



# SOCIAL PROTECTION IN BELGIUM



ESSPROS DATA 2016



Federal Public Service  
Social Security

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This year again, the FPS Social Security is pleased to present to you the new edition of the ESSPROS brochure. This gives you an overview of the update of the Belgian and European social protection figures.

The first part consists of the presentation of Belgium's ESSPROS statistical data for the year 2016.

Overall, Belgium's expenditure on social protection in terms of GDP between 2015 and 2016 decreased (30,26 % of GDP in 2015 and 29,63 % in 2016).

Compared to the 2015 data, there is a decrease in expenditure on unemployment from 3,09 % of GDP in 2015 to 2,54 % of GDP in 2016. The downward trend observed in 2015 continued in 2016. This development is strongly influenced by measures taken by the government such as limiting the right to integration allowances, raising the age requirement for exemption from registration as a jobseeker.

As for expenditure on old age, there is a very slight decrease, from 10,89 % of GDP in 2015 to 10,78 % of GDP in 2016.

If we look at Sickness / Health Care expenditure, we also see a slight decrease (7,74 % of GDP in 2015 and 7,47 % of GDP in 2016).

In 2016, social protection receipts represented 29,46 % of GDP, or 125 billion EUR. Compared to 2015, there has been a decrease in employers' contributions, which represent the largest share of social protection receipts (TSR), or 39,42 % compared to 40,67 % of TSR in 2015. This decrease is mainly due to the measures decided by the government as part of the taxshift.

As for government contributions, there has been an increase of their share in social protection receipts in 2016, representing 38,97 % of TSR (37,40 % of TSR in 2015).



As for protected persons' contributions, they represented 19,76 % of social protection receipts in 2016, i.e. a very slight increase compared to 2015 (19,69 % of TSR in 2015).

The second part presents the comparison of 2015 data for our country with those of the other Member States of the European Union. These are the most recent data published by Eurostat at the time of writing. Some data for some countries are still provisional and other data are estimates.

This brochure is intended to be a concise source of social protection figures for the general public. The FPS Social Security collects these figures from its various partners in order to meet its international reporting obligations.

We hope you will enjoy reading this brochure.

# PREAMBLE

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## European perspective

### 1. Belgium's social protection data in 2016

In 2016, the Belgian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) amounted to 424.660 million EUR.

For 2016, some data for certain schemes have not been provided to us. These have not been estimated, which results in a slight underestimation of total expenditure and receipts.

#### A) Social protection receipts

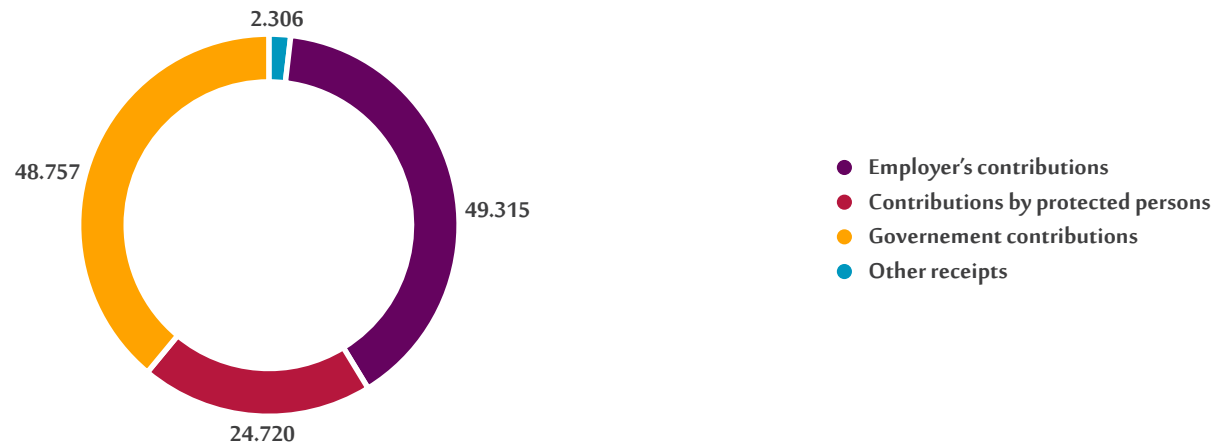
**Table 1 : Amounts of Belgium's social protection receipts in 2016**

	In million EUR	In % of GDP	In % of TSR <sup>1</sup>
Employers' contributions	49.314,58	11,61	39,42
Protected persons' contributions	24.720,24	5,82	19,76
Government contributions	48.756,81	11,48	38,97
Other receipts	2.306,21	0,54	1,84
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>125.097,84</b>	<b>29,46</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Source : FPS Social Security



**Chart 1 : Distribution of social receipts in 2016 (in million EUR)**



Source : FPS Social Security

In 2016, employers' contributions accounted for the largest share of social protection receipts, or 39,42 %. Compared to 2015, there has been a decrease of the latter and of their share in social protection receipts (40,67 % of TSR in 2015). This decrease is mainly due to the measures decided by the government as part of the taxshift.

Government and protected persons' contributions represent 38,97 % and 19,76 % of social protection receipts respectively in 2016, i.e. an increase compared to 2015 (they represented 37,40 % and 19,69 % of TSR respectively in 2015). Other receipts are of the order of 1,84 % of TSR (they represented 2,24 % of TSR in 2015).

## B) Social protection expenditure

Table 2 : Belgium's social expenditure in 2016

	In million EUR	In % of GDP	In % of TSE <sup>2</sup>
Social benefits	119.297,86	28,1	94,83
Administrative expenditure	4.666,25	1,1	3,71
Other expenditure	1.843,63	0,4	1,47
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>125.807,74</b>	<b>29,63</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Source : FPS Social Security

Table 2 shows that the largest share of social protection expenditure was spent on benefits (94,83 %) in 2016. Administrative expenditure and other expenditure accounted for 3,71 % and 1,47 % of total social expenditure respectively. In 2016, Belgium spent 29,63 % of its GDP on social protection, which represents a slight decrease compared to 2015 (expenditure was 30,26 % of GDP).

<sup>2</sup> TSE : Total social expenditure

## C) Social benefits by risk

Table 3 : Amounts of social benefits by risk in 2016

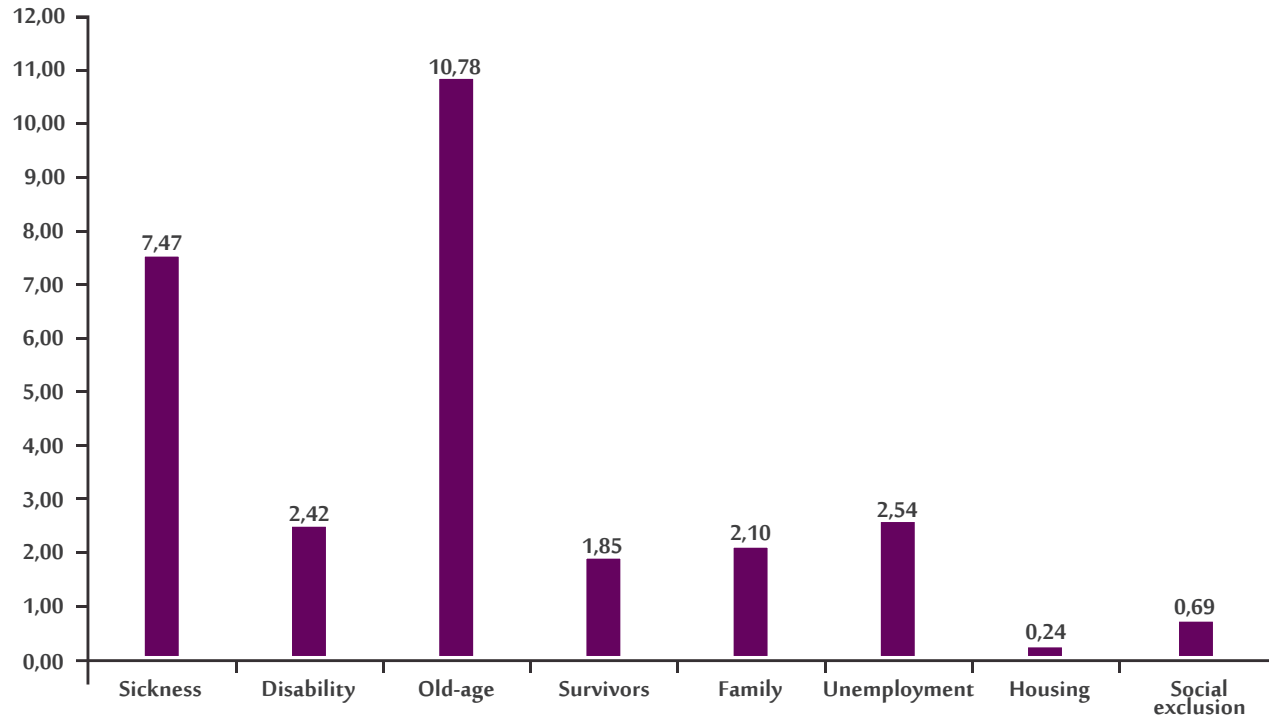
Risks	In million EUR	In % of GDP	In % of TSB <sup>3</sup>
Sickness	31.738,18	7,47	26,60
Invalidity	10.265,74	2,42	8,61
Old-age	45.773,92	10,78	38,37
Survivors	7.835,46	1,85	6,57
Family	8.936,61	2,10	7,49
Unemployment	10.792,35	2,54	9,05
Housing	1.007,74	0,24	0,84
Social exclusion	2.947,87	0,69	2,47
<b>Total</b>	<b>119.297,87</b>	<b>28,09</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Source : FPS Social Security

As in previous years, Old-age benefits accounted for the largest share of expenditure on social benefits, i.e. 38,37 %. When combined with Sickness / Health Care, Disability (which correspond to our concepts of sickness and disability insurance, accidents at work and occupational diseases) and Survivors, they account for 80,15 % of total social benefits (22,52 % of GDP).

<sup>3</sup> TPS : Total social benefits

**Chart 2 : Social risks in % of GDP in 2016**



Source : FPS Social Security

Chart 2 shows the eight social risks (functions) classified according to the ESSPROS methodology, in % of GDP. The Housing and Social Exclusion functions have the lowest percentages, i.e. respectively 0,24 % and 0,69 % of GDP. While Old-age and Sickness / Health Care functions represent the highest percentages, i.e. 10,78 % and 7,47 % respectively. As for the Unemployment function, it ranks third with 2,54 %. As regards the latter, there is a decrease in unemployment expenditure compared to 2015. They accounted for 3,09 % of GDP. The downward trend observed in 2015 continued in 2016. This development is strongly influenced by measures taken by the government such as limiting the right to integration allowances, raising the age requirement for exemption from registration as a jobseeker.

There has also been a decrease in Sickness / Health Care expenditure, which amounted to 7,74 % of GDP in 2015.

## D) Types of social benefits

According to the ESSPROS methodology, there are two types of social benefits : cash benefits and benefits in kind.

- A **cash benefit** is a benefit that is paid in cash and does not require proof of the recipient's actual expenses. For example, sick leave with pay, old-age pension payments, ...
- A **benefit in kind** is a benefit granted in the form of goods or services. Therefore, reimbursements of our "health care" insurance are regarded as benefits in kind. Among the benefits in kind, we will find for example : allowances for assistance in the daily tasks of the elderly, housing allowances, ...

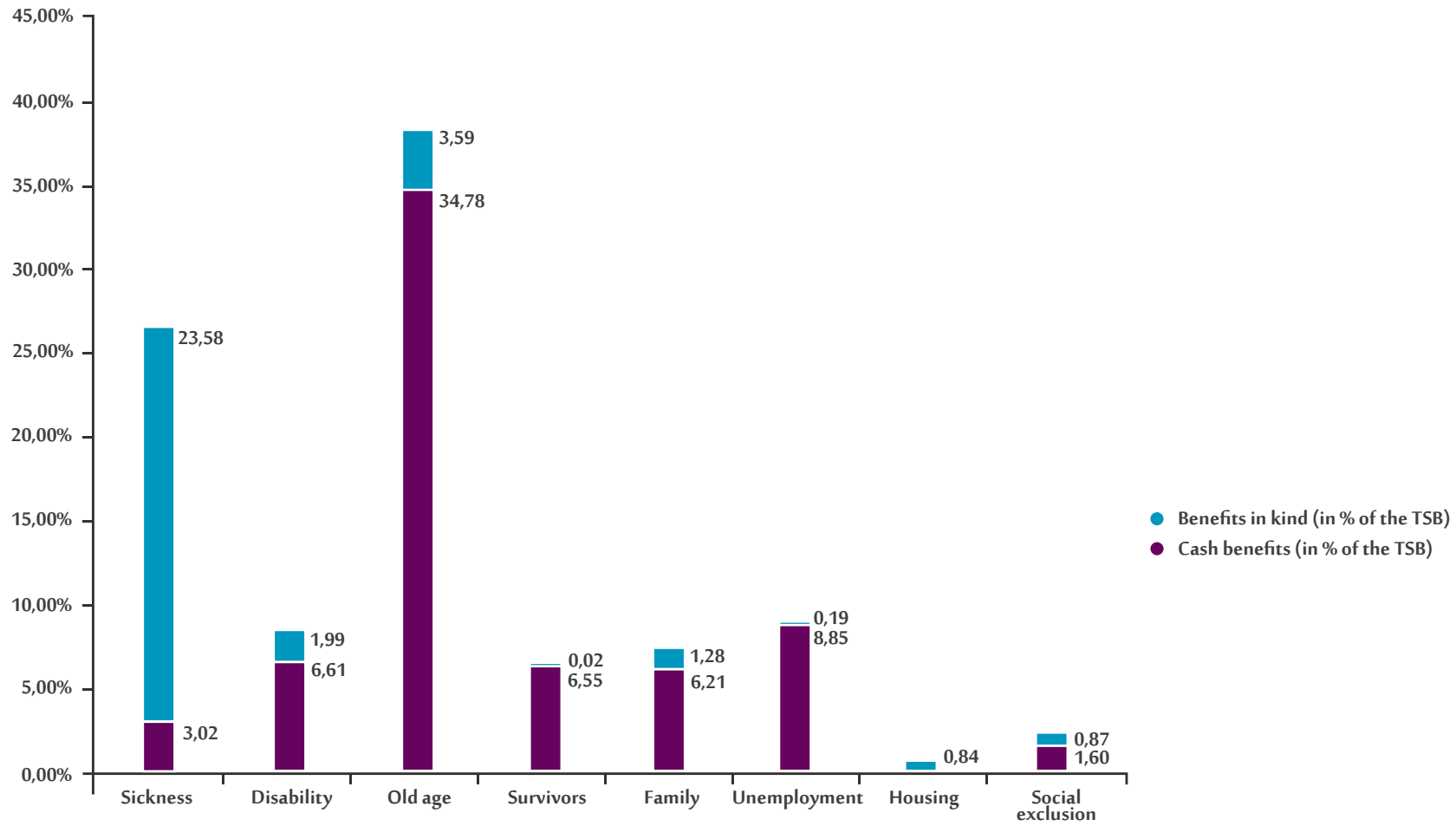
**Table 4 : Cash benefits and benefits in kind in 2016**

Risks	Cash benefits (in million EUR)	Cash benefits in % of TSB	Benefits in kind (in million EUR)	Benefits in kind in % of TSB
Sickness	3.607,95	3,02	28.130,24	23,58
Disability	7.886,23	6,61	2.379,51	1,99
Old-age	41.486,37	34,78	4.287,55	3,59
Survivors	7.816,45	6,55	19,01	0,02
Family	7.409,53	6,21	1.527,08	1,28
Unemployment	10.563,26	8,85	229,09	0,19
Housing		0,00	1.007,74	0,84
Social exclusion	1.910,88	1,60	1.036,98	0,87
<b>Total</b>	<b>80.680,67</b>	<b>67,63</b>	<b>38.617,20</b>	<b>32,37</b>

Source : FPS Social Security

In Belgium, social benefits are mainly cash benefits. In 2016, cash benefits accounted for 67,63 % of total social protection benefits (34,78 % for old-age pensions, 8,85 % for unemployment and 24,00 % for other cash benefits). Benefits in kind accounted for 32,37 % of total social benefits (23,58 % for the Sickness / Health Care function and 8,79 % for other benefits in kind).

Chart 3 : Share of cash benefits and benefits in kind (in % of total social benefits) in 2016



Source : FPS Social Security

## 2. Comparison with the other EU countries

In this chapter, we present the figures provided by the Member States to Eurostat. These figures concern the year 2015. As regards Belgium, we used the latest update of available figures. And for the other countries, we used the most recent data published by Eurostat at the time of writing of this brochure. For the year 2015, EU28 averages are not available because data are not complete for all countries.

The figures presented are raw data, which means that they do not take into account tax deductions or other compulsory levies owed by recipients. This leads us to warn data users against hasty conclusions because the use of raw data may lead to biased interpretations of analytical results.

Social protection benefits paid to recipients can take many forms. Within the ESSPROS, only the following types of benefits are selected :

- cash payments to protected persons ;
- reimbursement of expenses incurred by protected persons ;
- goods and services provided directly to protected persons.

These are therefore direct benefits insofar as they imply a direct increase in the disposable income of recipients.

### A) Social protection receipts in the European Union

For reasons of legibility, we will not include information on all countries for which social protection statistics are available, but we will confine ourselves to a selection of these. Complete information can be found on the Eurostat website (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/fr/data/database>).

Table 5 : Social protection receipts by type in % of GDP and in % of total social receipts (TSR) in 2015

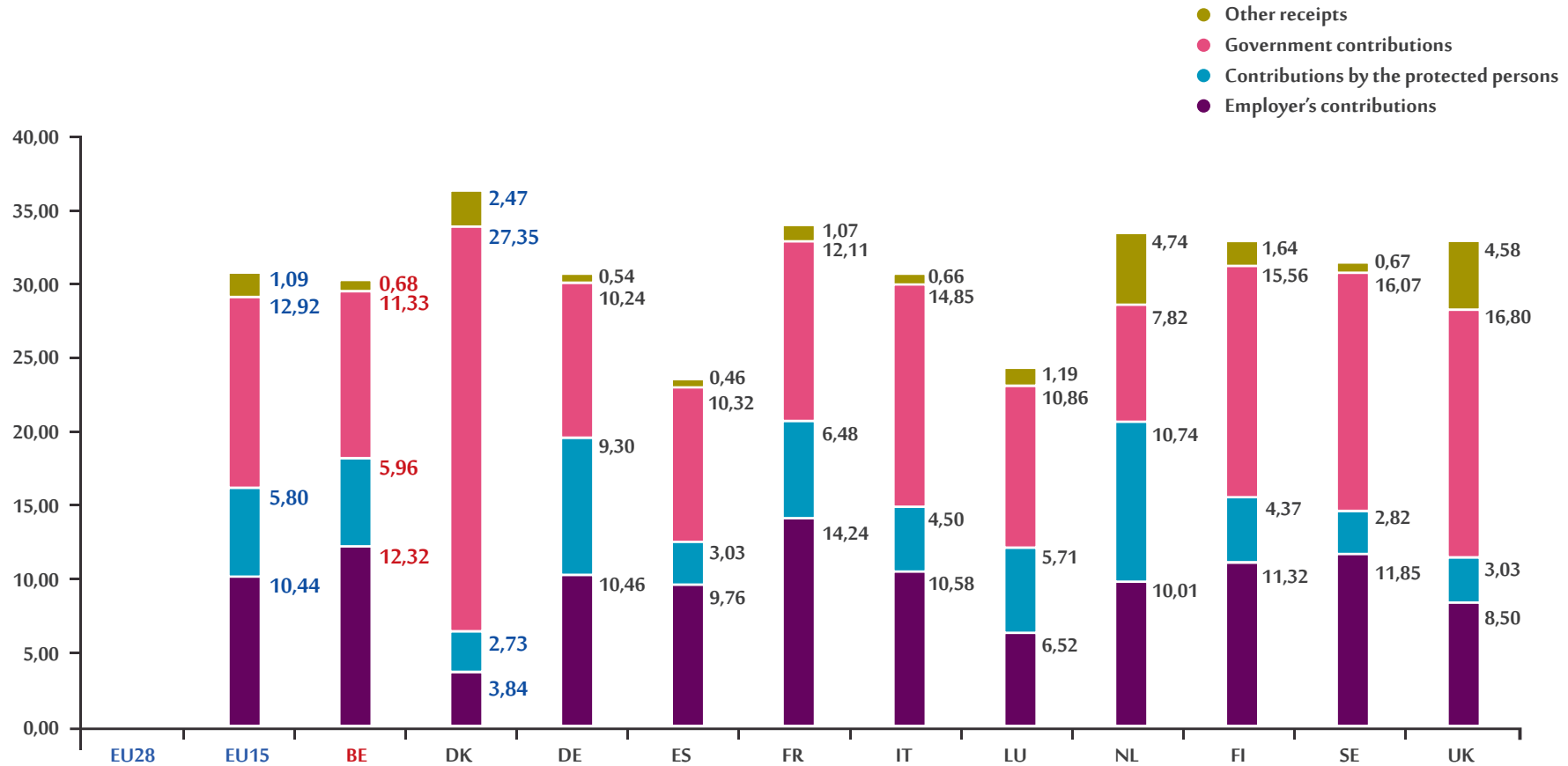
	Employers' contributions		Protected persons' contributions		Government contributions		Other receipts		Total	
	In % of GDP	In % of TSR	In % of GDP	In % of TSR	In % of GDP	In % of TSR	In % of GDP	In % of TSR	In % of GDP	In million EUR
<b>EU28</b>										
<b>EU15</b>	<b>10,44</b>	<b>33,81</b>	<b>5,80</b>	<b>18,80</b>	<b>12,92</b>	<b>41,85</b>	<b>1,71</b>	<b>5,54</b>	<b>30,90</b>	<b>4.212.053,27</b>
<b>BE</b>	<b>12,32</b>	<b>40,67</b>	<b>5,96</b>	<b>19,69</b>	<b>11,33</b>	<b>37,40</b>	<b>0,68</b>	<b>2,24</b>	<b>30,30</b>	<b>124.504,11</b>
DK	3,84	10,55	2,73	7,49	27,35	75,15	2,47	6,80	36,60	99.351,47
DE	10,46	34,25	9,31	30,47	10,24	33,51	0,54	1,76	30,50	931.306,22
ES	9,77	41,41	3,03	12,86	10,32	43,76	0,46	1,97	23,60	254.955,95
FR	14,24	42,02	6,48	19,12	12,11	35,71	1,07	3,14	33,90	745.195,17
IT	10,58	34,58	4,50	14,72	14,85	48,53	0,66	2,17	30,60	505.483,00
LU	6,52	26,86	5,71	23,53	10,86	44,70	1,19	4,91	24,00	12.527,28
NL	10,01	30,06	10,74	32,23	7,82	23,49	4,74	14,22	33,30	229.858,00
FI	11,32	34,42	4,37	13,28	15,56	47,31	1,64	4,98	32,90	68.932,68
SE	11,86	37,74	2,82	8,97	16,07	51,16	0,67	2,13	31,40	141.120,12
UK	8,50	25,84	3,03	9,21	16,80	51,04	4,58	13,90	32,90	859.635,04

Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

In 2015, the main sources of funding for social protection in the EU were social contributions (52,61 % of total receipts for the EU15). In Belgium, social contributions payable by employers are higher than the European average. Our country ranks third behind France and Spain. As far as protected persons' contributions are concerned, Belgium's figures are very close to the European average. In Belgium, government contributions are below the EU average. Compared to the other countries not included in the table, the new Member States (Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia) also have high employers' contributions (>40 % of total social protection receipts).



Chart 4 : Distribution of social protection receipts in % of GDP in 2015



Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

Chart 4 shows that the share of government contributions and the share of employers' contributions represent the majority of social protection receipts. This chart also allows us to observe two types of financing systems (Bismarckian and Beveridge system). The Nordic countries - Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the United Kingdom – follow the universal model (the system giving priority to government contributions) and the other countries follow the insurance model (the system giving priority to social contributions). Today, however, no genuine system lives on and the two systems tend to come together.

## B) Social protection expenditure in the European Union

Table 6 shows the distribution of social protection expenditure in million EUR and in % of GDP. This allows us to see the share of national wealth that has been redistributed in terms of social protection.

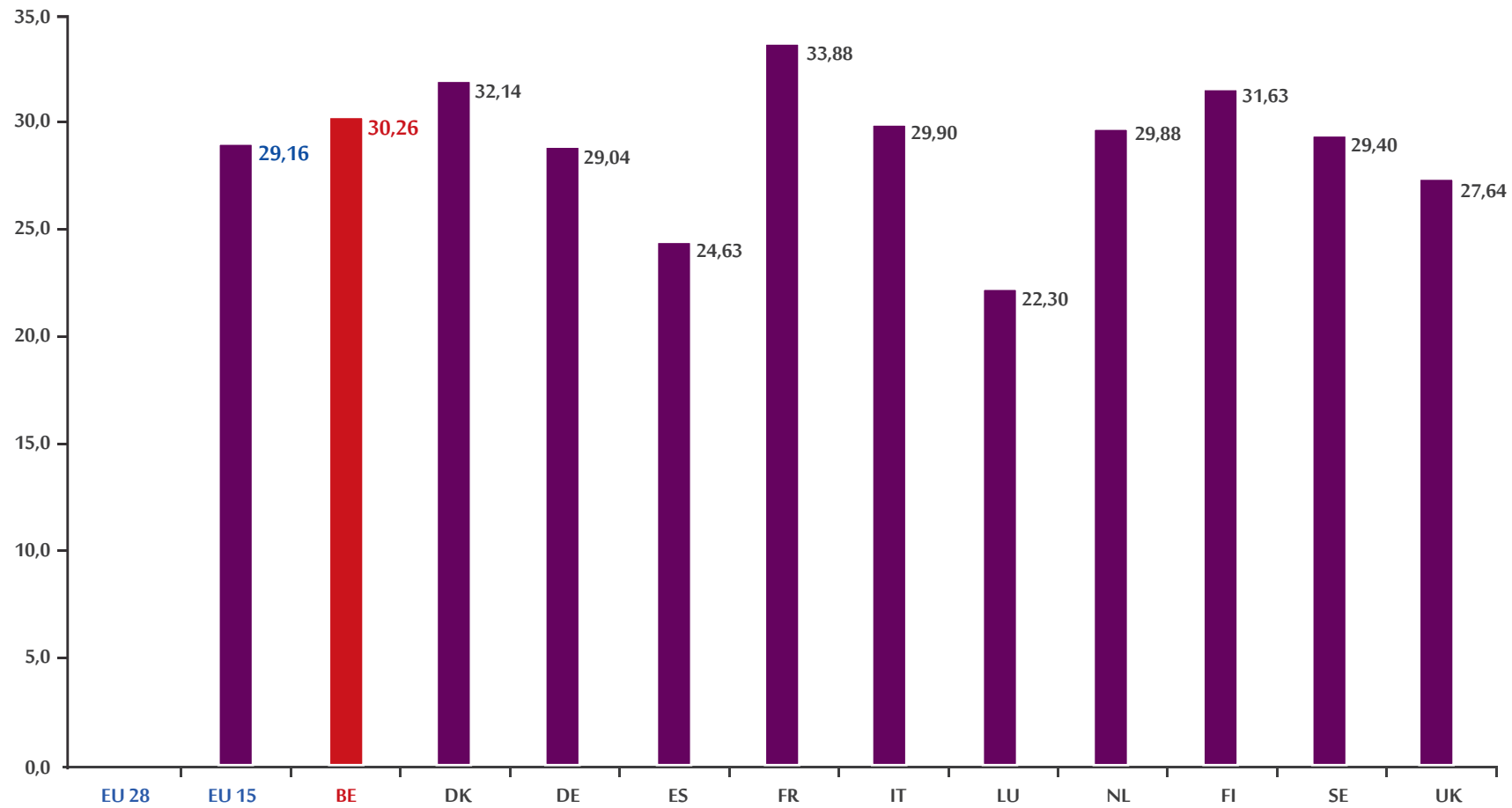
For most of EU countries, the share represented by social benefits amounts to 95 % or more of total social expenditure.

**Table 6 : Structure of social protection expenditure in 2015**

	Social benefits		Administrative expenditure		Other expenditure		Social expenditure	
	In million EUR	In % of GDP	In million EUR	In % of GDP	In million EUR	In % of GDP	In million EUR	In % of GDP
<b>EU28</b>								
<b>EU15</b>	<b>3.836.259,66</b>	<b>28,13</b>	<b>110.802,49</b>	<b>0,81</b>	<b>30.157,61</b>	<b>0,22</b>	<b>3.977.219,77</b>	<b>29,16</b>
<b>BE</b>	<b>119.137,63</b>	<b>28,99</b>	<b>3.665,40</b>	<b>0,89</b>	<b>1.568,21</b>	<b>0,38</b>	<b>124.371,24</b>	<b>30,26</b>
DK	84.519,28	30,96	3.222,38	1,18	0,00	0,00	87.741,65	32,14
DE	847.698,39	27,80	33.911,32	1,11	3.827,04	0,13	885.436,75	29,04
ES	261.400,25	24,18	4.850,33	0,45	31,33	0,00	266.281,91	24,63
FR	701.210,89	31,90	30.265,77	1,38	13.407,03	0,61	744.883,69	33,88
IT	476.291,00	28,83	10.448,00	0,63	7.225,00	0,44	493.964,00	29,90
LU	11.327,11	21,96	157,57	0,31	19,05	0,04	11.503,73	22,30
NL	194.122,00	28,13	9.911,00	1,44	2.144,00	0,31	206.177,00	29,88
FI	65.150,36	31,08	1.152,61	0,55	0,00	0,00	66.302,97	31,63
SE	129.446,52	28,82	2.615,92	0,58	0,00	0,00	132.062,44	29,40
UK	716.114,63	27,42	5.696,37	0,22	0,00	0,00	721.811,01	27,64

Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

Chart 5 : Social expenditure in % of GDP in 2015



Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

## C) Social benefits by risk in the European Union

To better compare data from the various countries, we use the amounts expressed in % of GDP. This makes it possible to compare proportionally on the basis of national wealth.

**Table 7 : Social benefits in % of GDP in 2015**

In % of GDP	Sickness / Health Care	Disability	Old-age	Survivors	Family / Children	Unemployment	Housing	Social exclusion
<b>EU28</b>								
<b>EU15</b>	<b>8,32</b>	<b>2,06</b>	<b>11,27</b>	<b>1,51</b>	<b>2,41</b>	<b>1,38</b>	<b>0,61</b>	<b>0,56</b>
<b>BE</b>	<b>7,74</b>	<b>2,35</b>	<b>10,89</b>	<b>1,90</b>	<b>2,13</b>	<b>3,09</b>	<b>0,23</b>	<b>0,65</b>
DK	6,25	4,04	11,51	2,03	3,46	1,51	0,70	1,46
DE	9,65	2,26	9,04	1,83	3,16	1,02	0,55	0,29
ES	6,62	1,73	9,66	2,38	1,28	2,16	0,10	0,25
FR	9,11	2,04	12,80	1,74	2,46	1,98	0,82	0,94
IT	6,64	1,68	14,14	2,66	1,72	1,73	0,04	0,22
LU	5,42	2,43	6,73	1,72	3,40	1,45	0,31	0,50
NL	9,28	2,67	10,80	1,14	1,09	1,47	0,12	1,24
FI	7,24	3,22	12,36	0,84	3,19	2,65	0,69	0,88
SE	7,50	3,34	12,22	0,34	2,99	1,05	0,44	0,95
UK	8,97	1,68	11,57	0,08	2,75	0,39	1,34	0,63

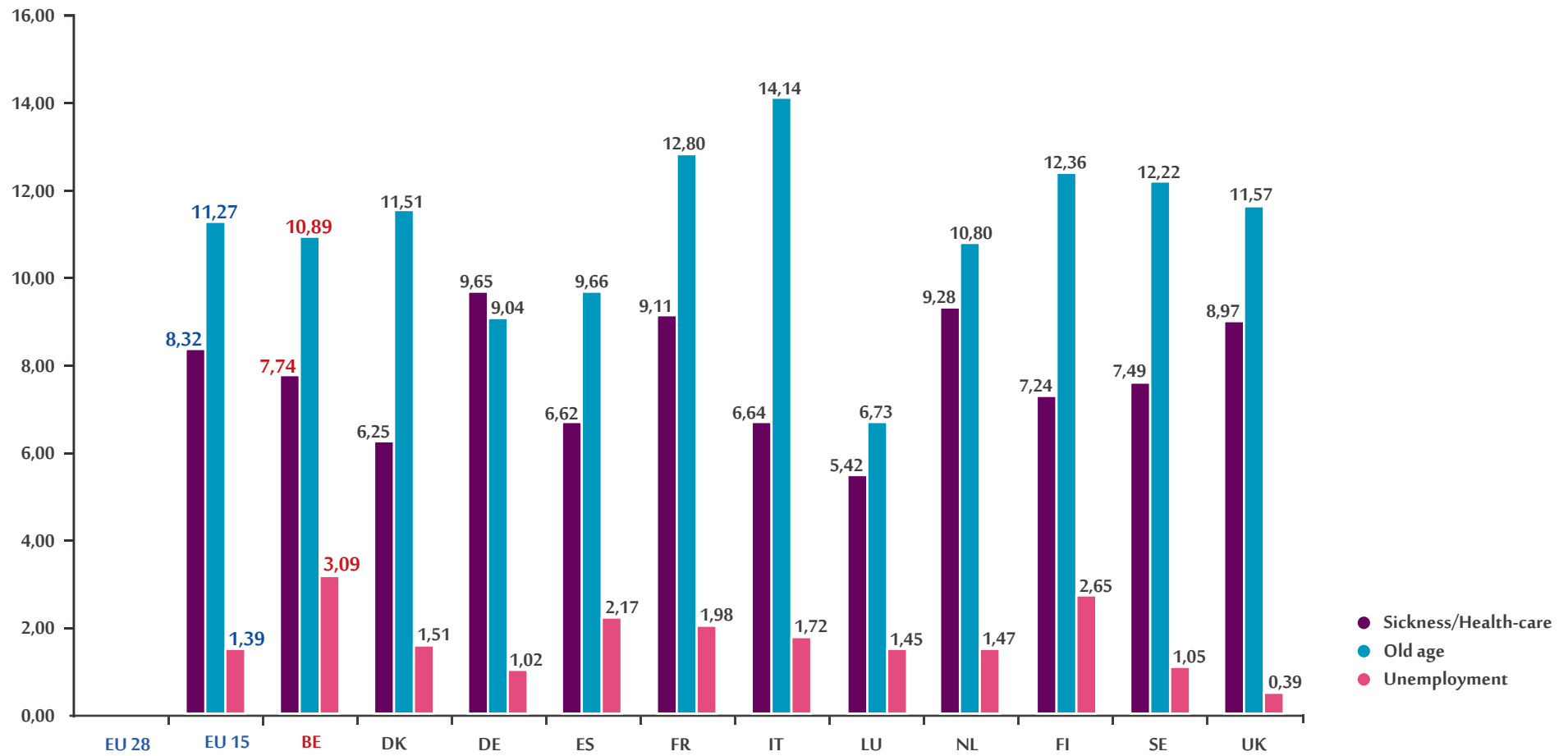
Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

Table 7 shows the weight represented by each function in the various Member States of the European Union. In 2015, our country is above the EU15 average, except for the Sickness / Health Care, Old-age, Family / Children and Housing functions. We cannot compare with the EU28 because these data are not available, as mentioned at the beginning of this section.

Age-related expenditure is particularly high for Italy, France, Finland and Sweden. For Belgium, this expenditure (10,89 % of GDP) is below the European average, which amounts to 11,27 % of GDP for 2015. Nevertheless, if we consider the expenditure on the Old-age and Survivors functions, which represents 12,79 % of GDP, Belgium is just above the EU15 average, which amounts to 12,78 % of GDP for these two functions.

With regard to the Unemployment function, three countries are well above the European average, namely Belgium, Finland and Spain. However, the origin of this phenomenon differs : if in Belgium there is a link with the extent of our unemployment system over time, it is clear that Spain is particularly affected by unemployment following the last economic crisis. As for Finland, there has been a peak in unemployment in 2015, which explains the increase in expenditure.

Chart 6 : Distribution of social benefits for the Sickness / Health Care, Old-age and Unemployment functions in % of GDP in 2015



Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

**Table 8 : Social benefits in % of total social benefits in 2015**

In % of GDP	Sickness / Health Care	Disability	Old-age	Survivors	Family / Children	Unemployment	Housing	Social exclusion
<b>EU28</b>								
<b>EU15</b>	<b>29,57</b>	<b>7,33</b>	<b>40,05</b>	<b>5,37</b>	<b>8,58</b>	<b>4,92</b>	<b>2,17</b>	<b>2,00</b>
<b>BE</b>	<b>26,72</b>	<b>8,12</b>	<b>37,57</b>	<b>6,55</b>	<b>7,34</b>	<b>10,68</b>	<b>0,80</b>	<b>2,23</b>
DK	20,19	13,04	37,18	6,57	11,17	4,88	2,26	4,71
DE	34,70	8,14	32,53	6,58	11,35	3,66	1,99	1,05
ES	27,37	7,16	39,95	9,83	5,29	8,95	0,42	1,03
FR	28,55	6,38	40,13	5,46	7,73	6,21	2,59	2,95
IT	23,03	5,84	49,06	9,21	5,98	5,98	0,12	0,77
LU	24,68	11,05	30,66	7,85	15,49	6,59	1,42	2,27
NL	33,00	9,51	38,37	4,05	3,86	5,21	1,60	4,39
FI	23,31	10,36	39,76	2,69	10,27	8,54	2,23	2,84
SE	26,01	11,58	42,41	1,16	10,37	3,64	1,54	3,29
UK	32,71	6,14	42,20	0,31	10,04	1,42	4,90	2,28

Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

Table 8 shows the share of each function in total benefits. Old-age benefits represent the largest share of social benefits, followed by Sickness and Health Care benefits.

**Chart 7 : Distribution of social benefits for the Sickness/Health Care and Old-age functions in % of total benefits in 2015**



Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

Chart 7 shows that Old-age and Sickness / Health Care benefits account for more than half of total benefits. The European average (for the EU15) is worth slightly less than 70 % of total benefits. Some countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy or the Netherlands exceed 70 %. Belgium is below the European average with 64,29 %.

## Abbreviations

**EUROSTAT** : Statistical Office of the European Union

**GDP** : Gross Domestic Product

**ESSPROS** : European System of integrated Social PROtection Statistics

**FPS** : Federal Public Service

**TSE** : Total Social Expenditure

**TPB** : Total Social Benefits

**TSR** : Total Social Receipts

**EU** : European Union

**EU15** : The 15 countries of the European Union before 1/5/2004 (Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom)

**EU28** : The 28 countries of the European Union (EU 15 + Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia)

**AT** : Austria

**BE** : Belgium

**BG** : Bulgaria

**CY** : Cyprus

**CZ** : Czech Republic

**HR** : Croatia

**DE** : Germany

**DK** : Denmark

**EL** : Greece

**ES** : Spain

**EE** : Estonia

**FI** : Finland

**FR** : France

**HU** : Hungary

**IE** : Ireland

**IT** : Italy

**LV** : Latvia

**LT** : Lithuania

**LU** : Luxembourg

**MT** : Malta

**PL** : Poland

**PT** : Portugal

**NL** : The Netherlands

**RO** : Romania

**SE** : Sweden

**SK** : Slovak Republic

**SI** : Slovenia

**UK** : United Kingdom



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