

# The evolution of the social situation and social protection in Belgium 2019

**'Slowly falling behind'**

Monitoring the social situation in Belgium and the progress towards the social objectives and the priorities of the National Reform Programme

November 2019



Federal Public Service  
Social Security

.be

# **Contents**

## **Summary and Key Messages of the analysis of the EU social indicators**

### **Introduction**

#### **1 | The Economic and European context**

- 1.1 Economic context
- 1.2 Social developments

#### **2 | The Europe 2020 poverty or social exclusion target**

#### **3 | Trends in employment, income, poverty and social exclusion**

- 3.1 Labour market trends
- 3.2 Income trends
  - 3.2.1 Overall income evolution
  - 3.2.2 Income inequality
- 3.3 Poverty and social exclusion trends
  - 3.3.1 A further look at poverty or social exclusion (AROPE)
  - 3.3.2 Differences by age group
  - 3.3.3 Differences by level of education
  - 3.3.4 Severe material deprivation and poverty risk
  - 3.3.5 Other high risk categories
  - 3.3.6 Regional differences

#### **4 | Follow-up of the policy priorities in the context of the National Reform Programme and the National Social Report**

- 4.1 Social Protection
- 4.2 Child poverty
- 4.3 Housing
- 4.4 Active inclusion
- 4.5 Integration of people with migrant background

#### **5 | Pensions**

#### **6 | Health care and long-term care**

### **References**

**Annex 1: SPPM scoreboard for Belgium / summary table of main social trends**

**Annex 2 : Tables and figures**

**Annex 3 : Trends in Regions**

**Annex 4 : Participants in the meeting of the Working group on social Indicators**

**Annex 5 : Nederlandstalige samenvatting en kernboodschappen**

**Annex 6 : Résumé et Messages clés en Français**

## **Summary and Key Messages of the analysis of the EU social indicators**

In the context of the Europe 2020 target on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, the FPS Social Security produces an annual monitoring report on the evolution of the social situation and social protection in Belgium. This report is based on the European social indicators. The report describes a number of trends with the objective of assessing and contextualizing the evolution towards the target.

The subtitle of the report, ‘slowly falling behind’, attempts to draw the attention to a key trend. Within the context of a highly developed Belgian welfare state, the indicators point to stable and among the lowest income inequality figures while at the same time showing an increasing poverty rate. The report links both findings by showing that increases in household incomes have been higher in middle income households than among the very lowest and highest incomes. Of course, within the scope of this report, the focus is on the lowest incomes. The title also stresses that this has been a gradual process over the last fifteen years.

**The main findings can be summarized briefly in the following five points, followed by a broader summary :**

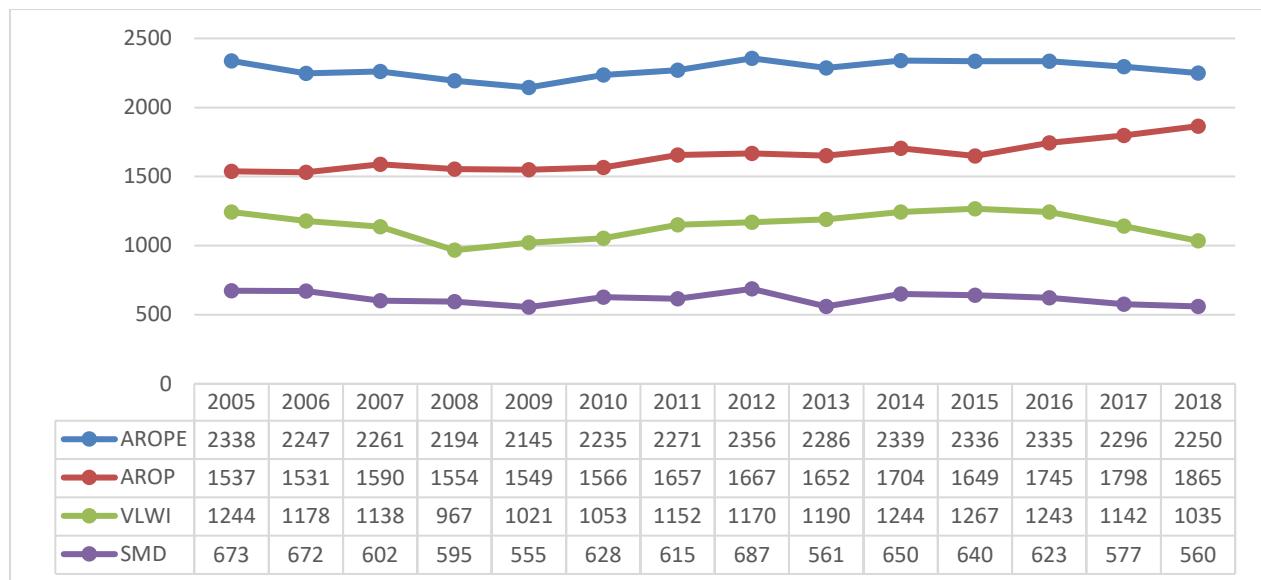
- The number of persons in a situation of poverty or social exclusion (Europe2020 target) has remained quasi stable when compared with the level at the start of the strategy
- While the total employment rate increased, it dropped for persons with a low educational attainment
- The lowest incomes fell behind the overall increase in household income
- The adequacy of social transfers decreases, in particular for the working age population and children
- Notwithstanding a drop in the number of quasi-jobless households, the poverty risk increases to its highest level since 2004

### **MAIN FINDINGS IN DETAIL :**

#### **1) No trend towards the Europe 2020 target**

**The number of persons in poverty or social exclusion** (Europe2020 target) is slightly decreasing since 2016 and **is in 2018, after earlier increases, about back at its 2008 level, the starting point of the Europe2020 strategy (2,250,000 vs. 2,194,000 in 2008)**. The drop is mostly caused by a decreasing level of quasi-joblessness and, to a lesser extent, by a drop in the number of persons in a severely materially deprived household. The at-risk-of poverty rate shows a relatively sharp increase since 2015 and was in 2018 (incomes 2017) at its highest level (16.4%) since the EU-SILC data collection.

**At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), at-risk-of poverty (AROP), severe material deprivation (SMD) and very low work intensity (VLWI), Belgium (absolute number of persons x1000)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

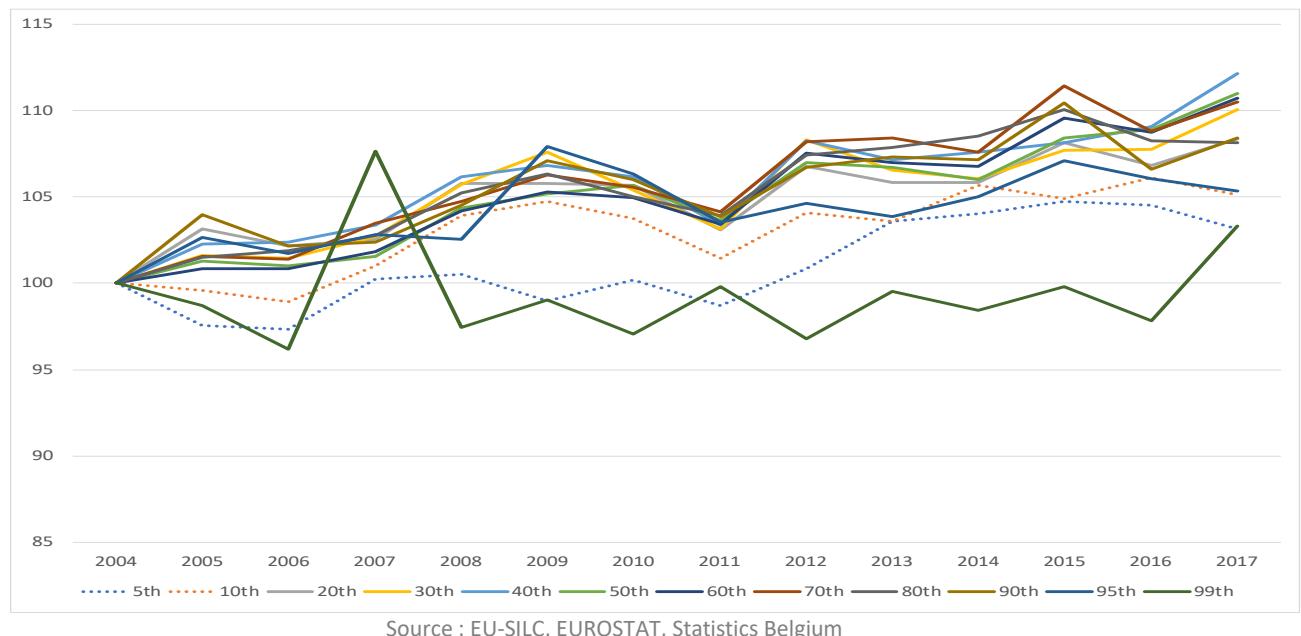
## 2) High employment rate but access to the labour market remains difficult

**The employment rate peaked in 2018 (69,7%).** It increased continuously among older workers (55-64). Among the broad group of prime age workers (here defined as 30-54) the rate only slightly increased since 2015. Among younger workers (here 20-29) the employment rate increased only as from 2017, after a decreasing trend earlier. **The employment rate keeps, slightly, decreasing for persons with a low educational attainment. The number of persons in a (quasi-) jobless household on the other hand dropped significantly, but remains among the highest in the EU.** The in-work poverty rate remains low compared to the EU-average and to the neighboring countries, but shows a slight upward trend since 2011.

## 3) Low income inequality, but lowest incomes fell behind

**Disposable household incomes increased moderately**, which is in line with international trends. Overall, the income inequality remains low and stable, **but households with a very low work-intensity and the lowest incomes didn't share equally in these moderate increased of household incomes.** These increases were mainly situated in work-rich households and in the middle of the income distribution. As a result of different trends (see also section on poverty trends below) different age categories changed places in the income distribution : low income elderly move up to some extend while weak working age groups take their place at the bottom.

## Median equivalent household income by income percentiles top cut-off points, Belgium (in 2017 prizes, EU-SILC 2005/income2004=100)



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium

### 4) Increasing poverty risk

**The at-risk-of-poverty rate is now significantly higher compared to the start of the observation period (16.4% vs. 14.8% in 2005).** The 2018 level is the highest since the beginning of the systematic observations. The increasing trend manifests itself in particular since 2015, where the level remained stable before this point. However, this stability was already the result of diverging trends for different population categories.

**The poverty risk of the elderly increases again since 2015, after a decade of strong drops.** The recent increase is in line with the increase for the population at large. **The poverty gap, which is the difference between the income of the poor elderly and the poverty threshold, keeps however decreasing.** This points to the fact that the lowest incomes among the elderly keep increasing, however not enough so as to lift them over the poverty threshold.

**The poverty risk among the working age population stabilizes in 2018 (incomes 2017), after successive increases over the previous years. The diverging trend between people with a high and people with a low educational attainment level continues.** Both the gap in employment rate and the gap in poverty risk further increase in 2018.

**After a number of years of fluctuations without a clearly increasing or decreasing trend, the percentage of children living in a household with a poverty risk increases strongly between 2016 and 2018.**

Consistent with the poverty risk indicator, the slight improvement in severe material deprivation is situated exclusively as from the second income quintile. For the lowest 20% incomes, this indicator remains stable.

Looking at specific categories, it can be observed that the newest 2018 figures confirm that **Belgium shows the highest poverty risk in the EU for persons with a non-EU citizenship** (48.3% vs. 38.3% for EU). The poverty risk for persons with a disability also remains above the EU-figure (23.1% vs. 20.9%).

The poverty risk is substantially higher among people renting their home, both on the private renting market as in social housing. The increase in the poverty risks is situated exclusively among renters.

There remain important differences in the poverty risks of the different regions. These differences have increased over the most recent years, due to an increase in Wallonia and a rather stable level in Flanders.

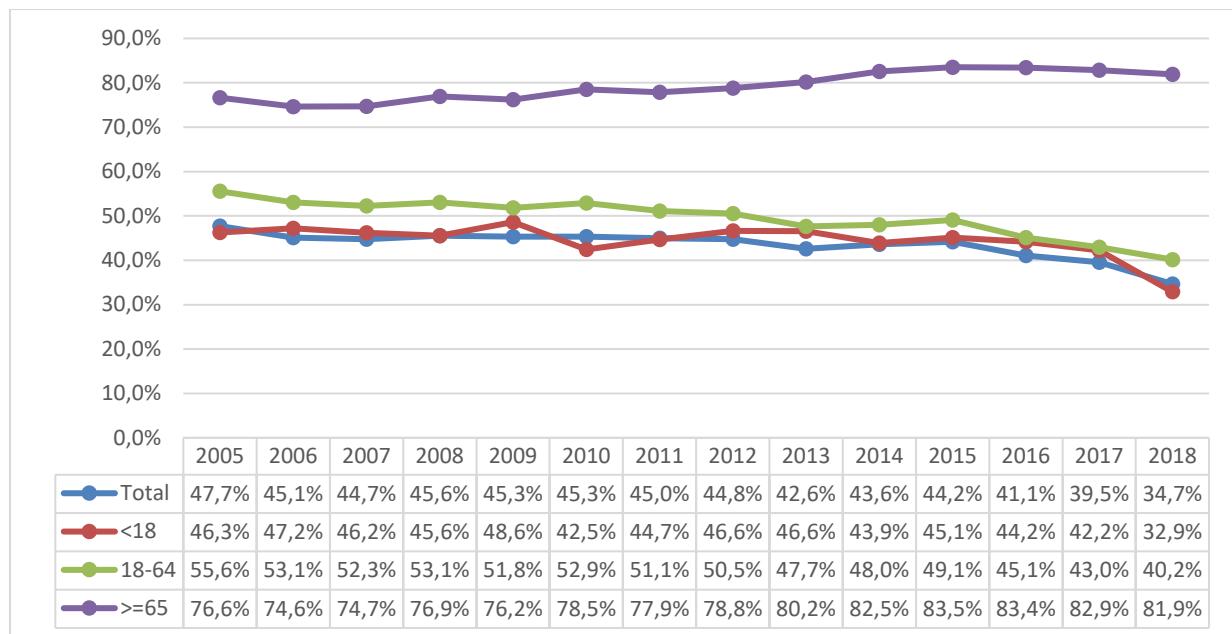
## **5) Adequacy of social transfers under increasing pressure**

Trends regarding benefit recipients continue. **The number of unemployment benefit recipients keeps decreasing, while the number of persons with an invalidity allowance keeps increasing.** With 400,000 the latter are at about the same level as the number of unemployment benefit recipients. **The number of social assistance beneficiaries and persons with a handicap income replacement benefit also further increase slightly.**

According to the most recent complete EU statistics on social expenditures (ESSPROS 2016) the expenditure level for Belgium (29.6% of GDP) was higher than the EU average (28.1%) and on the same level as The Netherlands (29.5%) and Germany (29.4%) and below the level of France (34.3%). There is no 2017 EU figure yet, but according to these more recent figures the position vis-à-vis the neighboring countries remains about the same, with slight decreases for Belgium as well as for most of the neighboring countries.

**The effectiveness of social transfers** is traditionally relatively high in Belgium, but **has been decreasing during recent years for children and the working age population.** This decrease continues in the 2018 figures. For the elderly the effectiveness remains stable in 2018, following increases in the years before.

## Effectiveness of social protection by age: % reduction of pre-transfer poverty rate due to social transfers, Belgium



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**The poverty risk of persons living in a (quasi-)jobless household** is a good indicator of the adequacy of social transfers as these households mainly depend on the transfers for their income. **This indicator shows a remarkable increase over the last years and its level is higher than the EU average (70% vs. 61%). In particular for (quasi-)jobless households with children, social allowances appear to be inadequate. For these households the poverty risk exceeds 80%.**

Minimum incomes (social assistance and minimum social security allowances) have kept pace with the poverty threshold, and thus with general welfare development. However, most minimum income levels, except for pensions and invalidity allowances for single persons, remain below the poverty threshold and at the same distance from it.

### 6) Improvement of lowest pensions and stable overall income position of elderly

The relation between the median income of the elderly population and that of the younger generations and the ratio between the median pension and the median labour income both stabilize in the most recent data, following slight increases in the preceding years. So, **the large decrease of the poverty risk of the elderly during the last decade does not reflect a substantial improvement in the income situation of the elderly in general, rather it points to an improvement of the lowest incomes**, and hence, to an improved adequacy of the lowest pensions.

For the future, theoretical replacement rates point to a stable replacement rate of pensions for an average wage worker. The replacement rate would clearly increase for low wage workers and clearly decrease for high wage workers.

## **7) Postponing medical care remains relatively high for low incomes**

The results of some recent reports on the status of health and health care are summarized in this report. These point eg. to persistent health inequalities and some challenges in healthcare, like eg. the performance of prevention.

Regarding access to health care, the ‘unmet need for medical care’ indicator points to a stable level of persons indicating that they had to postpone medical care due to financial reasons, waiting lists or distance. For the whole population this indicator is at the same level as the for the EU (1.8%). For the lowest income quintile the percentage is considerably higher. For this group the percentage remains, notwithstanding a small decrease in the two most recent years, considerably above the EU figure (6.4% vs. 3.4%).

## **TOWARDS THE END OF THE EUROPE2020 STRATEGY: CONCLUDING REMARKS**

At the start of the Europe2020 strategy it was assumed that the EU-SILC 2018 figures would be the most recent ones by the end of the strategy, and so would serve as the basis for the assessment of the strategy. Due to the improved timeliness of the data it could be possible that by the end of 2020 the EU-SILC 2019 data are available. In any case it appears clear that for Belgium the target of reducing the number of persons in a situation of poverty or social exclusion by 380.000 will not be reached and neither a substantial trend in the direction of the target will be set in place, a conclusion that will not only apply to Belgium. This conclusion is in line with the observation of the Federal Planning Bureau (2019) that the trend of the percentage at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion is not on track to reach its Sustainable development goal, which is set even more ambitiously to be reduced by 50% by 2030.

There is a considerable consistence in the data over time and between different sources, and so also in the key messages put forward in the successive monitoring reports. The overarching drivers of the findings, and the lack of progress are reflected in the key messages at the beginning of this summary. The employment rate remains for different reasons low for more vulnerable categories and the adequacy of social protection has decreased for the working age population, in particular for households with children. The first notwithstanding high active labour market spending, the latter notwithstanding the fact that minimum incomes kept pace with general welfare development, be it that they remain in many cases below the poverty threshold.

The Europe 2020 target is based on a combination of three indicators, each one reflecting a specific dimension of poverty and social exclusion. Its monitoring requires a broad analysis of the social situation and the impact of social protection. The findings of this analysis point to the correlated nature of the different aspects of the problem and lead to the conclusion that Belgium is not immune to international trends putting pressure on social cohesion.

The Europe 2020 strategy introduced the use of targets as a governance tool in the social policy field. In their joint assessment report on the strategy the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee present a mixed picture of the results of the strategy regarding the targets at EU-level. While the employment target will be nearly reached, there is less progress on the

**poverty and social exclusion target. Even when the realization of the objectives is mixed, both Committees consider the use of a target as a positive development as well as the indicators on which the poverty and social exclusion target has been based.**

## Introduction

This report summarises the evolution of the social situation in Belgium and supports the monitoring<sup>1</sup> of the Europe 2020 target on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion in the context of the National Reform Programme.

As for previous reports, this monitoring is mainly updated with social indicators from the EU Study on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS).<sup>2</sup> The first being the main data source for the EU social indicators.

These indicators are available on the Eurostat website. The EU figures are complemented with national data (with more details and breakdowns) and recent studies.

Some limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting data from surveys (EU-SILC and LFS) on a population sample:

- A statistical error rate should be taken into account. This means that when the value of an indicator is interpreted for a specific moment in time, an error rate should be considered. Moreover the differences in time and space found in the sample cannot always be extrapolated to the entire population. For indicators calculated on the basis of smaller subpopulations, for example Regions, the error rate is higher. [Table A3.5. in annex 3](#) gives an overview of the confidence intervals for some key indicators on a regional level.
- Some population groups are not included in the sampling frame. Hence, the situation of these groups is not reflected in the indicators. These groups mainly include persons in collective households, homeless people and people who do not have a valid residence permit. In the SILC-CUT survey (Schockaert et al., 2012), the combined size of these groups is estimated at 2% to 3% of the population. Some of these groups live in extreme poverty. The authors therefore estimate that the EU-SILC poverty rate (AROP) may underestimate the real rate by 0.6 pp. to 1.7pp..<sup>3</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that there is a time-lag between the reference period of some data (the moment to which the collected information refers) and the moment when the data are collected, e.g. income data refer to the year before the year of data-collection. This should be kept in mind when relating the results with policy measures.

---

<sup>1</sup> The monitoring of the social situation in the context of the aforementioned European reports is coordinated by the Federal Public Service (FPS) Social Security, with the support of the NRP/NSR Social Indicator working group, which consists of experts in the field of social indicators from the federal and regional administrations, universities, research centres and stakeholder organisations (cf. annex 4 for an overview of the persons who contributed to this note). However, the responsibility for the content of this note lies with the FPS Social Security. This report was prepared by Rudi Van Dam (rudi.vandam@minsoc.fed.be), Sébastien Bastaits (sebastien.bastaits@minsoc.fed.be) and Silke Laenen (silke.laenen@minsoc.fed.be). Natascha Van Mechelen supplied table A2.1 (Annex 2)

<sup>2</sup> Last update of tables and figures in this report on 01/11/2019.

<sup>3</sup> Schockaert, I., Morissens, A., Cincinnato, S., Nicaise, I., *Armoede tussen de plooien. Aanvullingen en correcties op de EU-SILC voor verborgen groepen armen*, Leuven: HIVA, 2012, 225p.

# 1 | The Economic and European Context

## 1.1 Economic context

**Table 1.1.** below is based on figures from the Spring/Summer 2019 Economic Forecasts of the European Commission.

The Belgian economic growth forecasted for the following years will be less positive than predicted last year. The GDP growth will amount to 1.4% in 2018 and 1.2% in 2019 and 2020.

The reduction of the public debt is expected to continue, falling to 100.7% in 2020.

The inflation rate has reached its highest level since 2013 (2.2 % in 2017 and 2.3% in 2018), but is presumed to decrease to 1.6 % in 2019 and 2020, and thus closer to EU figures.

As mentioned in last years' report, some uncertainties remain: the unpredictable outcome of the ongoing negotiation of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the stress recently displayed on global financial markets, a further escalation in the US's increase of tariffs, terrorist attacks,...

**Table 1.1. Evolution of some economic indicators and forecasts 2019-2020**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>GDP growth rate</b>													
BE	0.8	-2.3	2.7	1.8	0.2	-0.2	1.3	1.7	1.5	1.7	1.4	1.2	1.2
EU28	0.5	-4.4	2.1	1.7	-0.4	0.3	1.7	2.3	1.9	2.4	2.0	1.4	1.6
<b>Budget balance</b>													
BE	-1.1	-5.4	-4.0	-4.1	-4.2	-3.1	-3.1	-2.4	-2.4	-0.8	-0.7	-1.3	-1.5
EU28	-2.4	-6.6	-6.4	-4.6	-4.3	-3.3	-2.9	-2.4	-1.6	-1.0	-0.6	-1.0	-1.0
<b>Gross debt (% of GDP)</b>													
BE	92.5	99.5	99.7	102.6	104.3	105.5	107.0	106.4	106.1	103.4	102.0	101.3	100.7
EU28	60,7	73,3	79,0	81,6	84,0	85,8	86,6	84,6	83,4	81,7	80,0	80,2	78,8
<b>Inflation rate (yearly change percentage)</b>													
BE	4.5	0.0	2.3	3.4	2.6	1.2	0.5	0.6	1.8	2.2	2.3	1.6	1.6
EU28	3.7	1.0	2.1	3.1	2.6	1.5	0.5	0.0	0.3	1.7	1.9	1.5	1.6

Source: 2008-2018 EUROSTAT; 2019-2020 European Economic Forecast Spring/Summer 2019, European Commission.

## **1.2 Social developments**

As in previous years, in this section we summarise the main findings from two different monitoring tools aimed at measuring the social situation of EU countries: the ‘Social Scoreboard’ of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the ‘Social Protection Performance Monitor’ (SPPM) of the Social Protection Committee. Both tools are developed at EU level.

### a) Evidence from the 2018 Social Scoreboard<sup>4</sup>

The analysis of the headline indicators shows that there are persistent disparities between Member States in terms of performance (see [figure 1.1](#)). Almost every member state reports a problematic flag.

As mentioned last year, Belgium performs average or in some cases above average, but some dimensions such as the employment rate and formal childcare do require caution.

---

<sup>4</sup> Joint Employment Report 2019 ([https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2019-european-semester-autumn-package\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2019-european-semester-autumn-package_en))

**Figure 1.1. Summary of the 12 headline indicators of the 2018 Social Scoreboard**

	Equal opportunities and access to the labour market					Dynamic labour markets and fair working conditions					Public support / Social protection and inclusion			
	Early leavers from education and training	Gender employment gap	Income quintile ratio	At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate	Youth NEET rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Long-term unemployment rate	Real GDHI per capita (2008 = 100)	Net earnings of a full-time single worker earning AW	Impact of social transfers on poverty reduction	Children aged less than 3 years in formal childcare	Self-reported unmet need for medical care	Individuals' level of digital skills
Year	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2016	2016	2017	2016	2017	2017
Best performers	HR, IE, PL, SI	FI, LT, SE	CZ, FI, SI, SK	CZ, FI	AT, CZ, DE, NL, SE, SI	CZ, DE, EE, NL, SE, UK	CZ		BG, PL	UK, NL, LU, AT, DE	DK, FI, HU, SE	FR, LU, NL, PT		FI, LU, NL, SE
Better than average	AT, CZ, EL, LT, LV, NL	DK, EE, LU, PT, SI, SK	BE, DK, HU, MT, NL, SE	CY, DE, FR, MT, PL, SE, SI, SK	IE	AT, BG, LT, PT, SI	AT, DE, HU, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, UK	AT, DE, CY, CZ, DK, EE, HR, HU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, UK	DK, LT, RO, SE	BE, FR, SE, DK, IE, FI	BE, CZ, FR, NL, PL, SI	EE, ES, MT, SI	AT, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FR, HU, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL	AT, CZ, DE, MT, UK
On average	BE, DE, EE, FI, FR, SE, UK	AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, ES, FR, IE, NL, UK	CY, DE, EE, FR, HR, LU, PL	BE, EE, HU, PT	BE, FI, FR, HU, LT, LV, MT, PL, PT, SK, UK	CY, FI, FR, HU, IE, LU, LV, MT, PL, SK	BE, BG, DK, EE, FI, FR, IE, LT, LV, SE, SI, SK	BE, BG, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, LV, RO, SI	CZ, EE, DE, FR, FI, HU, LV, NL, SI, SK	MT, IT, EL, ES	CY, DE, MT, SK	CY, DE, FI, IE, IT, LV, UK	BE, BG, FI, HR, LT, PT, SE, SK	BE, EE, ES, FR, LT, SI, SK
Good but to monitor	LU	LV	AT	AT, DK, NL	DK, LU	DK					AT	BE, DK, SE		DK
Weak but improving	BG, MT, PT	MT	EL, IT, RO	RO	BG, RO	RO	CY, EL, ES, HR	EL, ES		LT, EE, RO, BG, LV		RO	EE, EL	CY
To watch	CY, DK, HU, SK	CZ, HR, HU, PL	PT	ES, HR, IT, LT, LU, LV	EE, ES	BE	IT	SK	AT, BE, ES, IE, IT, LU, PT, UK	PT, PL, CZ, HR, SI	EE, ES, HR, LT, LU, PT	AT, HR, HU, LT	CY, RO, SI	EL, HU, IE, LV, PL, PT
Critical situations	ES, IT, RO	EL, IT, RO	BG, ES, LT, LV	BG, EL	CY, EL, HR, IT	EL, ES, HR, IT		IT	CY, EL	HU, SK	BG, EL, IT, LV, RO	BG, CZ, EL, PL, SK	LV	BG, HR, RO

Source: 2019 Joint Employment Report.

b) Evidence from the last SPPM<sup>5</sup>

b.1. On the short term (2015-2016)<sup>6</sup>:

Regarding the most recent period of 2015-2016 (see [figure 1.2.](#)), SPPM data provides continued signs of a general improvement in the social situation, with most indicators mainly flagging up positive changes.

In particular, positive developments in the social situation can be observed in the following areas:

- Rises in real gross household disposable income in 19 MS along with significant reductions in the severe material deprivation rate in 12 MS, the material and social deprivation rate in 14 MS, and in the housing cost overburden rate in 11 MS. This reflects that, in aggregate, household incomes and financial conditions of EU households have further improved, benefitting from stronger economic activity and improved labour markets;
- A reduction in the risk of poverty or social exclusion for the overall population in 12 MS, mainly driven by falls in severe material deprivation and in the share of the population living in (quasi-) jobless households. Moreover, there are reductions in the share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in many Member States (13);
- Further reductions in long term unemployment (in 16 MS) and in youth exclusion, with significant falls in the share of young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) in 10 MS, reflecting improvements in the labour market;
- Continued improvements in the labour market participation of older workers (as evidenced by increases in the employment rate for 55-64 year olds in 21 MS).

Nevertheless, across the EU the following main negative trends, or “trends to watch” (i.e. where around a third or more of all Member States show a significant deterioration in the given indicator), can still be identified for the most recent period:

- Deterioration of the depth of poverty risk (as measured by the poverty gap, i.e. how poor the poor are) in 8 MS, and the in-work poverty risk in several (7) countries;
- Rises in the at-risk-of-poverty rates for people residing in (quasi-)jobless households in 8 MS, pointing to a continued deterioration in the adequacy of social benefits in several countries.

At the same time, there are signs of a decline in the relative income of the elderly, with significant falls in the median relative income ratio of the elderly in 13 countries (although in contrast, the aggregate replacement ratio improved in 9 MS). This decline in the income situation of the elderly is a reversal of the general trend observed in the years following the crisis, and reflects to a large extent the evolution

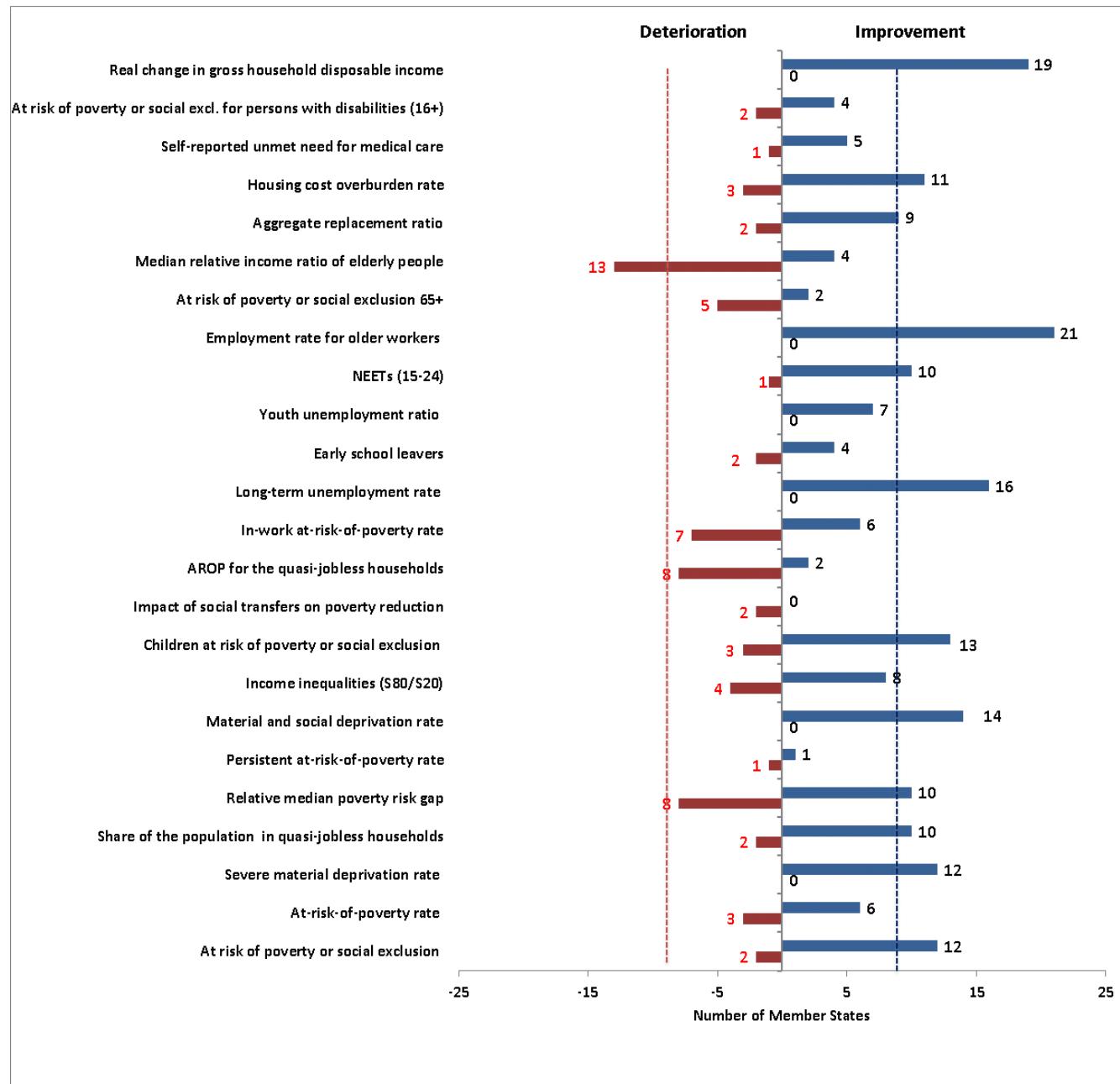
---

5 Social Protection Committee; Annual Report 2018 (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8151&furtherPubs=yes>)

6 For EU-SILC based indicators the changes generally actually refer to 2014-2015 for income and household work intensity indicators. For LFS-based indicators (LTU rate, early school leavers, youth unemployment ratio, NEETs (15-24), ER (55-64)) and SMD figures (not yet final for 2017 for several MS) the changes refer to the period 2016-2017.

of the relative income situation of the working age population as the labour market situation and incomes from work have improved.

**Figure 1.2. Social trends to watch and improvements for 2015-2016\***



Source: Social Protection Performance Monitor 2018.

\* For EU-SILC based indicators the changes generally actually refer to 2014-2015 for income and household work intensity indicators. For LFS-based indicators (LTU rate, early school leavers, youth unemployment ratio, NEETs (15-24), ER (55-64)) and SMD figures (not yet final for 2017 for several MS) the changes refer to the period 2016-2017.

## b.2. Long term developments (2008-2016<sup>7</sup>):

When turning towards the long term developments since the launch of the Europe 2020 strategy in 2008 (see [figure 1.3.](#)), the SPPM reveals that, for some social indicators the situation still remains noticeably worse as a result of the economic crisis and this despite recent improvements.

The areas with the most substantial deterioration compared to 2008 are:

- An increased share of the population living in (quasi-)jobless households in around half of MS, together with rises in the poverty risk for people living in (quasi-)jobless households in 15 MS;
- An increased income inequality (in 11 MS) and a rise in the depth of poverty risk (with the poverty risk gap up in 14 MS) and also in the risk of in-work poverty (in 9 MS).

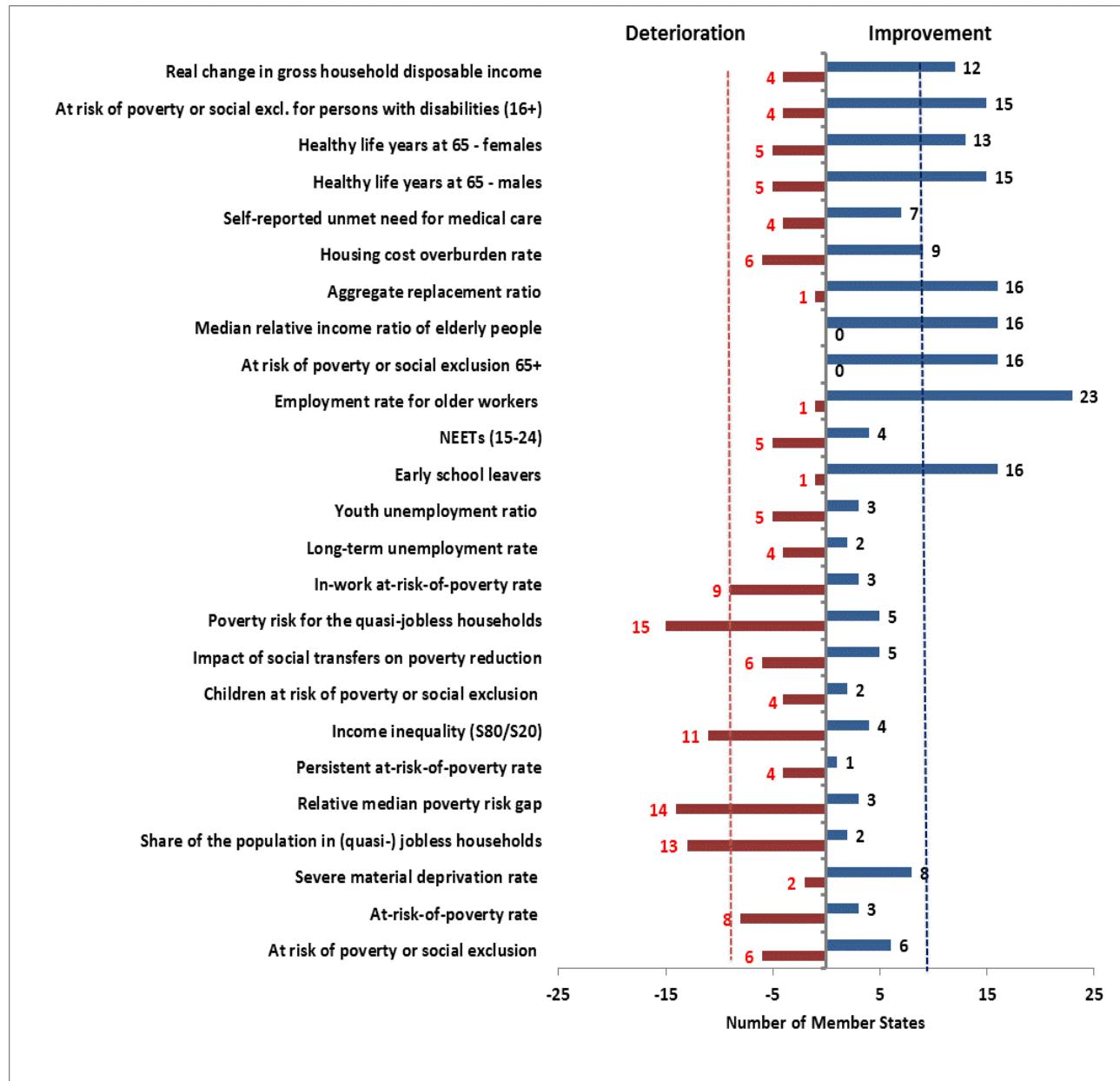
However, the dashboard indicators show there have also been a number of improvements, notably in the employment of older workers and in the relative situation of the elderly. The labour market situation of older workers has improved markedly, as evidenced by increases in the employment rate for the age group 55-64 in almost all Member States. At the same time, compared to 2008, the relative income situation of the elderly (aged 65 and over) shows clear signs of improvement in around two-thirds of Member States, with decreases in the number of elderly living at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 16 MS as well as an improvement in their income situation with respect to the rest of the population (as evidenced by rises in the aggregate replacement ratio in 16 MS, and the median relative income ratio of elderly people in 16). However, this trend should be interpreted with caution, as it does not necessarily show an improvement in absolute terms. As pension income remained stable during the economic crisis while the working age population suffered from substantial income loss (wage decreases, job loss, and decreases in benefit levels), the relative, but not necessarily the absolute, position of the elderly has improved, highlighting the important role of pension systems.

Other areas which have seen an improvement include an increasing number of healthy life years among the population aged over 65 in many Member States, a reduction in the at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate of persons aged 16+ with disabilities, and significant decreases in the number of early school leavers in Europe (with reductions in 16 MS). Overall, there are now significant improvements compared to 2008 in gross household disposable income in many Member States.

---

<sup>7</sup> For some indicators (SMD rate, LTU rate, early school leavers, youth unemployment ratio, NEETs, ER (55-64)) the changes generally refer to the period 2016-2017.

**Figure 1.3. Social trends to watch and improvements for 2008-2016\***



Source: Social Protection Performance Monitor 2018.

Note: i) For AT, break in series in 2011 for persistent poverty risk (so trend not considered for the period compared to 2008); ii) For BE, major break in 2011 in the self-reported unmet need for medical examination (so trend not considered for the period compared to 2008); iii) For 2014 BG registered a major break in the time series for the material deprivation indicator (SMD) and AROPE indicator, so longer-term changes are presented for the period 2008-2013 only; iv) For DK, breaks in series for the period 2008-2015 which mainly affect indicators related to incomes and to a lesser degree variables highly correlated with incomes (so trends not considered for the period compared to 2008 for these); v) For 2014 EE registered a major break in series for EU-SILC variables, so longer-term changes for these are presented for the period 2008-2013 only; vi) For HR, no EU-SILC data published by Eurostat before 2010; vii) For LU, major break in series in 2016 for EU-SILC based indicators, so long-term comparison is for the period 2008-2015; viii) For NL, improvement to the definition of income in 2016 has some impact on comparison of income-based indicators over time; ix) For RO, breaks in series in 2010 for LFS-based indicators, so changes 2010-2016 used for longer term change; x) For UK, changes in the survey vehicle and institution in 2012 might have affected the results on trends since 2008 and interpretation of data on the longer-term trend must therefore be particularly cautious; xi) \* For some indicators (SMD rate, LTU rate, early school leavers, youth unemployment ratio, NEETs, ER (55-64)) the changes generally refer to the period 2016-2017.

### **b.3. Comparison by Member States:**

Beside this, the SPPM also provides a comparison of the evolution observed in the Member States, in terms of numbers of key social indicators with significant improvement, as well over the most recent period (2015–2016), as for the longer-term perspective (2008-2016).

This evolution varies a lot between countries, as shown in [annexes 1.B. et 1.C.](#).

## 2 | The Europe 2020 poverty or social exclusion target

In the context of Europe 2020, the EU's mid-term strategy for the period 2010-2020, quantified targets were agreed in the fields of employment, R&D, environment, education and poverty and social exclusion.

As for the four other targets, the target on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion was agreed in 2010. It was decided to use the AROPE indicator (At Risk Of Poverty or social Exclusion). AROPE is based on the combination of three indicators : 1) AROP<sup>8</sup> - At Risk of Poverty ; 2) SMD<sup>9</sup> - Severe Material Deprivation and 3) VLWI<sup>10</sup> – Very Low Work Intensity.

As for the other countries, Belgium set this Europe 2020 social target based on the data of the EU-SILC survey of 2008. As the strategy has a duration of ten years, and due to delays in data availability, 2018 was foreseen to be the final data-year for assessing the evolution towards the target. Belgium decided to set the target of reducing the number of persons in poverty and/or social exclusion by 380.000, starting from 2.194.000 persons based on EU-SILC 2008. This means that, to reach the target, the number had to reach 1.814.000 persons or lower in EU-SILC 2018. This amounts to a reduction of about 17%.

[Figure 2.1.](#) below illustrates that the target is not met. After an increase for three consecutive years (2009-2012) during the beginning of the strategy, the evolution of the AROPE was quasi stable for a few years. Despite the slight decrease observed in the EU-SILC data of 2017 and 2018, the indicator is still as high as at the beginning of the strategy.

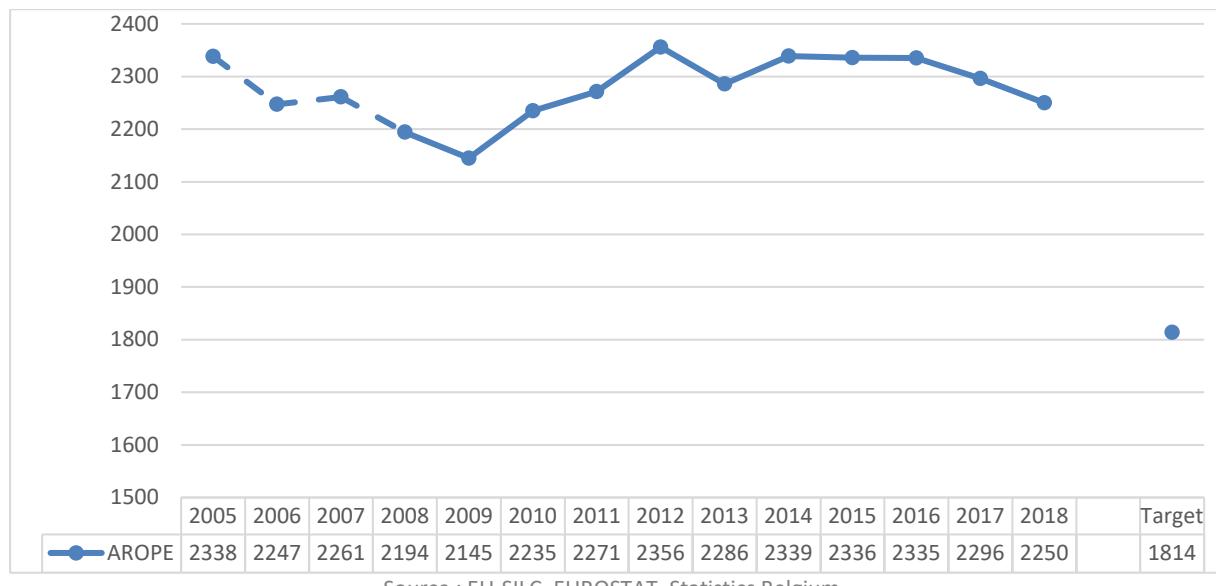
---

<sup>8</sup> AROP measures the number of persons that are below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold fixed at 60% of the median disposable income (14 246 €/year, or 1 187 €/month, for a single person in Belgium in EU-SILC 2018).

<sup>9</sup> SMD measures the number of persons that are in a situation of severe material deprivation, meaning a person who lives in a household that is confronted with at least 4 out of 9 problems: being confronted with arrears, not being able to afford 1 week annual holiday away from home, not being able to afford a meal with meat/fish/chicken or a vegetarian equivalent every other day, not being able to make an unexpected expense with a value equal to the poverty threshold, not being able to heat the dwelling adequately, not being able to afford a washing machine, a tv, a telephone, a car.

<sup>10</sup> VLWI measures the number of persons that are in a situation of very low work intensity, meaning a person living in a household with an actual number of months worked in the household less than 20% of the possible maximum number of months that could be worked by all adult household members (excluding students).

**Figure 2.1. Evolution of poverty or social exclusion in relation to the national Europe 2020 target, Belgium (absolute number x1000)**

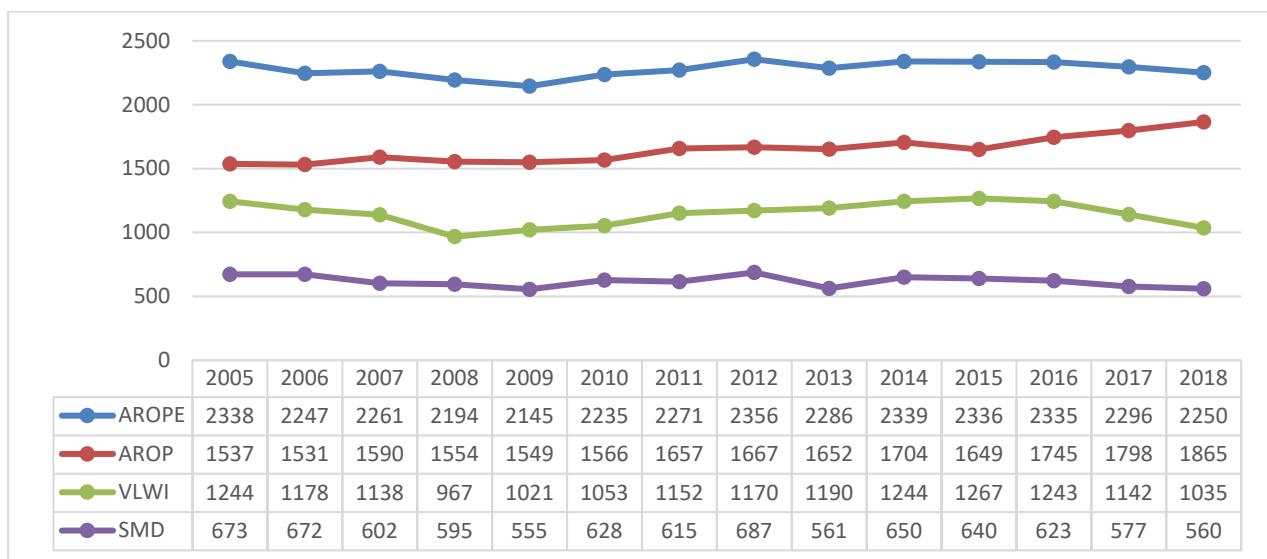


Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

Looking at the three different sub-indicators (figure 2.2.), the trends are quite different.

The number of persons at risk of poverty (AROP) shows a slight increase since 2010. This increase has strengthened since 2015. The AROP reached its highest level in 2018. The number of people living in a very low work intensity (VLWI) household has increased gradually during the crisis period of 2008-2015, before decreasing since 2016 to reach its lowest level, since 2008, in 2018. The number of persons in a situation of severe material deprivation (SMD) remained quite stable but shows a slightly decreasing trend since 2014. These three evolutions explain the great stability, and so the absence of clear progress, of the AROPE indicator since the start of the EU2020 strategy in 2008. In the three most recent years, a drop in the very low work intensity rate, and to some extent in the severe material deprivation rate, is offset by a rather clear increase in the number of people at-risk-of-poverty.

**Figure 2.2. At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), at-risk-of poverty (AROP), severe material deprivation (SMD) and very low work intensity (VLWI), Belgium (absolute number x1000)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

### 3 | Trends in employment, income, poverty and social exclusion

#### 3.1. Labour market trends

For most people, the main pathway for an adequate living standard is work. The employment rate in Belgium was stable on the population level during 2011-2015, but increased since 2016 to reach 69.7% in 2018, which is the highest level ever recorded for this indicator.<sup>11</sup> This level remains however significantly below the EU average, which was 73.1 % for the EU28 in 2018 (see [table 3.1a.](#)).

Following the favourable labour market situation, the unemployment rate also dropped significantly from 8.5% in 2014 to 6% in 2018. Forecasts indicate a further decrease in 2019 and 2020. This decrease would also be observable in the EU28.

**Table 3.1a. Employment rate and unemployment rate (in %)**

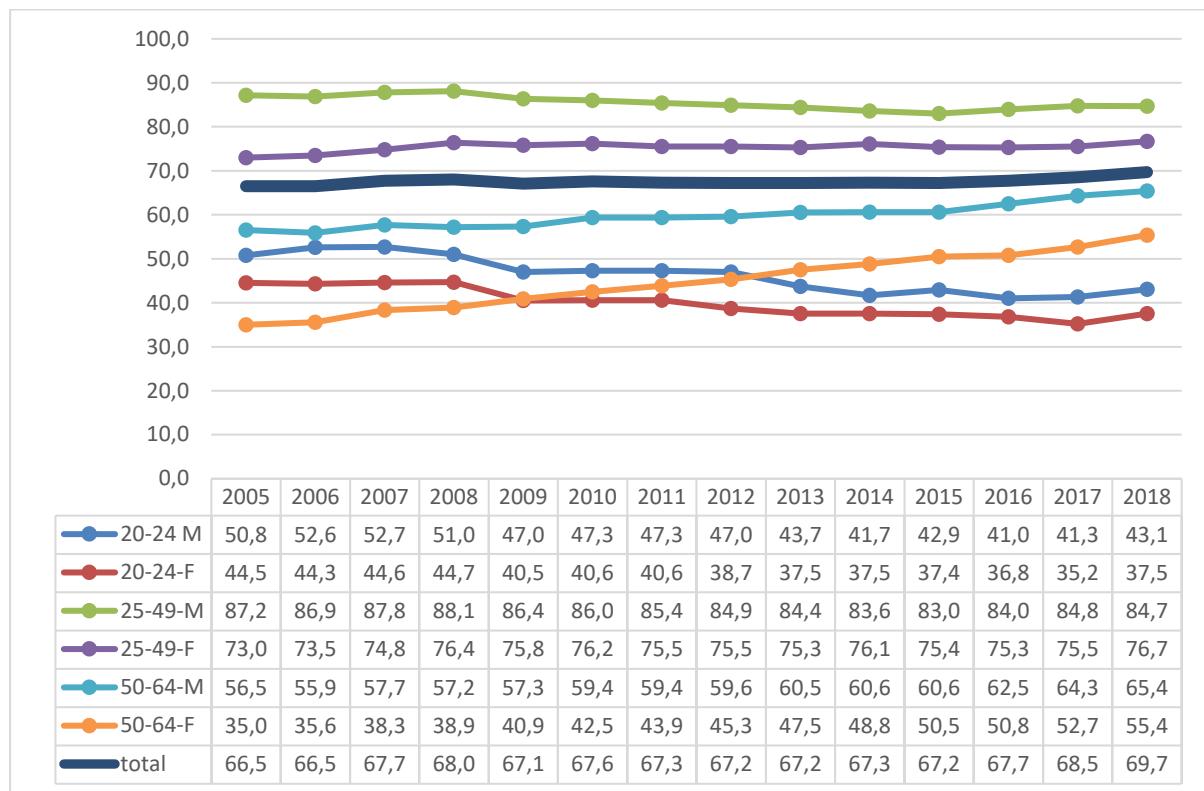
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Employment rate (20-64)</b>											
BE	67.6	67.3	67.2	67.2	67.3	67.2	67.7	68.5	69.7		
EU28	68.6	68.6	68.4	68.4	69.2	70.1	71.1	72.2	73.2		
<b>Unemployment rate</b>											
BE	8.3	7.2	7.6	8.4	8.5	8.5	7.8	7.1	6.0	5.6	5.3
EU28	9.6	9.7	10.5	10.9	10.2	9.4	8.6	7.6	6.8	6.5	6.2

Source: 2008-2018 EUROSTAT; 2019-2020 European Economic Forecast Spring 2019, European Commission. Note: the latest figures on the Eurostat website show an employment rate of 73.1 for the EU28.

[Figure 3.1.](#) presents the evolution of the total employment rate for 20 to 64 year olds by detailed age category and by gender. For the prime age population, here defined as 25-49 year olds, the employment rate is relatively high and has remained rather stable for both men and women. For women there is a slight increase between 2017-2018. The overall increase appears to be mainly due to the increased employment rate of the older age group (50-64). While the rate has increased for both men and women, the increase has been particularly strong and continuous for women. For 20 – 24 year olds the employment rate decreased until 2016. In the two most recent years, an upward trend can be observed.

<sup>11</sup> First semestrial results of the LFS 2018 indicate that the increase in the employment rate for Belgium will continue in 2019, and will amount to 71%.

**Figure 3.1. Employment rate by age and gender (20-64), total and specific category of older workers, Belgium (in %)**

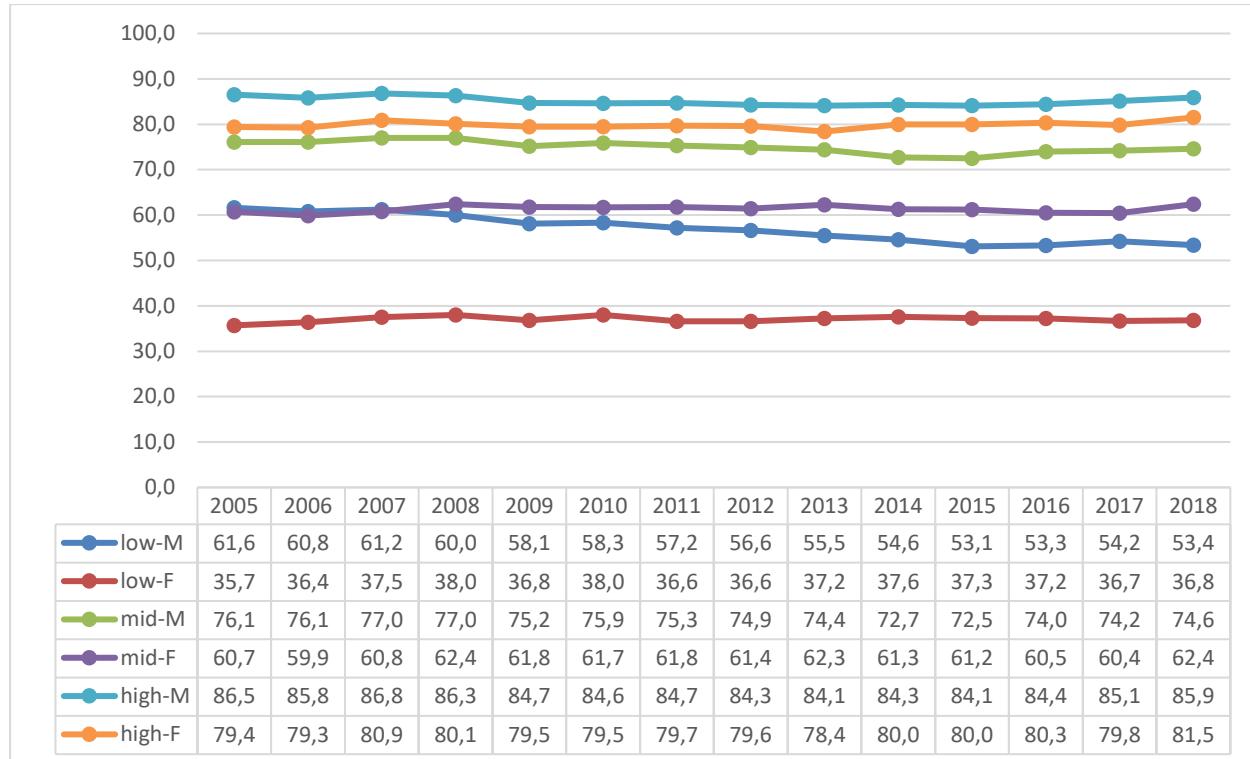


Source : Labour Force Survey, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

Figure 3.1.bis presents the evolution of the employment rate from yet another perspective: educational attainment and gender. The two most striking observations from this graph are the very low employment rate for women with a low educational attainment level and the gap with women with a higher level on the one hand, and the rather decreasing than increasing employment rate for the low skilled on the other hand. For low skilled men there clearly is a decreasing trend, while for women it has remained rather stable. As documented in the 2018 version of this report, these results have to be interpreted jointly with the finding that share of the low skilled among the working age population has significantly decreased over the last decade. Although this would have to be substantiated by further research, it seems reasonable to assume that through demographic evolution the low skilled have become a smaller and weaker group over time.

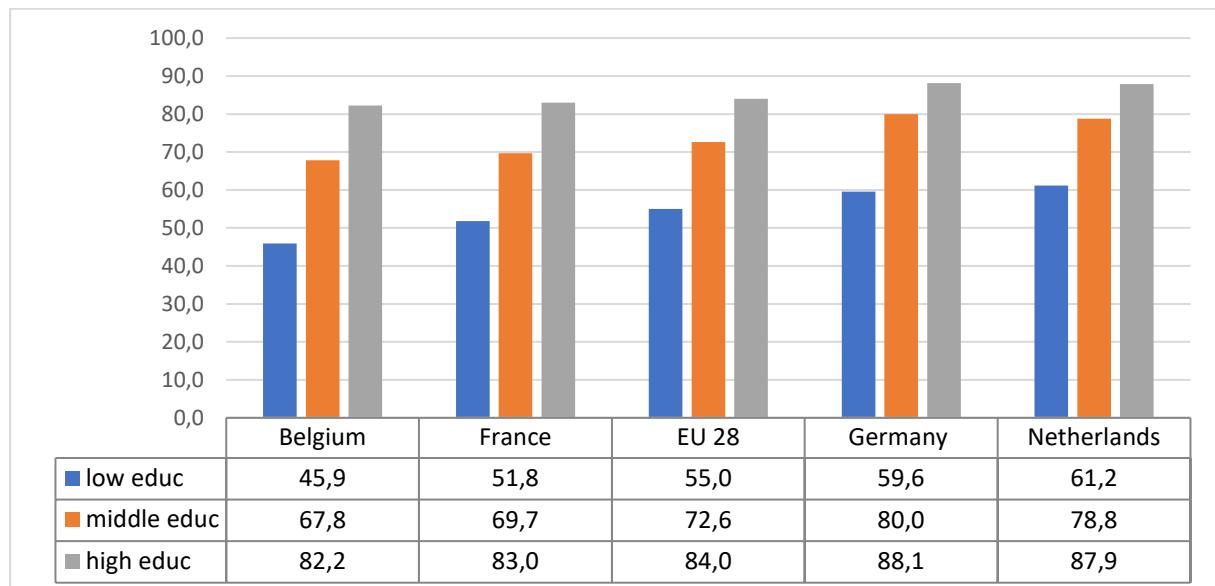
Furthermore, it is relevant to note that the differences in employment rate are not so outspoken for persons with a high educational level (figure 3.1.ter). For this category, the Belgian employment rate is well above 80% and less than 2 pp. below the EU average. Persons with a low educational attainment level have also a much lower employment rate in the neighbouring countries and overall in the EU. However, for this category the Belgian rate is still much lower and nearly 10 pp. below the EU average, pointing to a particularly significant issue for Belgian policy making.

**Figure 3.1.bis. Employment rate (20-64), by educational attainment level and gender, Belgium (in %)**



Source : Labour Force Survey, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

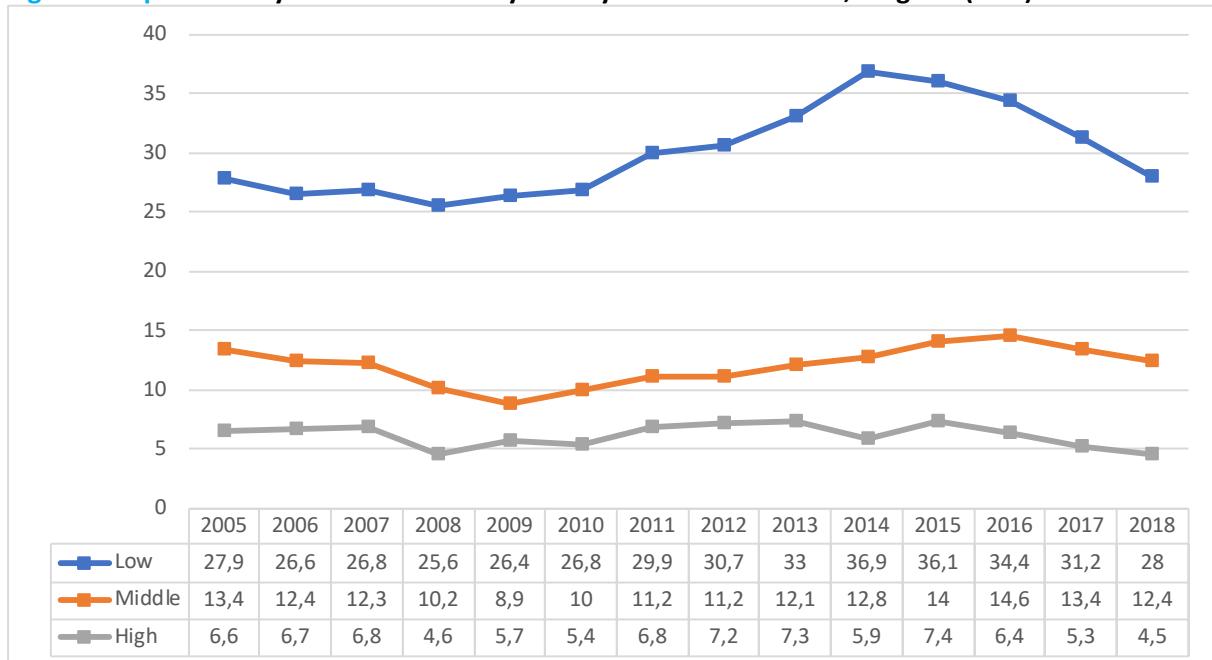
**Figure 3.1.ter. Employment rate by educational attainment level, Belgium EU28 and its neighbouring countries, 2018 (in %)**



Source : Labour Force Survey, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure 3.1.quater** looks at another aspect of vulnerable labour market positions. It presents the evolution of the very low work intensity rate by educational status. As stated when discussing the AROPE-target, this indicator decreased during recent years, but remains among the highest in the EU. The evolution by educational status shows that very low work intensity sharply increased between 2008 and 2014, especially among persons with a low educational attainment, but also among those at middle attainment level. As from 2014 there is again a clear decreasing trend, which is the most marked among the low skilled. It seems obvious to link this evolution with the improvement in the overall employment rate, benefitting also weaker categories. A further analysis of the different components of the AROPE indicator shows that the decreasing trend in the very low work intensity rate is mainly situated among households that are not income poor and not in a situation of severe material deprivation ([figure A2.8 in Annex 2](#)), which seems to hint that the drop in the rate might be particularly situated among older workers.

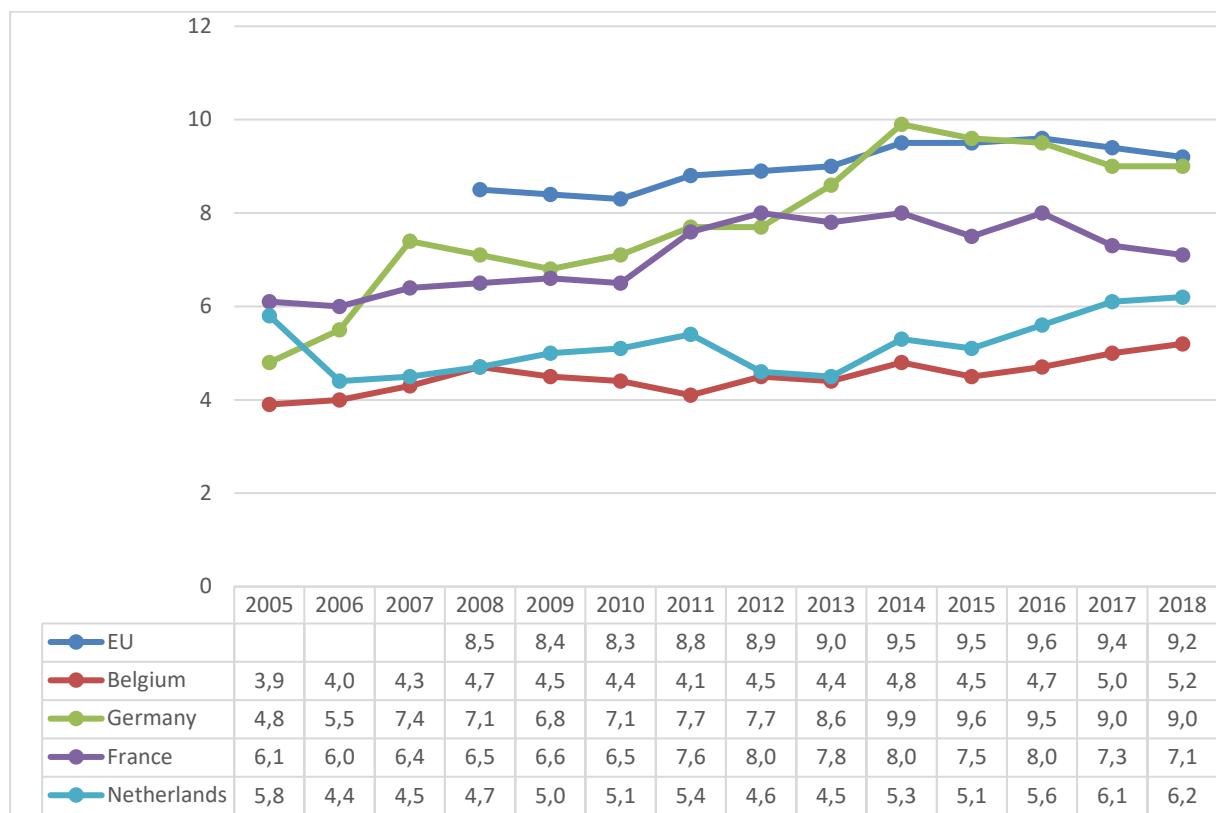
**Figure 3.1.quater. Very low work intensity rate by educational status, Belgium (in %)**



Source : Labour Force Survey, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

These findings illustrate that Belgium has a low labour market participation, while it remains to have one of the highest productivity levels in the EU. This results in one of the lowest levels of in-work poverty. The share of poor among the employed is traditionally well below EU levels and the levels of the neighbouring countries. This remains so in the latest figures. However, it is noteworthy that the data point to a slightly increasing level of in-work poverty, from 4.1% in 2011 to 5.2% in 2018. Although there seems to be some consistency in the increasing trend, the increase is still too limited to justify strong conclusions. It should nevertheless be noted that, notwithstanding the relatively low in-work poverty rate ([figure 3.1.quinques](#)), in absolute terms this group makes up a sizable share of the total number of persons at-risk-of-poverty.

**Figure 3.1. quinques. In work poverty rate (18-64), Belgium and its neighbouring countries (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

### 3.2. Income Trends

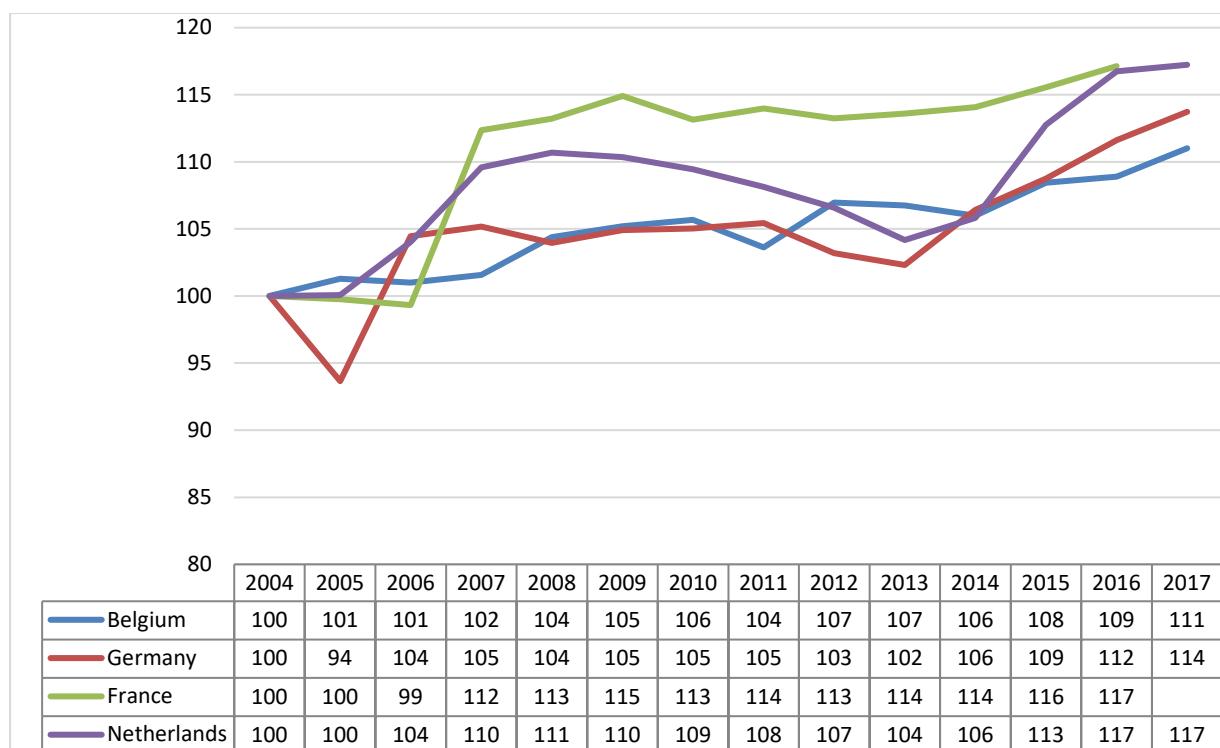
#### 3.2.1. Overall income evolution

Turning from employment to income, this section discusses the level and dispersion of household income. Between the beginning of the EU-SILC data-collection in 2005 (incomes of 2004)<sup>12</sup> and 2018 (incomes of 2017), the median equivalent disposable household ([figure 3.2.1.](#)) income has increased by 11% in real terms, so on average lower than 1% per year. Gross household disposable ([figure 3.2.1bis](#)) income shows a comparable increase.

The neighbouring countries show a similar evolution, though growth seems to have been slightly higher in these countries. This observation is in line with observations of overall subdued wage growth in the different EU and international reports, already reported in the 2018 version of this report. A related study of the Belgian National Bank shows slow consumption growth, pointing to moderate wage increases as a possible explanation (see [BOX 1](#)). Wage growth seems to have picked up moderately in 2018 (2019 Joint Employment Report).

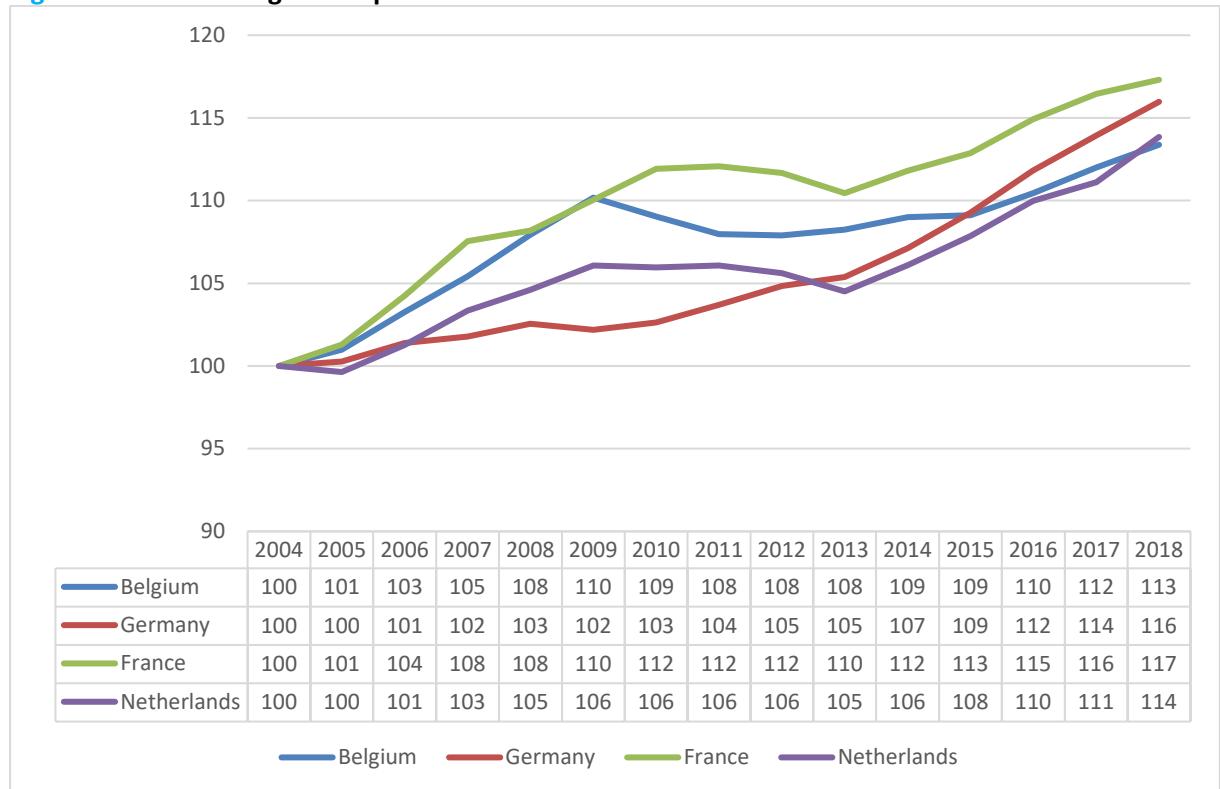
<sup>12</sup> The first EU-SILC wave for Belgium was 2004, but for some EU Member States data collection started only in 2005 (eg. DE, NL). In view of consistency between the tables EU-SILC 2005 has been used as starting point throughout this analysis

**Figure 3.2.1. Median equivalent disposable household income (in real terms)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium, calculation SPF Social Security.

**Figure 3.2.1bis : Real gross disposable household income**



Source : European Commission AMECO database.

**Box 1 : « Why has Belgian private consumption growth been so moderate in recent years”<sup>13</sup>**

In its June 2019 article, the Belgian National Bank studies the causes of the relatively weak household consumption in Belgium over the last years (1% vs. 1.5% on average in the Eurozone area in the period 2014-2108).

Over a longer period (2008-2018), the study shows that the difference in private consumption growth with the Eurozone is less significant, the growth rate being around 1% over the entire decade in both Belgium and the Eurozone. Following the National Bank, the explanation comes from the fact that consumption resisted better in Belgium during the first years of the crisis (1% annual growth during 2008-2013), while the impact of the crisis was bigger in the neighboring countries and the Eurozone at large (0.5% during 2008-2013). The inverse happened in the period 2014-2018, where a catching up occurred in the other countries, mainly supported by expenditures on durables and non-essentials. This explains the higher consumption growth in the Eurozone (1.5%/year) compared to Belgium (1%/year).

The cause of these different evolutions lies with the evolution of households' employment income, which is of course an important determinant of consumption expenditure. The study shows that for the period 2008-2013 the impact of the crisis on household labour income was weaker in Belgium compared to other countries. As a cause of this lesser impact the study refers to the extension of the temporary unemployment scheme and the system of indexation of wages and social benefits. These policies supported household incomes and thus consumption. The inverse happened in the following period, when the economic upswing caused a stronger increase in household labour income in the other countries, while household income growth remained rather stable in Belgium, despite the increase in employment and the tax-shift, the study argues. The study refers to measures that moderated wage growth in view of supporting competitiveness of Belgian firms.

The study explores the impact of other factors on consumption, like the impact of wealth or excessive dept, but these are not found to be impacting on the relatively weak growth in 2014-2018.

### 3.2.2. Income inequality

Income inequality in Belgium is and remains very low compared to other countries. Furthermore, both the Gini-coefficient and the S80/S20 quintile ratio have rather, slightly, decreased than increased (see [table 3.2.](#) and [figure 3.2.2](#)).

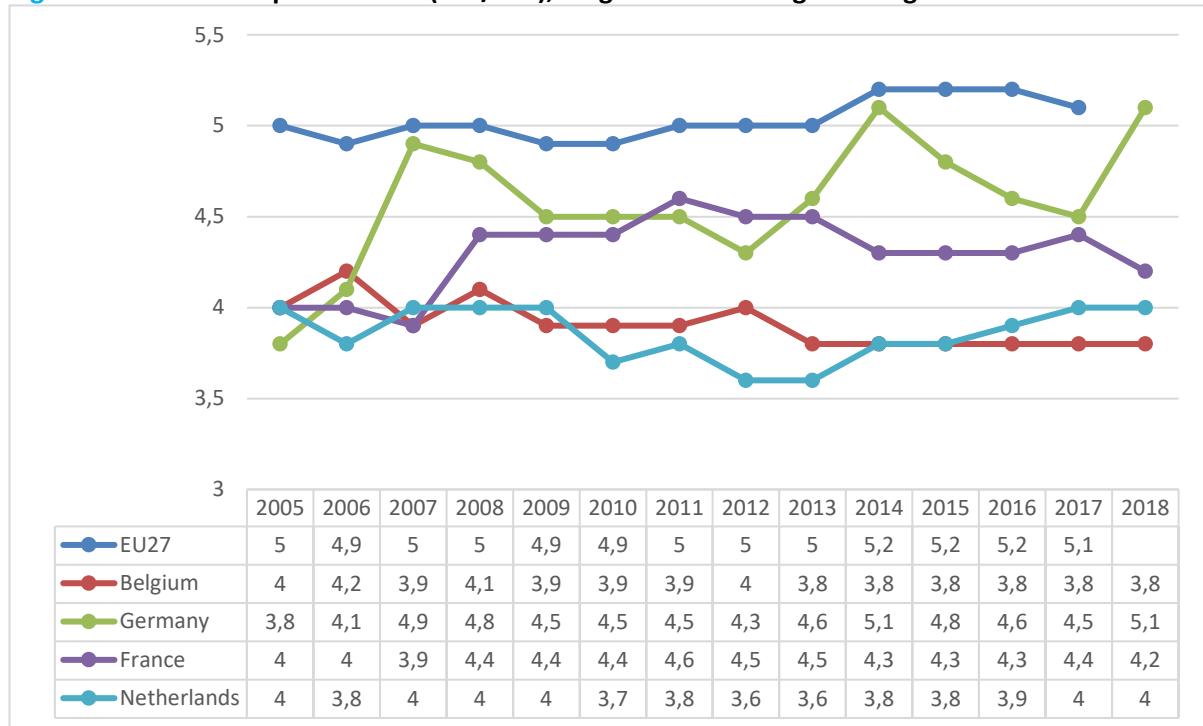
**Table 3.2. Income inequality in Belgium**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
S80/S20	4	4.2	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	3.9	4	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
Gini	28	27.8	26.3	27.5	26.4	26.6	26.3	26.5	25.9	25.9	26.2	26.3	26	25.6

Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

<sup>13</sup> This article can be consulted through : <https://www.nbb.be/en/articles/why-has-belgian-private-consumption-growth-been-so-moderate-recent-years>

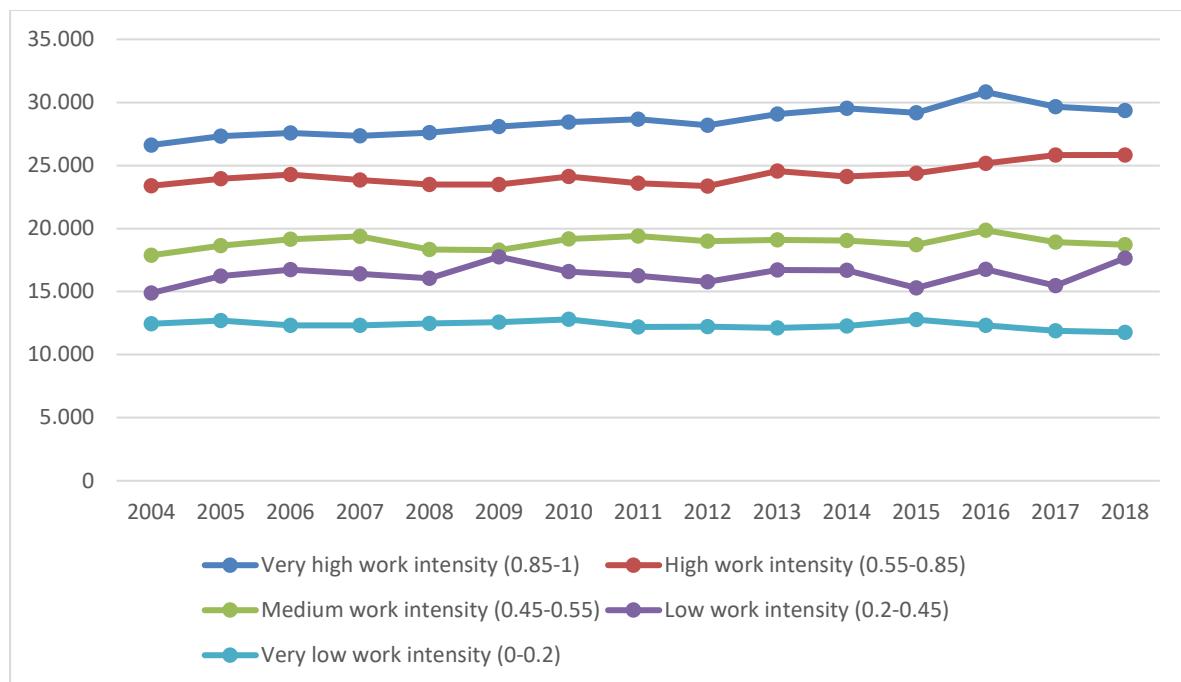
**Figure 3.2.2. Income quintile ratio (S80/S20), Belgium and its neighbouring countries**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

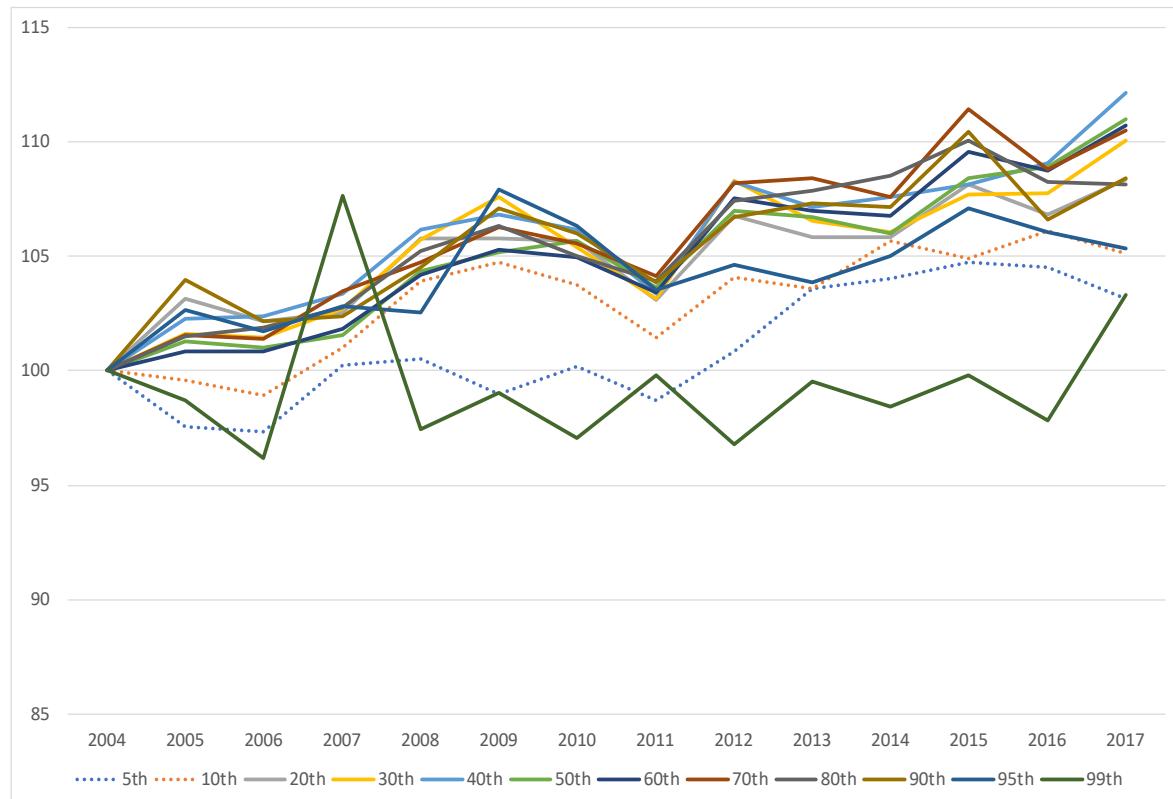
The stability in income inequality seems to be somewhat contradictory with the, now significant, increase in income poverty. The figures 3.2.2bis and 3.2.2ter shed some more light on this. From these figures it appears that the, moderate, increase in equivalent household income was unequally distributed and predominantly located in higher social categories. Figure 3.2.2bis shows that median equivalent household income increased in work-rich households, while it remained stable in quasi-jobless households. Figure 3.2.2ter shows the evolution in real terms of the top-cut off points of percentiles of the income distribution in relation to the EU-SILC 2005 (income 2004) value. These results point to somewhat stronger increases for the middle income groups (40<sup>th</sup> to 80<sup>th</sup> percentile) than for the other income groups. Thus, the lowest income groups have been falling behind to some extend in comparison with the income developments of the middle income groups. This is not reflected in the standard inequality measures, which take a broader perspective than the very lowest income groups.

**Figure 3.2.2bis. Median equivalent household income by work-intensity level, Belgium (in euro)**



Source: EU-SILC, Eurostat, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure 3.2.2.ter. Median equivalent household income by income percentiles top cut-off points, Belgium (in 2017 prizes, EU-SILC 2005/income2004=100)**



Source: EU-SILC, Eurostat, Statistics Belgium.

### .3. Poverty and social exclusion trends

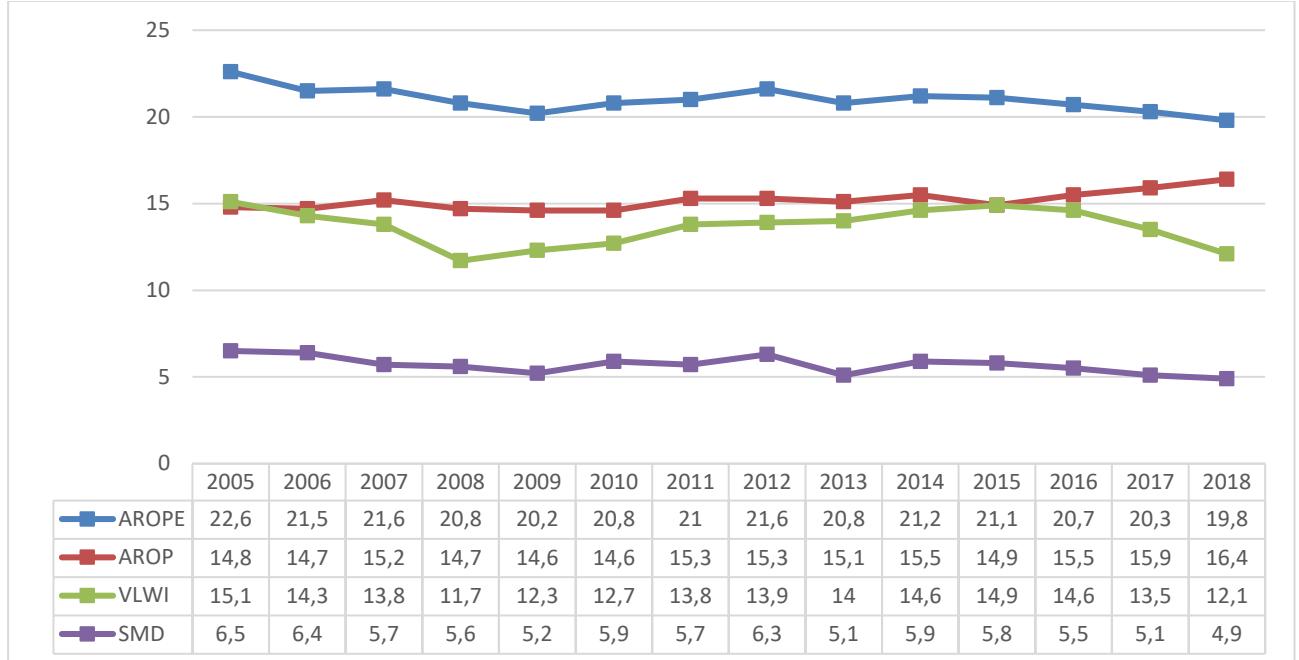
#### 3.3.1. A further look at poverty or social exclusion (AROPE)

Earlier in [figure 2.1.](#) of this report on the follow-up of the Europe 2020 target, it was pointed out that the number of people at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion did not significantly change over the past decade. [Figure 2.2.](#) showed that the trends of the three indicators that make up AROPE were quite different.

These different trends remain when the evolution is expressed in percentages instead of absolute numbers. In [Figure 3.3.1.](#) below, it can be observed that the AROPE rate stayed quite stable during the entire period; with nevertheless a slight decrease during the last years (to reach its lowest level at 19,8% in 2018). This can mainly be explained by a simultaneously decrease of the VLWI rate and the SMD rate.

On the other hand, the AROP rate increased quite strongly since 2015 and reached its highest level in 2016 with 16,4%.

**Figure 3.3.1. Evolution of AROPE, AROP, SMD and VLWI<sup>14</sup> (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

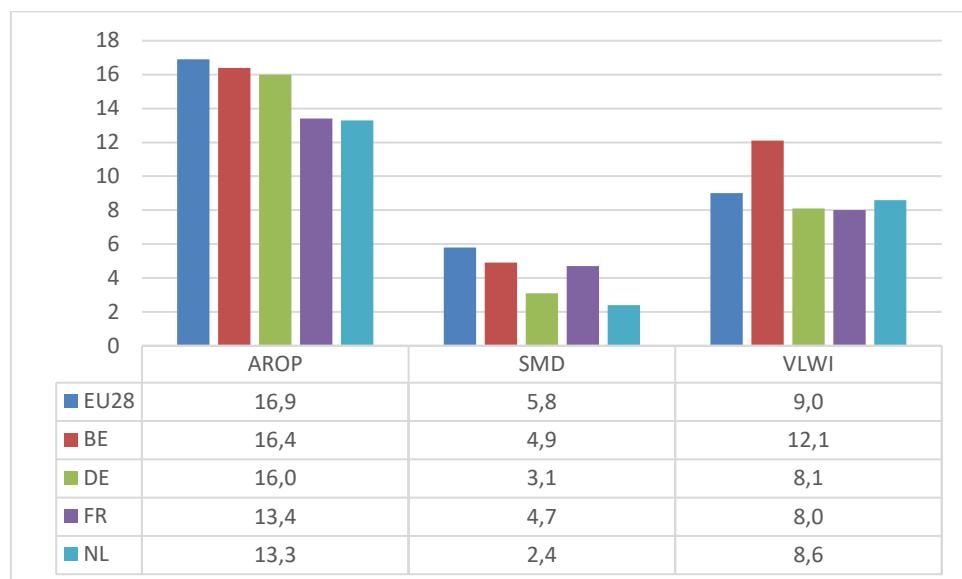
[Figure 3.3.1bis.](#) compares the percentages of the three components of AROPE with the neighbouring countries and the EU. It can be observed that, in 2018, Belgium performs:

- Significantly better on the SMD indicator than the EU-average. Its level is however slightly higher than in neighbouring countries.

<sup>14</sup> In percentage of the 0-60 year-old population.

- Only slightly (0.5 pp.) better on the AROP indicator than the EU-average.. Its level is however higher than in France and the Netherlands, and at the same level as Germany.
- Always, and despite recent improvements, significantly worse on the VLWI indicator than the EU-average and the neighbouring countries. For this indicator Belgium continues to show one of the highest levels in the EU.

**Figure 3.3.1bis. Target indicators in Belgium, neighbouring countries and EU28, 2018**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium. Note : The percentages for EU28 are estimates.

Before turning to the next section of this report, we would like to recall, as explained in detail in the report of last year, that, next to the Severe Material Deprivation (SMD) indicator and the 'standard' Material Deprivation (MD<sup>15</sup>) indicator, a new indicator, named 'Material and Social Deprivation' (MSD), was endorsed in march 2017 by the EU.

This MSD indicator is based on 13 items and refers to the proportion of people lacking at least 5 out of these 13 items. Six of these items were already included in the standard measure, seven are new.<sup>16</sup> The data for this new indicator are available since 2014.

Figure 3.3.1ter below shows that for Belgium the new MSD indicator is less than 1% higher than the standard MD between 2014 and 2018. The new indicator shows an evolution comparable to the MD indicator, pointing to a decrease in the most recent years. Figure 3.3.1quater shows that in 2017 the difference between the two indicators varies from one country to another, but overall differences

<sup>15</sup> Contrary to the SMD indicator that states that a person has to be confronted with a least 4 out of 9 problems to be considered in a situation of "severe" material deprivation; the "standard" material deprivation (MD) indicator only considers persons missing 3 items out of 9.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed description of the 13 items, see box 3, p 27 of last years' report.

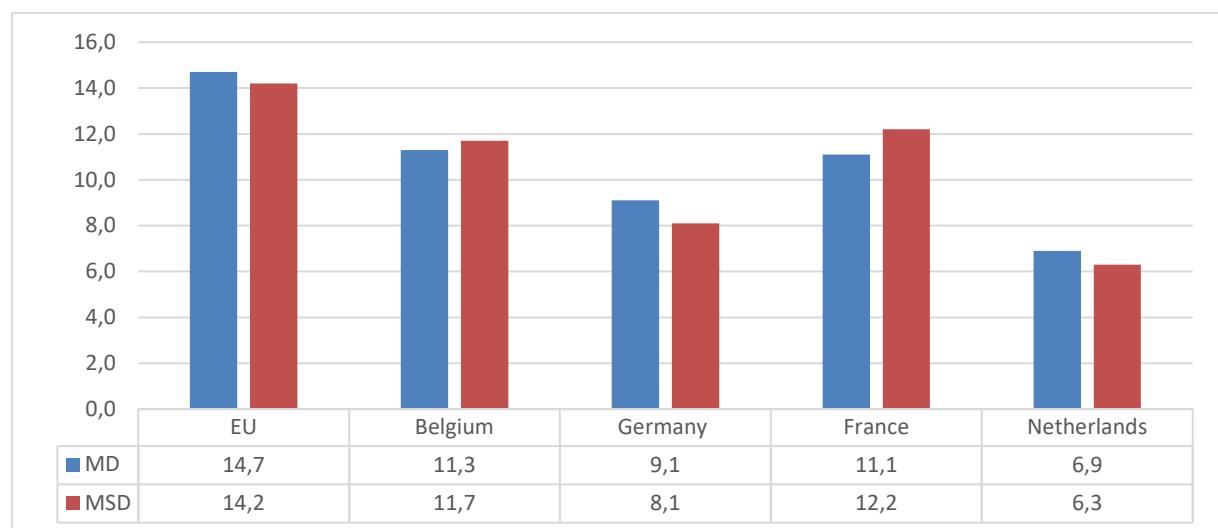
remain limited. Whilst being below the EU average, Belgium scores worse than its neighbouring countries, except for France.

**Figure 3.3.1ter. Comparison of the standard MD and new MSD for Belgium**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure 3.3.1quater. Comparison of the standard MD and new MSD, neighbouring countries and EU28, 2017**



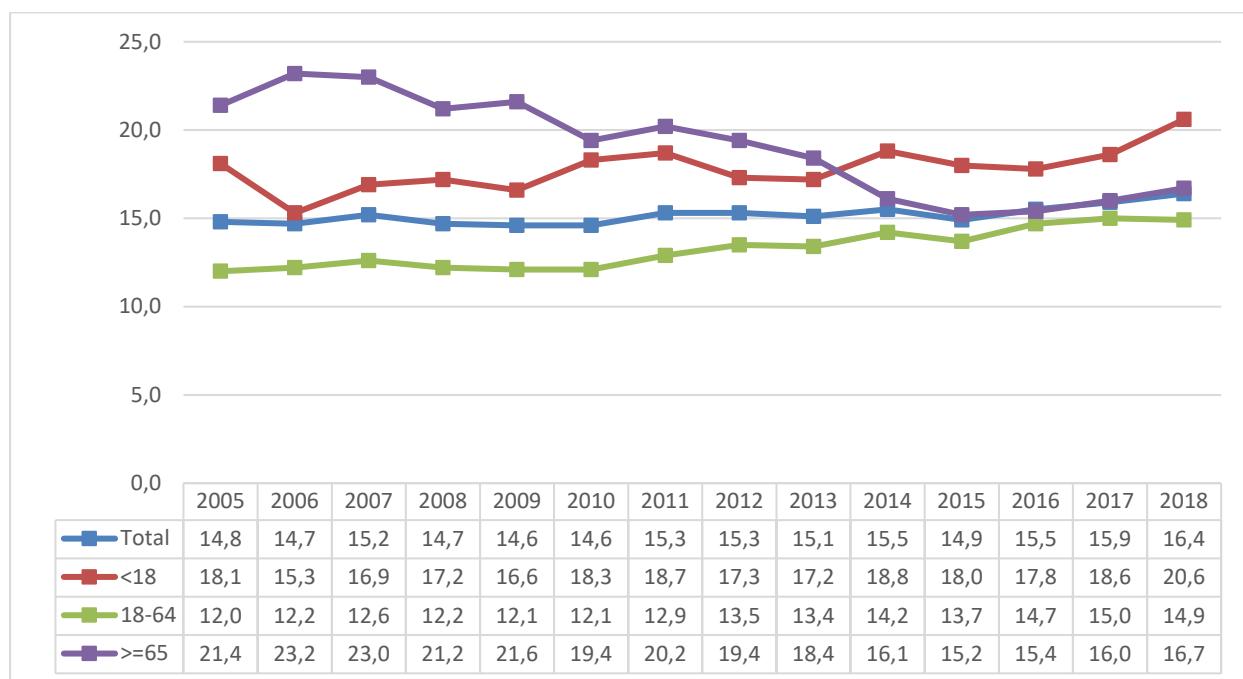
Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

### 3.3.2. Differences by age group

Trends in the at-risk-of-poverty rate are analysed here for three broad age categories: children (0-18), the population at active age (18-64) and the elderly (65+) (see [figure 3.3.2](#)).

As already pointed out in previous reporting, in a longer term perspective the results show an opposite trend for the elderly and the active age population. The poverty risk has significantly decreased for the elderly over the last 15 years, while it has been increasing for the active age population since 2010. The most recent data-points show again some increase for the elderly, in line with the evolution for the whole population. For the active age population there was no further increase over the last two years. For children there were some fluctuations without a clear up- or downward trend. The last figures however lead to the conclusion of an upward trend over the longer period. The most recent 2018 figures show the highest poverty percentage for children (20.6%) over the whole observation period.

**Figure 3.3.2. Evolution At-risk-of-poverty in percentage by age group (in %)**

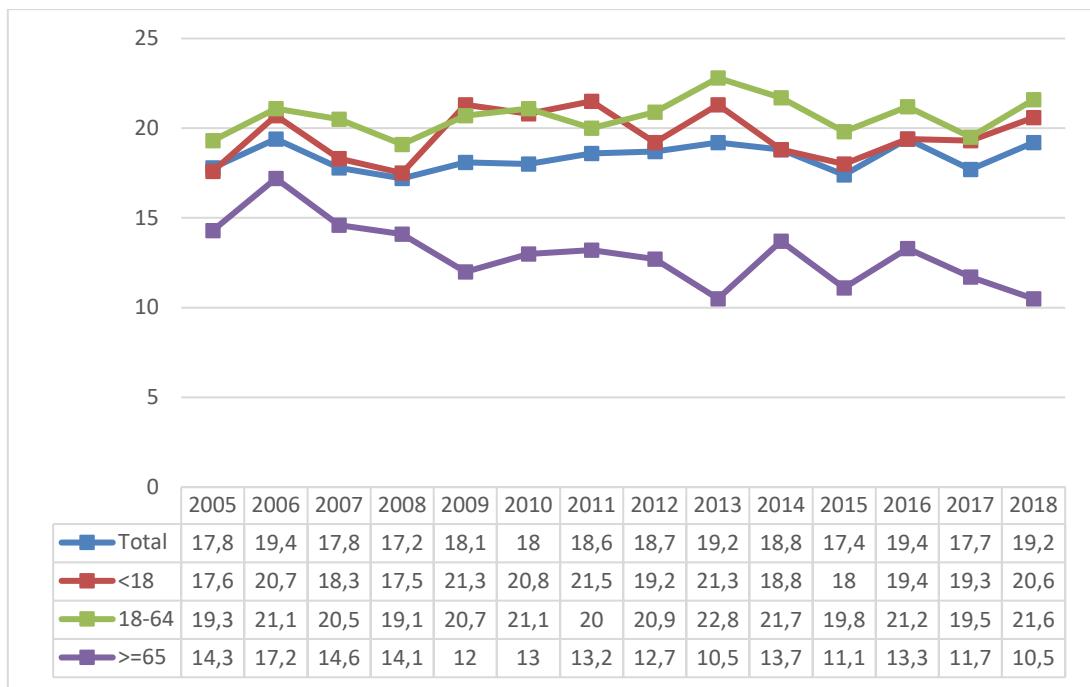


Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

The evolution of the median at-risk-of-poverty gap<sup>17</sup> ([figure 3.3.2bis](#)), which indicates how far people at-risk-of-poverty are below the poverty line, shows, on the one hand, that this gap is lower for the elderly than for other age groups, and on the other hand, that this gap has globally dropped during the whole period for the elderly, while it remained rather stable for the other age-groups.

<sup>17</sup> The difference between the median income of persons having an income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold and the at-risk-of-poverty threshold as a percentage of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold.

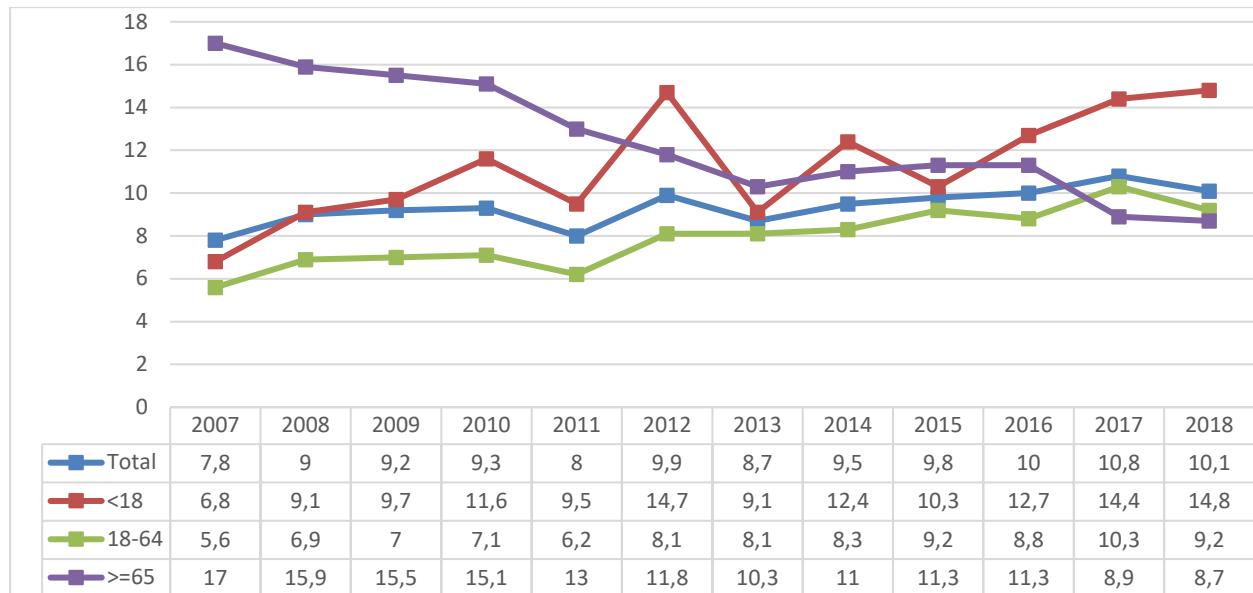
**Figure 3.3.2bis. Relative median poverty risk gap, total and by age, Belgium (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

Whereas the AROP rate assesses the share of people living below the poverty threshold at one moment in time, the persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate indicator shows the percentage of persons that are at-risk-of-poverty in the most recent year for which data are available and in at least 2 of the 3 preceding years. In [figure 3.3.2ter](#), we see that this percentage of persons with a persistent poverty risk was 10,1% in 2018 for the total population. As in the case of the general AROP-rate, the persistent poverty rate clearly dropped for the elderly over the entire period while the trend is upward for the other age categories. But, contrary to the general AROP rate, the persistent poverty rate didn't increase during the last three years for the elderly and the active age group. It did however increase further for children, reaching its highest level since 2012.

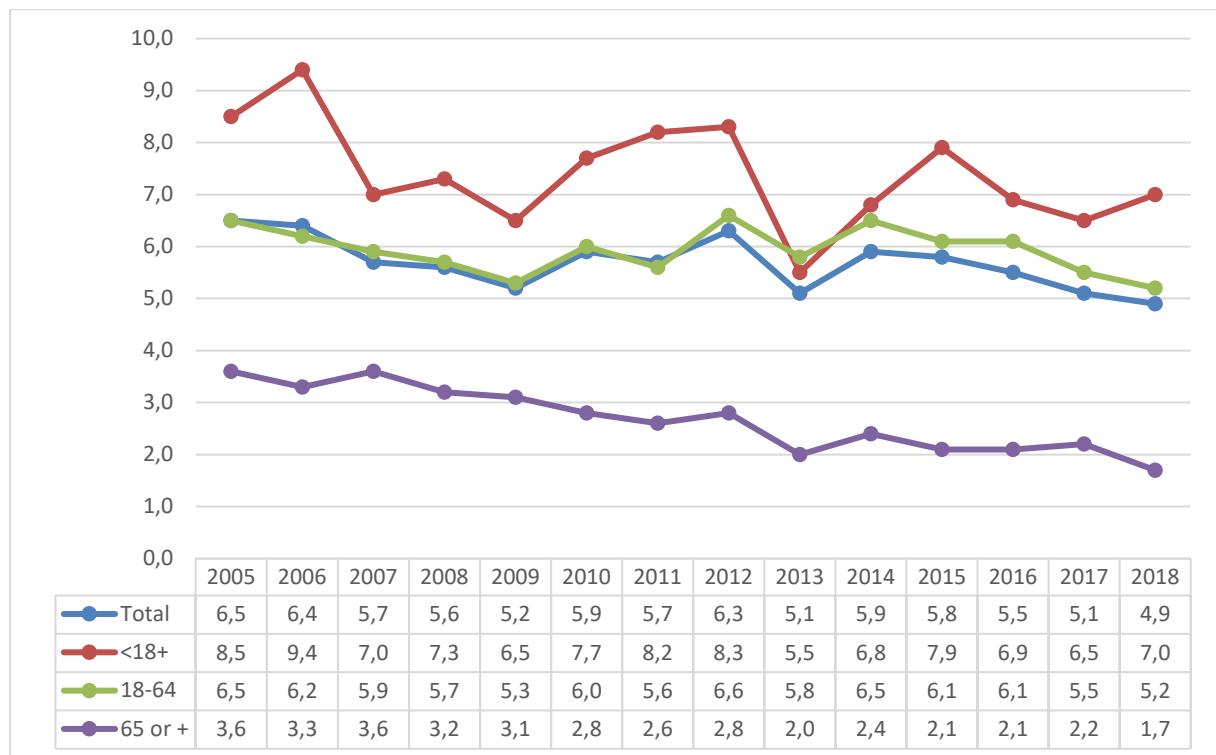
**Figure 3.3.2ter. Persistent poverty rate, total and by age, Belgium (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

When we break the evolution of the SMD down by age, we also see similar divergences on a long term perspective: a decline of the SMD rate for the elderly and a more stable evolution for the two other age categories. On the short term, it's clear the decrease of the SMD rate in the active age group causes the global decrease of this indicator for the last 3 to 4 years (see [figure 3.3.2quater](#)).

**Figure 3.3.2.quater. SMD total and by age, Belgium (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

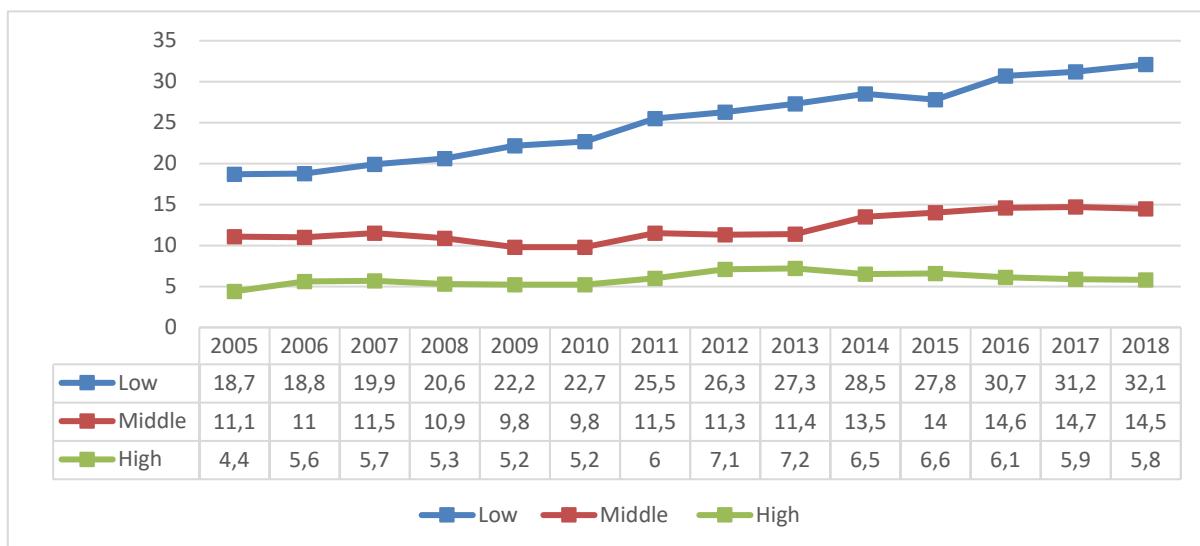
### 3.3.3. Differences by level of education

When the evolution of the at-risk-of-poverty rate (AROP) for the active age population is broken down by educational level, divergences are much more outspoken.

In [figure 3.2.2ter](#), we see that the poverty rates for persons with a low educational attainment<sup>18</sup> quasi continuously (with an exception in 2015) increased from 2005 (18.7%) to 2018 ( 32.1%).

The difference in poverty rates between persons with a low and a high educational attainment increased from 14 pp. in 2005 to 26 pp. in 2018, pointing to a growing divide within the population at active age.

**Figure 3.3.3. At-risk-of-poverty rate by level of education, (18-64) Belgium (in %)**

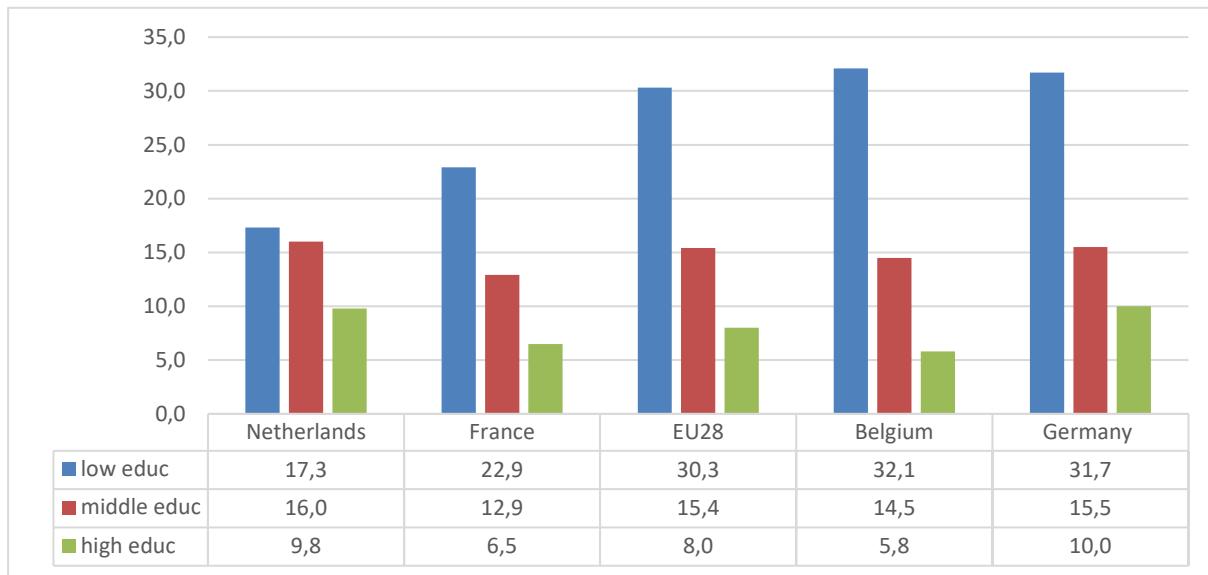


Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

In a comparative perspective, as illustrated in [figure 3.3.3bis](#), the divergences between the different educational levels are more important in Belgium than in some neighbouring countries such as France and the Netherlands.

<sup>18</sup> It's important to note that assessing the evolution of the poverty risk by educational level requires some caution due to significant methodological issues that have occurred in the Belgian's EU-SILC Survey questions used to measure the educational level of the respondents. More explanation on this is given in annex 3 of the 2018 report .

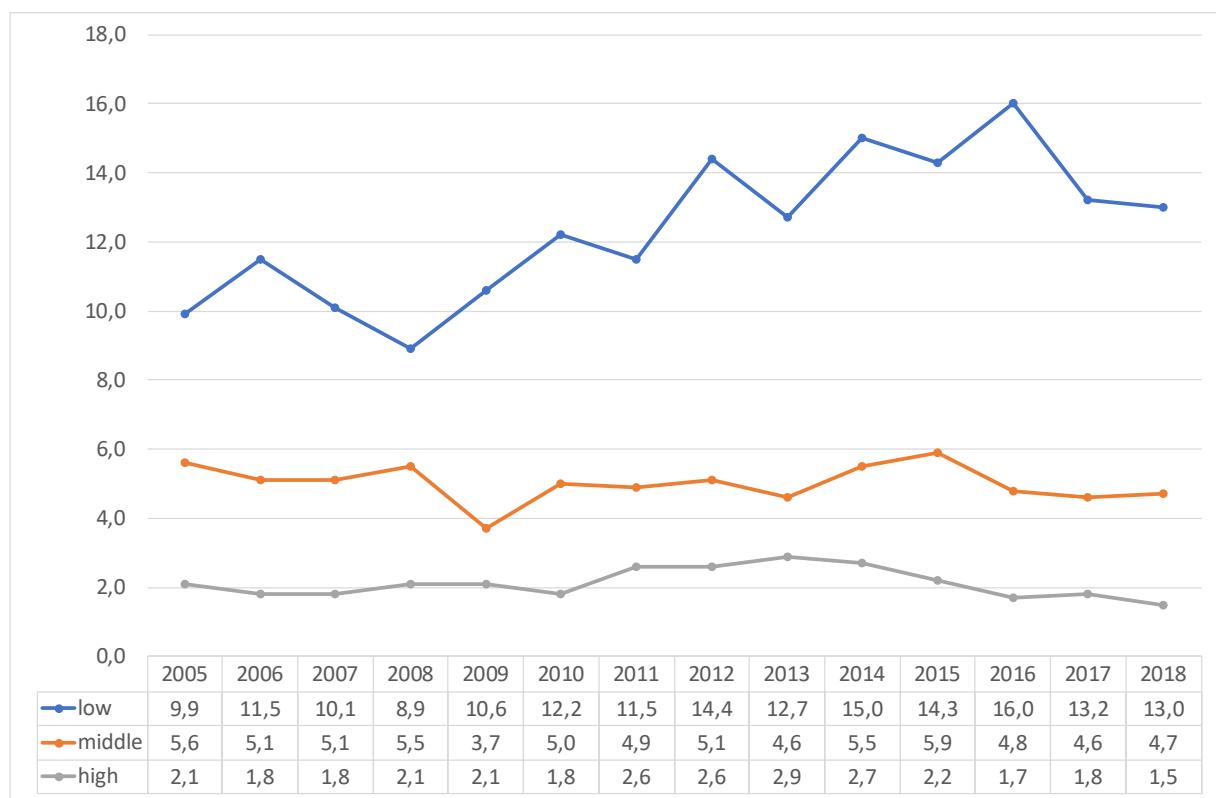
**Figure 3.3.3bis. At-risk-of-poverty rate by level of education, Belgium and its neighbouring countries, 2018 (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium. Note : The percentages for EU28 are estimates.

The evolution of the severe material deprivation rate by educational level (Figure 3.3.3ter) is similar to the evolution of the at-risk-of-poverty rate. Again, a sharp increase of the SMD rate can be observed for persons with a low educational attainment level, while the level has remained rather stable for the other educational groups. The rate for those with a low level does however not further increase in the two most recent years (2016 – 2018).

**Figure 3.3.3ter. Severe Material Deprivation rate by level of education, active age population (18-64), (in %)**

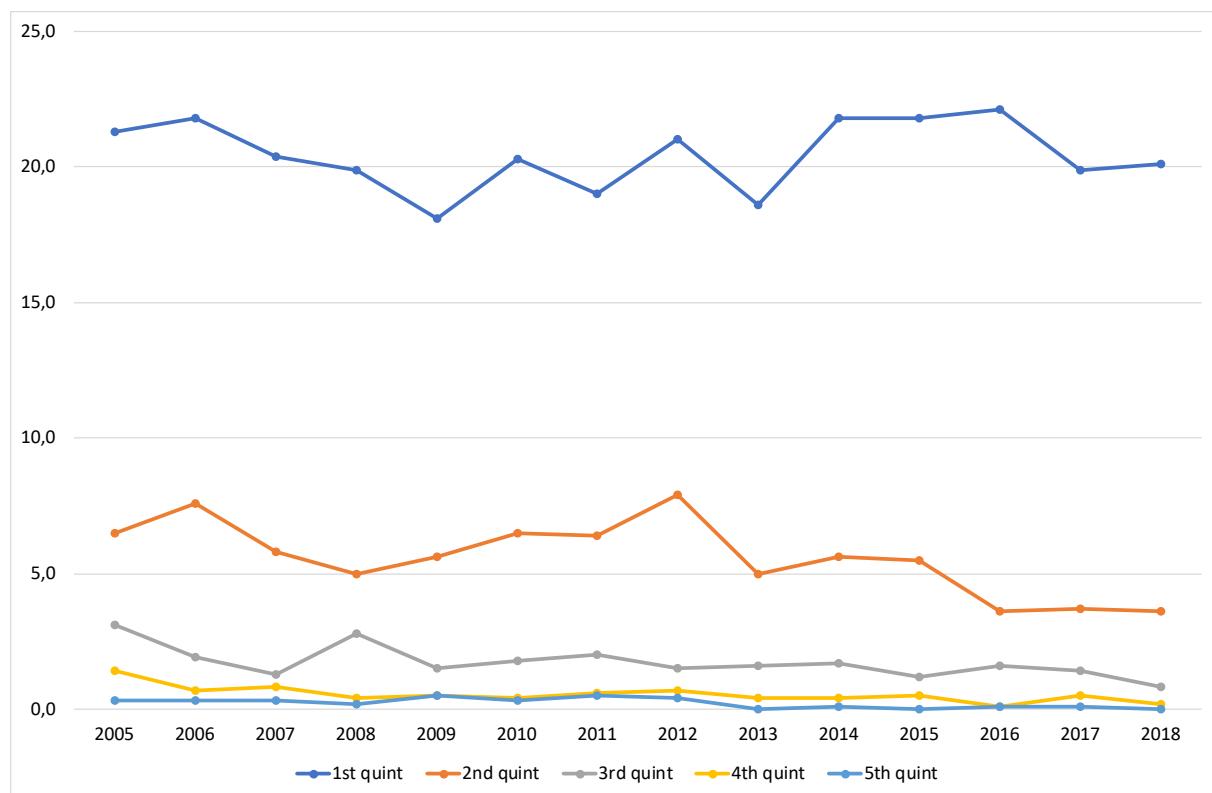


Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

### 3.3.4 Severe material deprivation and poverty risk

Material deprivation and income poverty can both be considered as measures of poverty, while the attachment to the labour market as measured by the (quasi-)jobless households indicator could be considered as a driver of the former or as a measure of social exclusion, the labour market being an important channel for social inclusion. In this regard, the somewhat divergent evolution of the SMD and AROP indicators may seem to lead to contradictory conclusions on the evolution of poverty. However, looking at the evolution of SMD by income level shows that there is in fact no contradiction. The decrease of the SMD seems to be mainly situated in the second income quintile and to a lesser extend in the higher income quintiles, while for the lowest income quintile the SMD rate remained stable (and much higher than for the other quintiles). Hence, it is not the case that the position of the lowest incomes has improved on other aspects than income, but rather the SMD confirms the lack of upward improvement for this group (Figure 3.4.4.).

**Figure 3.3.4. : Severe Material Deprivation rate by income quintile, Belgium, %**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

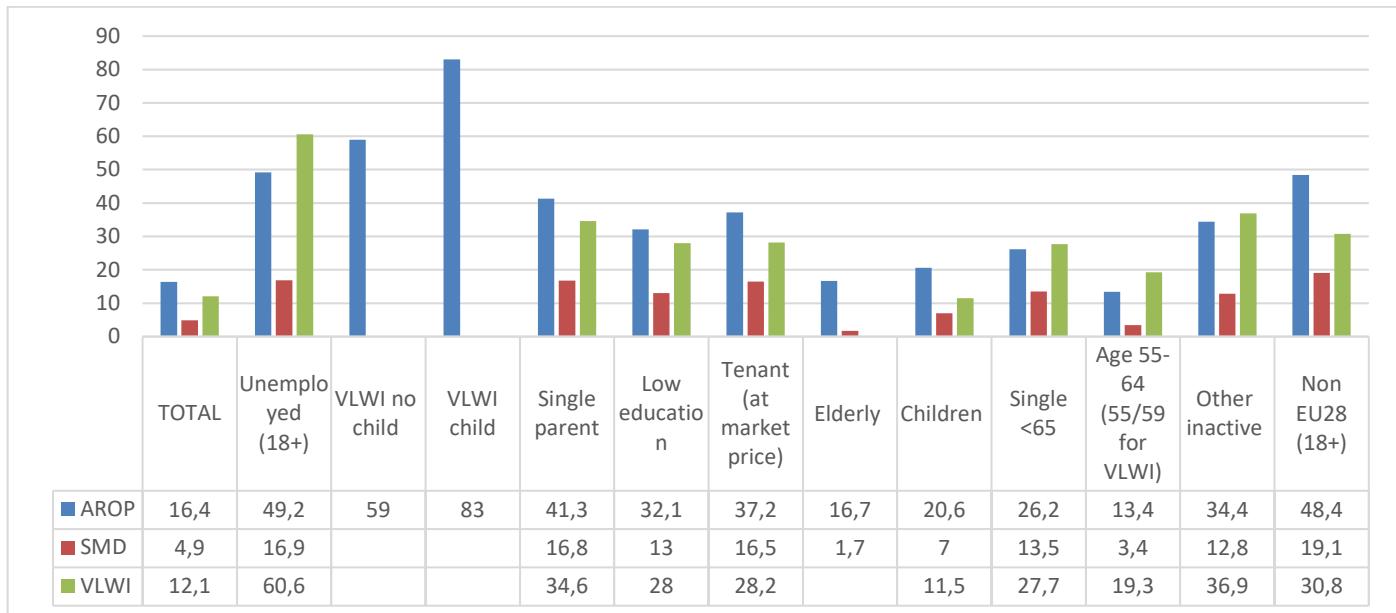
### 3.3.5. Other high risk categories

Figure 3.3.5. shows the risk of poverty or social exclusion for a number of other population categories.

Some of these categories (elderly, low educated) have already been discussed earlier or will be discussed later in this report (tenants, non-EU28, VLWI with and without children). These categories and others, such as the unemployed and single parents, are characterised by high scores for all or at least one of the three indicators.

The categories with the highest risk of poverty or social exclusion are the following: persons living in households with very low work intensity, especially those with children, and persons with a non-EU28 nationality.

**Figure 3.3.5. Incidence of poverty or social exclusion by high risk and policy relevant social categories, Belgium, 2018**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

### 3.3.6. Regional differences

Extensive analysis and monitoring on the evolution of the social situation is undertaken by the Regional Authorities.<sup>19</sup>

In annex 4, we show some regional figures on the basic indicators relating to poverty and social exclusion. In addition, some key shifts regarding labour market integration are also given.

Finally, we recall that for the Regions, as mentioned in the introduction, as indicators are often calculated on the basis of smaller populations, the error rate is higher. Table A4.5. gives an overview of confidence intervals in 2018 for key indicators on the national and regional level.

When looking at these figures, we can conclude that there are important differences in levels between the regions, but over the last years the indicators pointed to similar trends and challenges. The most recent evolution (2016 – 2018) however, seems to point to a more divergent evolution between the regions, with Wallonia showing some negative developments, while Flanders remains stable or slightly improves.

19 Cf. Statistiek Vlaanderen ; Brussels Instituut voor Statistiek & Analyse (BISA) / Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d'Analyse (IBSA); Institut Wallon de l'Evaluation de la Prospective et de la Statistique (IWEPS).

## **4 | Follow-up of the policy priorities in the context of the National Reform Programme**

### **4.1 Social Protection**

In this section, data are presented on social protection from three different perspectives : the number of beneficiaries, expenditures and the adequacy of social protection.

#### **4.1.1. Evolution of beneficiaries**

This section starts with some significant developments concerning the number of working-age beneficiaries of a replacement income. The number of people benefiting from an unemployment allowance has decreased during the previous years. This has been especially the case since 2015, when the number of full time unemployed with an unemployment allowance dropped significantly. The Unemployment Administration (NEO)<sup>20</sup> stresses three reasons for this decrease. The first reason is the moderate economic growth. Secondly, there is a demographic effect: the labour force and the working age population increased to a lesser extent than in previous years, while at the same time there were more people retiring. Finally, there is the effect of policy reforms (and especially the end of ‘integration allowances’).

The number of persons with an invalidity allowance on the other hand increased steadily during the last decade, reaching more than 400.000 beneficiaries in 2018. This increase can be partially explained by demographic and labour market evolutions: an ageing population and the increased female labour market participation in combination with the increased pensionable age for woman. Furthermore there are increases in specific diseases that play a role, like musculoskeletal disorders and in particular mental disorders. In its report on the evolution of the number of beneficiaries, the Belgian Institute for Sickness and Invalidity Insurances (NIHDI)<sup>21</sup> points to possible work and work-life balance related determinants thereof.

The number of social assistance beneficiaries<sup>22</sup> also increased steadily over the last decade, with relatively strong increases since 2015 (see [figure 4.1.1.](#)). Next to cyclical effects, related to the business circle, the Federal administration for Social Integration points out a number of structural causes:

- The growing insecurity of vulnerable groups (low-skilled, lone parents, people with migrant background, ...)
- The increase in the number of people who combine social assistance with other means

---

<sup>20</sup> National Employment Office (ONEM in French, RVA in Flemish). Annual Report 2018 : <https://www.onem.be/fr/documentation/publications/rapports-annuels/rapport-annuel-2018>

<sup>21</sup> National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (INAMI in French, RIZIV in Flemish). Study on invalidity : [https://www.riziv.fgov.be/SiteCollectionDocuments/studie\\_du\\_verklarende\\_factoren\\_invaliditeit\\_2007\\_2016.pdf](https://www.riziv.fgov.be/SiteCollectionDocuments/studie_du_verklarende_factoren_invaliditeit_2007_2016.pdf)

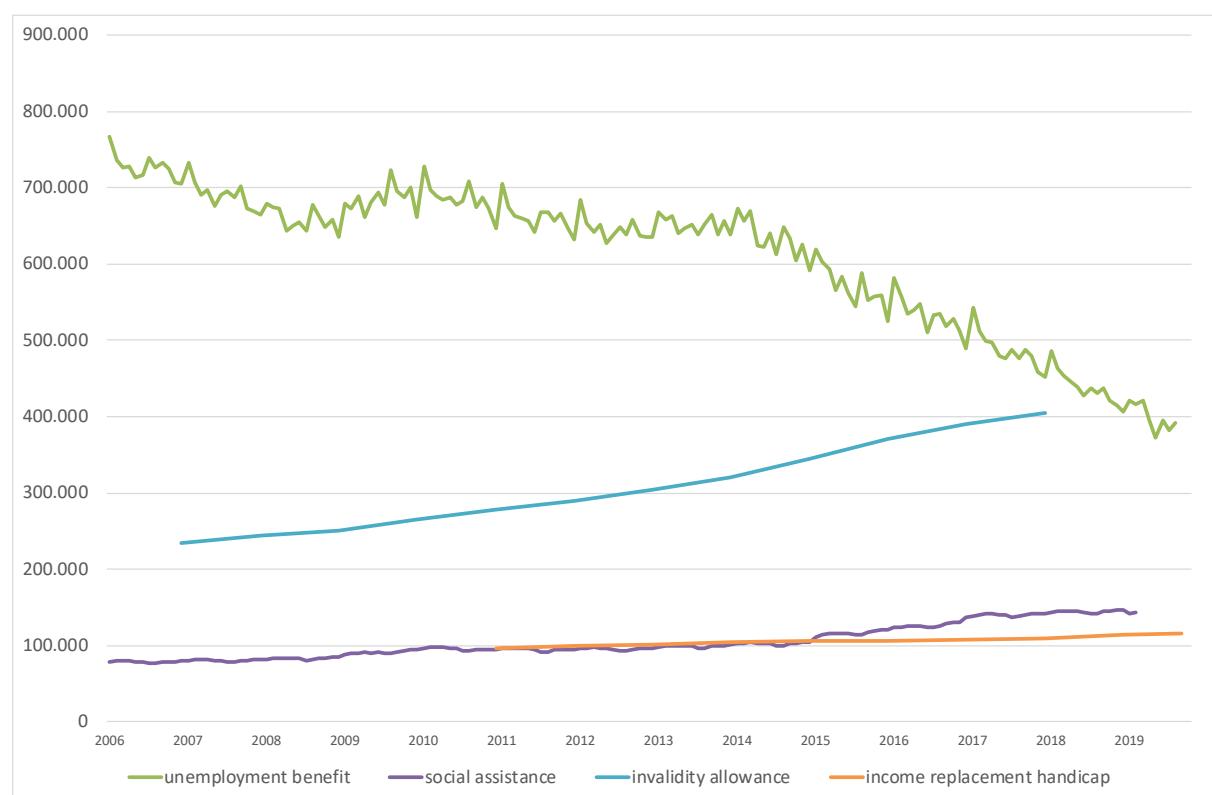
<sup>22</sup> Public Federal Service for Social Integration (SPP Intégration Sociale in French, POD Maatschappelijke Integratie in Flemish) : <https://www.mi-is.be/fr/etudes-publications-statistiques/releve-du-nombre-de-beneficiaires-dun-revenu-integration>

- The growing number of people with a right to social integration, due to their inclusion in the population register
- The increase in the number of people who make an appeal for social assistance following a sanction in the unemployment benefit
- Reforms in the unemployment insurance
- The transfer of persons from subsidiary protection in the context of the right on social assistance towards the right to social integration (December 1st 2016)
- Recognized refugees

Also the number of beneficiaries on an income replacement allowance for persons with a handicap slightly further increased.

Observing the contradictory trends in the different benefit types, it seems likely that there are, at least to some extent, interaction effects between the different benefit systems for the working age population and that underlying labour market related effects are at play.

**Figure 4.1.1. Trends in take up of selected benefits for working age population, Belgium (in number of persons)**



Note: (1) Unemployment recipients: monthly number ; (2) invalidity allowances, income replacement for persons with a handicap: number of recipients at December 31st;  
 (3) social assistance benefits (RMI): monthly number of recipients.

Source : National Employment Office (ONEM/RVA) ; National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance 5INAMI/RIZIV) ;  
 Public Federal Service for Social Integration (SPP IS / POD MII); FPS Social Security

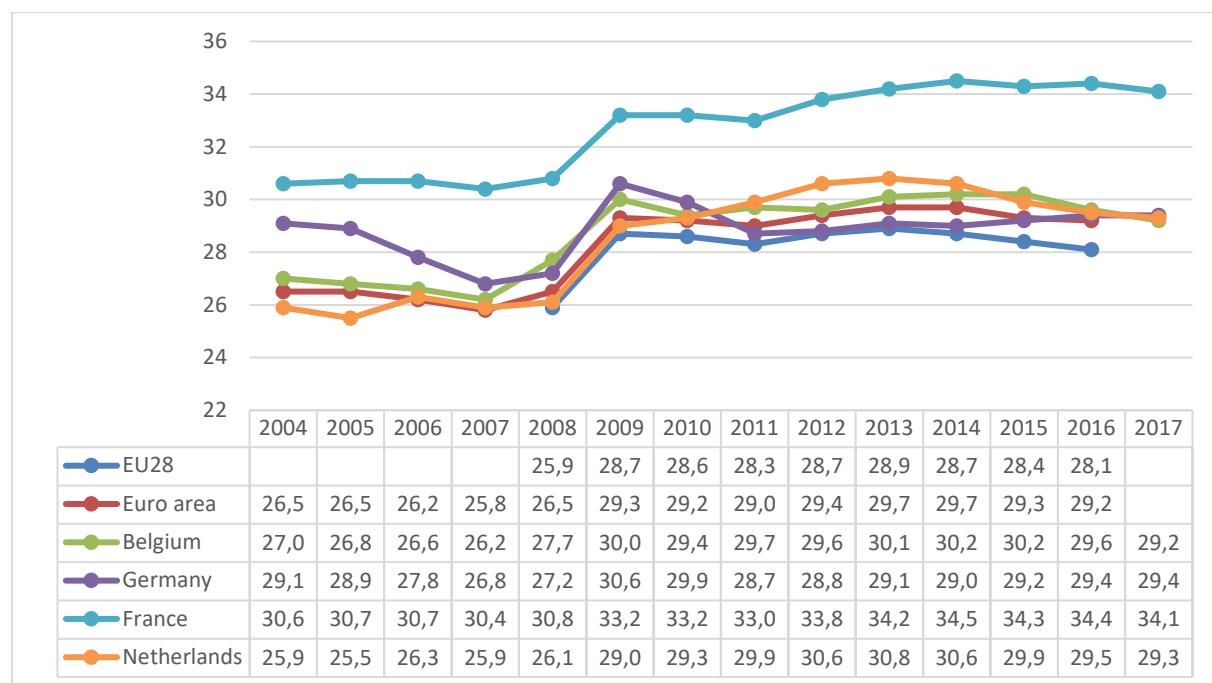
#### 4.1.2. Social benefit expenditure

In 2016, social benefit expenditure amounted in Belgium to 29.6% of the GDP, which is above the EU28-average (28.1%) and is slightly higher than the average for the Euro area (29.2%). The level is clearly below the level of France (34.3%), and more or less at the same level as the Netherlands and Germany.

The evolution of social benefit expenditure<sup>23</sup> remained in line with European and neighbouring countries' evolutions (figure 4.1.2.). Overall, there was a steep increase of the expenditure level in percentage of GDP in 2008-2009, due to the increase of the volume of benefits and the limited growth of the GDP. Between 2010 and 2014 a stabilisation or a continuously light increase (more marked in France and the Netherlands) was observed, with a particular situation in Germany where a significant reduction took place in 2011-2012 (but the level stays higher than before the crisis of 2007).

The most recent evolutions are somewhat divergent; with slight increases in Germany (and France) and slight decreases in Belgium, Netherlands and in the EU as a whole.

**Figure 4.1.2. Social benefits expenditure as % of GDP**



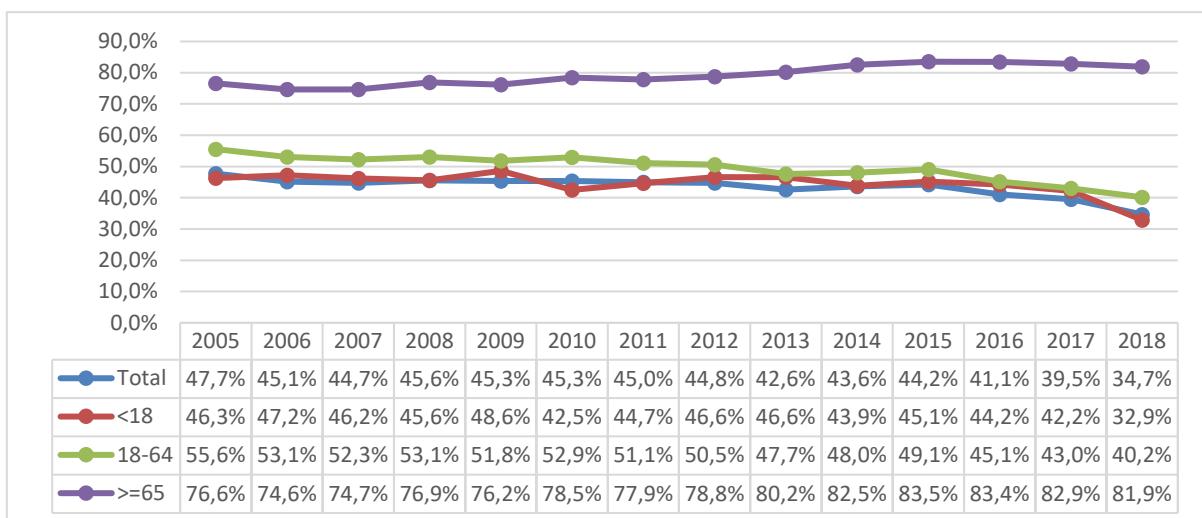
Source : ESSPROS, EUROSTAT.

23 Including administrative costs.

#### 4.1.3. Adequacy of social protection

The adequacy of social protection expenditure can be assessed in different ways. A first method is to look at the impact of social transfers on the level of poverty. This is done by calculating the level of poverty in the (hypothetical) case where social allowances would be deducted from the household income and comparing this hypothetical level with the real level<sup>24</sup>. In 2018, social benefits reduced the at-risk-of-poverty rate from 25.1% to 16.4%, i.e. a reduction by 34.7%. Between 2005 and 2016 the effectiveness of social transfers for the total population showed a slowly decreasing trend from 47.7% to 44.2%. This decreasing accelerated over the 3 last years, dropping to 34.7% in 2018. It is important to note that the impact of social transfers evolved differently for different age groups. Whereas the effectiveness of social protection decreased for the working age population (and to a lesser extend for children), it increased for the elderly (figure 4.1.3.).

**Figure 4.1.3. Effectiveness of social protection by age: % reduction of pre-transfer poverty rate due to social transfers, Belgium**



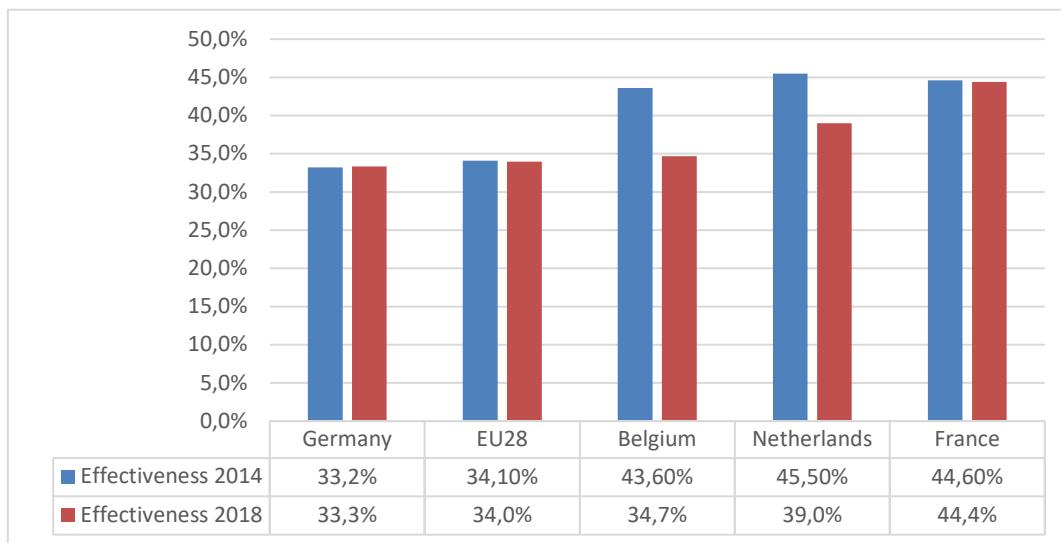
Note: social transfers without pensions for age categories '<18' and '18-64' and 'TOTAL', pensions included for age category '>64'

Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

In a comparative perspective, as illustrated in figure 4.1.3bis, the effectiveness is higher in Belgium than the EU average and in Germany, similar to the Netherlands and lower than in France. If we compare the evolution between 2014 and 2018, we see that the degree of effectiveness is stable in the EU, in Germany and in France, and that a decrease similar to the one in Belgium happened in the Netherlands (but less marked).

<sup>24</sup> Apart from securing a minimum income level, social benefits should also be evaluated on the extent to which they secure the living standard. However, the latter is more complex to measure. For pensions this aspect is covered via the 'theoretical replacement rates' (see section 5).

**Figure 4.1.3bis, Effectiveness of social protection by age : % reduction of pre-transfer poverty rate due to social transfers, Belgium and neighbours, 2014 & 2018**

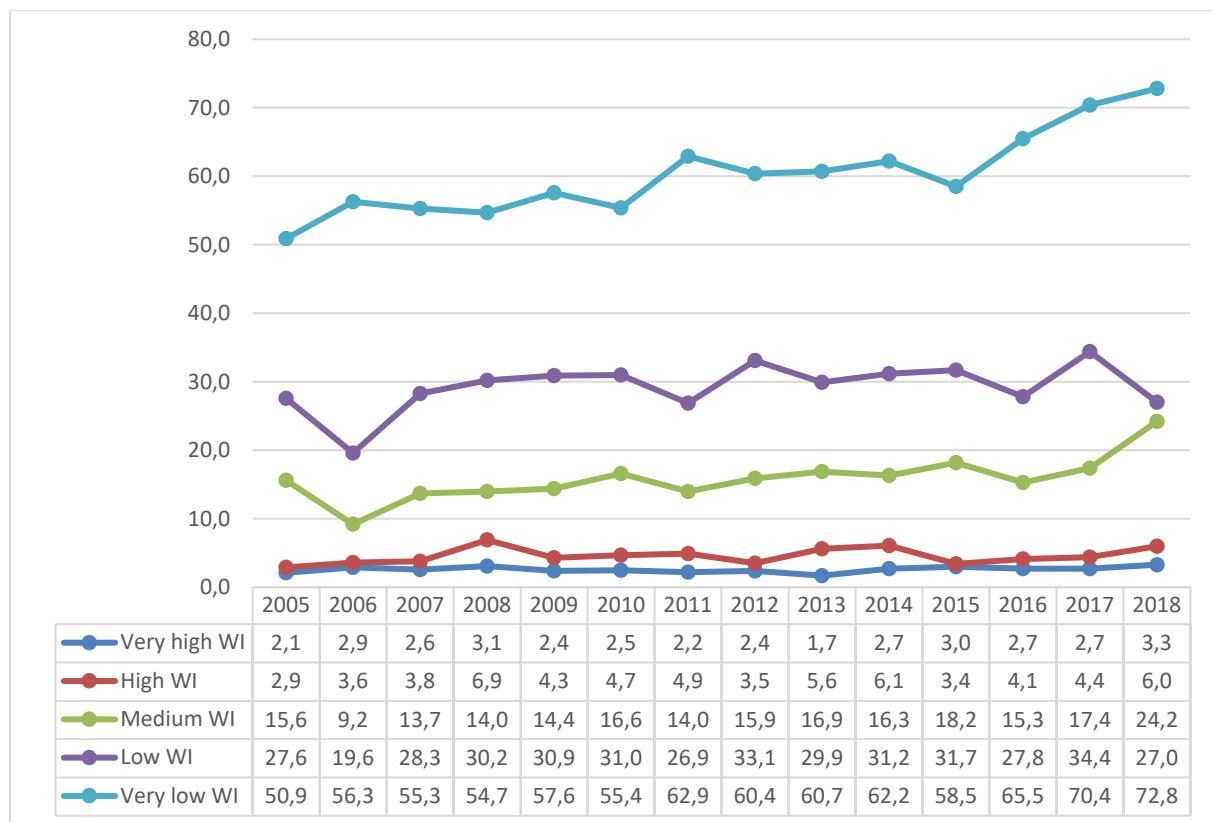


Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

The effectiveness of social protection can also be assessed by measuring the poverty risk of persons in households with very low work intensity. It can be assumed that most of these persons indeed do have to rely on social protection in order to be able to maintain a minimum standard of living.

First of all, it can be noted that there are very large differences in the AROP-rate along the levels of work intensity. In particular the very high poverty risk of people living in a household with a very low work-intensity is noteworthy. By contrast the poverty risk for persons in a high or very high work intensity household is very low. Secondly, one can observe that the poverty risk of persons in a very low work intensity household has been steadily increasing, from 50.9% in 2015 to 72.8% in 2018. Especially in the three last years (2015-2018) the increase was sharp. For the other levels of work-intensity, the evolution has been more stable or irregular, however with also an increase in the poverty risk for medium work-intensity households, in particular between 2016 and 2018. ([figure 4.1.3ter](#)).

**Figure 4.1.3ter. At-risk-of-poverty rate by work intensity of the household, Belgium (in%)**

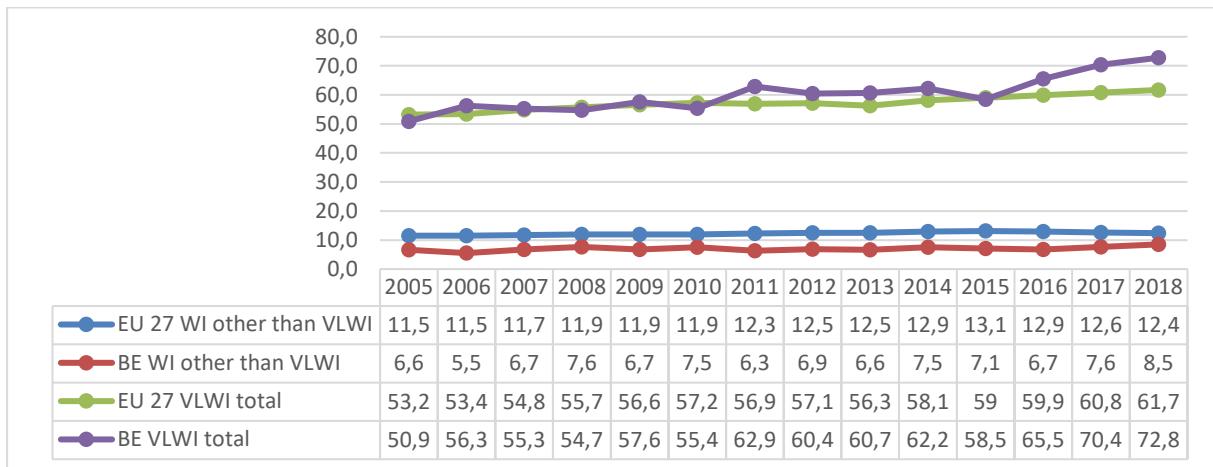


Note: Very high WI ]0.85 - 1] ; High WI ]0.55 - 0.85] ; Medium WI [0.45 - 0.55] ; Low WI ]0.2 - 0.45[ ; Very low WI [0 - 0.2]

Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

In a comparative perspective, as illustrated in [figure 4.1.3.quater](#), while the overall poverty risk of the Belgian population lies below the EU-average, the poverty risk of persons living in quasi-jobless households fluctuates around the EU-average and above, especially in the most recently available data. As will be illustrated in section 4.2 on child poverty, there is still an important difference in the poverty risk of households depending on social security with and without children.

**Figure 4.1.3.quater. At-risk-of-poverty rate by work intensity of the household, Belgium and EU average (in %)**



Note: VLWI = very low work intensity (0-0,2, below 20% of potential household work intensity) ; WI other than VLWI = work intensity (0,2-1: from 20 to 100% of the potential household work intensity)

Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

Yet another way of assessing the adequacy of social protection benefits is to compare benefits levels with an adequacy threshold. In this case we compare minimum benefit levels with the poverty threshold. From [table A.2.1](#) in [annex 2](#) it appears that social assistance benefits for the active age population ranges from 67% to 88% of the poverty threshold depending on the family type. Minimum unemployment benefits are at about the same level, ranging from 69% to 88% of the threshold. Minimum old age pensions and invalidity benefits are above the threshold for single persons, at 105 to 108%. For couples with or without children all minimum benefits are below the threshold.

It can be observed that the level of the benefits in relation to the threshold remained overall rather stable over time, indicating that minimum benefits followed general welfare developments.

One possible driver of the decreasing adequacy trend, notwithstanding minimum incomes kept up with welfare developments, is the increasing number of minimum income recipients. Since 2010 the number of minimum income recipients of active age has increased with 28%. According to Van Mechelen et al. (2016) this increase is the result of a variety of factors: the rising number of immigrants, structural unemployment, individualization and destabilization of families, and specific policies to restrict the access of social insurance benefits. Concerning the latter explanation, there are indeed indications that unemployment insurance reforms have resulted in an increased inflow in social assistance (RVA, 2017). However, also other factors could be at play, namely demographic factors that impact on benefit categories etc. These elements remain however tentative and an explanation of the decreasing adequacy trend would require a more thorough analysis falling beyond the scope of this report.

#### **4.1.4. Perceptions of social protection**

Next to the objective facts on the role and functioning of social protection benefits, there is growing recognition that it is also important to assess the populations' perceptions and attitudes towards the social protection system. In the 2018 'Risks that Matter' study of the OECD explores this aspect. In [box 2](#), some of the main findings of this study are presented, with a focus on the results for Belgium.

**Box 2 : OECD (2019), "Risks that Matter: Main Findings from the 2018 OECD Risks that Matter Survey"**

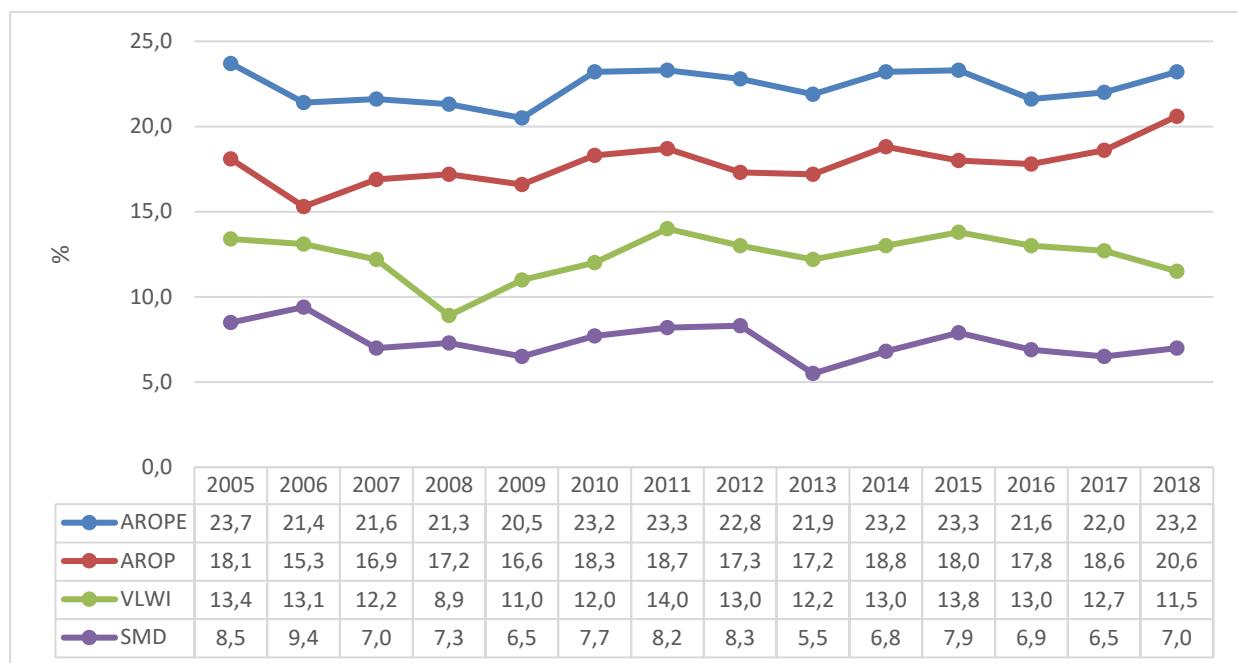
In the current context of growing distrust toward political élite, the OECD investigated the concerns of the population towards socio-economic risks and the appropriateness of state interventions. It reveals that the risk the most relevant is becoming ill or disabled (63% of Belgians list it in their top-three worries) followed by struggling to meet all expenses (42% of Belgians list it as one of their top-three risks). In the long run, the concern of the population shifts toward the risk of financial security in old age (64% list it as top-three).

These results are to some extend concordant with the second part of the survey: the opinion of the population toward social policies. Most Belgians believe that they are not being considered in the decision-making of social policies. Only 21% of the population think that "the government incorporates the views of people" in the policy process. Additionally, the population views their access to public benefits as limited. Only 29% expects easy access to public benefits if they need it. The discontent of the Belgian population on the access to social benefits is particularly evident in the part on pensions. 48% of the population does not believe that they will receive adequate income in old age from the government. A majority of Belgians (60%) is for an increase in support from the government and promotes a particular focus on pensions. 42% of Belgians agree that the government should spend more on pensions, even if it requires the taxes to be increased.

## 4.2 Child poverty

As pointed out in the section on the AROPE target-indicator, the number of children living in a situation of poverty or social exclusion shows limited up- and downward fluctuations over the recent period, with again some increases in the last two years. However, the AROP rate for children shows a clearer increase over the observation period, to reach its highest level in 2018, at 20,6%, as we already pointed out in section 3.3... More precisely, [figure 4.2.1](#) shows the evolution of all three dimensions of the Europe 2020 target for children.

**Figure 4.2.1. Poverty or social exclusion among children (0-17), Belgium (in %)**

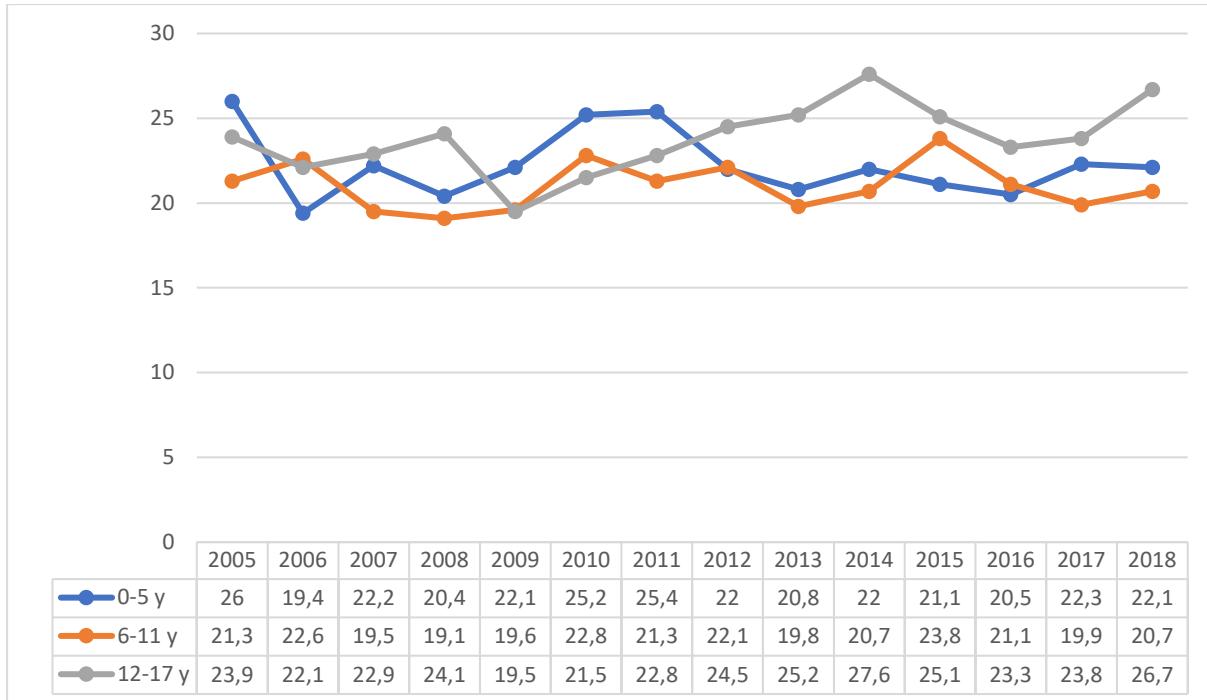


Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

[Figure 4.2.2.](#) shows that there are no significant differences between the two lowest age (0-5 and 6-11) categories. The poverty risk seems to be slightly higher for older children. <sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Due to relatively small sample sizes for breakdowns by child age groups, some caution is needed in the interpretation of the relative levels and the evolution.

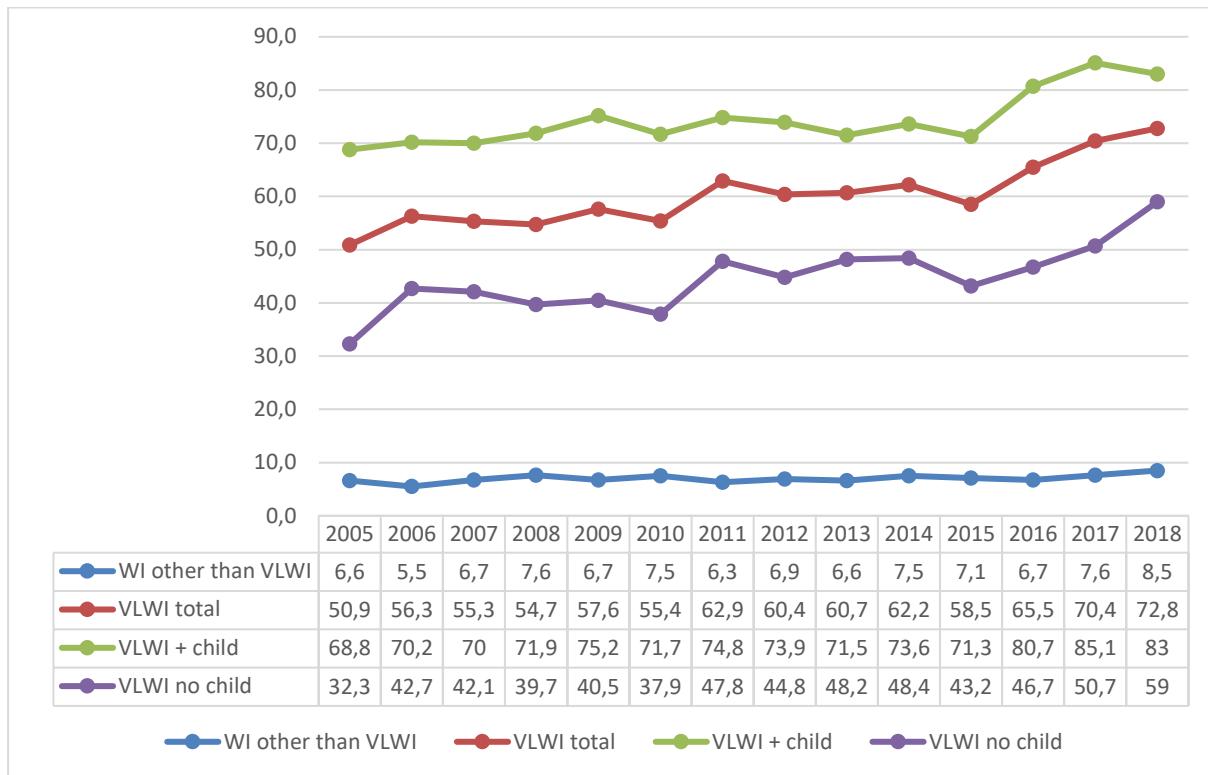
**Figure 4.2.2. Poverty or social exclusion of children by age, Belgium (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

Next we focus on children in very low work-intensity households. As was pointed out in [fig 4.1.4](#). in the previous section, low work intensity households have a very high poverty risk. The situation is however still somewhat different for quasi-jobless households with and without children (see [fig 4.2.2](#)). Both households with and without children face a high poverty risk and in both situations the risk has increased. However the poverty risk of households with children is still considerably higher than the one of households without children. In 2018 it reaches a very high 85%. Moreover, for households with children the poverty risk has been consistently higher than the EU figure for the same group and the gap with the EU has increased between 2015 and the most recent figures of 2018 (see [fig 4.2.2bis](#).). Although some caution is needed in drawing conclusions due to the relatively low sample sizes on which these findings are based, it seems justified to draw attention to the precariousness of households depending (quasi-) solely on social benefits, especially in households with children. In many cases the latter will be single parent households.

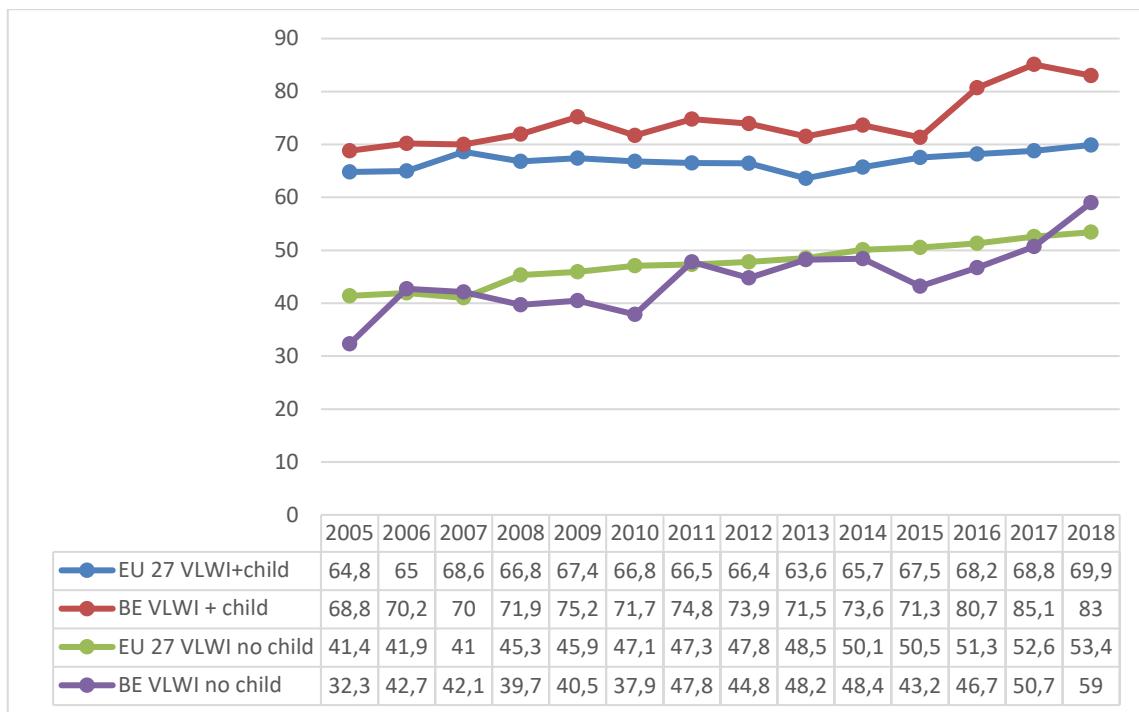
**Figure 4.2.3. At-risk-of-poverty rate by work intensity of the household, with and without children, Belgium**



Note : VLWI = very low work intensity (0-0,2, below 20% of potential household work intensity) ; WI other than VLWI = work intensity (0,2-1: from 20 to 100% of the potential household work intensity)

Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure 4.2.4. At-risk-of-poverty rate by work intensity of the household, with and without children, Belgium and EU (in %)**



Note : VLWI = very low work intensity (0-0.2, below 20% of potential household work intensity) ; WI other than VLWI = work intensity (0.2-1: from 20 to 100% of the potential household work intensity)

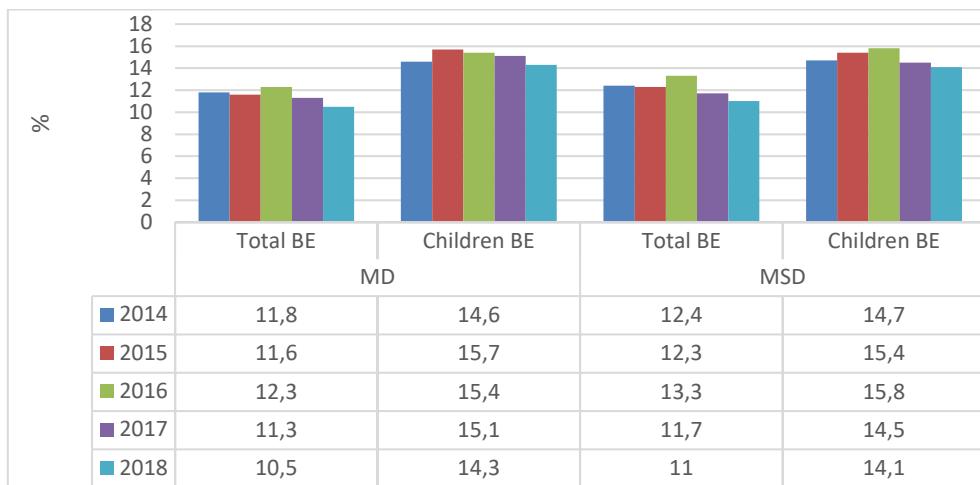
Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

In section 3.1.3, the new Material and Social Deprivation (MSD) indicator was presented. When applied to children, this new indicator presents the number/share of children living in a household that is materially and/or socially deprived. Next to this new MSD indicator, another new indicator has been adopted on EU level : the Child Deprivation Indicator. This Child Deprivation Indicator is, for the most part, based on child specific deprivation items and is defined as the percentage of children aged between 1 and 15 years who suffer from the enforced lack of at least three items out of 17 (unweighted) items<sup>26</sup>.

In figure 4.2.5., a first comparison is made between the "standard" material deprivation (MD) indicator and the new "material and social deprivation" (MSD) indicator for children. It can be observed that differences between the 'old' and the 'new' indicator are rather small. Furthermore, both for MD and MSD, the relative number of children living in households measured as being materially/materially and socially deprived is larger than for the Belgian population as a whole.

26 Described in last years' report (p. 46).

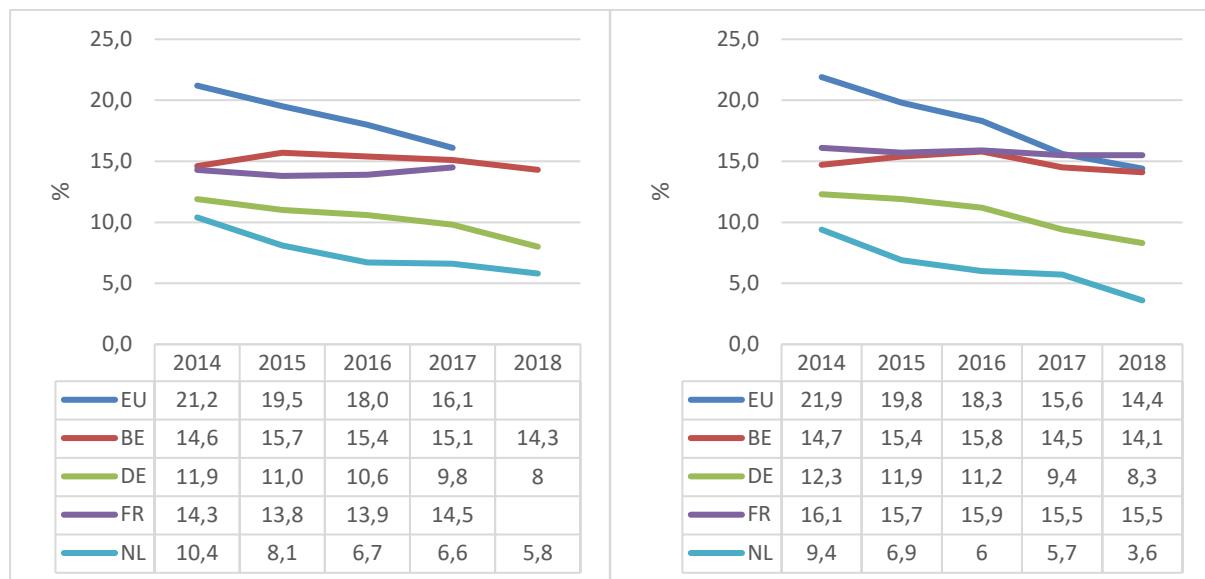
**Figure 4.2.5. Child deprivation : comparison between MD rate and MSD rate, total belgian population vs. children (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

In figure 4.2.6., a comparison of the MD and the MSD of children is made between Belgium, its neighbouring countries and the EU average. Overall levels and trends are quite similar. The figures show that the new MSD indicator for children is, most of the time, somewhat higher than the standard MD (except for Belgium and the Netherlands).

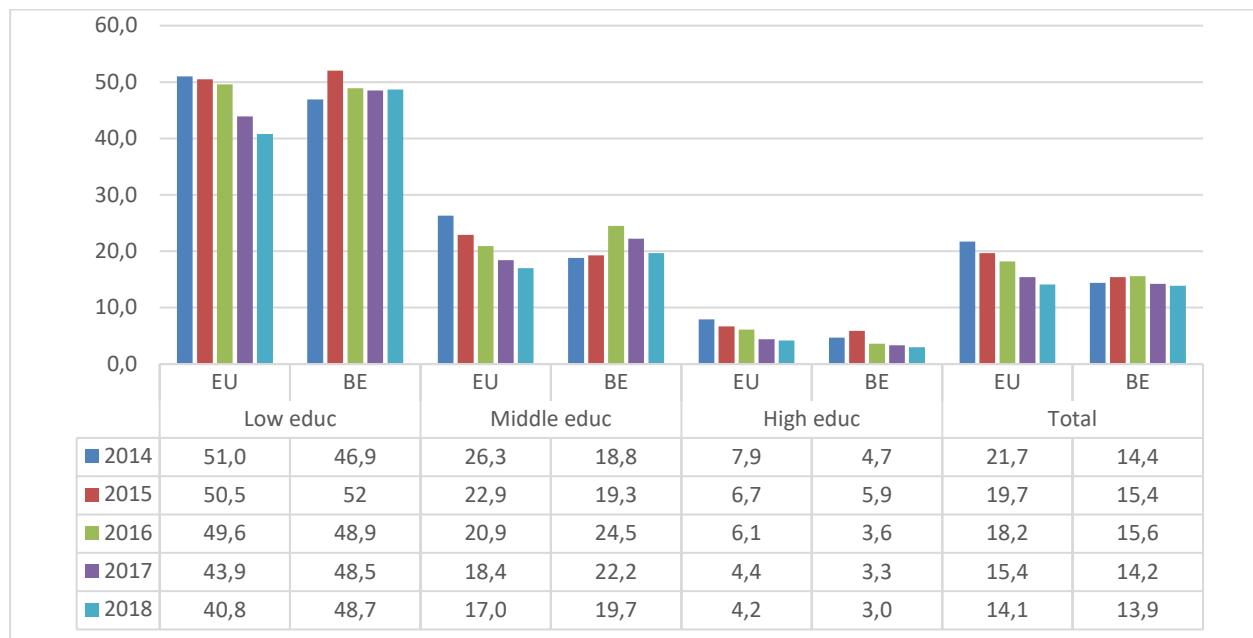
**Figure 4.2.6. Child deprivation : MD rate for children (left) vs. MSD rate for children (right), EU, Belgium, and its neighbours (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

Finally, figure 4.2.7. demonstrates that about fifty percent of the children being materially and socially deprived are those whose parents have a low educational attainment level.

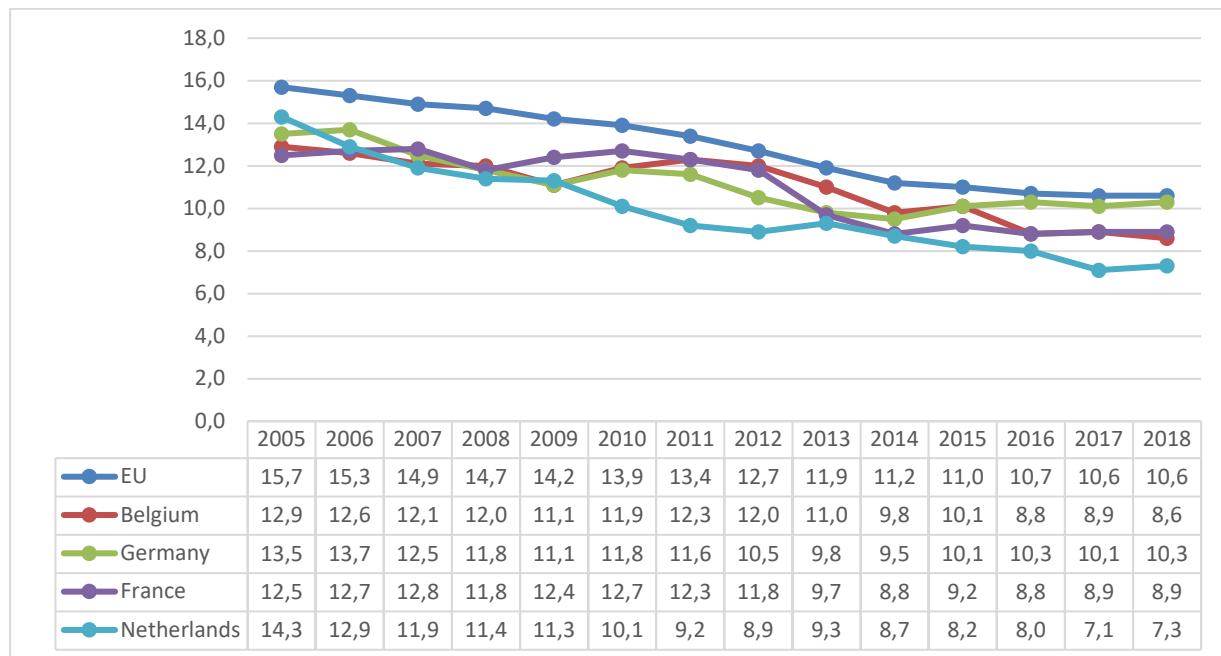
**Figure 4.2.7. Child deprivation : MSD rate for children by educational attainment of their parents, BE and EU (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

The percentage of early school leavers has decreased continuously (figure 4.2.8.). This indicator depicts the number of young people (aged 18-24) with a weak labour market position, but also sheds light on the performance of the educational system. Belgium scores better than the EU28 average.

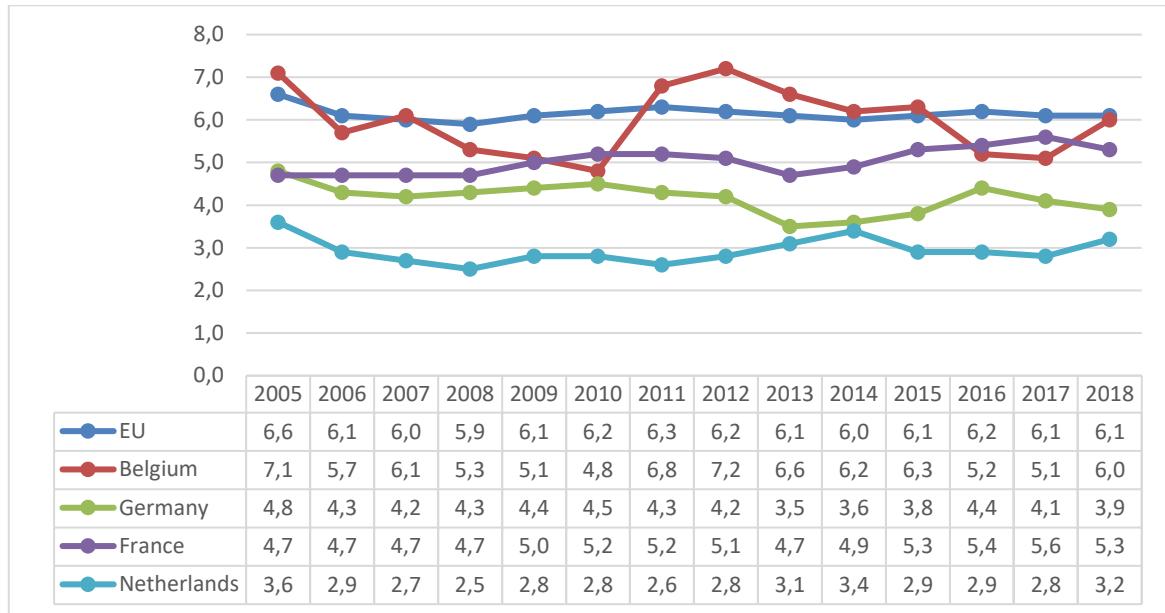
**Figure 4.2.8. Early school leavers (18-24), Belgium (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure 4.2.9.** shows the percentage of young people (18-24 years old) not in employment, education or training (NEET). This indicator is quite high in Belgium in comparison with the neighbouring countries.

**Figure 4.2.9. Young (15-24) NEET, Belgium (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

The most recent round of PISA, the OECD led international survey on the performance of educational systems, was already discussed in the 2017 monitoring report. We briefly repeat some of the main findings of PISA 2015 on social inclusion. The results of PISA 2018 will be released in December 2019.

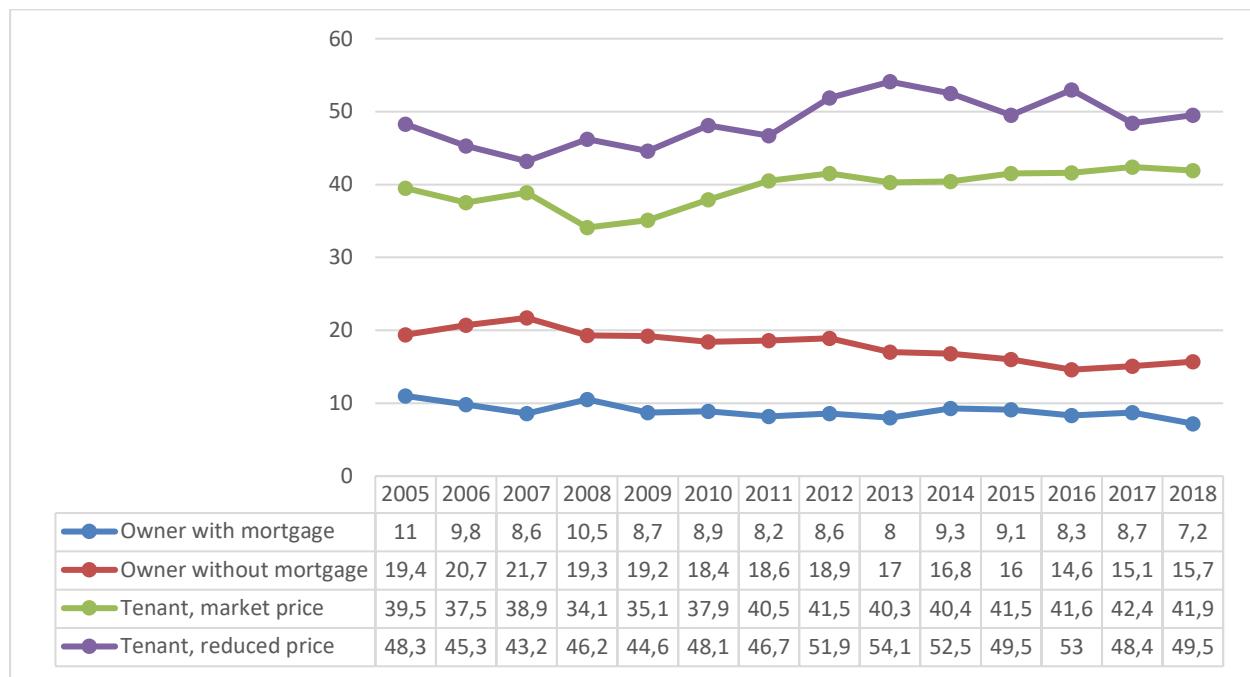
PISA 2015 focuses on science, mathematics, reading and financial literacy and confirms earlier findings. Belgium is one of the few countries that combines an above average general performance level of fifteen-year-olds with a high degree of social inequality. Moreover, Belgium is one of the weakest performers regarding pupils with a migrant background. Even after controlling for differences in the socio-economic profile, Belgium remains among the weakest (UGent, 2015a; 2015b). Similar findings are reported in the Education Diversity Barometer (Unia, 2018).

### 4.3 Housing

Earlier, it was indicated that the slight increase in the AROPE rate was mainly located among the working age population. A breakdown in the evolution regarding housing situation shows that the number of persons living in situation of poverty or social exclusion is not only higher among persons renting their home, but that the increase is especially observable in this category. For example, for tenants who rent at a reduced price (social housing), we observe an average higher level for the recent period 2012-2018 (around 50%) than for the previous period 2005-2011 (around 45%) with rather large annual variations. Among owners, with or without mortgage, the number of persons living in poverty

or social exclusion remains stable or even decreases for the owners without mortgage<sup>27</sup> ([figure 4.3.1](#)). As it is known that tenants have a weaker social profile than owners, the indicators point to the fact that poverty risks appeared to have increased in very specific population categories, where income poverty is combined with possible important expenditures..

**Figure 4.3.1. Risk of poverty or social exclusion by housing tenure, Belgium (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

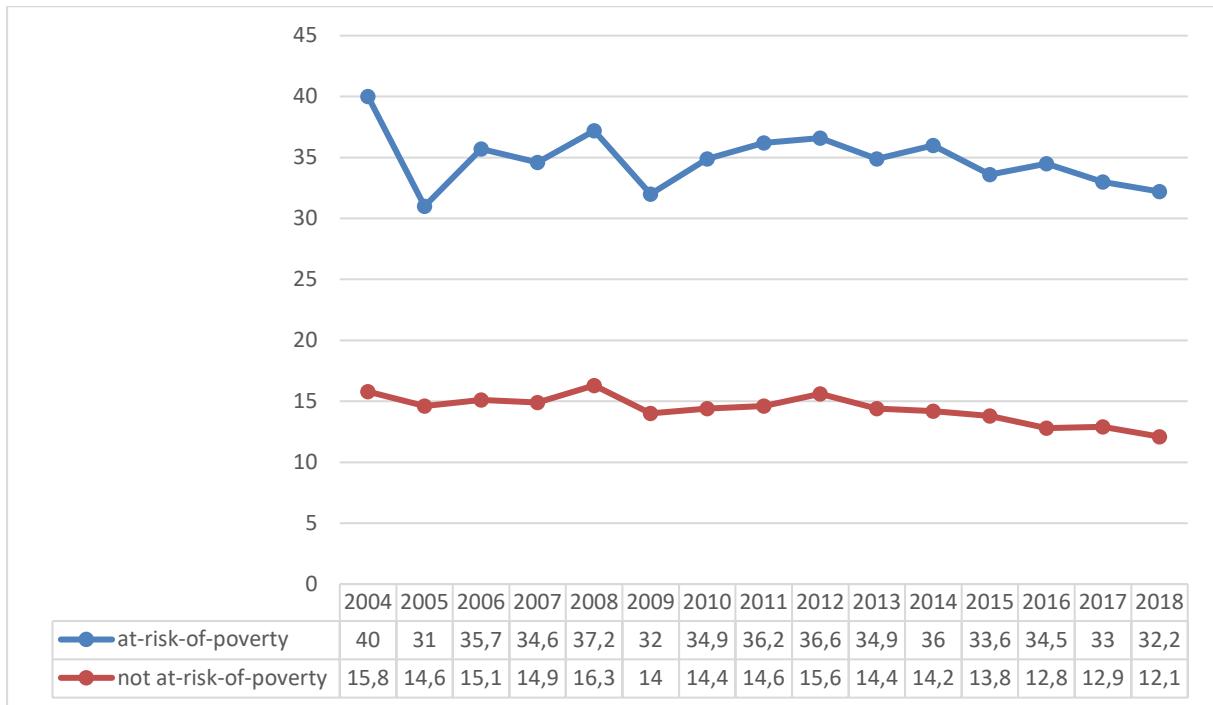
Furthermore, it is relevant to monitor the evolution of the share of housing costs in the household budget ([figure 4.3.2.](#)) by poverty status. For persons below the poverty threshold, this share remains relatively constant, around 35%, while it is at 13% for persons above the threshold, with a slightly decreasing trend since 2012.

The percentage of the population confronted with potentially problematic housing costs<sup>28</sup> is estimated at 8.6% in 2018 ([figure 4.3.3.](#)). Broken down by age category, it can be observed that the percentage of elderly with potentially problematic housing costs is slightly higher than the percentage of the active age population (respectively 10% and 8,6%), but the difference is lower than on average in previous years. The percentage of children living in a household with potentially problematic housing costs is at 7.1%.

27 The higher risk of poverty or social exclusion for owners without mortgages compared to owners with mortgages is probably linked to the profile of these categories. Owners without mortgages are mostly elderly people with lower (pensions) incomes.

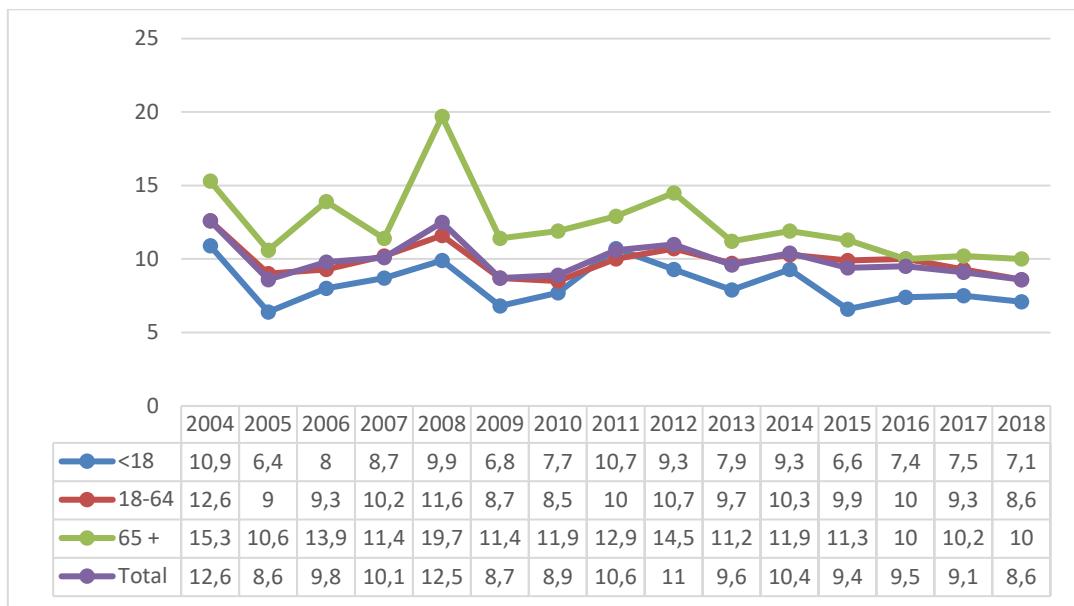
28 "Problematic housing costs": a situation in which the total housing costs (minus housing benefits) amount to 40% or more of the total disposable household income (minus housing benefits).

**Figure 4.3.2. Median housing cost burden by poverty status (in % of household disposable income), Belgium**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure 4.3.3. Housing cost overburden rate by age: % of persons with housing cost > 40% of disposable household income, Belgium**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

Two aspects of housing deserve specific attention because of their pertinence for social protection issues: ***social housing and homelessness***. For the first one, it is clear that the combination of (increasing) financial poverty and relatively high housing costs creates pressure on the living conditions of the people affected. In this context it is also relevant to note that the size of the social housing sector remains relatively low in Belgium. In Flanders the number of dwellings in the social housing sector increased to some extent, but it remained stable in Brussels and Wallonia. It is also relevant to note that the size of waiting lists is large in relation to the size of the social housing sector in the three regions (see [annex A.3.4.](#) for more details). For the second aspect, there is no systematic data-collection on the number of homeless people in Belgium. However, researchers are developing a new strategy to map homelessness, called the “MEHOBEL Project” ( see box 5, p.51, of the 2018 edition of this report).

As mentioned in the latter box homelessness is not limited to cities. However, big cities are clearly particularly concerned by this issue. For this reason the Brussels-Capital Region, through the Centre for support for help on homelessness (La Strada) has developed in 2008 an methodology for counting the homeless and persons in inadequate housing situations, based on FEANTSA’s ETHOS definitions. Five counts have been organized so far: in 2008, 2010, 2014, 2016 and 2018.

Based on the latest edition, from the 4,187 persons surveyed 51% was homeless (rough sleeping or in emergency accommodation), 22% was ‘without housing’ (support housing, transit housing, ...) and 25% was in ‘inadequate housing’. 759 persons were counted as rough sleepers, (night of 5 November 2018) against 707 in 2016; The study also finds a strong increase in the number of persons in emergency and crisis shelter, following an increase in the capacity regarding this type of support. For persons in other forms of housing support (Maisons d'accueil) the increase is less marked, mainly because the number of places has also remained stable.

#### 4.4 Active inclusion

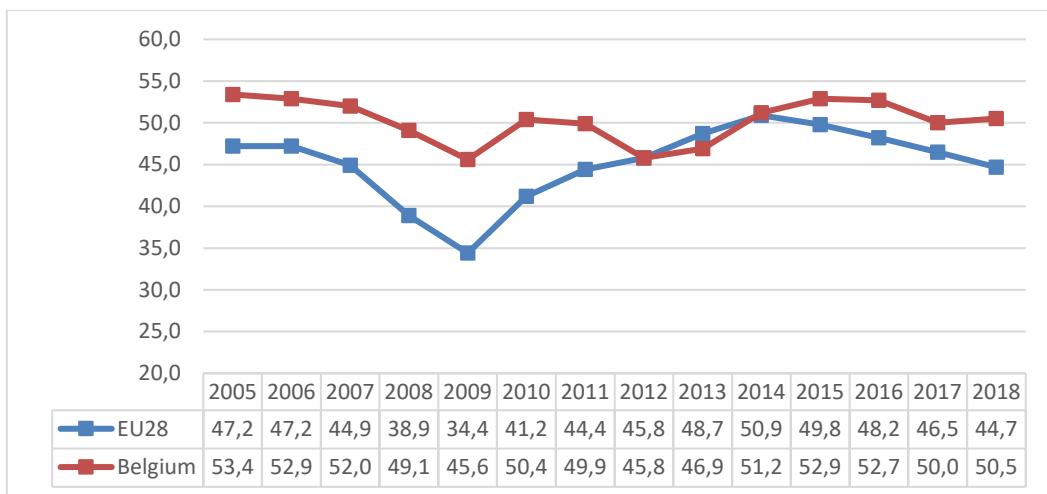
The active inclusion strategy has three components: an adequate minimum income, labour market inclusion and access to high-quality services.

In section 3.1.1. of this report it was shown that the overall employment rate has increased, specifically among older workers. Among people with a low educational attainment the employment rate remains low compared to EU levels and rather decreased than increased, especially among men. The share of (quasi-) jobless households dropped over the last years, in particular among people with a low educational attainment, but remains however one of the highest levels in the EU.

Here (and in section 4.5 for people with a migrant background) we focus further on some vulnerable categories.

Long-term unemployed are an example of such a vulnerable category. Although unemployment is globally quite low in Belgium (6% in 2018 as mentioned in table 3.1a versus 6,8% in the EU28), [figure 4.4.1.](#) shows that the long-term unemployment share (the share of the unemployed for at least 12 months in the total number of the unemployed) is around 50% in Belgium in 2017 and 2018. This is clearly above the EU average.

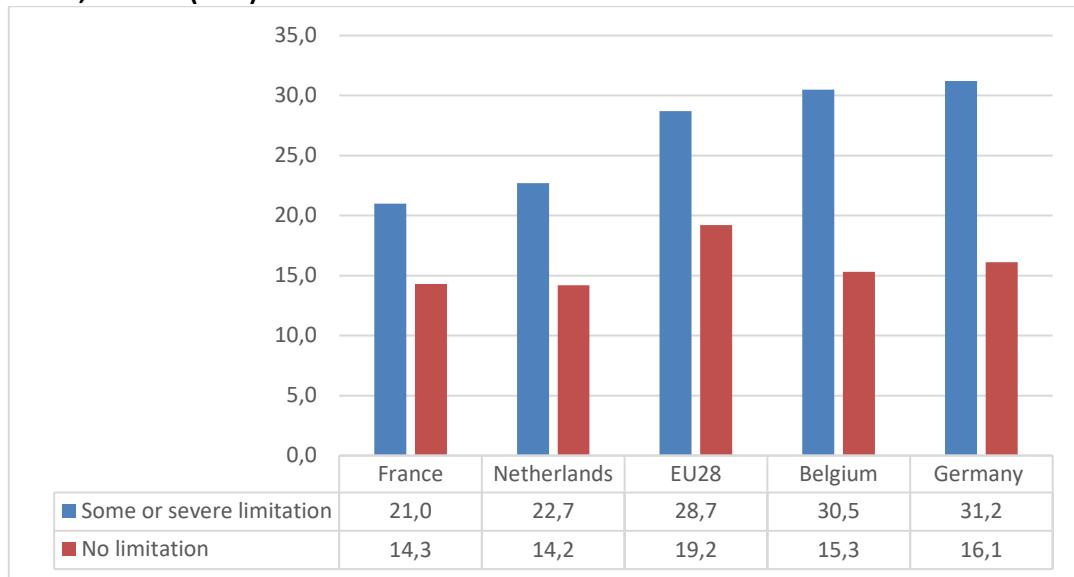
**Figure 4.4.1. Long-term unemployment share (20-64), BE and EU28, 2005-2018**



Source : LFS, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

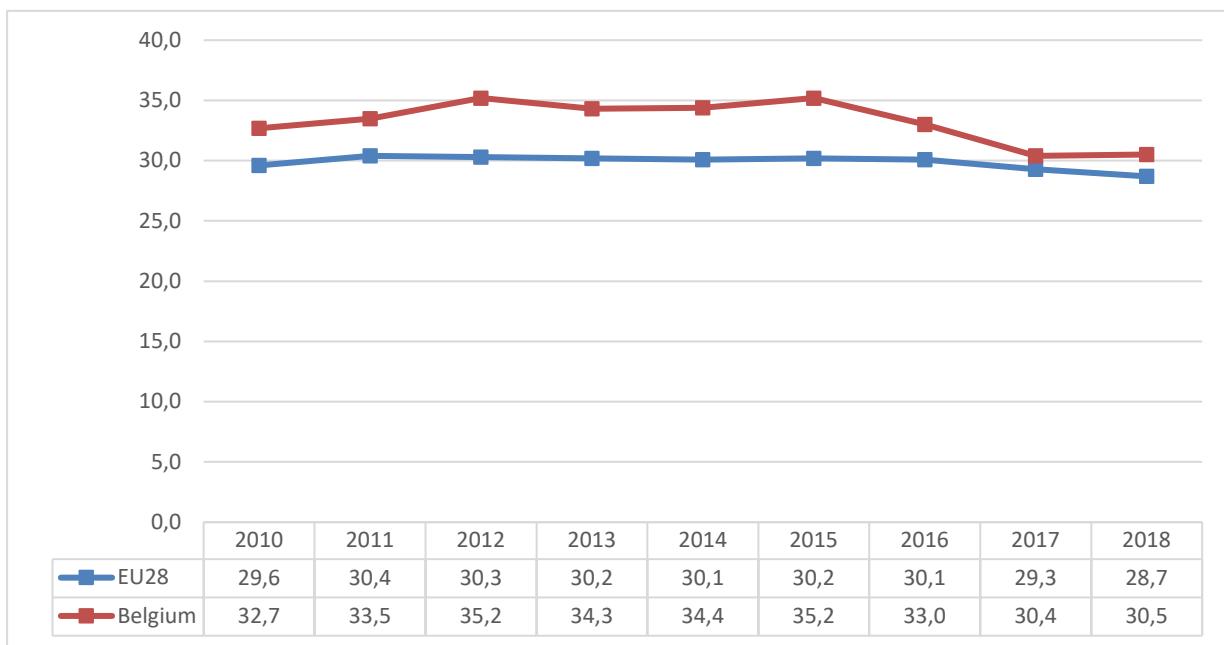
People with a disability are another vulnerable group. The rate of poverty or social exclusion for persons with some to severe limitations in daily activities is higher (30,5%) in Belgium than the EU28 figure (28,7%) (see [figure 4.4.2.](#)). As a result, Belgium is one of the EU countries where the gap between the risk of poverty or social exclusion for people with some to severe limitations and the risk of poverty or social exclusion for people with no limitations is among the largest (14,8%). However, the evolution has been slightly more positive in the last three years (see [figure 4.4.2bis.](#)).

**Figure 4.4.2. At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate for people (16y and above) with some to severe limitations in daily activities, compared with persons without disabilities, BE and its neighbours, in 2018 (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

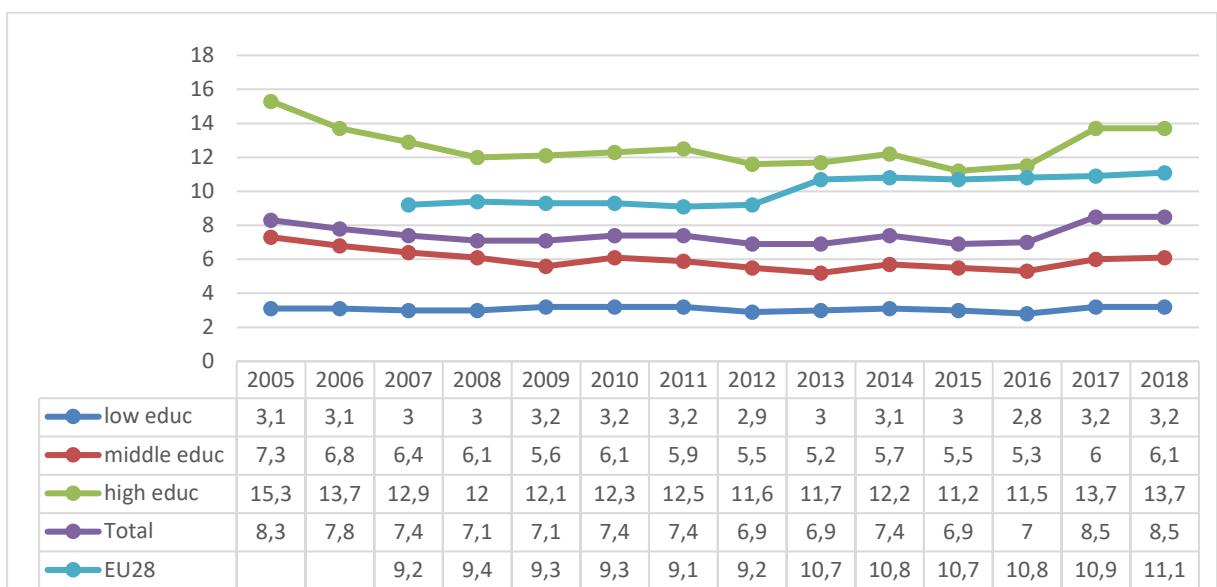
**Figure 4.4.2bis.** At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate for people (16y and above) with some to severe limitations in daily activities, BE and EU28, 2010-2018 (in %)



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

Participation in life-long learning is one indicator for the accessibility of services as a component of active inclusion (figure 4.4.3). The indicator for participation in education or training among the population aged between 25 and 64 years old presents a gap with the EU28 average. The difference in participation rate between persons with a high and a low educational level is important but remained stable at about 8 to 9 pp. during the last years (3.2% for low skilled and 13.7% for high skilled in 2018).

**Figure 4.4.3.** Participation in life-long learning by educational attainment, Belgium, EU28 (25-64y) (in %)



Source : Labour Force Survey, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

Note: Breaks in series in 2006, 2013 and 2017

In supporting people to re-enter the labour market, different strategies can be followed as foreseen in the EU council recommendation on long-term unemployment. In the latter, supporting people in situation of ***over-indebtedness*** is also mentioned as it can be an obstacle to re-enter the labour market and access quality social services like e.g. training.

Over-indebtedness can both be a cause and a result of poverty. In any case, it is very likely to lead to or accentuate situations of social exclusion.

The figures in [table 4.4](#) lead to the finding that there has been a favourable evolution since 2016, after a long period of increasing numbers of over-indebtedness after the crisis of 2007.

**Table 4.4. Evolution of some over-indebtedness figures, Belgium, 2008-2018\***

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014**	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Number of borrowers in default</b>	285.595	300.296	308.803	319.092	330.129	341.416	350.635	364.385	370.701	363.573	354.879
<b>% of borrowers in default</b>	5,94%	6,13%	6,22%	5,16%	5,29%	5,46%	5,63%	5,85%	5,93%	5,81%	5,66%
<b>Number of borrowers with more than 1 default**</b>							145.766	151.485	152.465	134.197	138.347
<b>Average arrears by borrower in default</b>	6.498 €	7.176 €	7.834 €	7.989 €	8.245 €	8.682 €	8.865 €	8.652 €	8.413 €	8.223 €	7.988 €
<b>Number of new procedures of collective debt regulation</b>	12.900	15.910	17.868	17.551	16.093	17.678	17.552	15.877	15.355	14.442	12.458

Source : The credit and Debt Observatory and the Central Individual Credit Register of the National Bank of Belgium

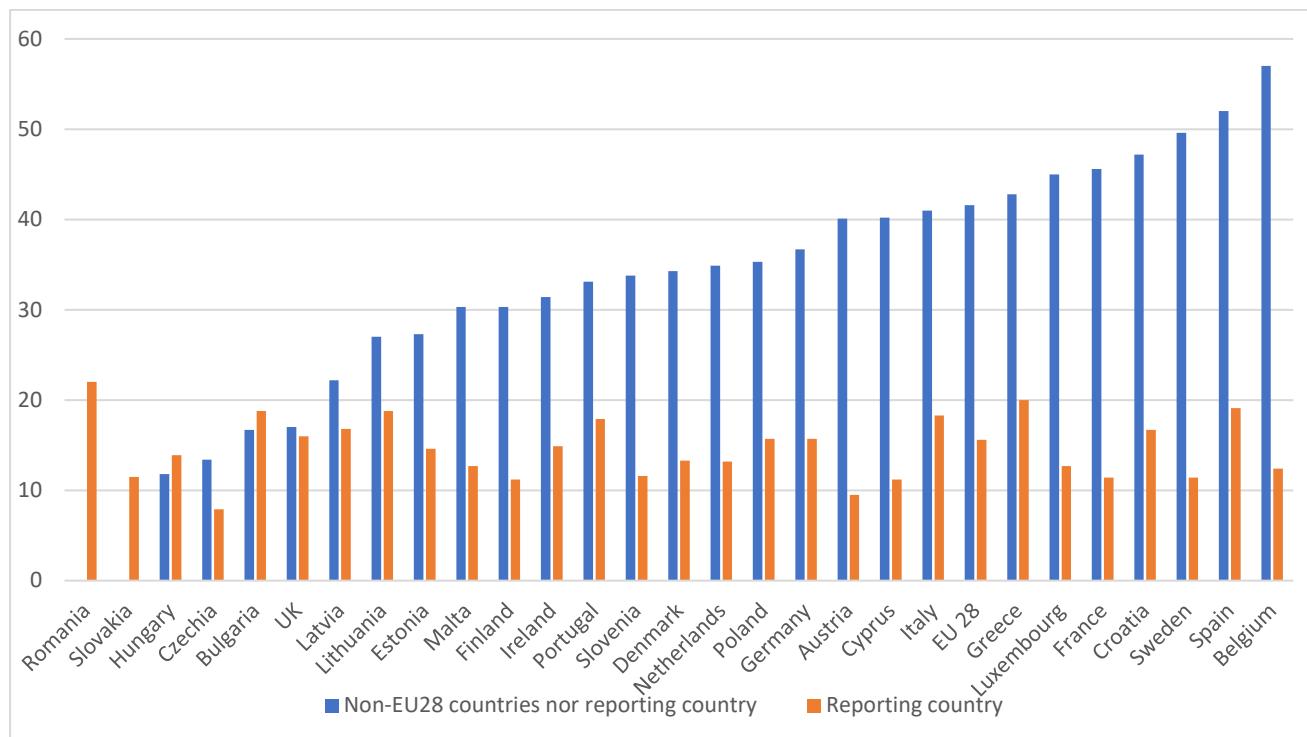
\* Figures on 31/12 of each year

\*\* BNB has operated a change in the calculation of this indicator in 2018 and has realised a new calculation for the period 2014-2018. Figures before 2014 are not comparable.

#### 4.5 Integration of people with a migrant background

Data on the living standards of people with a non-EU28 nationality provide further evidence on the deprived position of this category compared to Belgian citizens. Based on EU-SILC 2017 data<sup>29</sup>, non-EU28 nationals living in Belgium have the highest poverty rate (55,9%) in the EU, compared to non-EU28 citizens living in other EU countries, the EU-average being 41,6%<sup>30</sup> (see [figure 4.5.1.](#)). This finding is more or less confirmed on the basis of the new Material and Social Deprivation indicator, which is in Belgium also among the highest for non-EU citizens (36,6% in 2017 ; 34,5% in 2018), see [figure 4.5.2..](#)

**Figure 4.5.1. At risk-of-poverty-rate for non-EU28 nationals, (18-64), in 2017 (in %)**

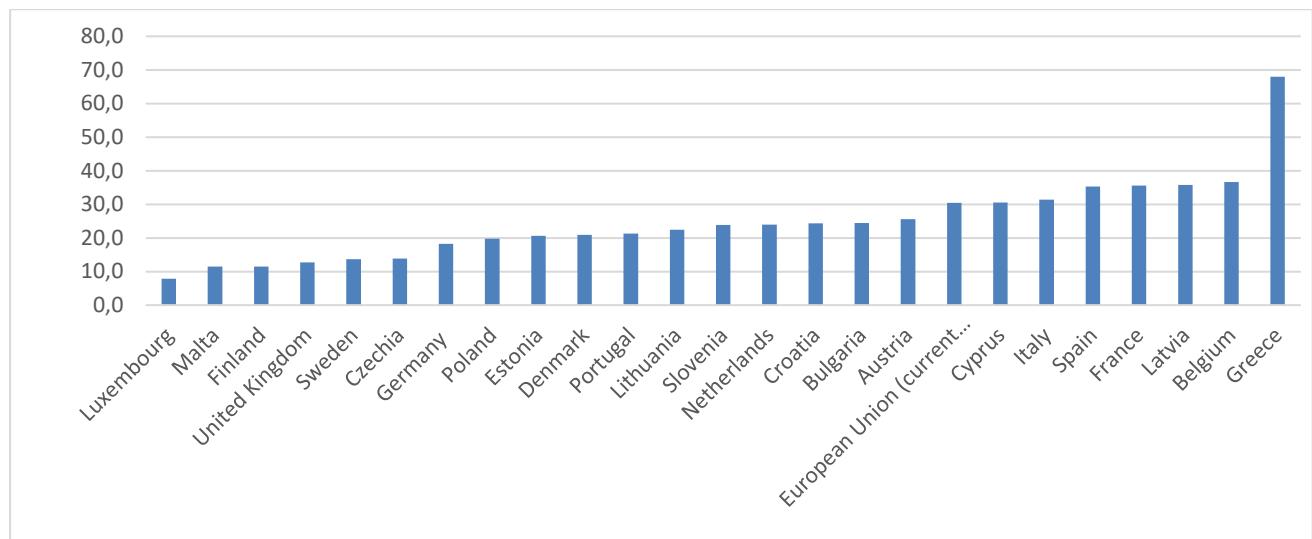


Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

<sup>29</sup> No EU-SILC 2018 data available for all Member States at the time of editing this report. For Belgium, in 2018, the figure is lower 48,4%

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that due to the relatively low sample sizes on which these estimates are based, a margin of error should be taken into account. This may mean that the exact place in the country ranking might be different from the real situation, though this does not detract from the substance of the point that Belgium scores very bad on this issue.

**Figure 4.5.2. Material and Social Deprivation rate for non-EU28 nationals, in 2017 (in %)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

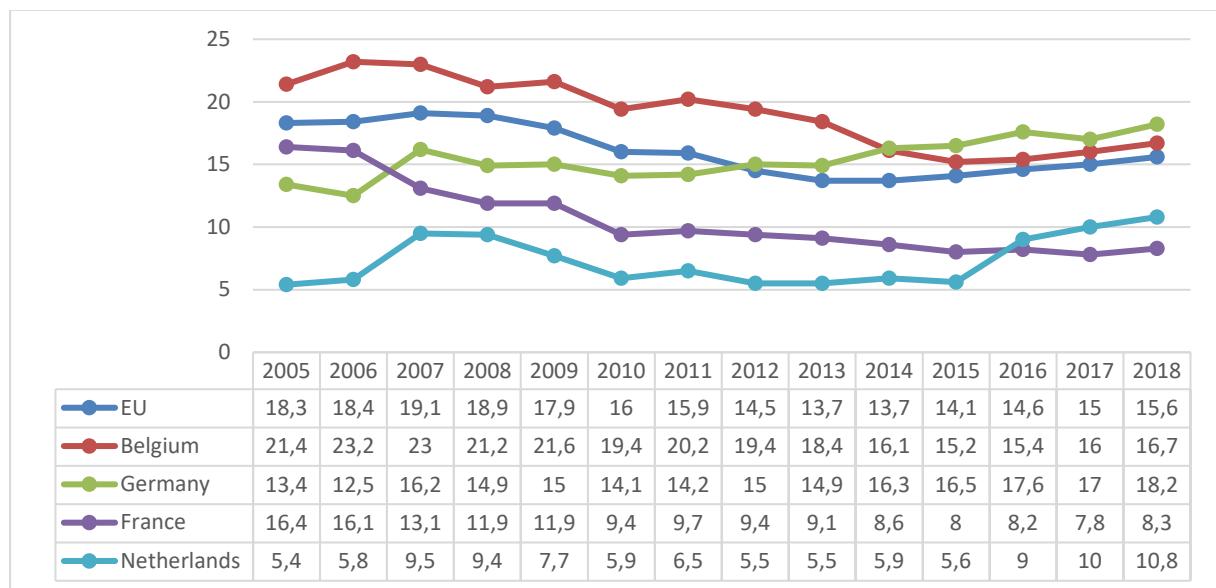
Besides, as explained in box 7 of last years' report, a common study of the FPS Labour and Social Dialogue and the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities (UNIA) shows that difference in the employment situation between people of foreign origin and the rest of the Belgian population is the largest of all EU-countries, and this on different aspects (employment rate, salary, etc.).

## 5 | Pensions

Section 3.2.1. showed that, in 2017 and 2018, the AROP increased for the elderly ([fig. 3.2.1bis](#)), after decreasing steadily since 2006. This observation is in line with the increase witnessed for the general population. The increase of the AROP is however in contrast with the decrease of the poverty risk gap ([fig. 3.2.1.ter](#)), the persistent poverty rate ([fig. 3.2.1. quarter](#)) and SMD ([fig. 3.2.1. quinquies](#)). Combining these different results leads to the conclusion that the relative position in terms of poverty risk of the elderly decreased somewhat in the most recent years, but the absolute situation continued to improve for the low income elderly.

If we compare the Belgian AROP for 2018 with its neighbouring countries ([fig. 5.1](#)), the poverty risk of the elderly population in Belgium is one of the highest and scores above the European average of 15,6%. As stated before, the AROP of Belgium increased steadily between 2016 and 2018 (and reaches 16.7% in 2018); an evolution that can also be witnessed for the EU average and the Netherlands.

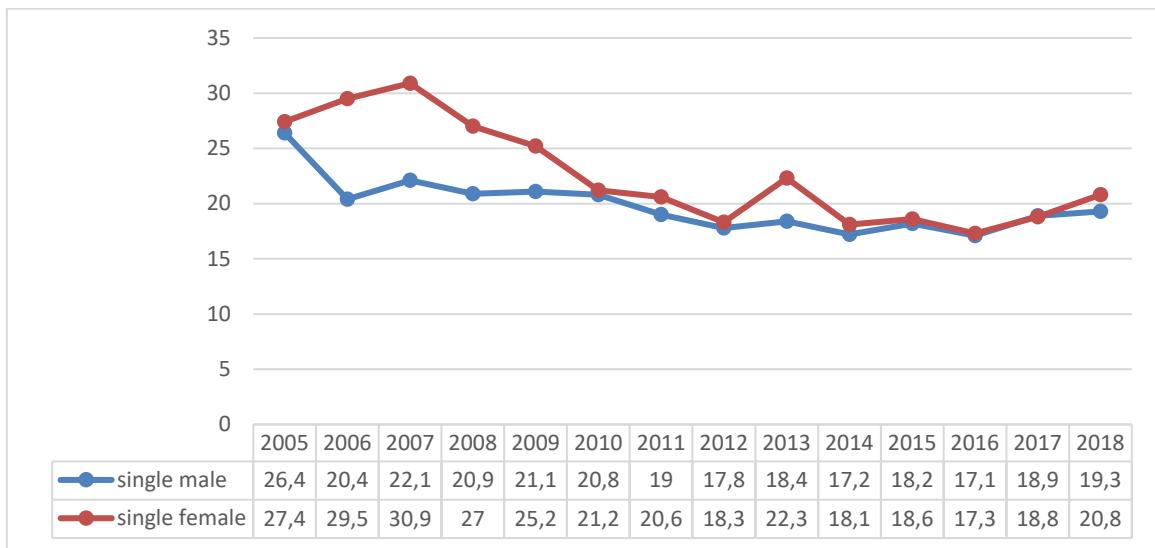
**Figure 5.1. AROP of elderly people (65 years or over), Belgium and its neighbouring countries, 2005 - 2018**



Source : EU-SILC , EUROSTAT , Statistics Belgium. Note : The 2018 percentage for the EU is an estimate.

In the last ten years, the AROP of single elderly women ([fig. 5.2.](#)) dropped considerably: from 25.2% in 2009 to 20.8% in 2018. The AROP of single elderly men also decreased during this time span, but less substantially. It seems safe to assume that cohort effects, namely women with better pension rights reaching retirement, are the main explanation for this finding, although the improvement of minimum pensions over the years could also have had an impact on this positive evolution. Detailed percentages per year are available in [figure 5.2.](#), as well in [Annex 2, figure A2.9](#).

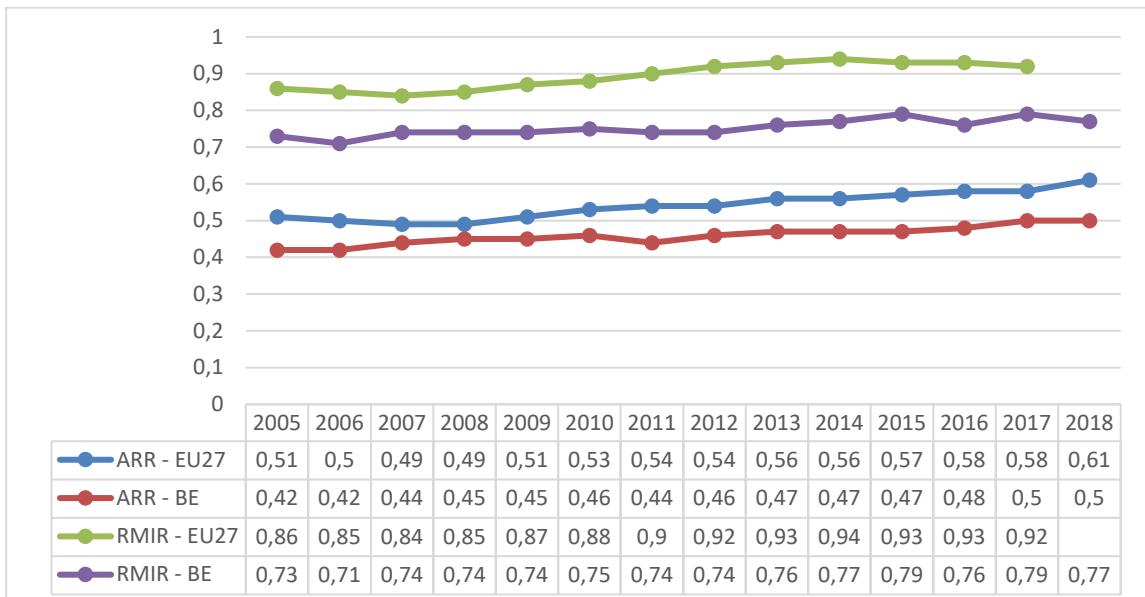
**Figure 5.2. AROP of single elderly (65 years or over) men and women, Belgium, 2005 - 2018**



Source: EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

In figure 5.3. we observe that the Aggregate Replace Ratio (ARR<sup>31</sup>) has remained stable between 2017 and 2018 for Belgium. Compared to the EU average, the ARR in Belgium is quite low: 0.5 in Belgium versus 0.61 in the EU in 2018. Germany (0.46) and the Netherlands (0.53) show a comparable ratio, whilst France (0.67) shows a much higher ratio. Over time however, the ARR has increased; the rate of this increase for Belgium is comparable to the increase of the EU average.

**Figure 5.3. Aggregate Replacement Ratio (ARR) and Relative Median Income Ratio (RMIR), Belgium and EU-27, 2005 - 2018**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium. Note : the 2018 RMIR for EU27 is not yet available.

<sup>31</sup> The ARR is the ratio of the income from pensions of persons aged between 65 and 74 years, and the income from work of persons aged 50 to 59 years.

The Relative Median Income Income Ratio (RMIR<sup>32</sup>) has been slowly increasing over time between 2006 and 2016. In the last few years however, it has been fluctuating and it reached 0.77 in 2018. If we compare Belgium with the latest EU average of 2017, we note that the RMIR in Belgium (0.79 in 2017) is well below the EU-average of 0.92. Over the years this has always been the case. The RMIR of Belgium is also below those of its neighbouring countries. The Netherlands observe a comparable ratio of 0.81 in 2017, whilst Germany has a ratio of 0.85. France reports in 2017 the highest ratio, with 1.05.

The **prospective theoretical replacement rate for Belgium**<sup>33</sup>, shown in [table 5.1.](#), illustrates that the replacement rate will only change to a limited extent for a person who retires in 2056. In the base-case scenario (career of 40 years, average income level) the net replacement rate (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar combined) amounted to 74.6% in 2016. In 2056, it would amount to 75.0%; which implies a quasi-stable level. However, [table 5.1.](#) shows that current and future replacement rates can vary widely when taking the income level during the professional career into account. For low incomes, the replacement rate is 87.8% in 2016, whereas it is 65.4% for high income levels. Based on the prospective theoretical replacement rates, this difference will further increase by 2056. By then, the rate will amount to 92.0% for low incomes and 60.5% for those with a high income.

**Table 5.1. Current and prospective theoretical replacement rates: base-case scenario and variants – net replacement rates**

	New base-case: 40 year career, average income level	Low income level	High income level	10 years after retirement	Female employee with 3 years career interruption for care of children	3 year career interruption due to unemployment
2016	74,6	87,8	65,4	*	*	*
2056	75,0	92,0	60,5	62,9	73,4	73,4

Source : SPC & European Commission, 2018.

The Study Committee on Ageing (SCA, 2019) publishes a yearly report on the budgetary and social consequences of ageing. In its latest report, the SCA estimates that social expenditures on pensions will amount to 12.5% of the GDP in 2070 ([table 5.2.](#)). This percentage is slightly higher than the percentage that was published last year (12.3% of the GDP in 2070; reference scenario of July 2018).

32 The RMIR is the ratio of the median income of persons aged 65 years and over, and the median income of persons less than 65 years.

33 The theoretical replacement rate indicates how effectively a pension system provides a retirement income to replace earnings. The calculation is based on a number of cases, but they are not (necessarily) representative of the actual pensions the pensioners receive. The results depend on a number of underlying assumptions. Nevertheless, these figures provide an insight in the outcomes of the pension system and how these compare with current outcomes. More information is available in the Pension Adequacy Report of 2018 of the Social Protection Committee (SPC) and the European Commission.

The SCA discerns two horizons: 2040 and 2070. In a first period, between 2018 and 2040, the SCA reports that the budgetary costs of ageing will be 3.8 ppt. of the GDP. In a second period, between 2040 and 2070, they will become negative (-1.4 ppt. of the GDP). In the long run however, between 2018 and 2070, the budgetary costs remain positive with 2.4 ppt. of the GDP.

Although pensions make up the largest part of social expenditures linked to ageing, expenditures for health care may not be disregarded. The spending in terms of health care increases the budgetary cost of ageing by 2.1 ppt. by 2070, while other social expenditures (unemployment, family allowances and other social expenses) reduce it. As stated before, the latest report of the SCA also considers the social consequences of ageing, and provides us with an overview of the social sustainability of pensions. This includes information on the poverty risk of the elderly. More information can be found in the SCA report.<sup>34</sup>

**Table 5.2. Evolution of the social expenditures and the budgetary costs of ageing on the long term, Belgium, 2018 - 2040 - 2070**

Components of the budgetary cost of ageing	Reference scenario of July 2019					
	2018	2040	2070	2018 - 2040	2040 - 2070	2018 - 2070
	In % of GDP			In ppt. of GDP		
Pensions	10,7	13,0	12,5	2,3	-0,5	1,8
Health care	8,0	10,4	10,1	2,4	-0,3	2,1
Invalidity	2,0	1,9	1,8	-0,1	-0,1	-0,2
Unemployment	1,5	1,0	1,0	-0,5	-0,1	-0,6
Family allowances	1,5	1,2	1,0	-0,3	-0,2	-0,5
Other social expenditures	1,5	1,4	1,3	-0,1	-0,2	-0,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,2</b>	<b>29,1</b>	<b>27,6</b>	<b>3,8</b>	<b>-1,4</b>	<b>2,4</b>

Source : SCA.

<sup>34</sup> The report can be consulted via: <https://www.plan.be/databases/data-33-en-2019+annual+report+of+the+study+committee+on+ageing>

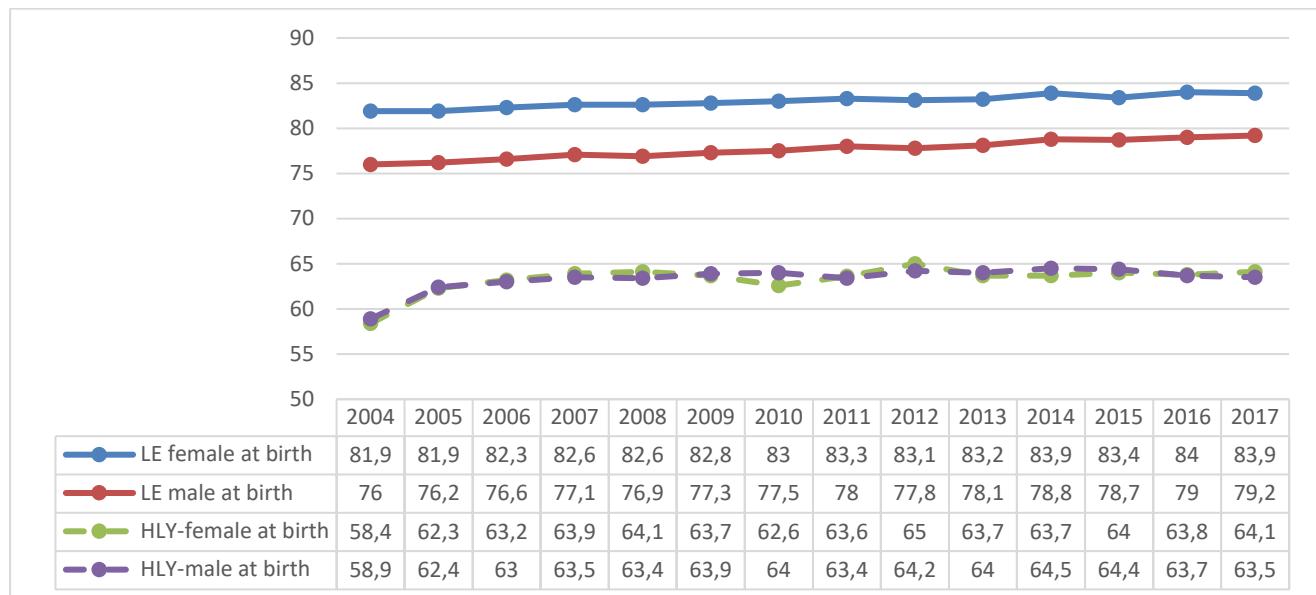
## 6 | Health care and long-term care

### 6.1. Life expectancy and healthy life years

**Life expectancy (LE) at birth** ([fig. 6.1.](#)) has been slowly increasing over the years. For women, it reaches its highest in 2016, with a life expectancy of 84 years. For men, it reaches its highest point in 2017, with an expectancy of 79.2 years. In 2017, there is a gender gap of 4.7 years.

When we look at the **healthy life (HLY) years at birth** ([fig. 6.1.](#)) however, the gender gap almost disappears. Both for men and women it has been slowly increasing over the years, from 58,4 years for women and 58,9 years for men in 2004, to respectively 64,1 years and 63,5 years in 2017.

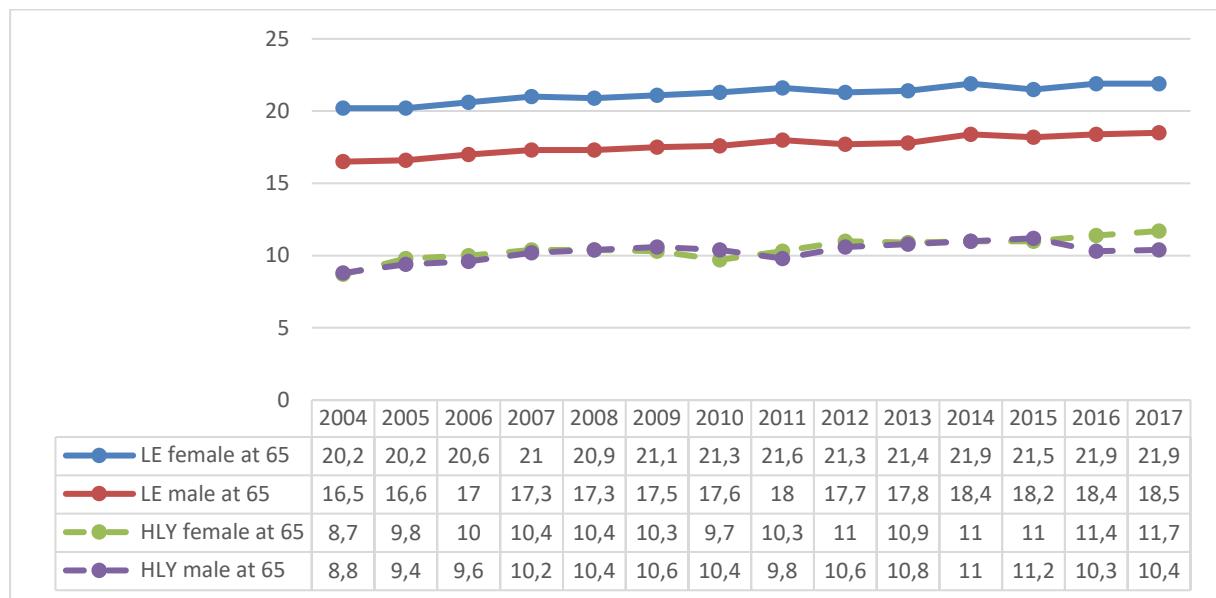
**Figure 6.1.1. Life expectancy (LE) and Healthy Life Years (HLY) at birth, in years, Belgium, 2004-2017**



Source : EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

A comparable observation can be made when we look at [figure 6.2.](#), which shows the **life expectancy and the healthy life years at the age of 65**. In 2017, women at 65 have a life expectancy of 21.9 years, whereas it amounts to 18.5 years for men. This means that there is a gender gap of some 3.4 years. Again, when we look at the healthy life years at the age of 65, the gender gap vanishes. In 2017, women at 65 have 11,7 healthy life years left; men 10,4.

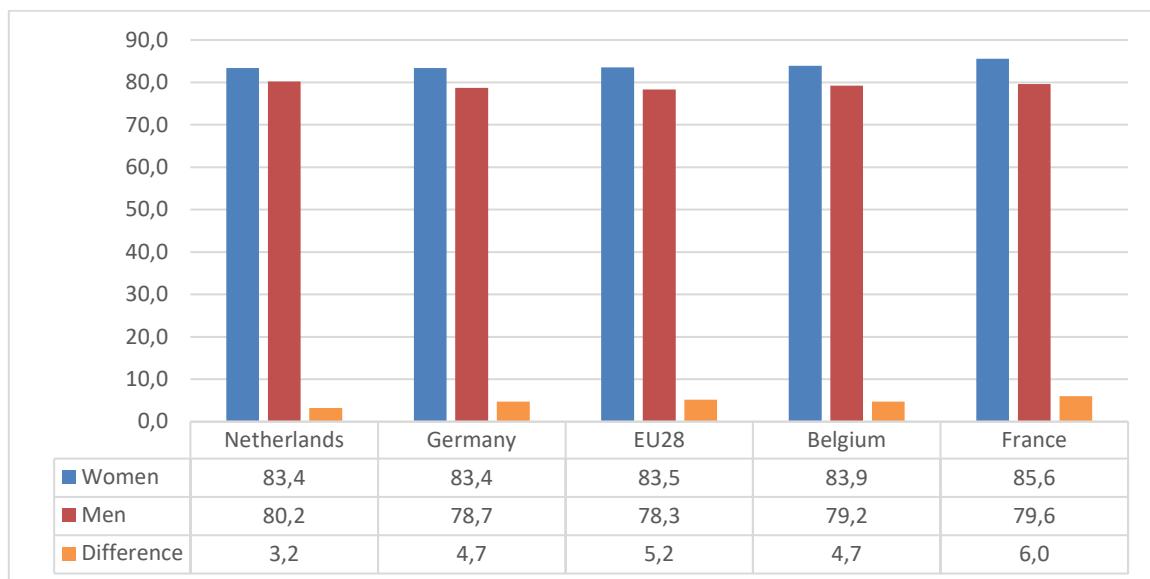
**Figure 6.1.2. Life expectancy (LE) and Healthy Life Years (HLY) at the age of 65, in years, Belgium, 2004-2017**



Source : EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

When comparing Belgium with its neighbouring countries and the EU average for 2017 (fig. 6.3.), it can be observed that the life expectancy of men and women in Belgium lies above the EU average and the majority of its neighbouring countries. The differences between the countries are, however, small.

**Figure 6.1.3. Life expectancy (LE) at birth in years, Belgium, EU, and its neighbouring countries, 2017**

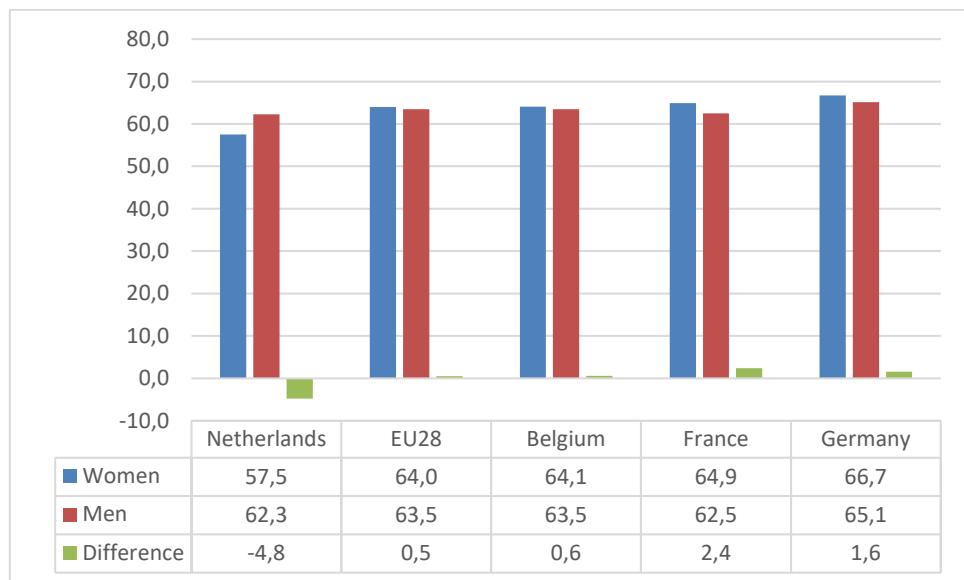


Source : EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

When comparing healthy life expectancy, the differences become more outspoken. Germany has the highest life expectancy with 66.7 healthy years for women and 65.1 years for men. The healthy life

expectancy in Belgium is comparable to the EU28 average, with 64.1 healthy years for women and 63.5 years for men.

**Figure 6.1.3bis. Healthy Life expectancy (LE) at birth in years, Belgium, EU, and its neighbouring countries, 2017**



Source : EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

Next to the LE and HLY indicators by Eurostat, the Health Interview Survey (HIS) provides an impression of the health of the Belgian population. In [box 3](#), a glimpse of the first results of the HIS 2018 is shown and the subjective health of the Belgian population is discussed.

### **BOX 3: Subjective health – 1<sup>st</sup> results of the Health Interview Survey 2018**

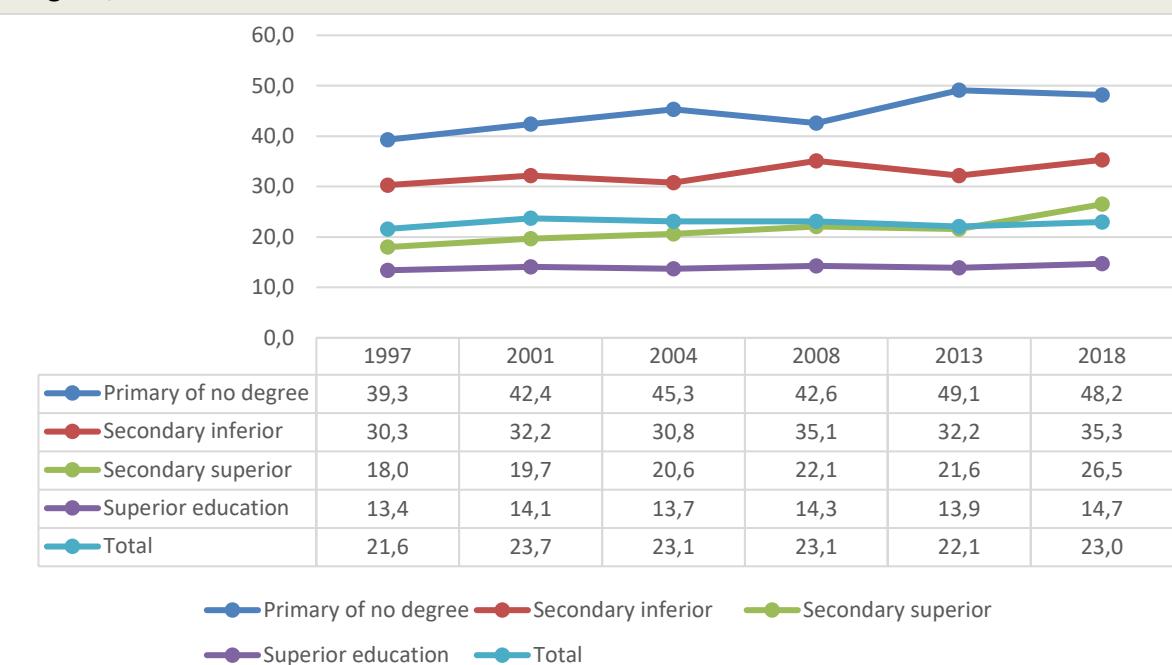
In 2018, the 6<sup>th</sup> Health Interview Survey (HIS) took place. The survey is organised by Sciensano, the Belgian institute for health, in collaboration with the Belgian statistical office (Statbel). According to Sciensano, the purpose of the survey is “to assess the health status of the population and to identify the main health problems as well as the determinants and behaviours that could influence them” (Van der Heyden et al, 2019).

In a first report on health and the quality of life, subjective health is discussed. Nearly one in four (23,0%) aged 15 or older in Belgium declares to be in moderate or poor health. Women (24,7%) declare to be more often in poorer health than men (21,2%). Of course, subjective health depends on the age of the respondent: 8,2% of 15-24-year olds states to be in poor health, as opposed to 17,6% of the 35-44-year olds and 41,7% of persons aged 75 and over. Low-educated individuals are more likely to report to be in poor health than those who are highly educated ([fig. 6.1.4.](#)): 48,2% of the respondents with a primary degree or no degree at all declare to be in poor health, as opposed 23,0% for those who have been in superior education (Van der Heyden et al, 2019).

When comparing 2018 with previous surveys, subjective health has remained stable during the last 20 years in Belgium, and this notwithstanding the gradual ageing of its population. As stated before,

23.0% of the population declares to be in moderate to poor health. This means that a large part, namely 77.0%, declares to be in good or very good health. This is above the European average of 70% (in 2016) (Van der Heyden et al, 2019).

**Figure. 6.1.4. Population aged 15 years and over with bad (very bad to fair) subjective health, in Belgium, in %**



Source: Sciensano, 2019.

A second report focuses on lifestyles; a third on knowledge on health and health prevention.<sup>35</sup> In the future, additional reports will be published, including on health and society, and the use of health care services.

## 6.2. Accessibility of health care

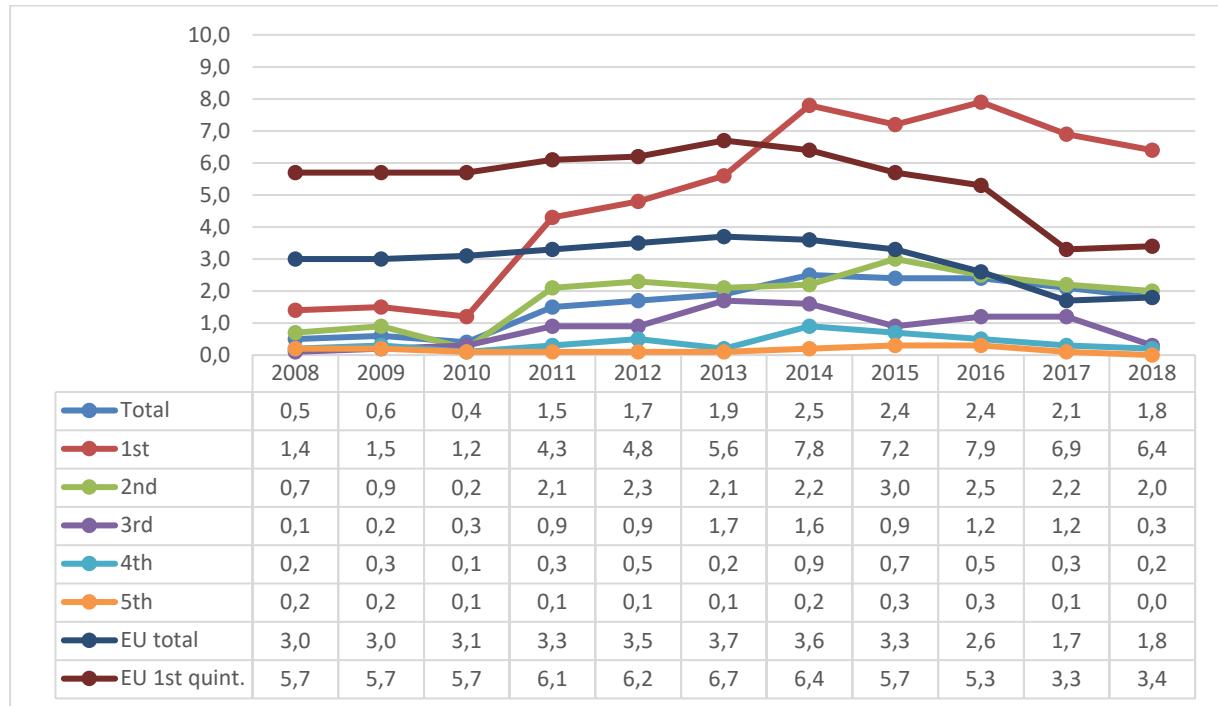
Information on the accessibility of health care is scarce as it is not easily measured. The indicators that are generally used are **the unmet need for medical care** and **the unmet need for dental care**. These indicators reflect the number of people who had to postpone health care due to financial, geographic or waiting time reasons. Belgium used to score quite well on these indicators, but this no longer seems to be the case. The highest percentages of unmet need were reached between 2014 and 2017, but in 2018 the unmet need is still considerably above the percentage of 2008. If we compare the unmet need for medical examination in Belgium with the EU average, it seems we have reached a turning point: 2017 is the first year the Belgian total (2.1%) finds itself above the EU 27 total of 1.7%. The same can be said about the unmet need for dental examination: in Belgium this percentage totals 3.7% in 2017; in the EU27 2.9%. It remains to be seen if this still will be the case in the future. The first estimates for the EU in 2018 however, do not confirm this trend. For medical examination, the unmet need in

<sup>35</sup> Both reports can be consulted through: [https://his.wiv-isp.be/nl/SitePages/Volledege\\_rapporten\\_2018.aspx](https://his.wiv-isp.be/nl/SitePages/Volledege_rapporten_2018.aspx)

Belgium matches the EU total of 1.8%. For dental examination the difference still stands, although it is limited: 3.1% in Belgium versus 3.0% in the EU.

Moreover, there are substantial variations by income group. In 2018, 6.4% of people in the lowest income group reported going without medical care (see [figure 6.4.](#)) when needed, while this proportion is close to zero in the highest income group. When it comes to dental care (see [figure 6.5.](#)), the differences are even more outspoken: in the 1<sup>st</sup> quintile 9.3% reported an unmet need, compared to only 0.3% in the 5<sup>th</sup> quintile. As in previous reports, it should be noted that this demands further research, given the rather extensive measures that are in place to guarantee access to medical care in Belgium (see also [box 4](#)).

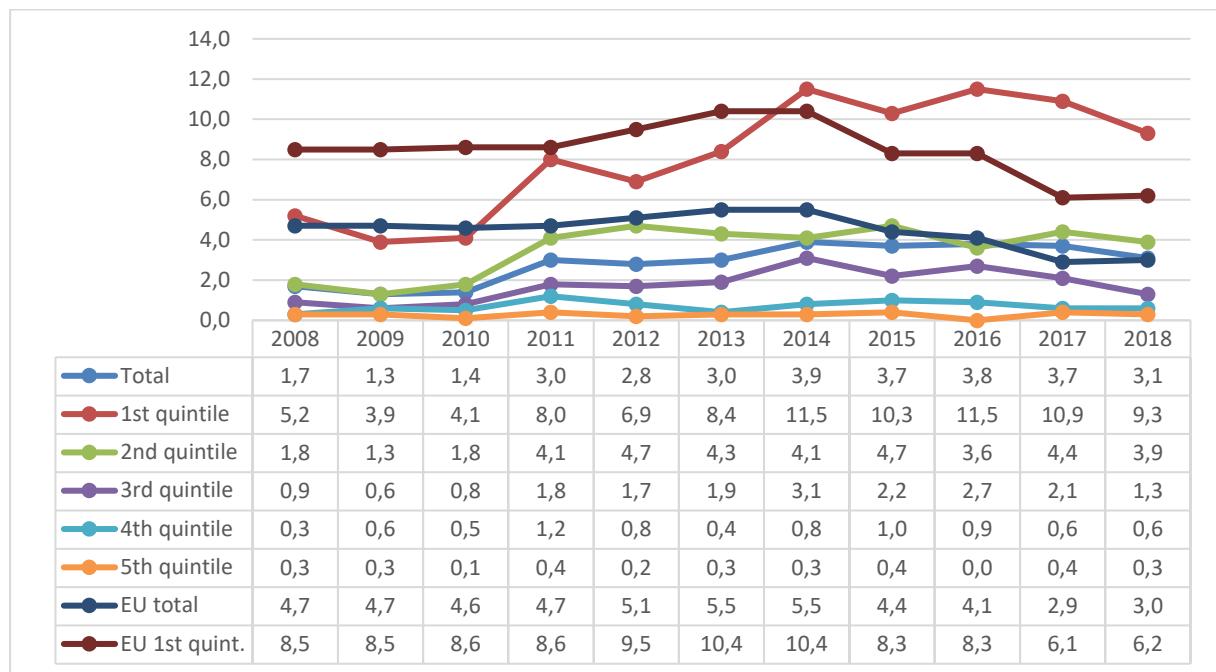
**Figure 6.2.1. Unmet need<sup>36</sup> for medical examination by income quintile, Belgium and EU, 2008 – 2018**



Source: EU-SILC; Eurostat; Statistics Belgium. Note : the 5th quintile for Belgium in 2018 is not significant. The EU 2018 percentages are estimates.

36 Break in time series in 2011.

**Figure 6.2.2. Unmet need<sup>37</sup> for dental examination by income quintile, Belgium and EU, 2008 - 2018**



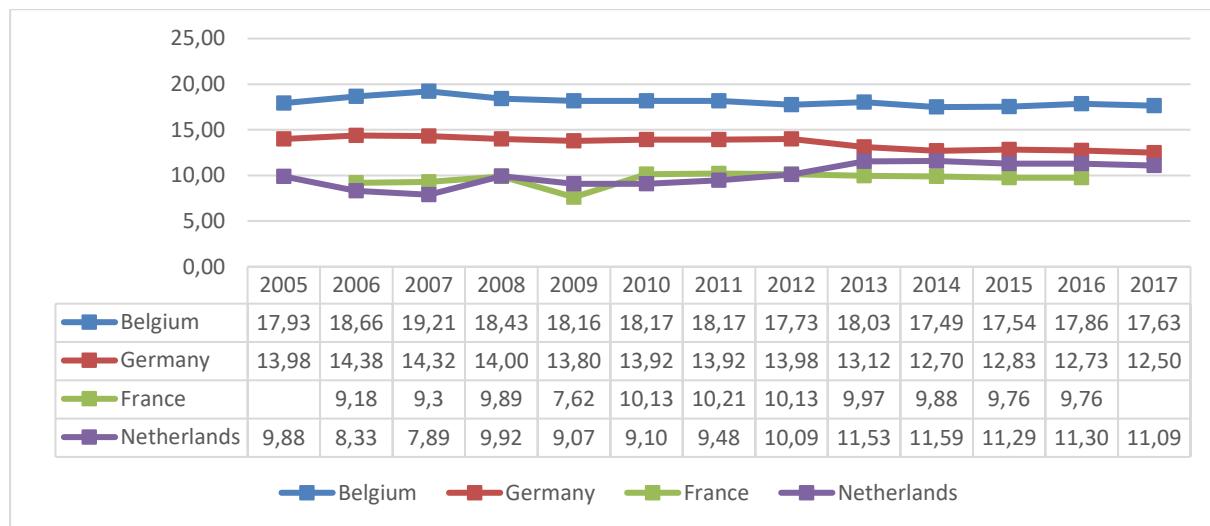
Source: EU-SILC, Eurostat, Statistics Belgium. Note : the EU 2018 percentages are estimates.

Measuring the financial accessibility of health care is also a major challenge and very little information is available. Based on the System of Health Accounts (SHA), the share of total health expenditure that is not paid by the formal health system, and thus can be assumed to be paid 'out-of-pocket' by patients, can be assessed. The absolute 'out-of-pocket payments' increased from € 5 billion to 8 billion between 2005 and 2017. It implies an average expenditure per habitant of € 704 in 2017. The share of 'out-pocket expenditures' in total health expenditure has however remained stable over the same period. Nevertheless, this share in Belgium (17,6% in 2017, fig. 6.6.) is high compared to neighbouring countries such as Germany (12,5%) and, the Netherlands (11,1%). Overall, due to comparability problems, these macro results concerning accessibility remain rather inconclusive.

Box 4 shortly discusses the 2019 Health System Performance Report published by the Belgian Health Care Knowledge Center. In this specific context, **health care spending** in terms of the GDP is touched upon, as well as a number of concerns related to unmet need and those in lower socio-economic groups.

37 Break in time series in 2011.

**Figure 6.2.3. Out-of-pocket expenditures as share in total health expenditure, Belgium and its neighbouring countries, 2005-2017**



Source : EUROSTAT – SHA.

#### **Box 4: the state of health in Belgium: the new Health System Performance Report**

The KCE (the Belgian Health Care Knowledge Center) publishes, in partnership with the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI)<sup>38</sup>, Sciensano and the FPS Public Health, each three to four years a “Health System Performance Assessment” (HSPA). This report is considered as a tool for identifying health priorities in the coming years, and this in an European context.

The last HSPA was finalised at the start of 2019. It contains 121 indicators, calculated for 2011 – 2017, which cover five dimensions (accessibility, quality, efficiency, sustainability and fairness) and five specific themes (preventive care, mental healthcare, elderly care, end-of-life care, and, for the 1<sup>st</sup> time, mother and new-born care).

When it comes to accessibility and fairness, the HSPA shows that, in 2016, Belgium spend 10.0% of its GDP on health care. In 2006, this percentage only amounted to 8.9%, but it has stabilised around 10% since 2009. The percentage for Belgium is slightly more elevated than the EU-15 average, where health care amounted to 9.8% of the GDP in 2016. In absolute terms, this means that Belgium spent EUR 3 745 per capita on health care in 2016. In 2006, this only amounted to EUR 2 745 per capita (Devos et al., 2019, p. 48).

Our health care system is quite accessible due to the mandatory health insurance and specific measures for the lowest incomes (increased reimbursement, maximum bill). There are improvements in out-of-pocket payments per capita since the previous analysis, but the percentage of individuals postponing medical examinations for financial reasons (**unmet need**), remains higher than the European average, especially for lower socio-economic groups. A similar observation was made in part 6.2. of this report.

<sup>38</sup> National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (INAMI in French, RIZIV in Flemish).

For these groups, there are a number of additional concerns: a lower attendance in cancer screenings, less frequent visits to the dentist and a higher use of medication. In the future, the KCE will publish a study of the fairness of access to health care, in which data on health care will be linked to socio-economic aspects (income, work) (Devos et al., 2019).

### **6.3. Sustainability of health care**

As mentioned before ([table 5.2](#), chapter 5), the Study Committee on Ageing (SCA) provides us with an assessment of the budgetary sustainability of ageing, including health care. In 2018, health care amounts to 8.0% of the GDP. In 2040 this amount will rise to 10.4%, whilst in 2070 it will slightly decrease to 10.1% of the GDP. This means a positive change of 2.4 ppt. between 2018 – 2040 and + 2.1 ppt. between 2018 – 2070, but a slight negative change of -0.3 ppt. between 2040 and 2070 (SCA, 2019).

## REFERENCES

- Devos C, Cordon A, Lefèvre M, Obyn C, Renard F, Bouckaert N, Gerkens S, Maertens de Noordhout C, Devleesschauwer B, Haelterman M, Léonard C, Meeus P. De performantie van het Belgische gezondheidssysteem – rapport 2019. Health Services Research (HSR) Brussels: Belgian Health Care Knowledge Centre (KCE). 2019. KCE Reports 313A. D/2019/10.273/32.
- Federaal Planbureau (2019), Welke prioriteit voor een duurzame ontwikkeling, Federaal Rapport inzake duurzame ontwikkeling 2019, Stand van zaken en evaluatie
- FOD Sociale Zekerheid (2018), The evolution of the social situation and social protection in Belgium 2018. Increasing pressure on social protection adequacy.,
- Minne, G., Basselier, R., Langenus, G., (2019) Why has Belgian private consumption growth been so moderate in recent years? NBB Economic Review, June 2019
- OECD (2019), “Risks that Matter: Main Findings from the 2018 OECD Risks that Matter Survey,”
- OECD / European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2017). Belgium: Country Health Profile 2017, State of Health in the EU. OECD Publishing: Paris / European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies: Brussels.
- RVA (2017) Impact van de beperking van het recht op inschakelingsuitkeringen. [https://www.rva.be/sites/default/files/assets/publications/Etudes/2019/2019-07-04\\_Beperking\\_recht\\_inschakelingsuitkeringen\\_NL.pdf](https://www.rva.be/sites/default/files/assets/publications/Etudes/2019/2019-07-04_Beperking_recht_inschakelingsuitkeringen_NL.pdf)
- SCA, 2019. Studiecommissie voor de Vergrijzing: Jaarlijks Verslag. Hoge Raad van Financiën: Brussel.
- SPC & European Commission, 2018. Pension adequacy report 2018 – Current and future income adequacy in old age in the EU (Volume 2 – Country profiles). European Commission: Brussels.
- UGent, 2015a. Wetenschappelijke geletterdheid bij 15-jarigen. Vlaams rapport PISA 2015. Consulted through: [http://www.pisa.ugent.be/uploads/assets/140/1485507054477-Vlaams%20rapport%202015\(2\).pdf](http://www.pisa.ugent.be/uploads/assets/140/1485507054477-Vlaams%20rapport%202015(2).pdf)
- Ugent, 2015b. Financiële geletterdheid bij 15-jarigen. Vlaams rapport 2015. Consulted through: <http://www.pisa.ugent.be/uploads/assets/144/1495611368087-Rapport%20financiële%20geletterdheid%20PISA2015.pdf>
- Unia, 2018. Diversiteitsbarometer Onderwijs. Consulted through: <https://www.unia.be/nl/publicaties-statistieken/publicaties/diversiteitsbarometer-onderwijs>
- Van der Heyden, J., Charafeddine, S., Demarest, S., Drieskens, S., Nguyen, D., Tafforeau, J. Gisle, L., Braekman, E., & Berete, F., 2019. Gezondheidsenquête 2018: gezondheid en kwaliteit van leven. Samenvatting van de resultaten. Sciensano: Brussel. Consulted through: <https://his.wiv-ispl.be/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Van Mechelen N, D. Zamora, B. Cantillon (2016) De groei en diversificatie van de bijstandspopulatie.  
In: De Wilde M., B. Cantillon, F. Vandenbroucke & M. De Bie (2016) 40 jaar OCMW en bijstand. Acco:  
Leuven.

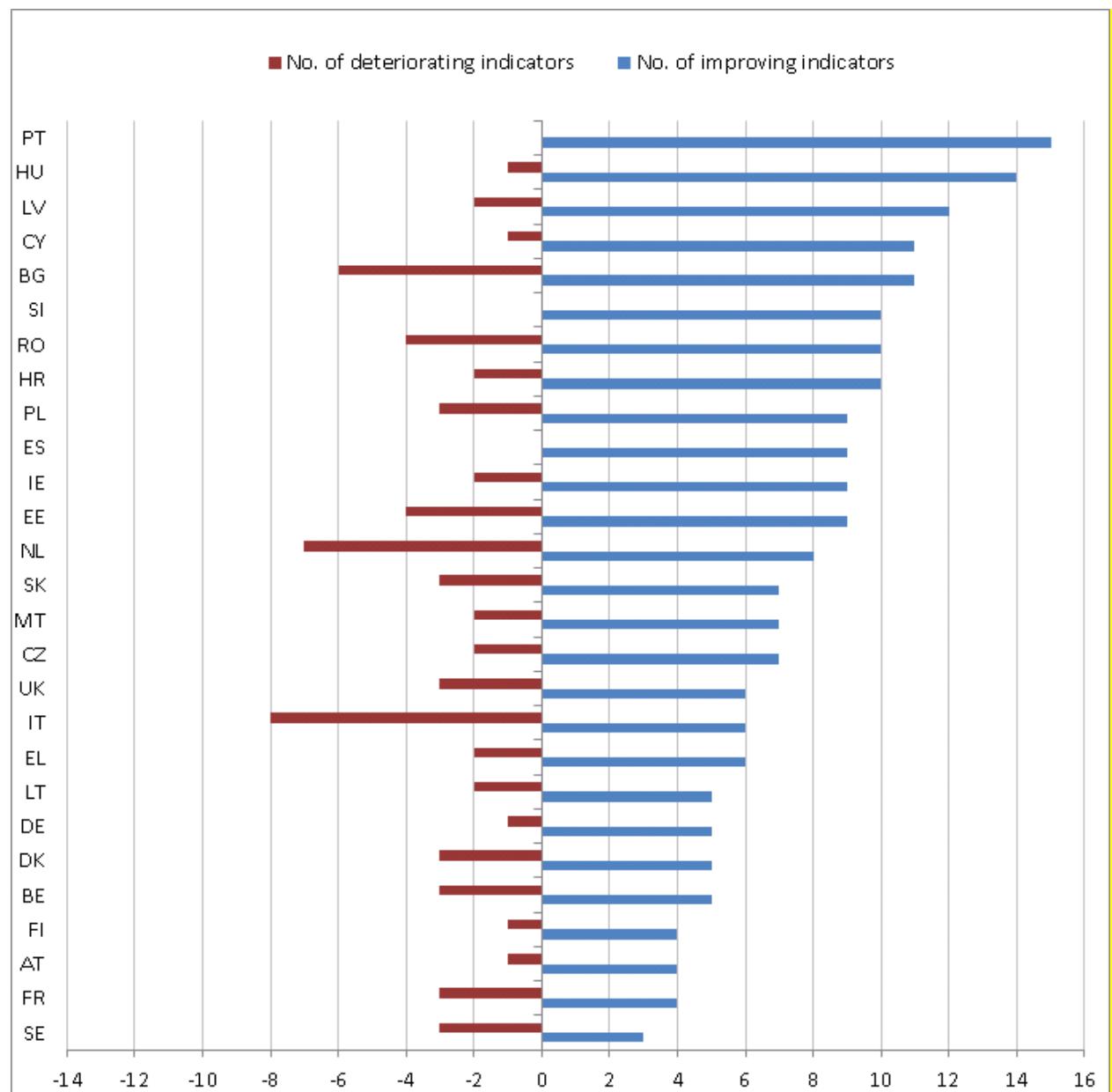
## **ANNEXES**

## ANNEX 1.A. : SPPM SCOREBOARD FOR BELGIUM / SUMMARY TABLE OF MAIN SOCIAL TRENDS

Group	Indicator	BE										EU27				
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	change 2015-2016 (2016-2017 for SMD & LFS-based figures)	change 2008 to latest year	2016	latest year change	change 2008 to latest year
Europe 2020	At risk of poverty or social exclusion (in %)	20.8	20.2	20.8	21.0	21.6	20.8	21.2	21.1	20.7	20.3	-0.4 pp	-0.1 pp	23.5	-0.2 pp	-0.2 pp
	At-risk-of-poverty rate (in %)	14.7	14.6	14.6	15.3	15.3	15.1	15.5	14.9	15.5	15.9	0.6 pp	0.8 pp	17.3	0.0 pp	0.7 pp
	At-risk-of-poverty threshold for a single person household (levels in pps, changes as real change in national currency in %)	10046	10501	10399	10895	11038	11738	11755	11953	12492	12525	2.3 %	6.8 %	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Severe material deprivation rate (in %)	5.6	5.2	5.9	5.7	6.3	5.1	5.9	5.8	5.5	5.1	-0.4 pp	-0.5 pp	7.5	-0.9 pp	-1.9 pp
	Population living in (quasi-) jobless households (in %)	11.7	12.3	12.7	13.8	13.9	14.0	14.6	14.9	14.6	13.5	-0.3 pp	2.9 pp	10.5	-0.2 pp	1.3 pp
Intensity of poverty risk	Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap (in %)	17.2	18.1	18.0	18.6	18.7	19.2	18.8	17.4	19.4	17.7	2.0 pp	2.2 pp	25	0.2 pp	3.1 pp
Persistence of poverty risk	Persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate (in %)	9.0	9.2	9.3	8.0	9.9	8.7	9.5	9.8	10.0	10.8	0.2 pp	1.0 pp	10.9	0.0 pp	2.2 pp
Material and social deprivation	Material and social deprivation rate (in %)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	12.4	12.3	13.3	n.a.	1.0 pp	n.a.	15.7	-1.5 pp	n.a.
Income inequalities	Income quintile ratio (S80/S20)	4.1	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	0.0 %	-7.3 %	5.2	0.0 %	4.0 %
Child poverty and social exclusion	At-risk-of poverty or social exclusion rate of children (% of people aged 0-17)	21.3	20.5	23.2	23.3	22.8	21.9	23.2	23.3	21.6	22.0	-1.7 pp	0.3 pp	26.4	-0.6 pp	-0.1 pp
Effectiveness of social protection system	Impact of social transfers (excl. pensions) on poverty reduction (%)	45.6	45.3	45.3	45.0	44.8	42.6	43.6	44.2	41.1	39.5	-3.1 pp	-4.5 pp	33.2	-0.5 pp	-1.4 pp
	At-risk-of-poverty rate for the population living in (quasi-) jobless households	54.7	57.6	55.4	62.9	60.4	60.7	62.2	58.5	65.5	70.4	7.0 pp	10.8 pp	59.9	0.9 pp	4.2 pp
Social consequences of labour market	In-work at-risk-of poverty rate (in %)	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.1	4.5	4.4	4.8	4.5	4.7	5.0	0.2 pp	0.0 pp	9.6	0.1 pp	1.1 pp
	Long-term unemployment rate (in %)	3.3	3.5	4.0	3.5	3.4	3.9	4.3	4.4	4.0	3.5	-0.5 pp	0.2 pp	3.9	-0.5 pp	0.9 pp
Youth exclusion	Early school leavers (in %)	12.0	11.1	11.9	12.3	12.0	11.0	9.8	10.1	8.8	8.9	0.1 pp	-3.1 pp	10.8	-0.2 pp	-4.2 pp
	Youth unemployment ratio (15-24)	6.0	7.1	7.3	6.0	6.2	7.3	7.0	6.6	5.7	5.4	-0.3 pp	-0.6 pp	7.7	-0.7 pp	0.1 pp
	NEETs (15-24)	10.1	11.1	10.9	11.8	12.3	12.7	12.0	12.2	9.9	9.3	-0.6 pp	-0.8 pp	11.5	-0.6 pp	0.0 pp
Active ageing	Employment rate of older workers (55-64) in %	34.5	35.3	37.3	38.7	39.5	41.7	42.7	44.0	45.4	48.3	2.9 pp	13.8 pp	55.4	1.8 pp	11.7 pp
Pension adequacy	At risk of poverty or social exclusion for the elderly (65+) in %	22.9	23.1	21.0	21.6	21.2	19.5	17.3	16.2	16.4	17.1	0.2 pp	-6.5 pp	18.1	0.8 pp	-5.2 pp
	Median relative income of elderly people	0.74	0.74	0.75	0.74	0.74	0.76	0.77	0.79	0.76	n.a.	-3.8 %	2.7 %	0.93	0.0 %	9.4 %
	Aggregate replacement ratio	0.45	0.45	0.46	0.44	0.46	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.48	n.a.	2.1 %	6.7 %	0.58	1.8 %	18.4 %
Health	Self reported unmet need for medical care	0.5	0.6	0.4	1.5 <sup>b</sup>	1.7	1.9	2.5	2.4	2.4	n.a.	0.0 pp	n.a.	2.5	-0.7 pp	-0.5 pp
	Healthy life years at 65 - males	10.4	10.6	10.4	9.8	10.6	10.8	11.0	11.2	10.3	n.a.	n.a.	-1.0 %	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Healthy life years at 65 - females	10.4	10.3	9.7	10.3	11.0	10.9	11.0	11.0	11.4	n.a.	n.a.	9.6 %	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Poverty and social exclusion of persons with disabilities	At risk of poverty or social exclusion for persons with disabilities (% of people with disabilities above 16 years)	33.9	32.7	32.7	33.5	35.6	34.3	34.4	35.2	33.0	n.a.	-2.2 pp	-0.9 pp	30	-0.1 pp	-0.9 pp
Access to decent housing	Housing cost overburden rate	12.5	8.7	8.9	10.6	11.0	9.6	10.4	9.4	9.5	9.1	0.1 pp	-3.0 pp	11.1	-0.2 pp	0.6 pp
Evolution in real household disposable income	Real change in gross household disposable income (in %)	2.4	2.1	-1.0	-1.0	-0.1	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.9	n.a.	0.9 %	2.0 %	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Note: For the poverty threshold values, levels are shown in PPS but changes are shown as changes in national currency terms and accounting for inflation. For consistency with the main SPPM dashboard latest changes refer to 2015-2016 for EU-SILC based indicators (except SMD) and 2016-2017 for SMD and LFS-based indicators, while changes since 2008 refer to 2008-2016 and 2008-2017 respectively. For BE, major break in 2011 in the self-reported unmet need for medical examination ("n.a." shown for the period compared to 2008).

## ANNEX 1.B. NUMBER OF SPPM KEY SOCIAL INDICATORS PER MEMBER STATE WITH A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT OR DETERIORATION FROM 2015 TO 2016\*



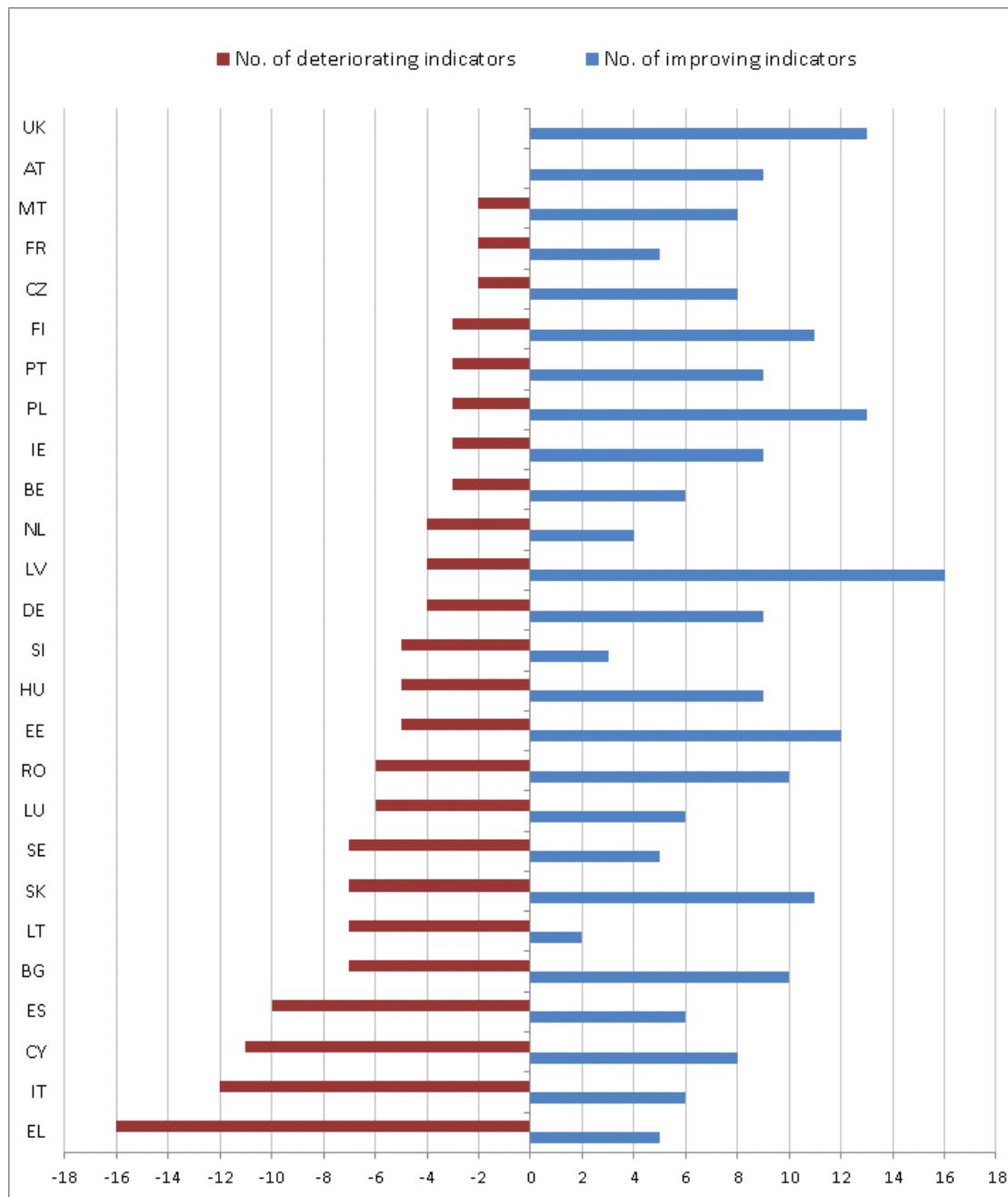
Source: Social Protection Performance Monitor.

Note : Bars refer to the number of SPPM indicators which have registered a statistically and substantively significant deterioration or improvement between 2015 and 2016. \* For EU-SILC based indicators changes actually refer to 2014-2015 for income and household work intensity indicators. For some indicators (SMD rate, LTU rate, early school leavers, youth unemployment ratio, NEETs, ER (55-64)) the changes refer to the period 2016-2017. There are a total of 25 dashboard indicators relevant for this reference period. Figures not shown for LU due to significant break in series for EU-SILC based indicators in 2016.

The Member States with the highest number of significant positive recent changes are Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, and Portugal, all recording improvements on more than 10 indicators and (except for BG) with very few indicators showing a deterioration. In contrast, improvements in Austria, Finland, France, and Sweden were much more limited, with significant improvements only registered

on 4 indicators or less. Almost all Member States recorded a larger number of indicators showing a significant improvement than a deterioration, although Italy and the Netherlands stand out as having a larger number of indicators showing a deterioration (with significant declines on 8 indicators in Italy).

## ANNEX 1.C. NUMBER OF SPPM INDICATORS PER MEMBER STATE WITH A SIGNIFICANT DETERIORATION OR IMPROVEMENT BETWEEN 2008 AND 2016



Source: Social Protection Performance Monitor.

Note : i) For AT, break in series in 2011 for persistent poverty risk (so trend not considered for the period compared to 2008); ii) For BE, major break in 2011 in the self-reported unmet need for medical examination (so trend not considered for the period compared to 2008); iii) For 2014 BG registered a major break in the time series for the material deprivation indicator (SMD) and AROPE indicator, so longer-term changes are presented for the period 2008-2013 only; iv) For DK, breaks in series for the period 2008-2015 which mainly affect indicators related to incomes and to a lesser degree variables highly correlated with incomes (so trends not considered for the period compared to 2008 for these); v) For 2014 EE registered a major break in series for EU-SILC variables, so longer-term changes for these are presented for the period 2008-2013 only; vi) For HR, no EU-SILC data published by Eurostat before 2010; vii) For LU, major break in series in 2016 for EU-SILC based indicators, so long-term comparison is for the period 2008-2015; viii) For NL, improvement to the definition of income in 2016 has some impact on comparison of income-based indicators over time; ix) For RO, breaks in series in 2010 for LFS-based indicators, so changes

*2010-2016 shown for longer term change; x) For UK, changes in the survey vehicle and institution in 2012 might have affected the results on trends since 2008 and interpretation of data on the longer-term trend must therefore be particularly cautious; xi) The bars refer to the number of SPPM indicators which have registered a statistically and substantively significant deterioration or improvement between 2008 and 2016/2017; xiii) \* For some indicators (SMD rate, LTU rate, early school leavers, youth unemployment ratio, NEETs, ER (55-64)) the changes generally refer to the period 2008-2017; ix) There are a total number of 25 SPPM dashboard indicators for this reference period.*

The Member States with the most worrisome developments remain Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain, with a deterioration on 10 or more indicators compared to 2008, and with relatively few indicators showing an improvement. In contrast, Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Malta and the UK have only registered a significant deterioration on 2 or fewer indicators, along with improvements on a large number of indicators. Around half of Member States now show a higher number of improvements than declines, most notably Latvia, Poland and the UK.

## ANNEX 2 : TABLES AND FIGURES

**Table A2.1. Minimum social protection allowances in % of at-risk-of-poverty threshold (60% of median)**

	2010	2012	2014	2016	2017		July 2019	
					Flanders	Other Regions	Flanders	Other Regions
<b>Income support for the elderly</b>								
Single person	92	91	93	92	91	91	91	91
Couple	82	80	83	82	81	81	81	81
<b>Income support for the disabled</b>								
Single person	74	73	76	75	75	75	75	75
Couple with two children	69	68	70	69	67	67	68	68
<b>Income support</b>								
Single person	74	73	75	76	75	75	75	75
Couple	66	65	67	68	67	67	67	67
Couple with two children	67	66	67	67	66	66	66	67
Single parent with two children	88	86	88	88	86	87	87	88
<b>Minimum pension (full career; including vacation pay)</b>								
Single person								
- Old-age Pension	107	101	104	103	107	107	108	108
- Survivor Pension	106	100	102	101	106	106	107	107
Couple	87	84	86	85	89	89	90	90
<b>Minimum unemployment benefit (all periods)</b>								
Single person	86	85	88	87	87	87	88	88
Couple	68	68	70	69	70	70	71	71
Couple with two children	69	68	69	68	68	68	69	69
Single parent with two children	86	85	87	86	86	86	86	87
<b>Minimum disability benefit (including catch-up premium 1 year of disability)</b>								
Single person	102	101	104	101	104	104	105	105
Couple with two children	81	80	82	80	82	82	82	83
<b>Minimum wage</b>								
Single person	125	121	124	125	122	122	124	124
Couple with two children	87	84	86	84	82	83	80	81

Source : FPS Social Security.

### Methodology :

- The basis for this indicator is the net disposable household income of beneficiaries, including child benefits and other social allowances, and after personal income tax.
- The results for 2019 are based on the amounts applicable on the 1st of July 2019.

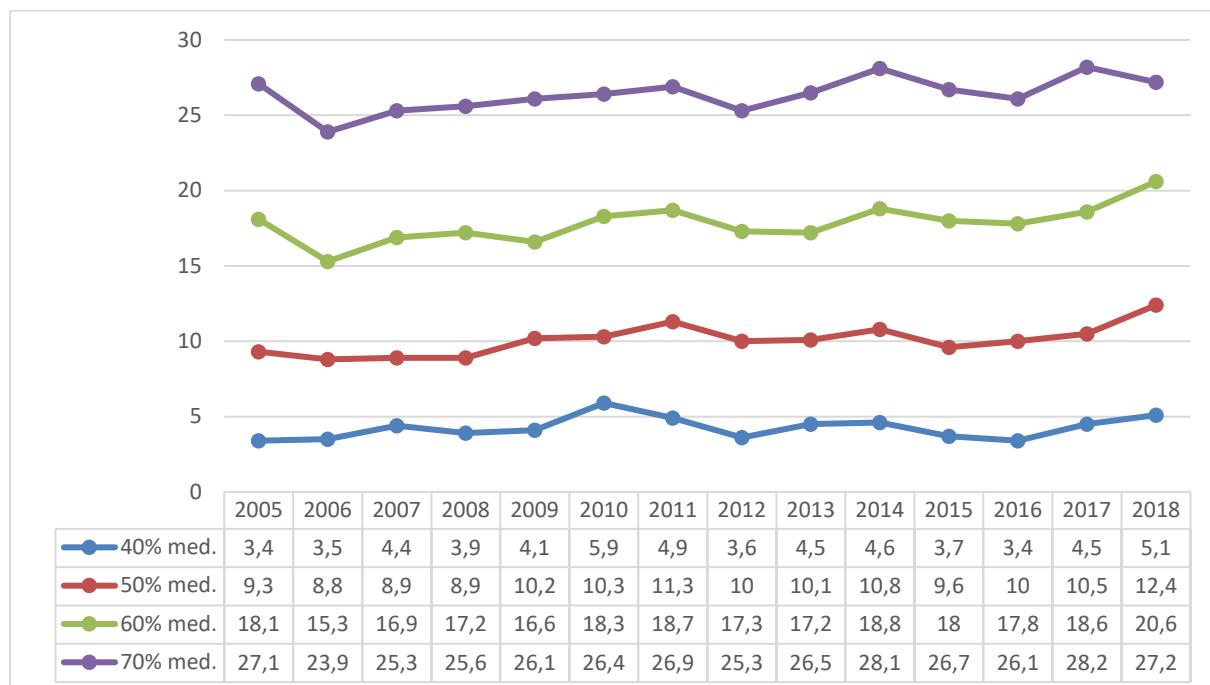
- The poverty threshold for the year t is calculated as 60% of the median equivalent household income according to EU-SILC in the year t+1. For 2019, the poverty threshold is estimated using EU-SILC 2018 (income of 2017) and the HCPI as published by Eurostat (mean of the monthly indexes). Due to this estimate, the figure for 2019 is not comparable with the figures of 2010 - 2017. In most years, the median income reports a stronger increase than the HCPI.
- The children are 2 and 6 years of age and benefit from the old child benefit schemes.
- The minimum wage is based on the mean monthly income of an individual of 22 years with 12 months of seniority, including double vacation pay and a thirteenth month's pay.
- These are all families who, apart from child benefits, depend on a single salary or benefit.

**Table A2.2. Time series of some indicators not included in figures**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
S80/S20	4.0	4.2	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
Gini	28.0	27.8	26.3	27.5	26.6	26.6	26.3	26.5	25.9	25.9	26.2	26.3	26	25.6
Gini (before social transfers - pension excluded)	37.7	36.0	34.6	34.5	34.8	34.8	34.8	35.1	34.0	34.5	34.6	34.2	33.6	32.3
Gini (before social transfers - pension included)	50.6	48.7	46.7	48.0	46.5	46.5	47.1	47.7	47.1	47.6	48	48.8	48.5	46.9
Poverty threshold (60%) (nominal annual amounts in Eur)	9,947	10,328	10540	10,791	11588	11,678	12,005	12,168	12890	13023	12993	13377	13670	14246
AROP 40% threshold (%)	2.7	3.3	3.7	3.2	3.5	4.1	3.6	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.7
AROP 50% threshold (%)	7.7	8.2	8.0	7.5	7.9	7.9	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.6	7.8	8.6	8.3	9
AROP 60% threshold (%)	14.8	14.7	15.2	14.7	14.6	14.6	15.3	15.3	15.1	15.5	14.9	15.5	15.9	16.4
AROP 70% threshold (%)	24.1	23.5	23.4	23.8	23.5	23.8	24.1	24.1	24.3	24.9	23.8	24.6	25.4	25.4

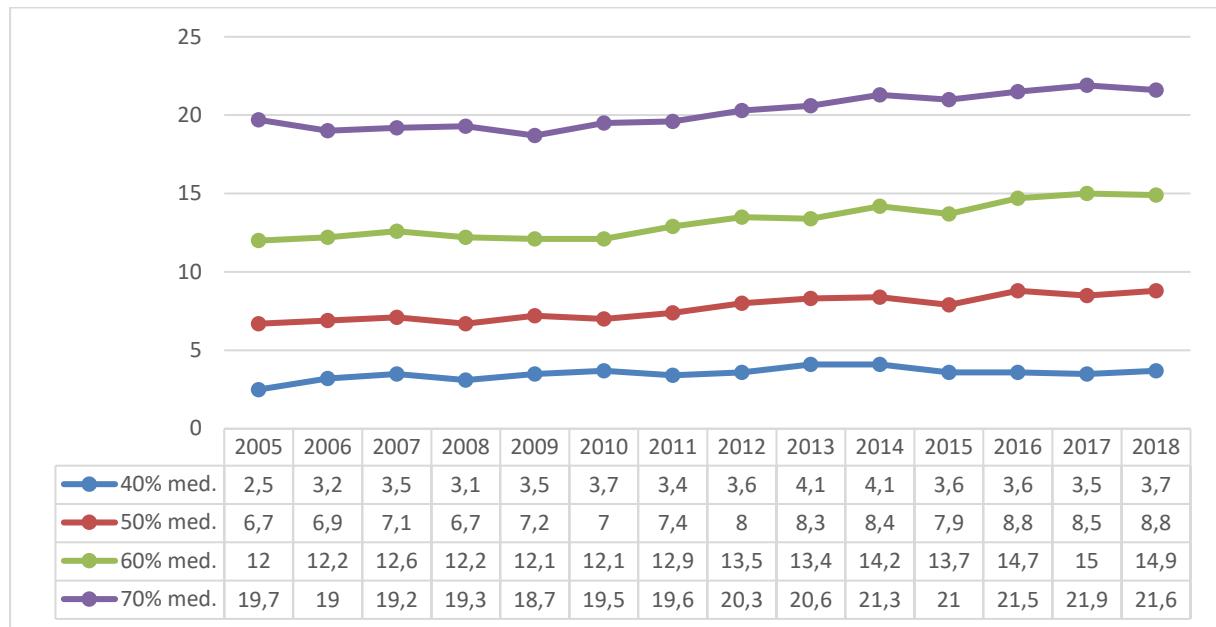
Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure A2.1. At-risk-of-poverty rate for children (-18) by different at-risk-of-poverty threshold levels (40%, 50%, 60%, 70% of median equivalent household income)**



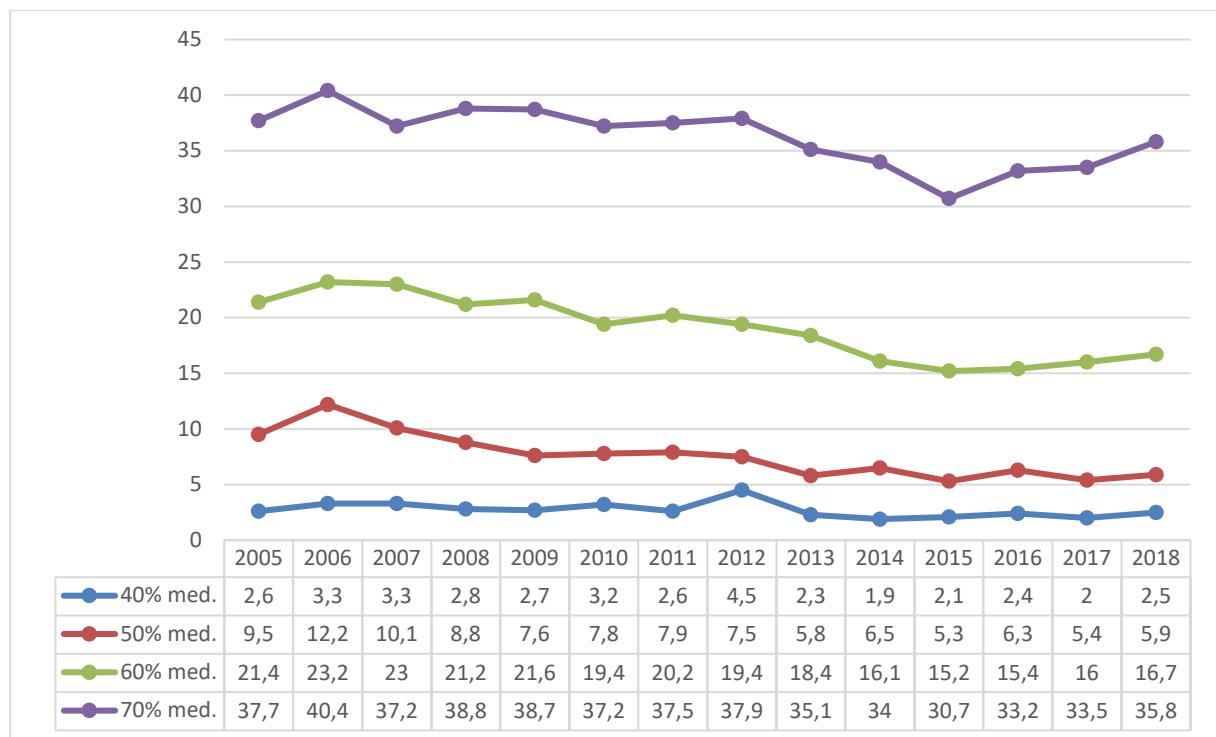
Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure A2.2. At-risk-of-poverty rate for working age population (18-64) by different at-risk-of-poverty threshold levels (40%, 50%, 60%, 70% of median equivalent household income)**



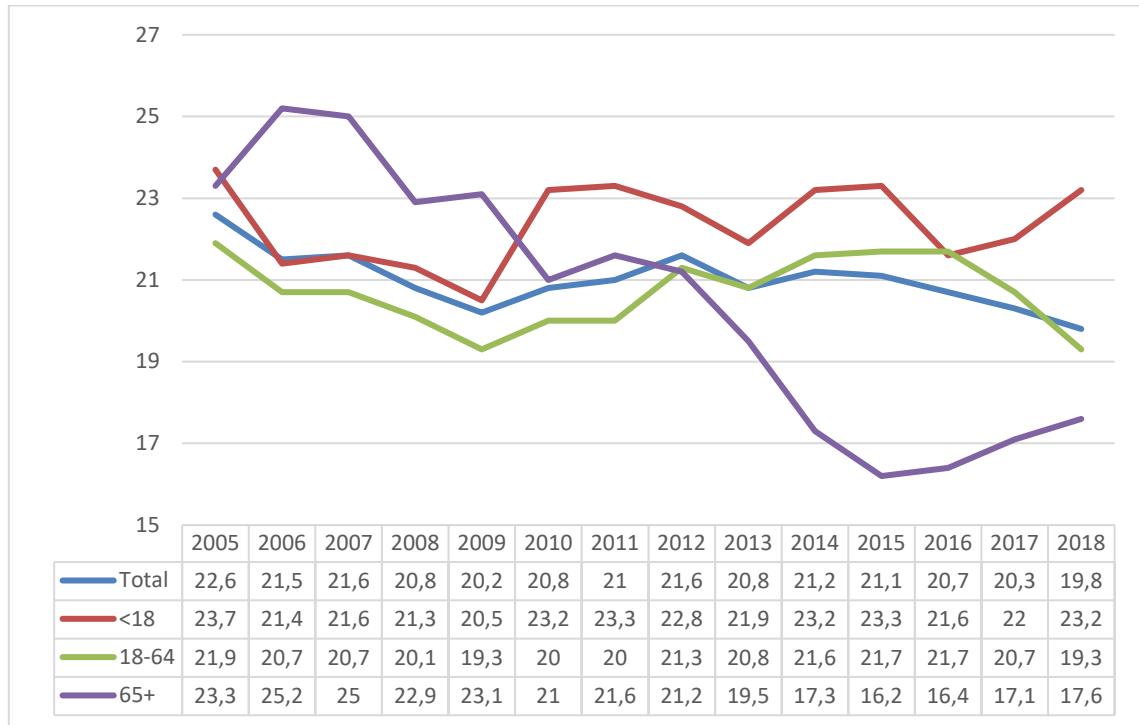
Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT Statistics Belgium.

**Figure A2.3. At-risk-of-poverty rate for elderly population (65+) by different at-risk-of-poverty threshold levels (40%, 50%, 60%, 70% of median equivalent household income)**



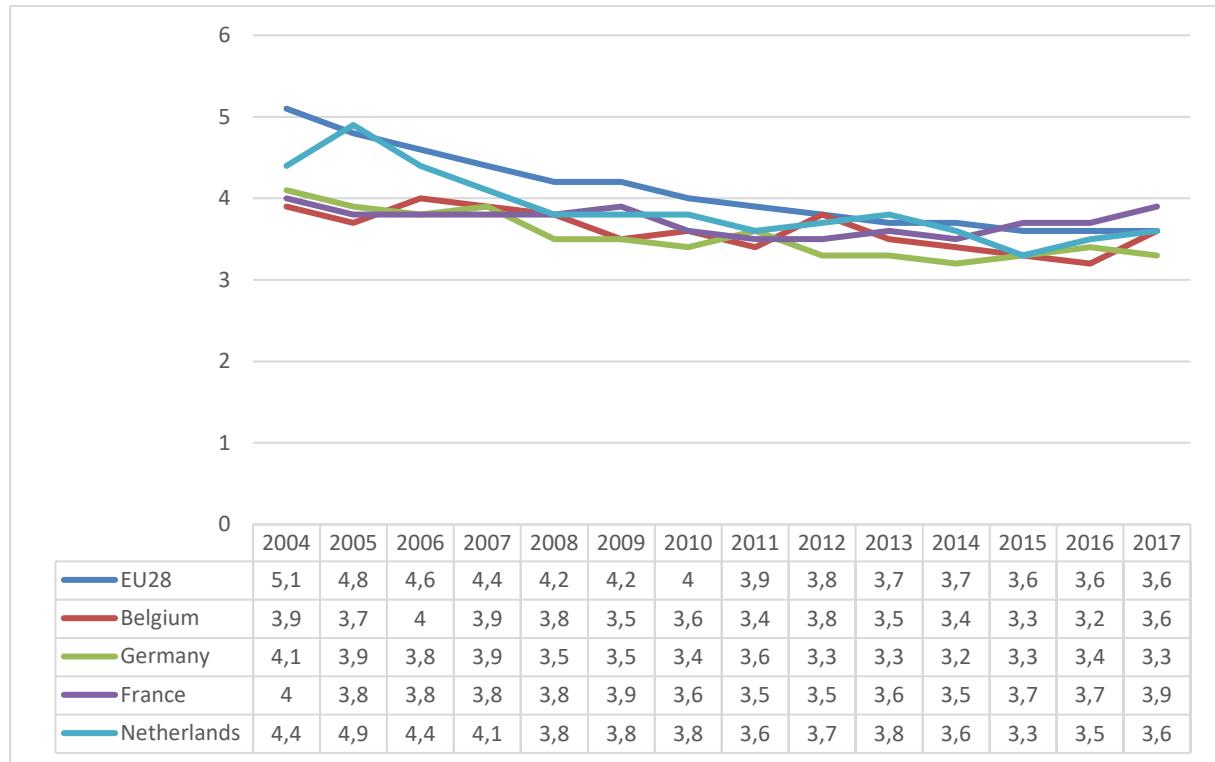
Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure A2.4. AROPE by age in percentage, Belgium**



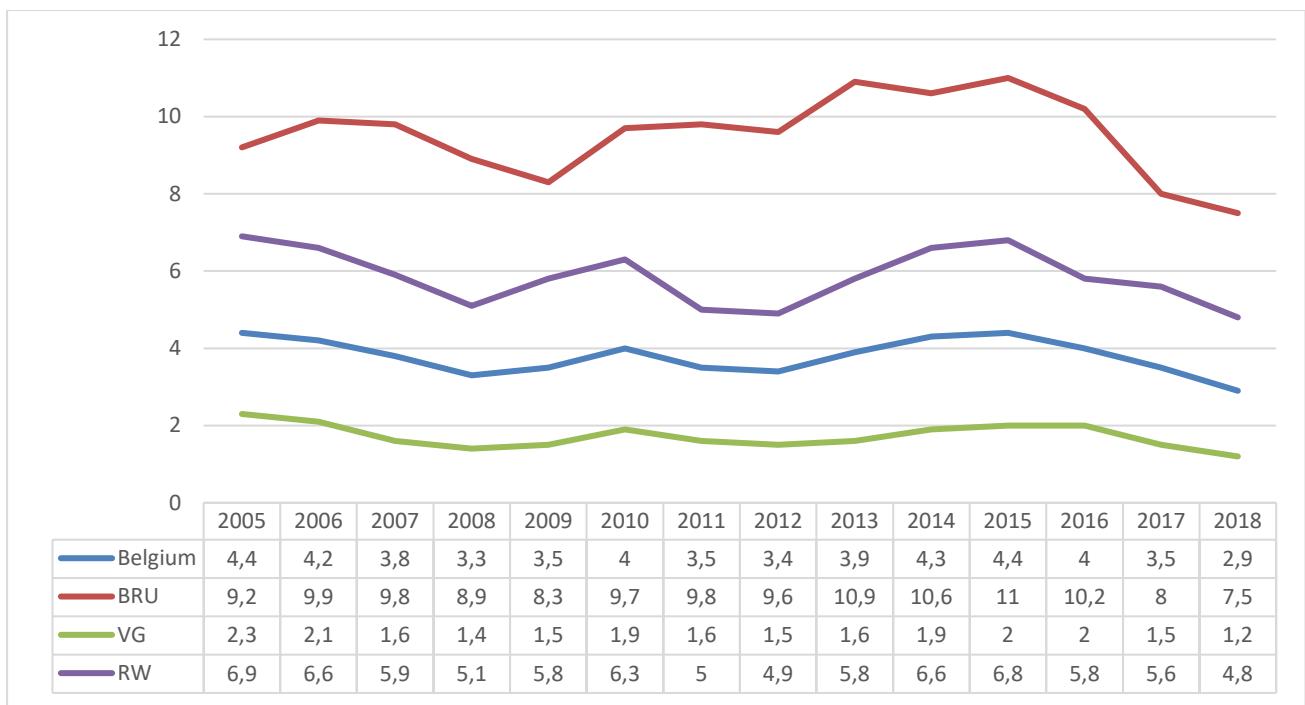
Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure A2.5. Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births), EU28, Belgium and neighbouring countries**



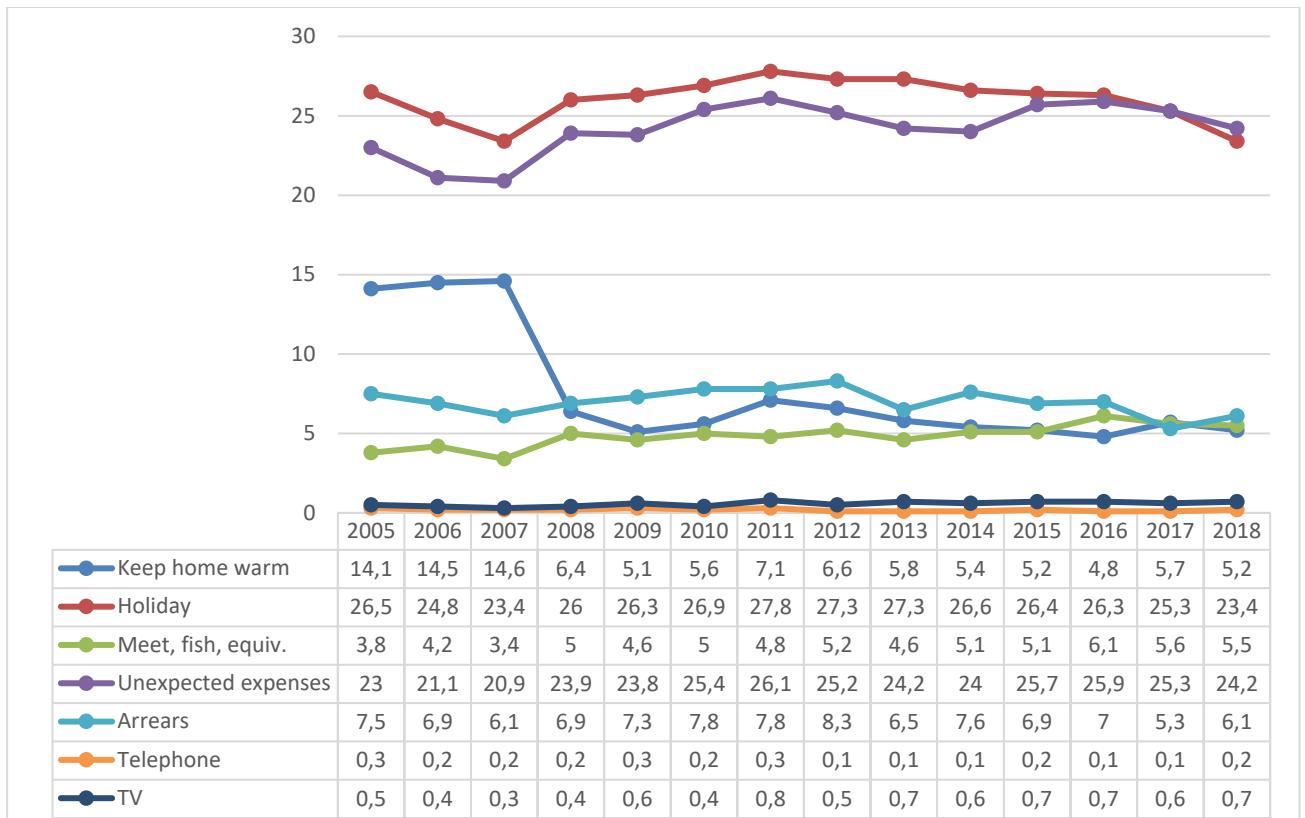
Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT.

**Figure A2.6. Long term unemployment rate, Belgium and Regions**



Source : Labour Force Survey, Statistics Belgium.

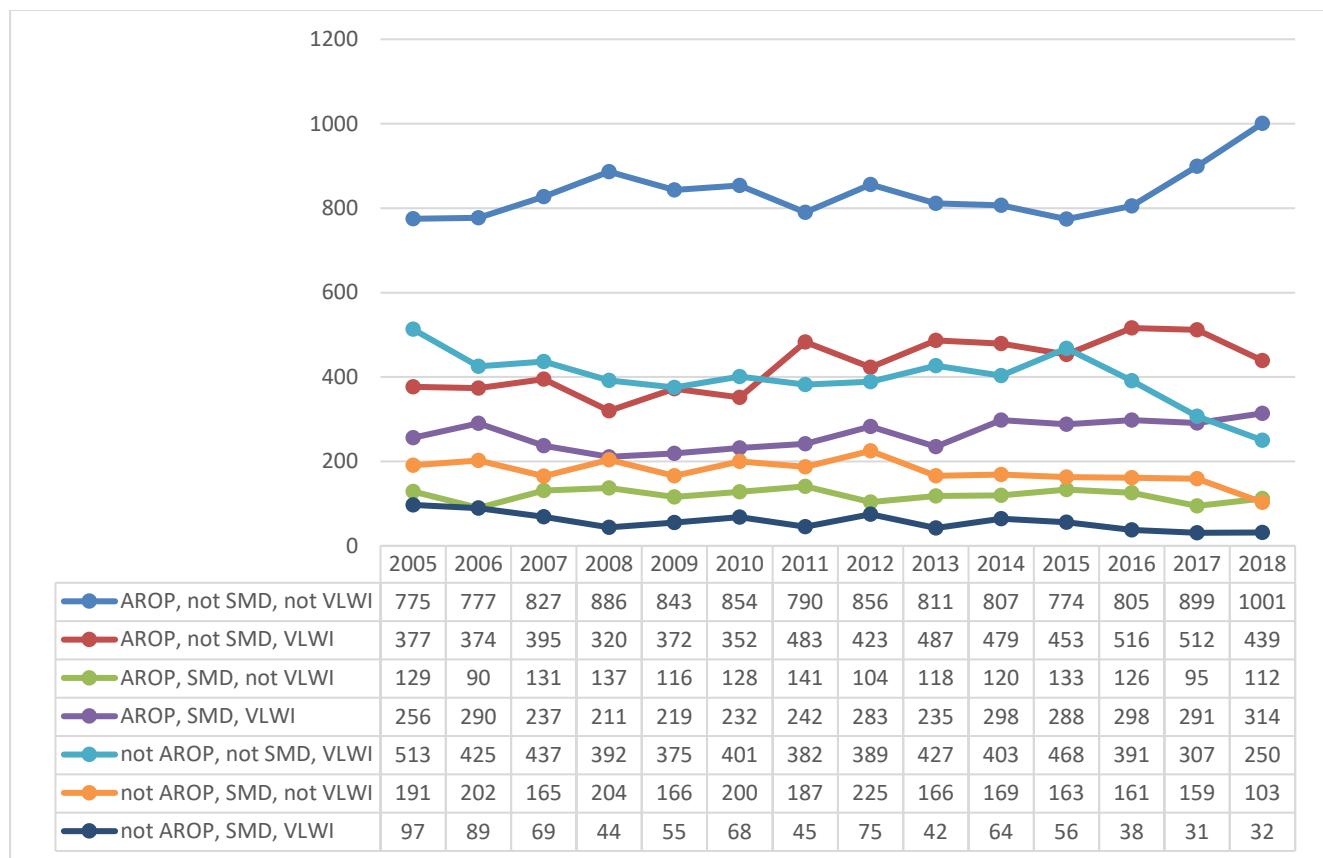
**Figure A2.7. Trends in material deprivation items, Belgium (in %)**



\* Drop for the item "keep home warm" between 2007 and 2008 is due to modification in the survey's question.

Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT.

**Figure A2.8. Intersections between three basic indicators (in 1000 of persons)**



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT.

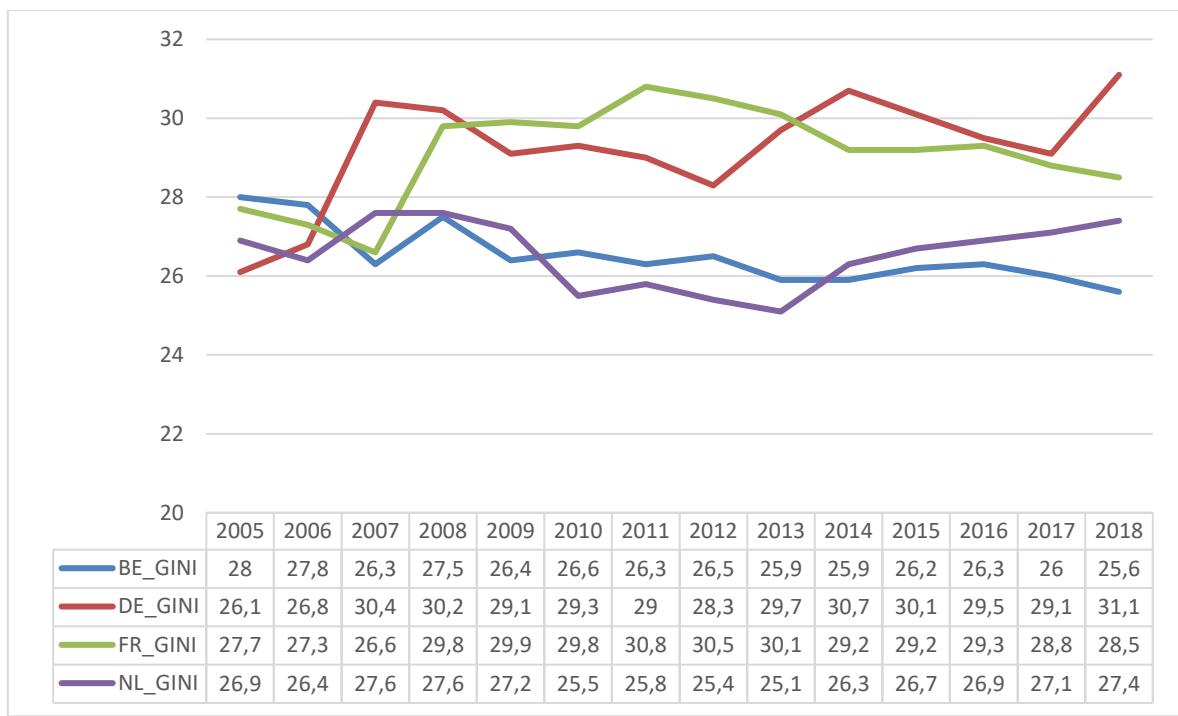
**Figure A2.9. Gender differences in poverty risk (in %)**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>AROP</b>													
single M	18.3	22.5	19.2	18.8	18.1	20.4	19.7	25.2	21.9	20.4	22.0	22.1	23.7
single F	28.1	28.3	25.4	24.6	19.4	22.3	20.7	23.9	22.9	22.0	21.7	21.7	23.8
<b>AROP 65+</b>													
single M	20.4	22.1	20.9	21.1	20.8	19	17.8	18.4	17.2	18.2	17.1	18.9	19.3
single F	29.5	30.9	27	25.2	21.2	20.6	18.3	22.3	18.1	18.6	17.3	18.8	20.3
<b>SMD</b>													
single M	11.2	12	9.3	10.5	12.6	11.8	12.2	15.5	12.2	9.3	10.6	9.6	10.4
single F	10.5	11.1	10.1	9.2	9.5	9	8.4	8	8.7	8.6	8.0	8.6	8.2
<b>VLWI*</b>													
M	12.8	12.6	10.3	11.1	11.9	13.2	13.4	14	14.2	14.1	13.1	12.6	11.2
F	15.9	15	13.2	13.6	13.5	14.4	14.3	14	14.9	15.8	16.2	14.4	13.1

\* These figures include also couples for whom there is no distinction in VLWI status between male and female

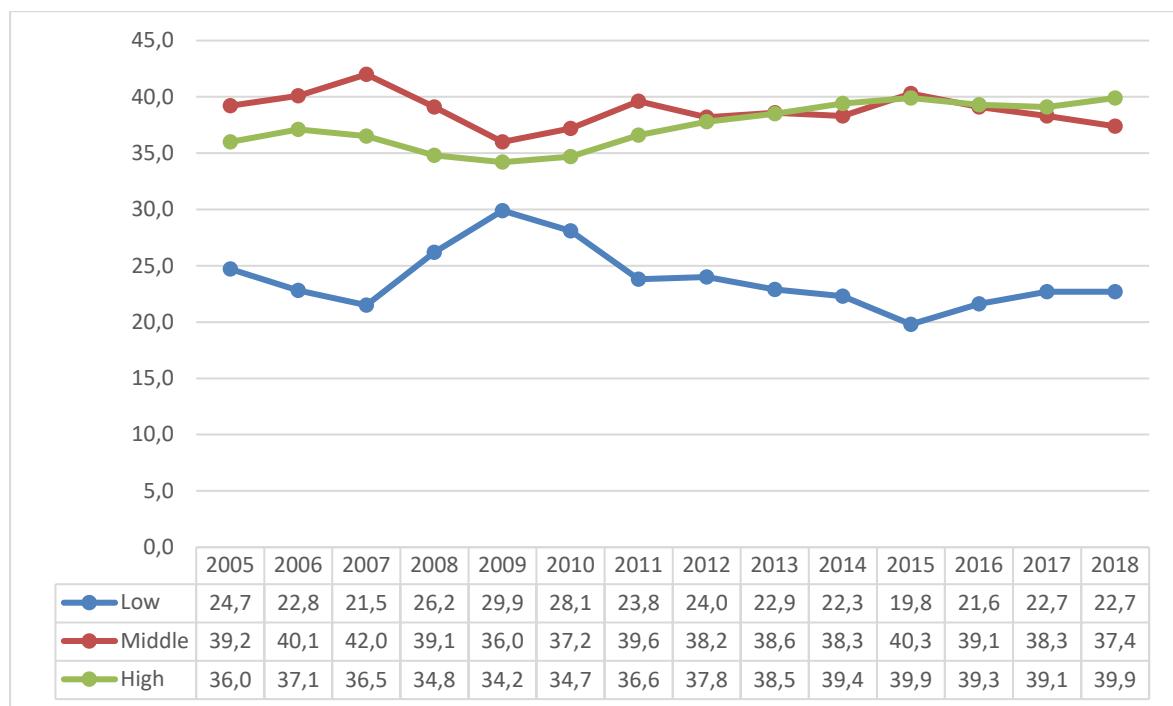
Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT.

**Figure A2.10. Evolution of the GINI index, Belgium and neighbouring countries, 2005-2018**



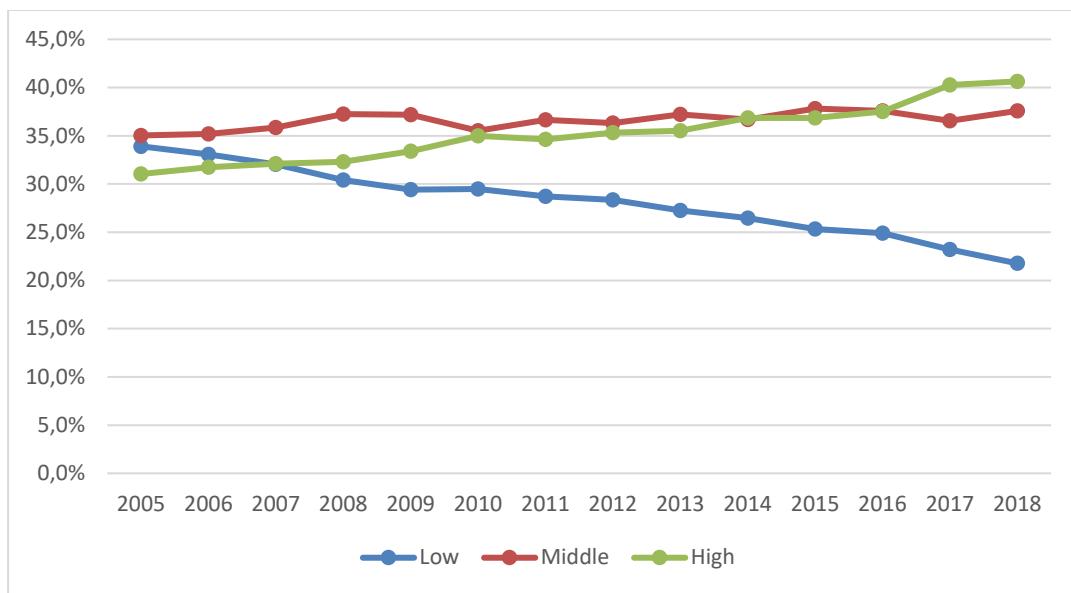
Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT ; Statistics Belgium.

**Figure A2.11. Share of broad educational levels in EU-SILC (18-64)**



Source: EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure A2.12. Share of broad educational levels in LFS (25-64)**

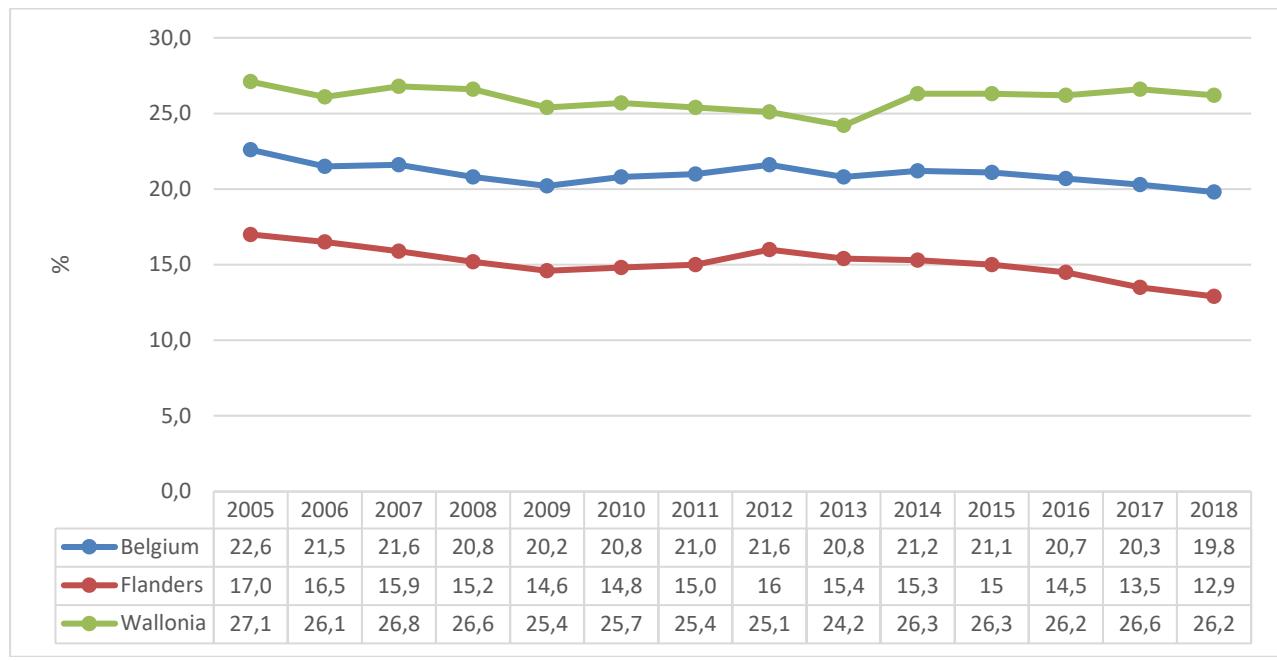


Source: LFS, EUROSTAT.

## ANNEX 3 : TRENDS IN REGIONS

### A 3.1. Indicators on poverty and social exclusion

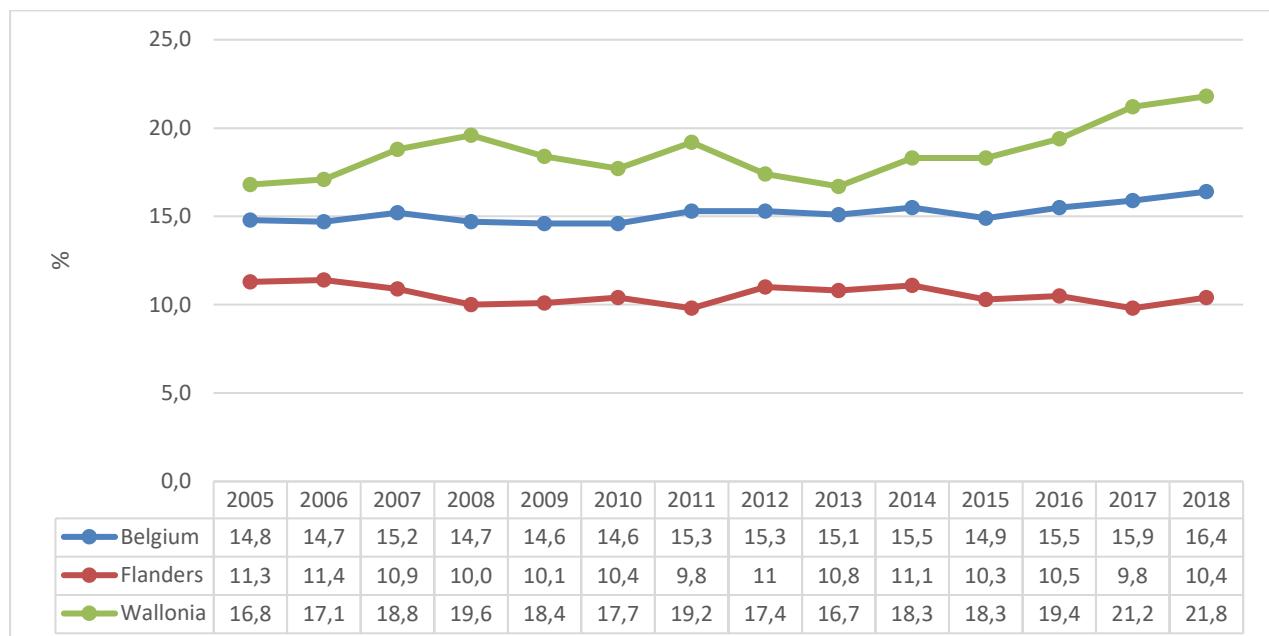
**Figure A3.1.1. At-risk-of poverty or social exclusion per Region (2005-2018, in %)**



Source: EU-SILC, EUROSTAT ; Statistics Belgium.

Brussels 2018 = 38 %

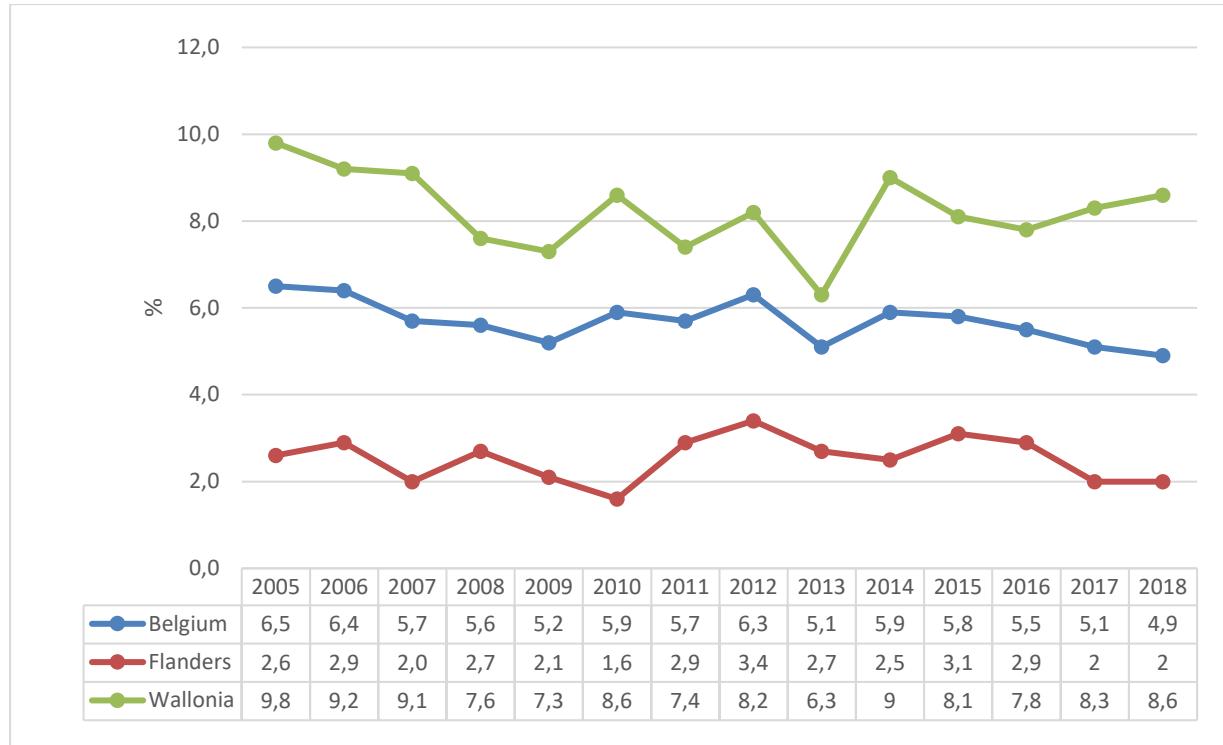
**Figure A3.1.2. At-risk-of-poverty rate per Region (2005-2018, in %)**



Source: EU-SILC, EUROSTAT ; Statistics Belgium.

Brussels 2018 = 32,6 %

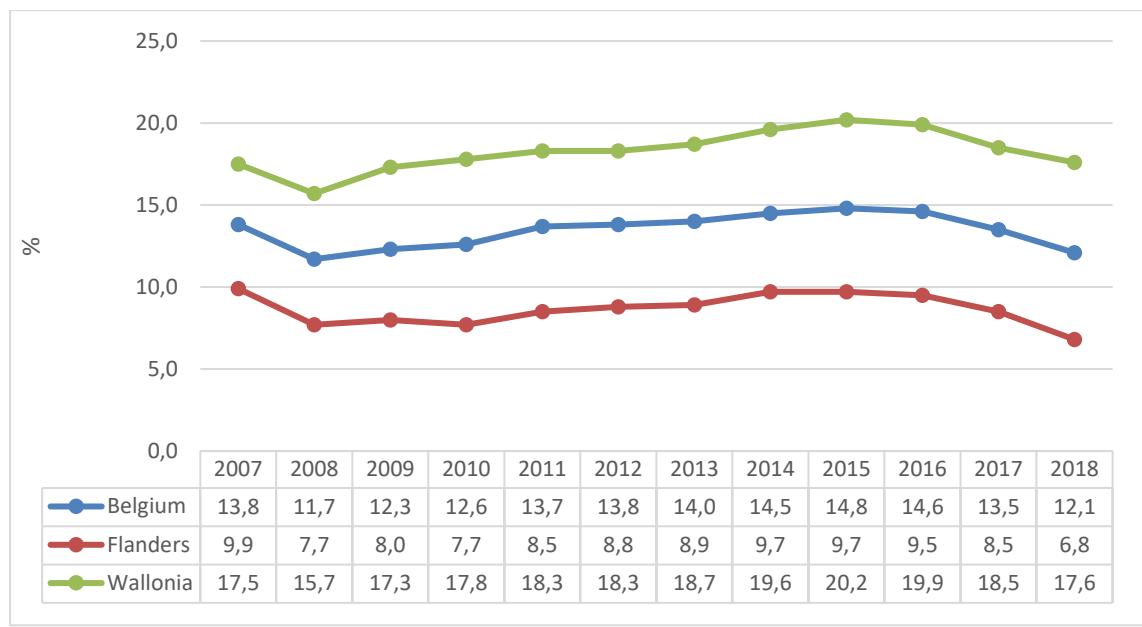
**Figure A3.1.3. Severe material deprivation per Region (2005-2018, in %)**



Source: EU-SILC, EUROSTAT ; Statistics Belgium.

Brussels 2018 = 9,8 %

**Figure A3.1.4. Very low work intensity per Region (2005-2018, in %)**

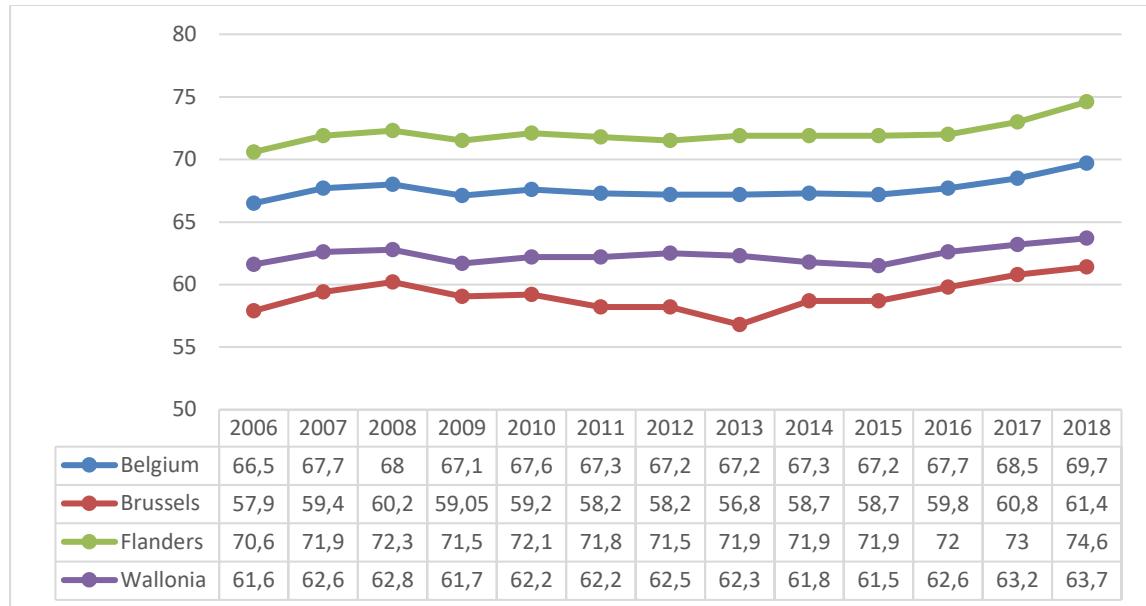


Source: EU-SILC, EUROSTAT ; Statistics Belgium

Brussels 2018 = 23 %

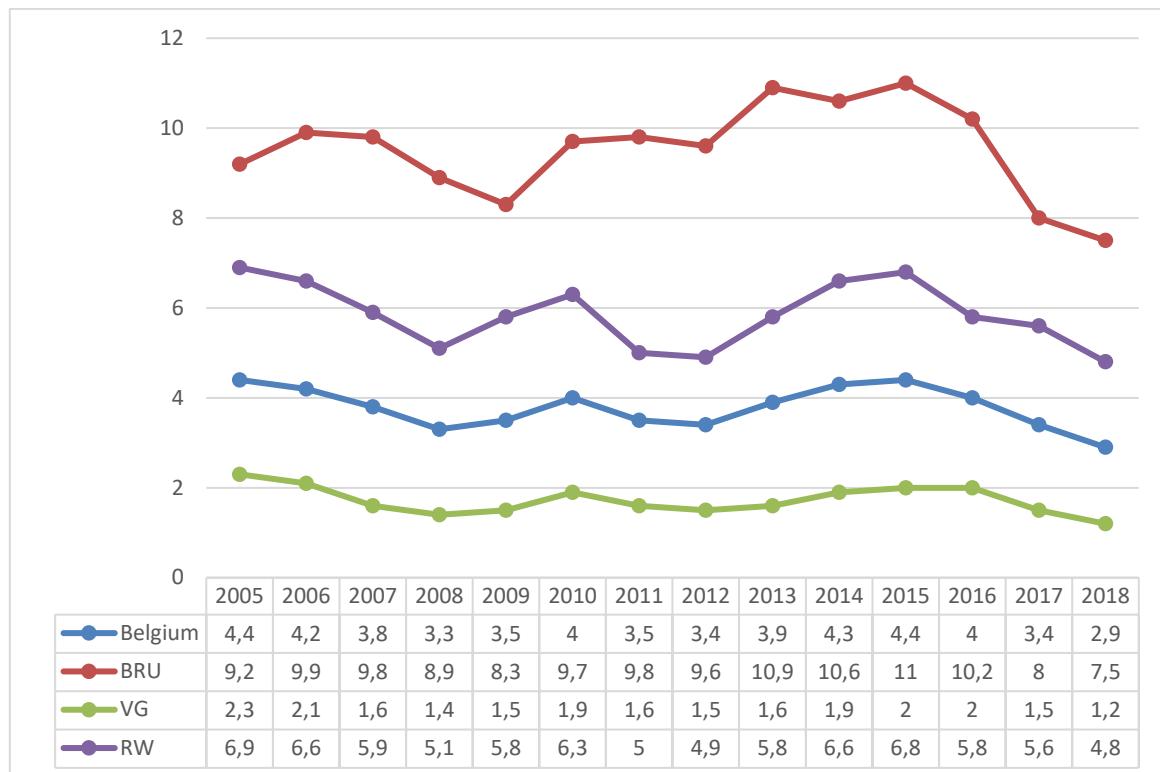
### A 3.2. Labour market performance

**Figure A3.2.1. Employment rate of the age group 20-64 per Region (2005-2018, in %)**



Source: Labour Force Survey, EUROSTAT; Statistics Belgium.

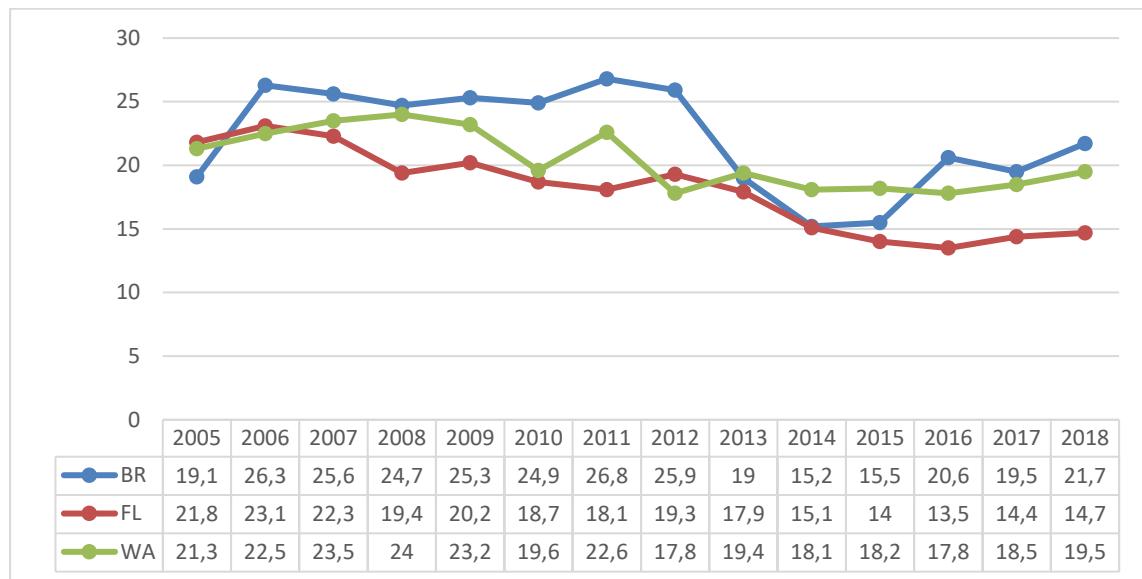
**Figure A3.2.2. Long-term unemployment rate (12 months and more) per Region (2005-2018, in %)**



Source: Labour Force Survey, EUROSTAT.

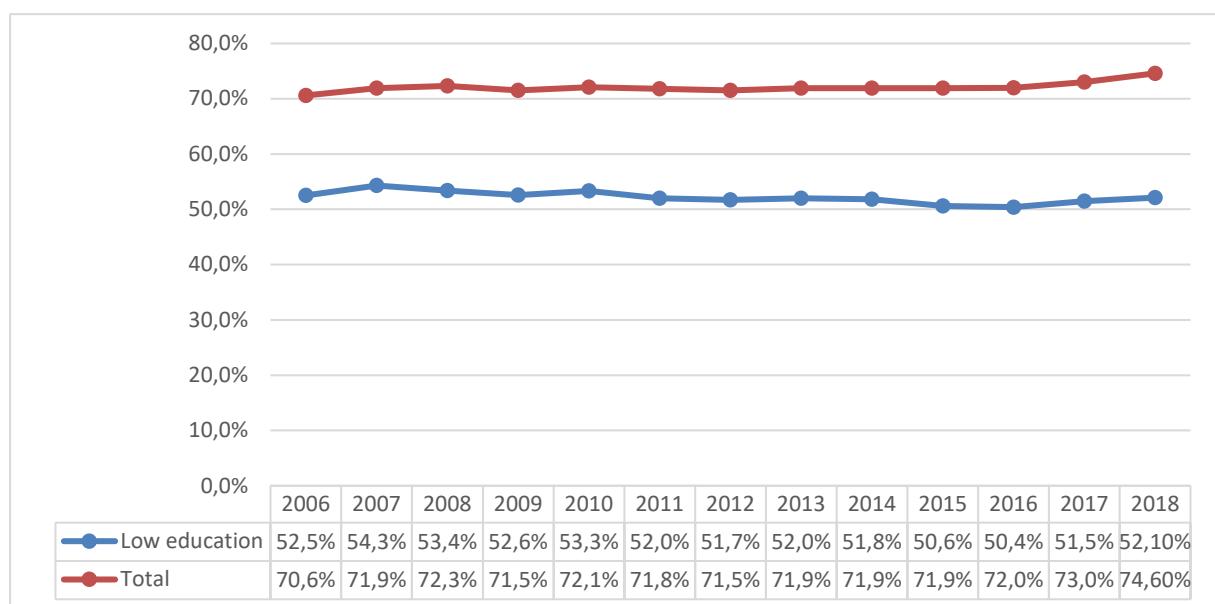
### A 3.3. Differences in trends between subgroups

**Figure A4.3.1. At-risk-of-poverty rate for the elderly population (65+) by Region**



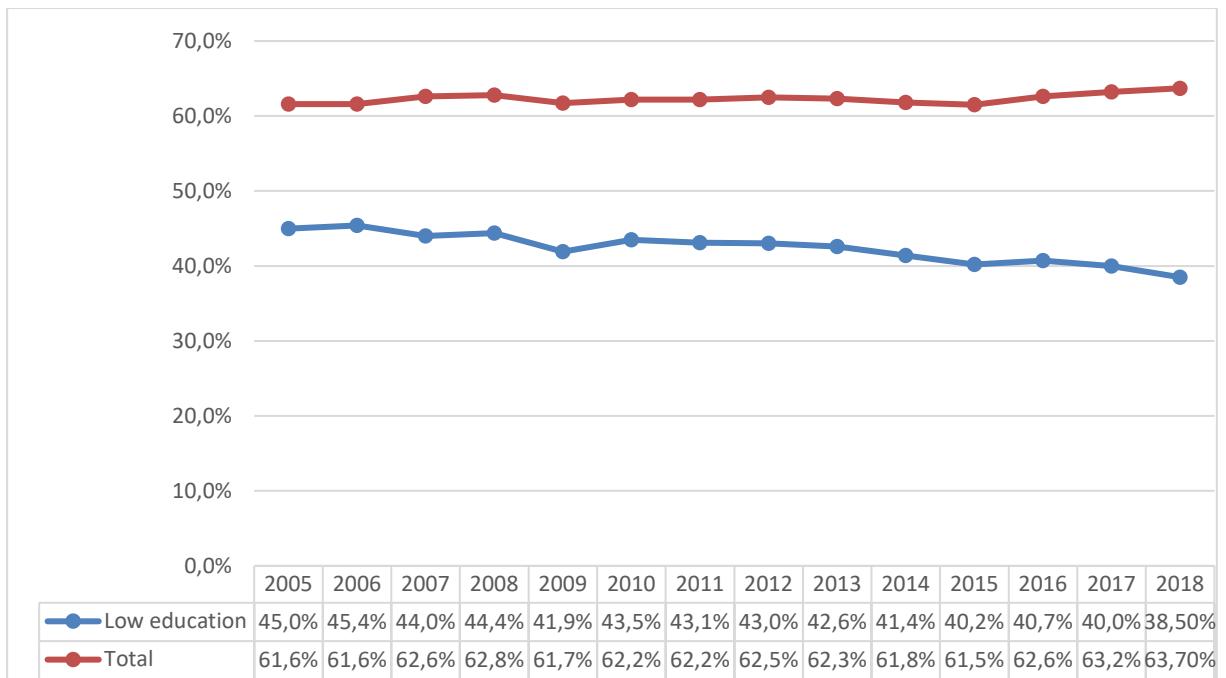
Source: EU-SILC- SVR, IWEPS.

**Figure A3.3.2. Employment rate by educational attainment level, Flanders (2005-2017, in %)**



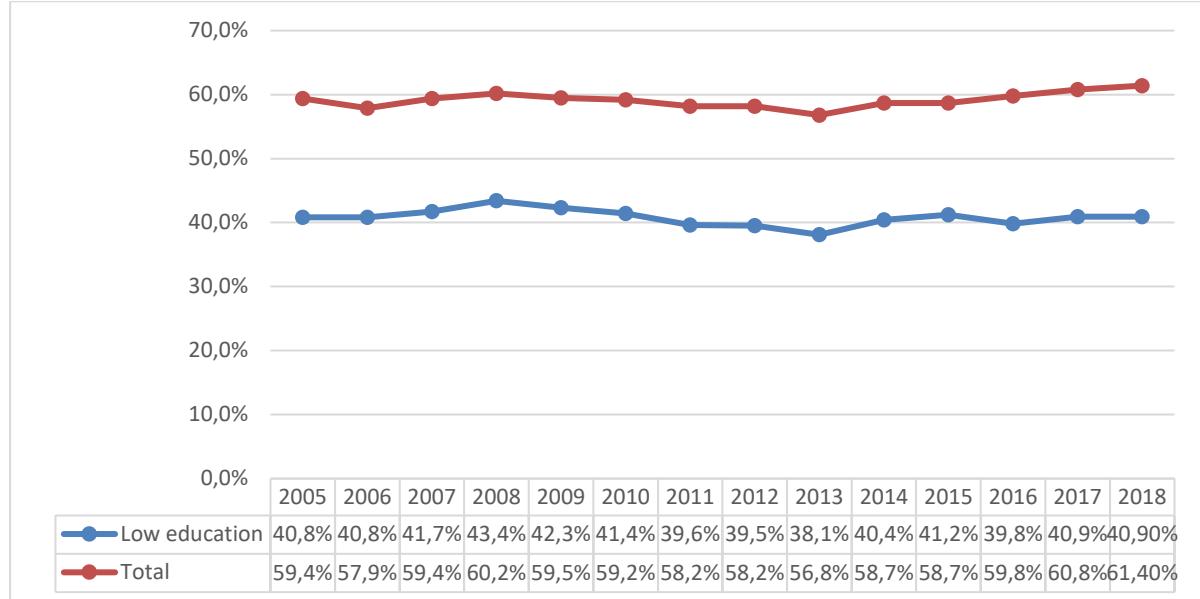
Source: Labour Force Survey, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure A3.3.2bis. Employment rate by educational attainment level, Wallonia (2005-2018, in %)**



Source: Labour Force Survey, Statistics Belgium.

**Figure A3.3.2ter. Employment rate by educational attainment level, Brussels (2005-2018, in %)**

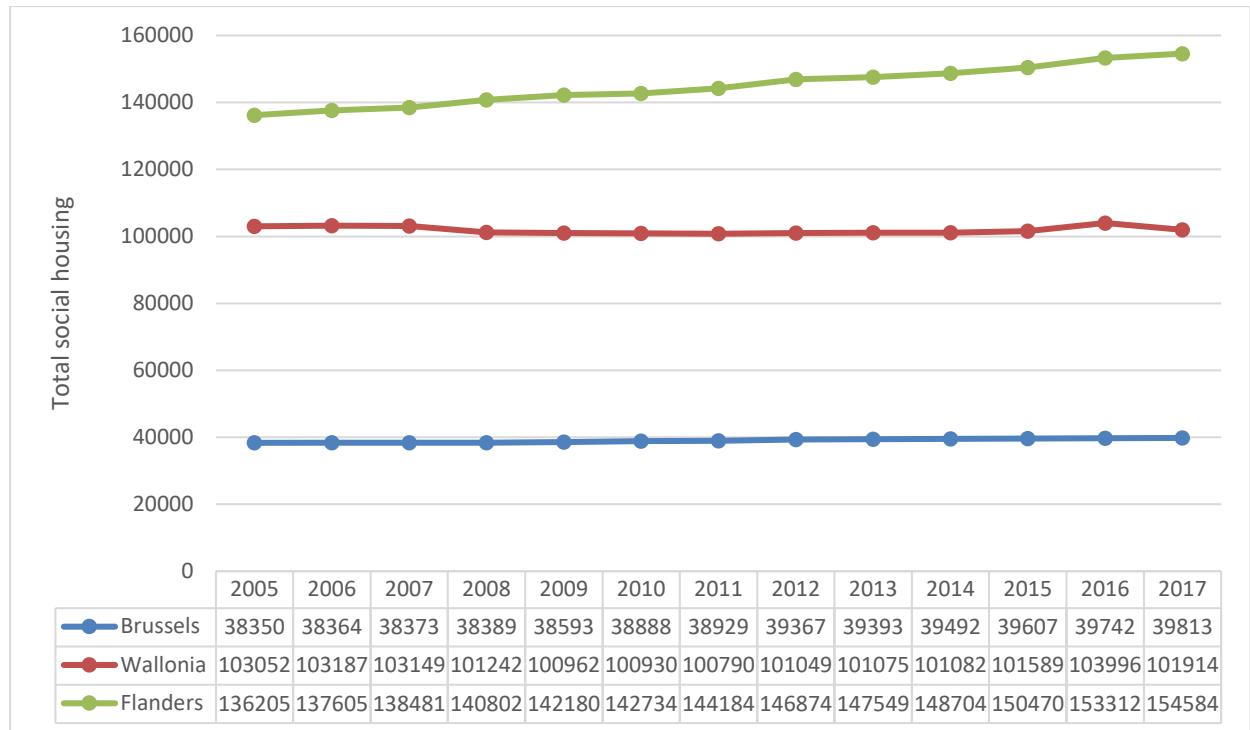


Source: Labour Force Survey, Statistics Belgium.

#### A 3.4. Social Housing

In Belgium, the regions are responsible for social housing. On the basis of the following figure ([figure A.3.4.1](#)), we can conclude that the number of social housing in Wallonia and Brussels is rather stable through years, while it follows an increasing trend in Flanders.

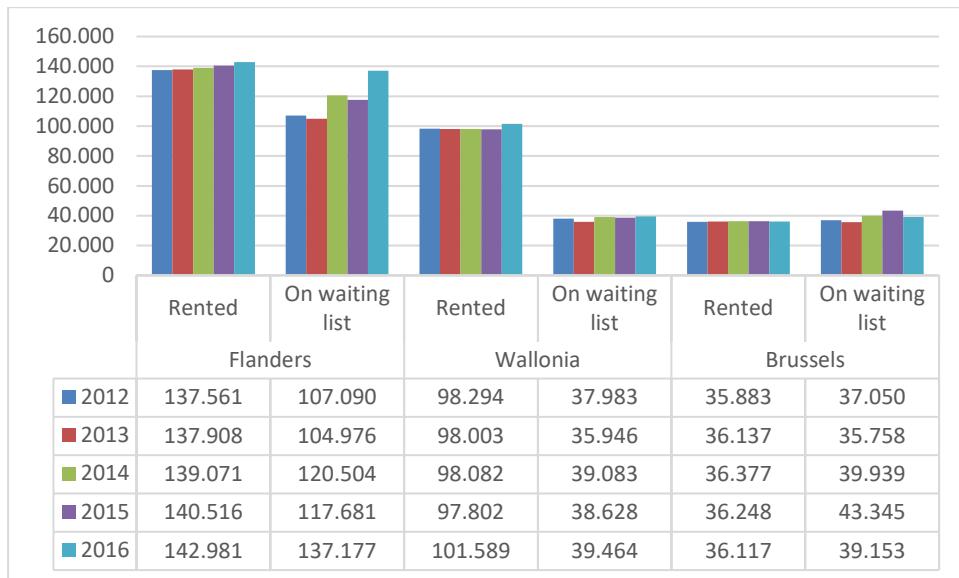
**Figure A.3.4.1. Number of social housing in Belgium, 2005-2017, per region**



Sources: Brussels: Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d'Analyse (IBSA) ; Wallonia: Walloon Housing Company (SWL) ; Flanders: Vlaamse Maatschappij voor Sociaal Wonen (VMSW), Statistiek Vlaanderen and Regionale Statistieken Vlaanderen

Due to differences in data collection, it remains difficult to give an exact figure of the number of persons on a waiting list in the regions. There could also be double counts of people registered in different regions. Furthermore, like the social housing society does, one could make a difference between people who are on a list but who already live in social housing and people who don't. With all these remarks in mind, it seems clear that there is a lack of social housing in all three regions and that waiting lists are particularly long (see [figure A.3.4.2.](#)). The most striking is Brussels, where the demand for social housing represents twice the number of social housing that is actually provided.

**Figure A.3.4.2. Number of social housing rented and of households on waiting list, Belgium, 2012-2016, per region**



Source: [http://www.luttepauvrete.be/chiffres\\_logements\\_sociaux.htm](http://www.luttepauvrete.be/chiffres_logements_sociaux.htm)

### A 3.5. Confidence intervals

As, for the Regions, indicators are often calculated on the basis of smaller populations, so that error rate are higher, we gives in the Table A3.5. an overview of confident intervals (CI) for the key indicators on national and regional level for 2018.

**Table A4.5. Confidence intervals (CI) 2018**

	AROP	CI AROP	LWI	CI LWI	SMD	CI SMD	AROPE	CI AROPE
Belgium	16.4	14.9 – 17.9	12.1	10.4 – 13.8	4.9	3.9 – 5.9	19.8	18.3 – 21.3
Flanders	10.4	8.4 – 12.4	6.8	5.3 – 8.3	2	1.2 – 2.8	12.9	11 – 14.8
Wallonia	21.8	17.6 – 26	17.6	13.4 – 21.8	8.6	5.9 – 11.3	26.2	21.8 – 30.6
Brussels	32.6	28.2 – 37	23	19.1 – 26.9	9.8	7.3 – 12.3	38	33.5 – 42.5

Source : Statistics Belgium.

## **ANNEX 4 : PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON SOCIAL INDICATORS/WRITTEN FEEDBACK**

Jeroen Barrez (POD Maatschappelijke Integratie/SPP Inclusion Sociale), Marion Englert (Observatorium Gezondheid en Welzijn Brussel/Observatoire du Santé et du Sociale Bruxelles), Jean-Maurice Frère (Federaal Planbureau/Bureau Federal du Plan), Geneviève Geenens (STATBEL), Josée Goris (POD Maatschappelijke Integratie/SPP Integration Sociale), , Peter Lelie (FOD Sociale Zekereheid/SPF Sécurité Sociale), Sarah Marchal (Centrum voor Sociaal Beleid/UA), Thibault Morel (Steunpunt armoedebestrijding/Service de lute contre la pauvreté), Ides Nicaise (HIVA/KULeuven), Cathérine Peters (Nationale Commissie voor de rechten van het kind/Commission nationale pour les droits de l'enfant), Natascha Van Mechelen (FOD Sociale Zekerheid/SPF Sécurité Sociale)

## **ANNEX 5 : NEDERLANDSTALIGE SAMENVATTING EN KERNBOODSCHAPPEN VAN DE ANALYSE VAN DE EU SOCIALE INDICATOREN**

In de context van de Europa 2020 doelstelling inzake de reductie van het aantal personen in armoede of sociale uitsluiting stelt de FOD Sociale Zekerheid jaarlijks een monitoringrapport op over de evolutie van de sociale situatie en de sociale bescherming in België. Dit rapport is gebaseerd op de Europese sociale indicatoren. Het rapport beschrijft een aantal trends met het oog op het inschatten en contextualiseren van de evolutie naar de doelstelling.

De subtitel van het rapport, 'langzaam achterop', tracht de aandacht te vestigen op een belangrijke trend. Binnen de context van de sterk ontwikkelde Belgische welvaarstaat wijzen indicatoren enerzijds op een stabiele en lage inkomensongelijkheid en tegelijkertijd op een stijgend armoederisico. Dit rapport linkt beide vaststellingen door aan te tonen dat de beschikbare gezinsinkomens sterker gestegen zijn in de middengroepen dan in de laagste en hoogste inkomensgroepen. Binnen de scope van dit rapport gaat de aandacht uiteraard op de eerste plaats naar de laagste inkomen. De titel benadrukt ook dat dit een gradueel proces is dat zich de afgelopen vijftien jaar heeft gemanifesteerd.

De belangrijkste bevindingen kunnen bondig samengevat worden in volgende punten, daarna volgt een uitgebreidere samenvatting:

- Het aantal personen in een situatie van armoede of sociale uitsluiting (Europa 2020 doelstelling) is quasi stabiel gebleven vergeleken met de beginsituatie
- Terwijl de globale tewerkstellingsgraad toeneemt daalt deze voor laaggeschoolden
- De laagste inkomen bleven achter ten opzichte van globale evolutie van huishoudinkomens.
- De doelmatigheid van de sociale bescherming daalt, voornamelijk voor de actieve bevolking en kinderen

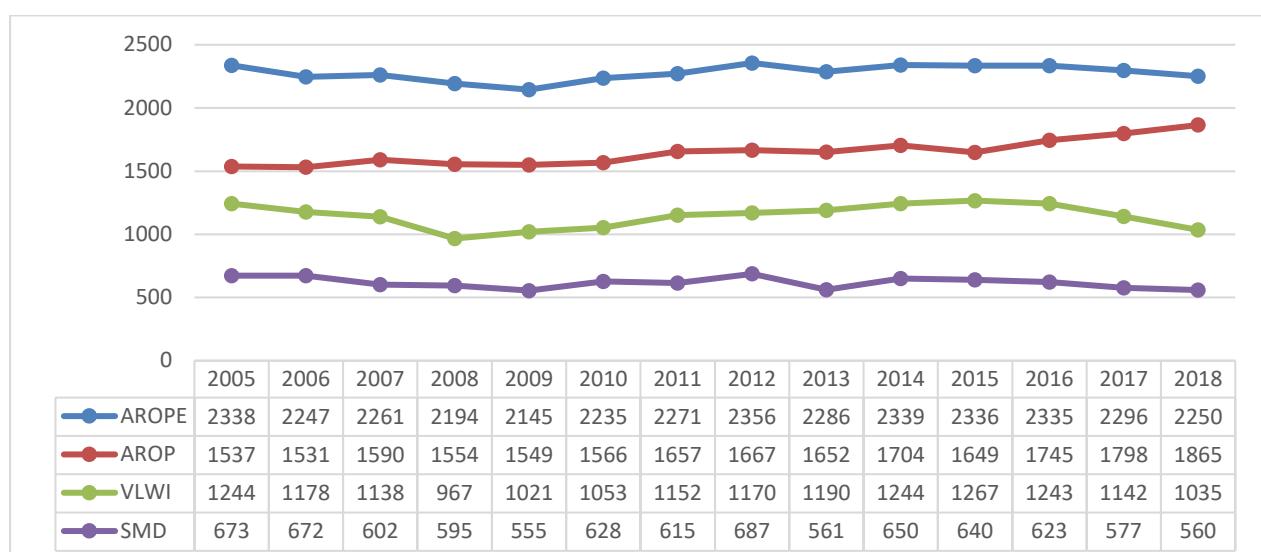
- Ondanks een daling van het aantal huishoudens zonder betaald werk stijgt het armoederisico tot zijn hoogste niveau sinds 2004

Belangrijkste bevindingen in meer detail:

### 1) Geen trend naar Europa 2020 doelstelling

**Het aantal personen in armoede of sociale uitsluiting** (Europa2020 doelstelling)<sup>39</sup> daalt licht sinds 2016, en **bevindt zich in 2018 na voorgaande lichte stijgingen, ongeveer terug op het startniveau van 2008** (2.250.000 tov 2.194.000 in 2008). De daling is vooral een gevolg van het aantal personen in een huishouden zonder betaald werk en, in mindere mate, een daling van het aantal personen in een huishouden met ernstige materiële deprivatie. Het financieel armoederisico vertoont een relatief scherpe stijging sinds 2015 en lag in 2018 (inkomens 2017) met 16,4% op het hoogste niveau sinds de start van de EU-SILC data-collectie.

**Personen in armoede of sociale uitsluiting (AROPE), armoederisico (AROP), ernstige materiële deprivatie (SMD) en zeer lage werkintensiteit (VLWI), België (absoluut aantal x1000)**



### 2) Hoge tewerkstellingsgraad maar toegang tot arbeidsmarkt blijft moeilijk

**Met 69,7% was de tewerkstellingsgraad in 2018 op zijn hoogste niveau ooit.** De tewerkstelling is voortdurend gestegen onder oudere werknemers (55-64), onder de ruime groep in het midden van de beroepsactieve leeftijd (30-54) stijgt de tewerkstelling in beperkte mate sinds 2015. Onder jongeren (20-29) is er pas vanaf 2017 terug een stijging na een dalende trend in de voorgaande jaren. **Onder laaggeschoolden neemt de tewerkstellingsgraad verder af.** **Het aandeel van personen in een huishouden zonder betaald werk daarentegen daalt substantieel maar behoort nog tot de hoogste**

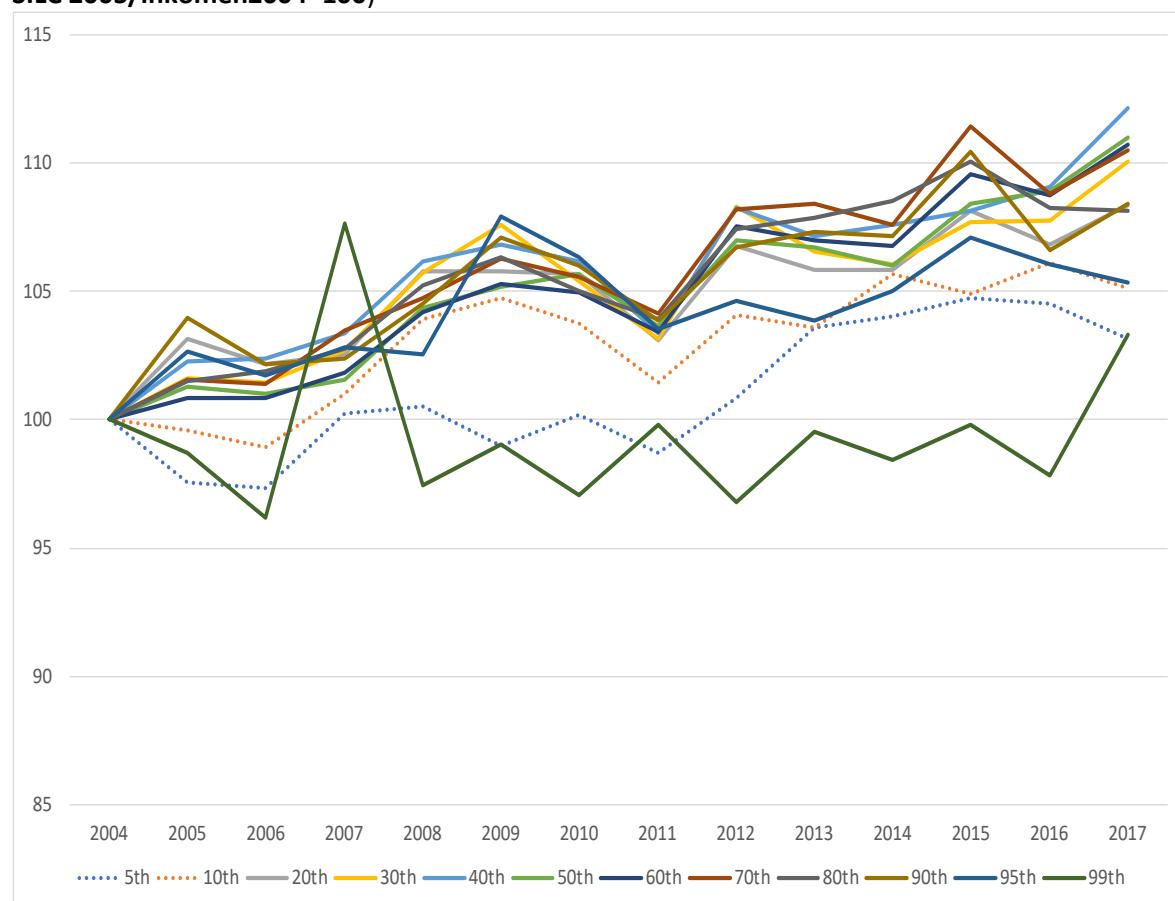
<sup>39</sup> De Europa2020 indicator 'armoede of sociale uitsluiting' is gebaseerd op een combinatie van drie afzonderlijke indicatoren: het aantal personen met armoederisico en/of in een huishouden (quasi) zonder betaald werk en/of in een huishouden met ernstige materiële deprivatie

**in de EU.** De ‘in-work poverty’ graad blijft laag in vergelijking met het EU-cijfer en in vergelijking met de buurlanden, maar vertoont de laatste jaren een licht opwaartse trend.

### 3) Lage inkomensongelijkheid maar laagste inkomens bleven achterop

**De beschikbare gezinsinkomens stijgen in beperkte mate**, wat in de lijn ligt van internationale trends. Algemeen blijft de inkomensongelijkheid laag en stabiel, maar huishoudens met een zeer lage werkintensiteit en de laagste inkomens hebben niet gedeeld in de beperkte stijgingen van de gezinsinkomens. Deze stijgingen hebben zich vooral voorgedaan onder werk-rijke huishoudens en in het midden van de inkomensverdeling. Gelet op de uiteenlopende trends in armoederisico voor verschillende leeftijdsgroepen (zie hieronder) wisselen categorieën van plaats in de inkomensverdeling, waarbij ouderen met lage inkomens enigszins naar boven schuiven, terwijl zwakkere groepen onder de bevolking op actieve leeftijd hun plaats helemaal onderaan innemen.

**Mediaan (equivalent) huishoudinkomen per inkomenspercentiel, België (in prijzen van 2017, EU-SILC 2005/inkomen2004=100)**



#### **4) Toenemend armoederisico**

**Met 16,4 % ligt het armoederisico significant hoger dan bij het begin van de observatieperiode (14,8% in 2005).** Het armoederisico bereikt daarmee zijn hoogste niveau sinds het begin van de systematische monitoring. De opwaartse trend tekent zich vooral af sinds 2015, waar voordien het niveau stabiel bleef. Echter deze stabiliteit was ook reeds een gevolg van uiteenlopende trends voor verschillende bevolkingsgroepen.

**Het armoederisico onder ouderen stijgt opnieuw sinds 2015, na een sterke en voortdurende dalende trend** sinds het begin van de waarnemingen in 2004. De recente stijging ligt in de lijn van de stijging van het armoederisico voor de globale bevolking. **De armoedekloof, het verschil tussen het mediaan inkomen van ouderen onder de armoedegrens en de armoedegrens zelf, blijft wel verder dalen.** Dit wijst erop dat de laagste inkomens onder ouderen verder blijven stijgen, zij het dat zij daarmee in mindere mate dan de voorgaande jaren boven de armoedegrens komen.

**Het armoederisico onder de bevolking op actieve leeftijd stabiliseert in 2018 (inkomens 2017), na opeenvolgende stijgingen in de vorige jaren. In deze bevolkingscategorie neemt de kloof tussen hoog- en laagopgeleiden verder toe.** Zowel de kloof in de tewerkstellingsgraad als in het armoederisico tussen laag- en hoger opgeleiden blijft verder toenemen in 2018.

Na een aantal jaar fluctuaties zonder duidelijke stijgende of dalende trend neemt **het percentage kinderen dat leeft in een gezin met een armoederisico relatief sterk toe tussen 2016 en 2018.**

Inzake specifieke categorieën kan vastgesteld worden dat België ook in de nieuwste 2018 cijfers nagenoeg het **hoogste armoederisico in de EU blijft noteren voor personen met een niet EU-nationaliteit** (48,3% t.o.v. 38,3% voor de EU). Het armoederisico voor personen met een handicap blijft zich ook boven het EU-cijfers situeren (23,1% t.o.v. 20,9%).

Het armoederisico is substantieel hoger onder, zowel private als sociale, huurders dan onder eigenaars van de woning. De stijging situeert zich ook enkel onder huurders.

Er blijven belangrijke verschillen bestaan tussen de armoedeniveau's van de verschillende **regio's**. Deze verschillen zijn tijdens de meest recente jaren verder toegenomen, met een stijging in Wallonië en een eerder stabiel niveau in Vlaanderen.

#### **5) Doelmatigheid van sociale bescherming onder toenemende druk**

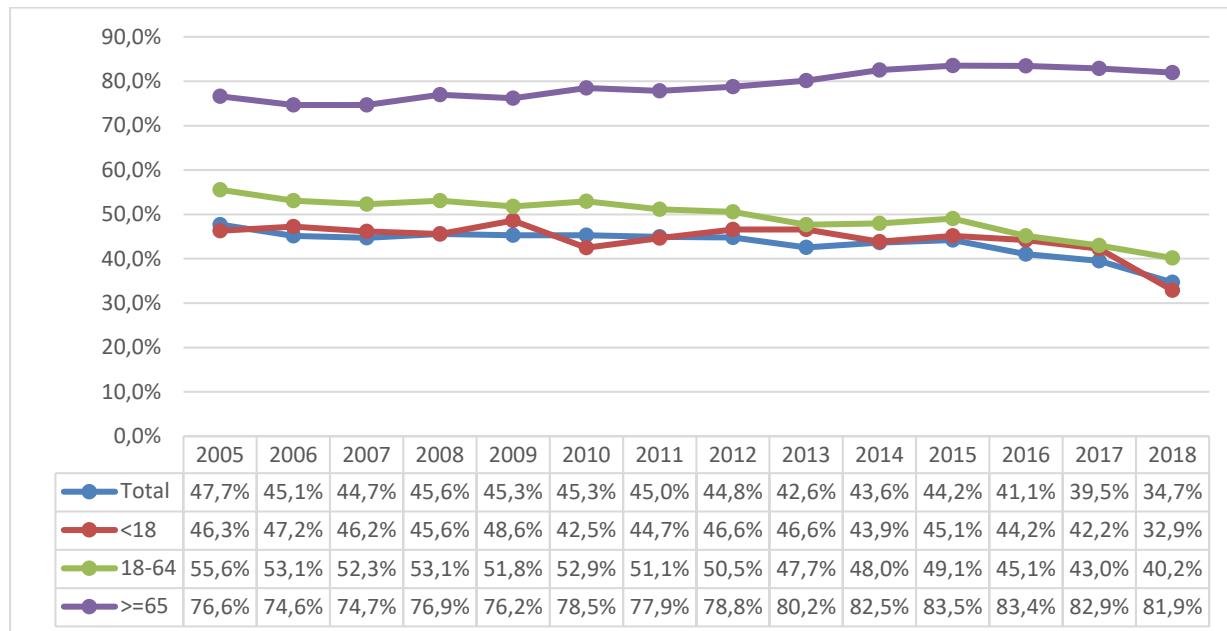
De trends inzake het aantal uitkeringstrekkers blijven zich verder doorzetten. **Het aantal volledig werkloze uitkeringsgerechtigde werklozen blijft dalen, terwijl het aantal invaliden blijft stijgen** en zich met 400.000 ongeveer op hetzelfde niveau bevindt als het aantal werklozen. **Ook het aantal leefloners steeg licht verder in 2018, net als het aantal personen met een inkomensvervangende tegemoetkoming wegens handicap.**

Volgens de meest recente volledige EU statistieken inzake sociale bestedingen (ESSPROS-2016) bevonden de sociale beschermingsuitgaven in percentage van het BBP (29,6%) zich enigszins boven het EU28 gemiddelde (28,1%) en op het niveau van Nederland (29,5%) en Duitsland (29,4%) en onder het niveau van Frankrijk (34,3%). Voor 2017 is er nog geen EU cijfer beschikbaar, maar de positie t.o.v.

de buurlanden blijft ongeveer gelijk, met lichte afnames zowel voor België als voor de meeste buurlanden.

**De effectiviteit van de sociale transfers<sup>40</sup>** is traditioneel relatief hoog in België, maar daalt de laatste jaren voor kinderen en personen op actieve leeftijd. Deze daling zet zich verder door in de meest recente cijfers voor 2018. Voor ouderen blijft de effectiviteit in 2018 stabiel, na eerdere toenemers.

Effectiviteit van sociale bescherming naar leeftijdscategorie: % reductie van de pre-transfer armoedegraad door sociale transfers, België



**Het armoederisico voor personen die leven in een huishouden (quasi) zonder werk** is een goede indicator voor de toereikendheid van de sociale uitkeringen. Deze huishoudens zijn immers doorgaans afhankelijk van deze uitkeringen als inkomensbron. **Het is opmerkelijk dat het armoederisico voor personen in deze huishoudens de laatste jaren sterk gestegen is en hoger ligt dan het gemiddelde voor de EU (70% tegenover 61%). Vooral voor huishoudens zonder betaald werk en met kinderen blijken de uitkeringen in hoge mate ontoereikend te zijn.** Het armoederisico voor deze groep ligt boven 80%.

**De sociale minima hebben gelijke tred gehouden met de armoedegrens,** en dus met de globale welvaartsontwikkeling. De meeste minima, met uitzondering voor deze voor pensioenen en invaliditeitsuitkeringen voor alleenstaanden, blijven echter onder de armoedegrens en op een gelijke afstand daarvan.

40 Het % reductie van de pre-transfer armoedegraad door sociale transfers

## **6) Verbetering van laagste pensioenen en stabiele globale inkomenspositie van ouderen**

De verhouding tussen het mediane inkomen van ouderen en dat van de jongere bevolking en de verhouding van het mediaan pensioen ten opzichte van het mediaan arbeidsinkomen stabiliseren in de meest recente gegevens, na eerdere lichte toenames tijdens de voorgaande jaren. **Het sterk gedaalde armoederisico onder ouderen tijdens het afgelopen anderhalve decennium wijst bijgevolg niet op een algemene substantiële verbetering van de inkomenspositie van ouderen ten opzichte van jongere leeftijdsgroepen, maar wel op een verbetering onder de laagste inkomens**, en dus op een verbeterde doelmatigheid van de laagste pensioenen. Naar de toekomst toe wijzen simulaties op een stabilisatie van de vervangingsratio van de pensioen voor iemand die gedurende de ganse carrière aan het gemiddeld loon werkt. Voor lage lonen zou de vervangingsratio duidelijk stijgen, terwijl deze voor hoge lonen duidelijk zou dalen.

## **7) Uitstel medische zorgen blijft relatief hoog voor lage inkomens**

De resultaten van enkele recente rapporten inzake de gezondheid van de Belgische bevolking en de werking van de gezondheidszorg worden weergegeven. Deze wijzen o.a. op blijvende ongelijkheden op het vlak van gezondheid en een aantal zwakkere punten in de gezondheidszorg zoals de performantie van preventie.

Op het vlak van toegankelijkheid wijst de ‘unmet need for medical care’ indicator op een stabiel niveau van personen die aangeven gezondheidszorgen te hebben moeten uitstellen omwille van financiële redenen, wachtlijsten of afstand. Globaal situeert deze indicator zich op hetzelfde niveau als het cijfer voor de EU (1,8%). **Voor het laagste inkomensquintiel is het cijfer aanzienlijk hoger (6,4%). Voor deze groep blijft het, ondanks een lichte daling tussen de laatste twee beschikbare jaren, aanzienlijk boven het EU cijfer liggen (6,4% ten opzichte van 3,4%).**

## **Naar het einde van de Europa2020 strategie: afsluitende opmerkingen**

Bij de start van de Europa2020 strategie werd er van uitgegaan dat de EU-SILC 2018 cijfers de meest recente zouden zijn bij het beëindigen van de strategie, en dus als basis zouden dienen voor de evaluatie. Door de verbeterde tijdsdruk van de gegevens is het misschien mogelijk dat eind 2020 ook de EU-SILC 2019 cijfers reeds beschikbaar zullen zijn. **In elk geval lijkt het voor België duidelijk dat de doelstelling om het aantal personen in een situatie van armoede of sociale uitsluiting te verminderen met 380.000 niet zal gehaald worden en dat er ook geen substantiële trend in de richting van de doelstelling kan vastgesteld worden**, een vaststelling die niet enkel voor België geldt. Deze conclusie ligt in de lijn van de vaststellingen van het Federaal Planbureau (2019) dat de trend van het percentage personen in armoede of sociale uitsluiting niet op schema ligt voor het bereiken van de doelstelling in het dader van de doelstellingen inzake duurzame ontwikkeling, een doelstelling die de ambitie vooropzet van een reductie van 50%.

**Er is globaal genomen een behoorlijk grote consistentie in de gegevens doorheen de tijd en tussen diverse bronnen, en dus ook in de aandachtspunten die in de opeenvolgende monitoringrapporten werden aangestipt. De globale verklarende factoren worden weerspiegelt in de key-messages aan**

het begin van deze samenvatting. De tewerkstellingsgraad blijft om diverse redenen te laag voor zwakkere groepen en de doelmatigheid van de sociale bescherming is afgenoem voor de bevolking op beroepsactieve leeftijd, zeker voor gezinnen met kinderen. Het eerste ondanks talrijke activeringsmaatregelen, laatste ondanks het gegeven dat de minimumbescherming (bijstand en minimum uitkeringen) gelijke tred hebben gehouden met de welvaartsontwikkeling, zij het dat zij in veel gevallen onder de armoederisicogrens blijven.

De Europa2020 doelstelling is gebaseerd op een combinatie van drie indicatoren die elk een specifiek aspect van armoede en sociale uitsluiting weerspiegelen. De monitoring vereist dan ook een bredere analyse van de sociale situatie en de sociale bescherming. **De bevindingen van deze analyse wijzen op de samenhang tussen de verschillende aspecten van de problematiek en tot de conclusie dat België niet immuun is voor internationale trends die de sociale cohesie onder druk zetten.**

De Europa 2020 strategie introduceerde het gebruik van targets als een beleidsinstrument in het domein van het sociaal beleid. In hun gezamenlijke inschatting van de strategie presenteren het EU Sociaal Beschermingscomité en het Tewerkstellingscomité een gemengd beeld van de resultaten inzake het behalen van de doelstellingen op EU-niveau. Terwijl de tewerkstellingsdoelstellingen nagenoeg zal bereikt worden is er minder vooruitgang voor de doelstelling inzake armoede en sociale uitsluiting. Ook al is de realisatie van de doelstellingen gemengd, beide Comités beoordelen het gebruik van targets toch als een positieve ontwikkeling, net als de indicatoren waarop de armoede- en sociale uitsluitingsdoelstelling gebaseerd was.

## ANNEX 6 : RÉSUMÉ ET MESSAGES CLÉS DE L'ANALYSE DES INDICATEURS SOCIAUX EUROPÉENS

Dans le cadre de l'objectif de réduction de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion sociale de la Stratégie Européenne 2020, le SPF Sécurité sociale réalise un rapport de monitoring annuel sur l'évolution de la situation sociale et de la protection sociale en Belgique. Ce rapport est basé sur les indicateurs sociaux européens. Ce rapport décrit une série de tendances qui contextualisent l'évolution sociale au travers de cet objectif EU 2020.

Le sous-titre de ce rapport, « *Un lent décrochage caché* », essaie d'attirer l'attention sur une évolution cruciale. Dans un contexte d'état providence belge très développé, les indicateurs d'inégalités de revenus sont stables et bas, mais en même temps le taux de pauvreté augmente. Le rapport lie ces deux constats, à priori contradictoires, en montrant que les augmentations de revenus ont été plus fortes pour les ménages de la classe « moyenne » que pour les ménages à très bas et hauts revenus. Bien sûr, au vu du scope de ce rapport, le focus s'est fait sur les bas revenus. Le titre insiste aussi sur le fait que cela a été une évolution progressive au cours des 15 dernières années.

**Les principales conclusions du rapport peuvent être résumées brièvement par les cinq points suivants, complété par un résumé plus large :**

- Le nombre de personnes en situation de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale (objectif EU 2020) est resté quasi stable comparé avec le niveau du début de la stratégie européenne.

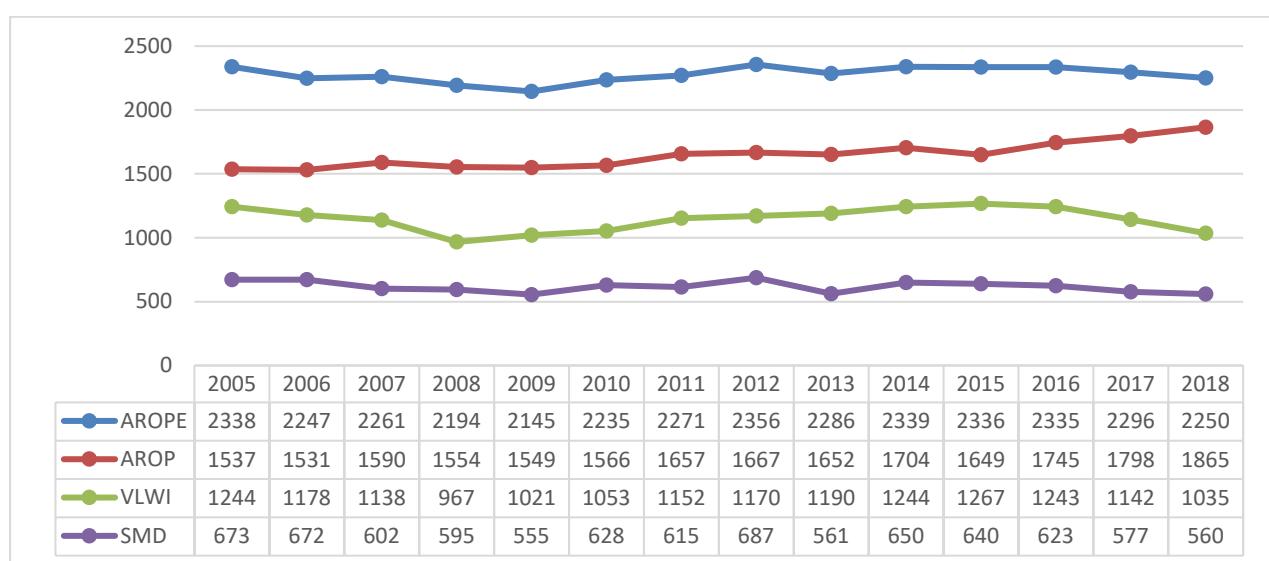
- Alors que le taux d'emploi a augmenté pour la population globale, il a diminué pour les personnes à faible niveau d'enseignement.
- Les plus bas revenus reculent, décrochent, en comparaison avec l'augmentation globale des revenus des ménages.
- L'adéquation des transferts sociaux diminue, en particulier pour la population en âge de travailler et pour les enfants.
- Malgré une diminution du nombre de ménages quasi sans-emploi (c'est à dire à très faible intensité de travail), le risque de pauvreté a augmenté pour atteindre son maximum depuis 2004.

#### LES PRINCIPALES CONCLUSIONS DANS LE DÉTAIL :

##### 1. *Pas de tendance vers l'objectif Europe 2020*

**Le nombre de personnes en situation de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale** (Objectif Europe 2020) a légèrement diminué depuis 2016 et est en 2018, après les augmentations précédentes, de retour à son niveau de 2008, le point de départ de la stratégie 2020 (**2.250.000** en **2018** pour **2.194.000** en **2008**). La petite baisse depuis 2016 est principalement due à une diminution du nombre de ménages quasi sans-emploi, et dans une moindre mesure, à une diminution du nombre de ménages en situation de privation matérielle sévère. Le taux de risque de pauvreté montre par contre une hausse relativement forte depuis 2015 et était en 2018 (sur base des revenus 2017) à son plus haut niveau (16.4%) depuis la collecte des données EU-SILC.

#### Risque de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale (AROPE), Risque de pauvreté (AROP), privation matérielle sévère (SMD) et très faible intensité de travail (VLWI), Belgique (nombre absolu x1000)



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

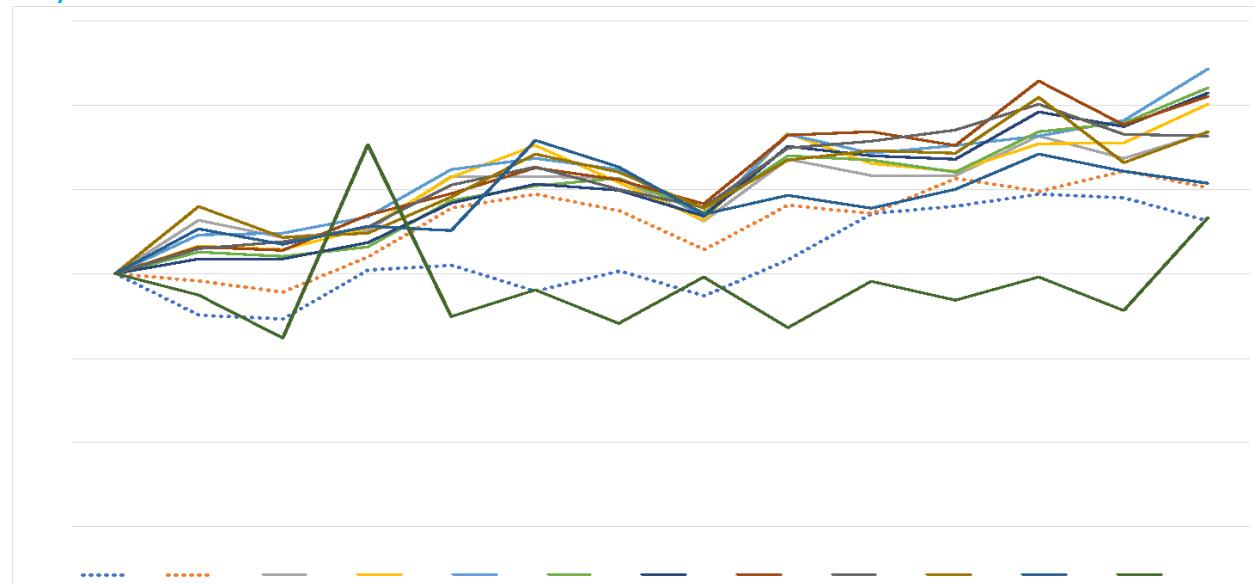
## 2. *Taux d'emploi élevé mais l'accès au marché du travail reste difficile*

**Le taux d'emploi a atteint un sommet en 2018 (69,7%).** Il a augmenté continuellement sur toute la période pour les travailleurs âgés (55-64). Par contre, au sein du groupe large des travailleurs de 30 à 54 ans, le taux n'a légèrement augmenté que depuis 2015. Parmi les "jeunes travailleurs" (20-29) le taux n'augmente que depuis 2017, après une tendance à la baisse précédemment. **Le taux d'emploi continue, légèrement, de diminuer pour les personnes avec un faible niveau d'enseignement.** Le nombre de personnes dans un ménages quasi sans-emploi a de son côté diminué considérablement, mais reste (proportionnellement) parmi le plus élevé en Europe. Le taux de pauvreté au travail reste bas comparé à la moyenne européenne et aux pays voisins, mais montre une légère tendance à la hausse depuis 2011.

## 3. *Faible inégalité de revenus, mais les bas revenus reculent et décrochent*

Les revenus disponibles des ménages ont augmenté modérément, ce qui est cohérent avec les tendances internationales. Globalement, l'inégalité des revenus reste faible et stable, mais les ménages avec une très faible intensité de travail et ceux avec les plus bas revenus ne profitent pas (autant) de cette hausse modérée des revenus. En effet, la hausse se situe surtout pour les ménages à forte intensité de travail et ceux au milieu de la distribution des revenus. En conséquence (voir aussi le point ci-dessous sur les tendances en matière de pauvreté), et en combinaison avec les classes d'âges, des catégories ont inversé leur place dans la distribution des revenus : les âgés avec des bas revenus ont d'une certaine manière évolué positivement, alors que les groupes les plus faibles de la classe d'âge active ont pris leur place au fond de la distribution.

Revenu médian (équivalent) disponible des ménages par percentile (prix de 2017, EUSILC 2005/Revenu2004 = 100)



Source: EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium

#### **4. Risque de pauvreté en augmentation**

**Le risque de pauvreté est maintenant significativement plus élevé qu'au début de la période d'observation (16.4% en 2018 contre 14.8% en 2005).** Le niveau de 2018 est même le plus élevé depuis le début des observations systématiques. La tendance à la hausse se manifeste en fait depuis 2015, le niveau étant resté assez stable avant cette date. Cependant, cette stabilité résultait déjà de tendances divergentes pour différentes catégories de la population.

**Le risque de pauvretés des personnes âgées (65 ans et +) augmente à nouveau depuis 2015, après une décennie de forte diminution.** L'augmentation récente est cohérente avec l'augmentation dans l'ensemble de la population. **L'écart de pauvreté, qui mesure la différence entre le revenu des âgés en situation de pauvreté et le seuil de pauvreté, continue toutefois à diminuer.** Cela démontre que les revenus les plus bas parmi les âgés continuent d'augmenter, cependant pas suffisamment pour leur permettre de passer au-dessus de seuil de pauvreté.

**Le risque de pauvreté parmi la population en âge de travailler s'est stabilisé en 2018 (revenus 2017), après des augmentations successives lors des années précédentes. Les tendances divergentes entre les personnes avec un niveau d'enseignement faible et celles avec un niveau d'enseignement élevé continuent.** L'écart continue à augmenter tant en terme de taux d'emploi qu'en terme de risque de pauvreté.

**Après plusieurs années de variabilité sans tendances claires ni à la hausse ni à la baisse, le pourcentage d'enfants vivant dans un ménage en risque de pauvreté a fortement augmenté entre 2016 et 2018.**

Conformément à l'indicateur de risque de pauvreté, la légère amélioration en matière de privation matérielle sévère se situe exclusivement à partir du second quintile de revenus. Pour les 20% des revenus les plus bas, cet indicateur reste stable.

Lorsqu'on s'intéresse à certaines catégories spécifiques, on peut observer que les nouveaux chiffres de 2018 confirment que **la Belgique a le plus grand risque de pauvreté de l'UE pour les personnes de nationalité autre que de l'UE** (48.3% en BE contre 38.3% pour la moyenne EU). Le risque de pauvreté pour les personnes avec un handicap reste aussi au-dessus de la moyenne européenne (23.1% en BE contre 20.9% en UE).

Le risque de pauvreté est substantiellement plus élevé chez les locataires, tant pour ceux du logement social que pour ceux du marché privé. L'augmentation du risque de pauvreté se situe aussi exclusivement chez les locataires.

Il reste d'importantes différences entre les risques de pauvreté des différentes régions. Cette différence a augmenté aux cours des dernières années, en raison d'une augmentation en Wallonie et d'un niveau plutôt stable en Flandre.

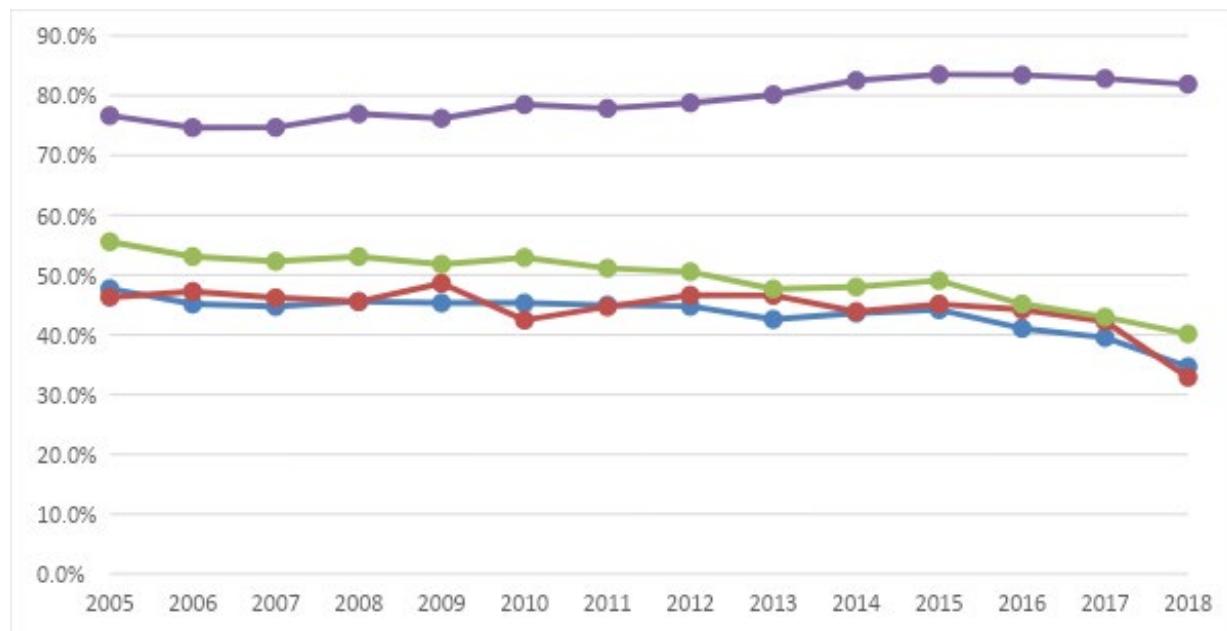
#### **5. Adéquation des transferts sociaux sous pression croissante**

Les évolutions passées en terme de bénéficiaires d'allocations sociales se poursuivent. **Le nombre de bénéficiaires d'une allocation de chômage continue de diminuer, tandis qu'à l'inverse le nombre de personnes avec une allocation d'invalidité augmente.** Tous les deux ont désormais un niveau similaire de +- 400.000 bénéficiaires. **Le nombre de bénéficiaire d'une assistance sociale augmente aussi légèrement.**

Sur base des dernières statistiques européennes en matière de dépenses de protection sociale (SESPROS 2016), le niveau de dépenses en Belgique (29.6% du PIB) était supérieur à la moyenne de l'UE (28.1%), + - au même niveau qu'au Pays-Bas (29.5%) et en Allemagne (29.4%) et en dessous du niveau de la France (34.3%). Il n'y a pas encore de chiffres pour UE pour 2017, mais selon ces chiffres, la position de la Belgique vis à vis des pays voisins reste la même ces dernières années, avec une légère diminution en Belgique comme dans la plupart de pays voisins.

**La mesure (d'efficacité) dans laquelle les transferts sociaux réduisent la pauvreté, historiquement élevée en Belgique, a diminué ces dernières années pour les enfants et pour la population en âge de travailler.** Cette diminution se poursuit avec les chiffres de 2018. Pour les personnes âgées, l'efficacité est restée stable en 2018, après une augmentation les années précédentes.

#### Efficacité des transferts sociaux par âge: % de réduction du taux de pauvreté (avant transfert) grâce aux transferts sociaux, Belgique



Source : EU-SILC, EUROSTAT, Statistics Belgium.

**Le risque de pauvreté des personnes vivant dans un ménage (quasi) sans-emploi est un bon indicateur de l'adéquation des transferts sociaux car ces ménages dépendent principalement des transferts sociaux pour leur revenu. Cet indicateur montre une remarquable augmentation ces dernières années et son niveau est plus élevé que la moyenne européenne (70% en Belgique, 61% en UE). En particulier, les allocations sociales apparaissent inadéquates pour les ménages (quasi) sans-emploi avec enfants. Pour ces ménages, le risque de pauvreté dépasse 80%.**

Les revenus minimums (assistance sociale et allocations minimales de sécurité sociale) ont évolué à la même vitesse que le seuil de pauvreté, en suivant l'évolution du coût de la vie. Cependant, la plupart des revenus minimums, sauf pour les pensions et les allocations d'invalides des personnes seules, restent sous le seuil de pauvreté (et avec le même écart par rapport à celui-ci).

## **6. Amélioration des pensions les plus basses et position globalement stable des personnes âgées en terme de revenu**

Le rapport entre le revenu médian de la population âgée et celui des générations plus jeunes, ainsi que le ratio entre la pension médiane et le revenu médian du travail, se sont tous les deux stabilisés au cours des dernières années, après de légères augmentations les années précédentes. Dès lors, **la forte baisse du risque de pauvreté des personnes âgées lors de la dernière décennie ne reflète pas une amélioration substantielle des âgés en général, mais plutôt une amélioration des bas revenus (des personnes âgées)**, et donc, une amélioration de l'adéquation des plus basses pensions.

Pour l'avenir, les taux de remplacement théoriques prospectifs indiquent un taux de remplacement de la pension stable pour un travailleur au salaire moyen. Cependant, le taux de remplacement augmentera clairement pour les travailleurs à bas revenus et diminuera clairement pour les travailleurs à haut revenu.

## **7. Les reports de soins médicaux restent élevés chez les bas revenus**

**Les résultats de récents rapports sur l'état de santé et les soins de santé** sont résumés dans ce rapport. Ces rapports mettent e.a. en avant la persistance des inégalités de santé ainsi que quelques défis en matière de soins de santé comme par exemple la performance et la prévention.

En ce qui concerne l'accès aux soins de santé, **le nombre de personnes postposant des soins médicaux** pour raisons financières, de liste d'attente ou de distance, **est stable**. Pour l'ensemble de la population, cet indicateur est au même niveau en Belgique que la moyenne EU (1.8%). **Pour les bas revenus (1er quintile), le pourcentage de report est considérablement plus élevé. Pour ce groupe, le pourcentage reste, malgré une petite diminution lors des 2 dernières années, considérablement au-dessus de la moyenne de l'UE (6.4% en BE contre 3.4% en UE).**

## **QUELQUES CONCLUSIONS AU TERME DE LA STRATÉGIE EUROPE 2020**

Au début de la stratégie Europe 2020, il était supposé que les chiffres de l'enquête EU-SILC 2018 seraient les plus récents avant la fin de la stratégie, et donc qu'ils serviraient comme base pour l'évaluation de la stratégie. Au vu de l'amélioration dans les délais de disponibilité des données, il est possible que les données EU-SILC 2019 soit disponibles avant la fin 2020. Dans tous les cas, **il apparaît clairement que l'objectif de réduire de 380.000 le nombre de personnes en situation de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale ne sera pas atteint pour la Belgique, et qu'il n'y aura aucune tendance substantielle dans la direction de l'objectif, ce constat ne s'appliquera pas seulement à la Belgique**. Cette conclusion est dans la lignée des constatations du Bureau Fédéral du Plan (2019) selon lesquelles l'évolution projetée du risque de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale ne tend pas non plus vers l'objectif de développement durable (cfr SDG de l'ONU) encore plus ambitieux d'une réduction de 50% pour 2030.

**Il y a une cohérence forte dans les données au fil du temps et entre les différentes sources, et donc aussi dans les messages clés mis en avant dans les rapports de monitoring successifs.** Ceux-ci sont répétés dans les messages clés listés au début de ce résumé. Pour différentes raisons, le taux d'emploi reste bas pour les catégories les plus vulnérables et l'adéquation de la protection sociale diminue pour

la population en âge de travailler, en particulier pour les ménages avec enfants. Et ce, malgré les dépenses d'activation du marché de l'emploi, et malgré le fait que les revenus minimums suivent l'évolution du coût de la vie (malgré cela, la plupart restent sous le seuil de pauvreté).

L'objectif Europe 2020 est basé sur la combinaison de 3 indicateurs, chacun reflétant une dimension spécifique de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion sociale. Ce monitoring demande une analyse plus approfondie de la situation sociale et de l'impact de la protection sociale. **Les enseignements de cette analyse montrent la nature corrélée des différents aspects du problème et amènent à la conclusion que la Belgique n'est pas immunisée aux tendances internationales démontrant une pression croissante sur la cohésion sociale.**

La stratégie européenne 2020 a introduit l'utilisation d'objectifs comme outil de gouvernance dans le domaine de la politique sociale . Dans leur rapport d'évaluation conjoint de la stratégie, le Comité de protection Sociale et le Comité Emploi ont présenté un bilan mitigé des résultats de la stratégie au regard des objectifs au niveau européen. Alors que l'objectif d'emploi sera presque atteint, il y a peu de progrès au niveau de l'objectif de pauvreté et d'exclusion sociale. Même si donc la réalisation des objectifs est mitigée, les deux comités considère l'utilisation d'un objectif comme une évolution positive, notamment au vu de la façon dont les indicateurs de pauvreté et d'exclusion sociales ont été bien basés.



Federal Public Service  
**Social Security**

© 2019

FPS Social Security / DG BeSoc

Administration Centre "Kruidtuin"  
Finance Tower  
Kruidtuinlaan 50  
1000 Brussels

[www.socialsecurity.fgov.be](http://www.socialsecurity.fgov.be)  
dgBeSoC-contact@minsoc.fed.be

Contact: rudi.vandam@minsoc.fed.be, sebastien.bastaits@minsoc.fed.be or silke.laenen@minsoc.fed.be

DIGITAL: D/2019/10.770/42

PRINT: D/2019/10.770/43