



# SOCIAL PROTECTION IN BELGIUM



ESSPROS DATA 2017



Federal Public Service  
Social Security

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This year again, the FPS Social Security is pleased to present the new edition of its ESSPROS brochure. It gives an overview of the updated figures on Belgian and European social protection. (This publication only considers data up to October 2019; more recent data have not been included).

The first part consists of the presentation of Belgium's ESSPROS statistical data for the year 2017.

In 2017, Belgium's social protection expenditure were 128.339,56 million euros. They represented 29,22% of the GDP.

Compared to the 2016 data, there is a decrease in expenditure on unemployment from 2,51% of GDP in 2016 to 1,91% of GDP in 2017. The decrease has to do with several factors, including the different measures taken by the government and a methodological correction in the ESSPROS statistics.

As regards expenditure on old age, we can see an increase from 10,62 % of GDP in 2016 to 11,06 % of GDP in 2017. The increase is linked, among other things, to the ageing of the population and the increase in life expectancy. If we look at expenditure on Sickness / Health Care, we see also a slight increase (7,41% of GDP in 2017 compared to 7,37% of GDP in 2016).



The second part presents the comparison of 2016 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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## 1. Belgium's social protection data in 2017

In 2017, the Belgian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) amounted to 439.174,5 million EUR.

For 2017, some data for certain schemes have not been provided to us. These have not been estimated.

### A) Social protection receipts

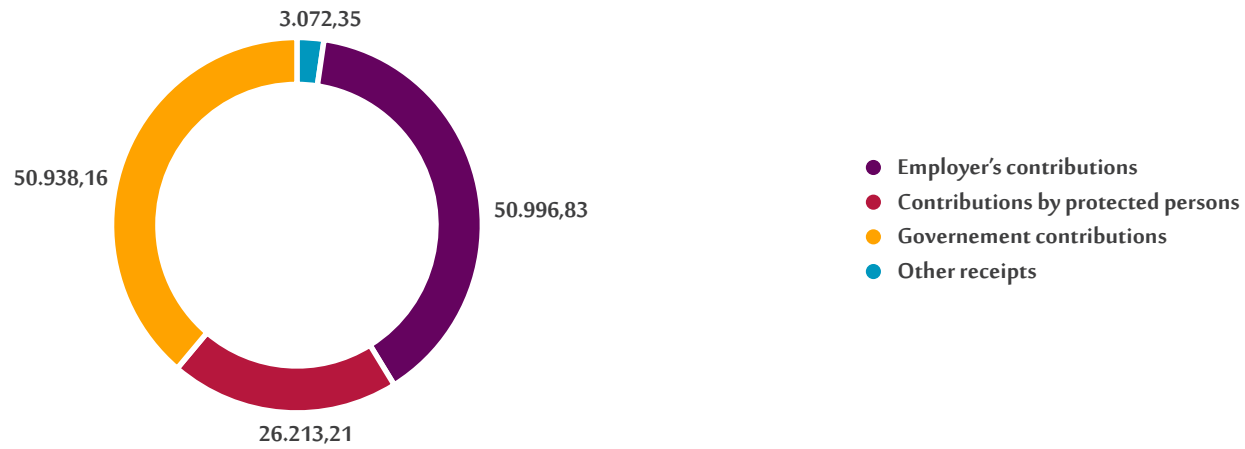
**Table 1 : Amounts of Belgium's social protection receipts in 2017**

	In million EUR	In % of GDP	In % of TSR <sup>1</sup>
Employers' contributions	50.996,83	11,61	38,86
Protected persons' contributions	26.213,21	5,97	19,98
Government contributions	50.938,16	11,60	38,82
Other receipts	3.072,35	0,70	2,34
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>131.220,55</b>	<b>29,88</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Source : FPS Social Security



Chart 1 : Distribution of social receipts in 2017 (in million EUR)



Source : FPS Social Security

In 2017, employers' contributions accounted for the largest share of social protection receipts, i.e. 38,86 %. Public contributions are very close to employers' contributions and represent 38,82% of social security receipts. Contributions from protected persons and other receipts represent 19,98% and 2,34% of social protection receipts, respectively.

## B) Social protection expenditure

Table 2 : Belgium's social expenditure in 2017

	In million EUR	In % of GDP	In % of TSE <sup>2</sup>
Social benefits	121.223,58	27,60	94,46
Administrative expenditure	4.729,92	1,08	3,69
Other expenditure	2.386,06	0,54	1,86
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>128.339,56</b>	<b>29,22</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Source : FPS Social Security

Table 2 shows that the largest share of social protection expenditure was spent on benefits, representing 94,46 % in the year 2017. Administrative expenditure and other expenditure accounted for 3,69 % and 1,86 % of total social expenditure respectively. In 2017, Belgium spent 29,22 % of its GDP on social protection, which is stable compared to the updated 2016 data (expenditure amounted to 125.773,87 million EUR, or 29,22 % of GDP).

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

## C) Social benefits by risk

Table 3 : Amounts of social benefits by risk in 2017

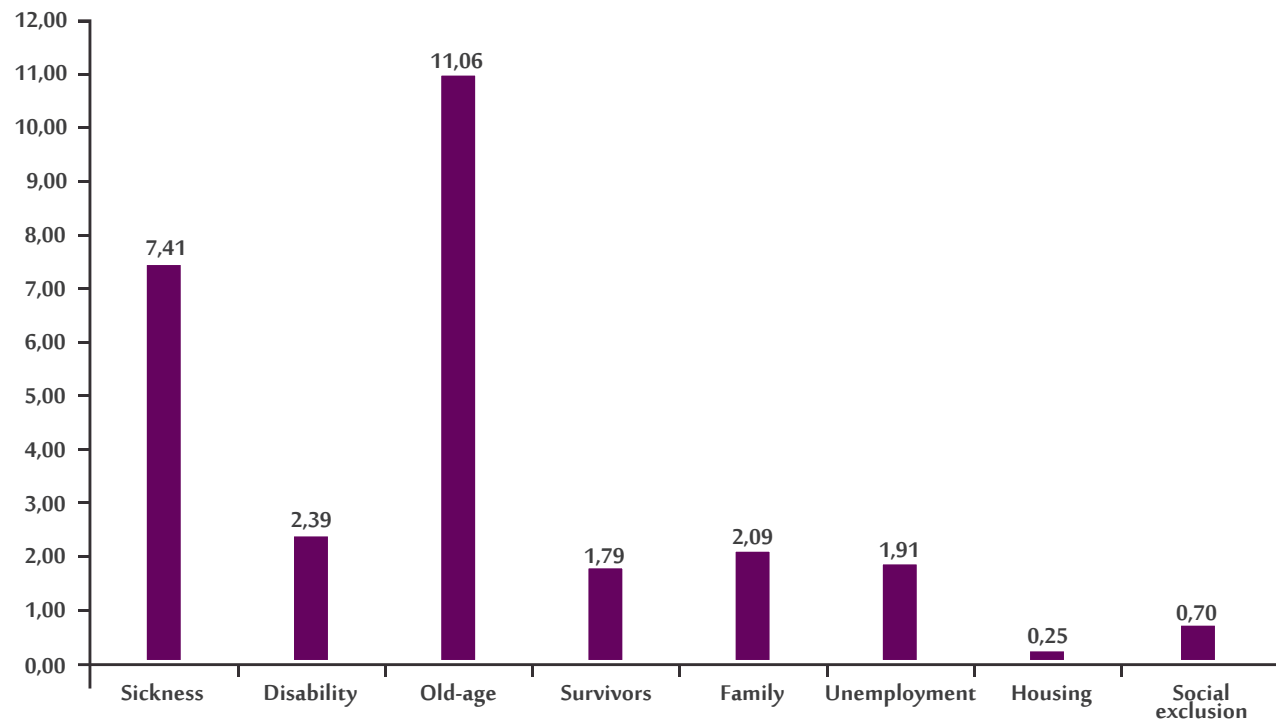
Risks	In million EUR	In % of GDP	In % of TSB <sup>3</sup>
Sickness	32.558,00	7,41	26,86
Invalidity	10.501,93	2,39	8,66
Old-age	48.559,12	11,06	40,06
Survivors	7.857,81	1,79	6,48
Family	9.178,43	2,09	7,57
Unemployment	8.394,93	1,91	6,93
Housing	1.099,16	0,25	0,91
Social exclusion	3.074,21	0,70	2,54
<b>Total</b>	<b>121.223,59</b>	<b>27,60</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Source : FPS Social Security

As in previous years, Old-age benefits accounted for the largest share of the expenditure on social benefits, i.e. 40,06%. 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 82,06 % of total social benefits (22,65 % of GDP).

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

Chart 2 : Social risks in % of GDP in 2017



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 represent the lowest percentages, i.e. respectively 0,25 % and 0,70 % of GDP. While Old-age and Sickness/Health Care functions represent the highest percentages, i.e. 11,06 % and 7,41 % of GDP respectively. As for the Unemployment function, it ranks fifth with 1,91 % of GDP. As regards the latter, there is a decrease in unemployment expenditure compared to 2016. It accounted for 2,51 % of GDP. The decrease has to do with several factors, including the different measures taken by the government (limiting the right to integration allowances, raising the age requirement for exemption from registration as a jobseeker ...) and a methodological correction in the ESSPROS statistics consisting in removing certain expenses (service vouchers, career breaks, time credits and other expenses) from unemployment benefits because they do not fall within the scope of ESSPROS, but which were previously recorded as ESSPROS data. There has also been a slight increase in Sickness/Health Care expenditure from 7,37 % to 7,41 % of GDP between 2016 and 2017.

## 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 (including reimbursement of expenses to protected persons). 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, ...

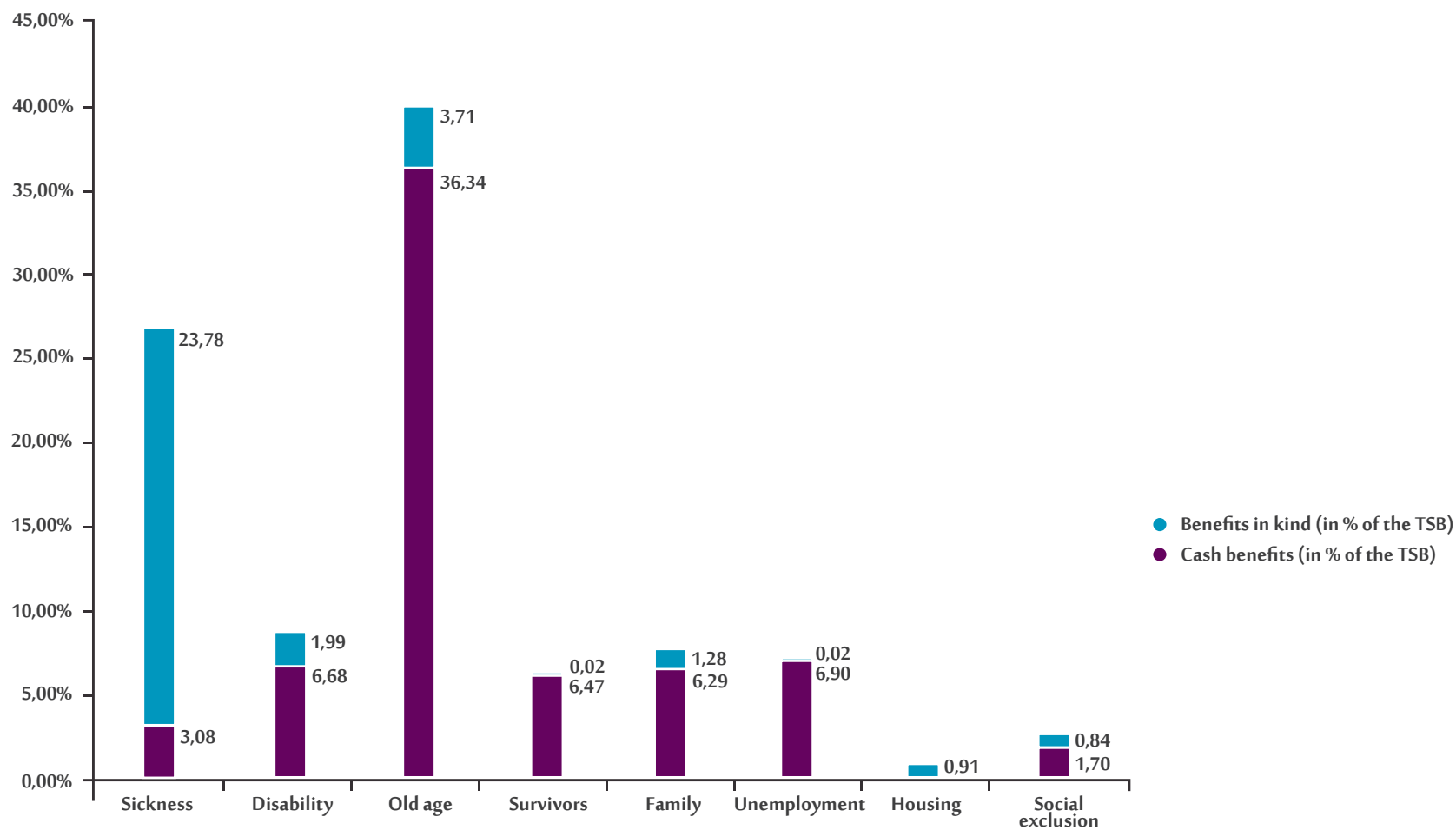
**Table 4 : Cash benefits and benefits in kind in 2017**

Risks	Cash benefits (in million EUR)	Cash benefits in % of TSB	Benefits in kind (in million EUR)	Benefits in kind in % of TSB
Sickness	3.733,03	3,08	28.824,97	23,78
Disability	8.092,56	6,68	2.409,37	1,99
Old-age	44.058,01	36,34	4.501,10	3,71
Survivors	7.837,50	6,47	20,31	0,02
Family	7.624,48	6,29	1.553,95	1,28
Unemployment	8.370,10	6,90	24,83	0,02
Housing	0,00	0,00	1.099,16	0,91
Social exclusion	2.060,68	1,70	1.013,52	0,84
<b>Total</b>	<b>81.776,36</b>	<b>67,46</b>	<b>39.447,21</b>	<b>32,54</b>

Source : FPS Social Security

In Belgium, social benefits are mainly cash benefits. In 2017, cash benefits accounted for 67,46 % of total social protection benefits (36,34 % for old-age pensions, 6,90 % for unemployment and 24,21 % for other cash benefits). Benefits in kind accounted for 32,54 % of total social benefits (23,78 % for the Sickness/Health Care function and 8,76 % for other benefits in kind).

Chart 3 : Share of cash benefits and benefits in kind (in % of total social benefits) in 2017



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 2016. 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 (i.e. in October 2019).

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 (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/data/database>).

Table 5 : Social protection receipts by type in % of GDP and in % of total social receipts (TSR) in 2016

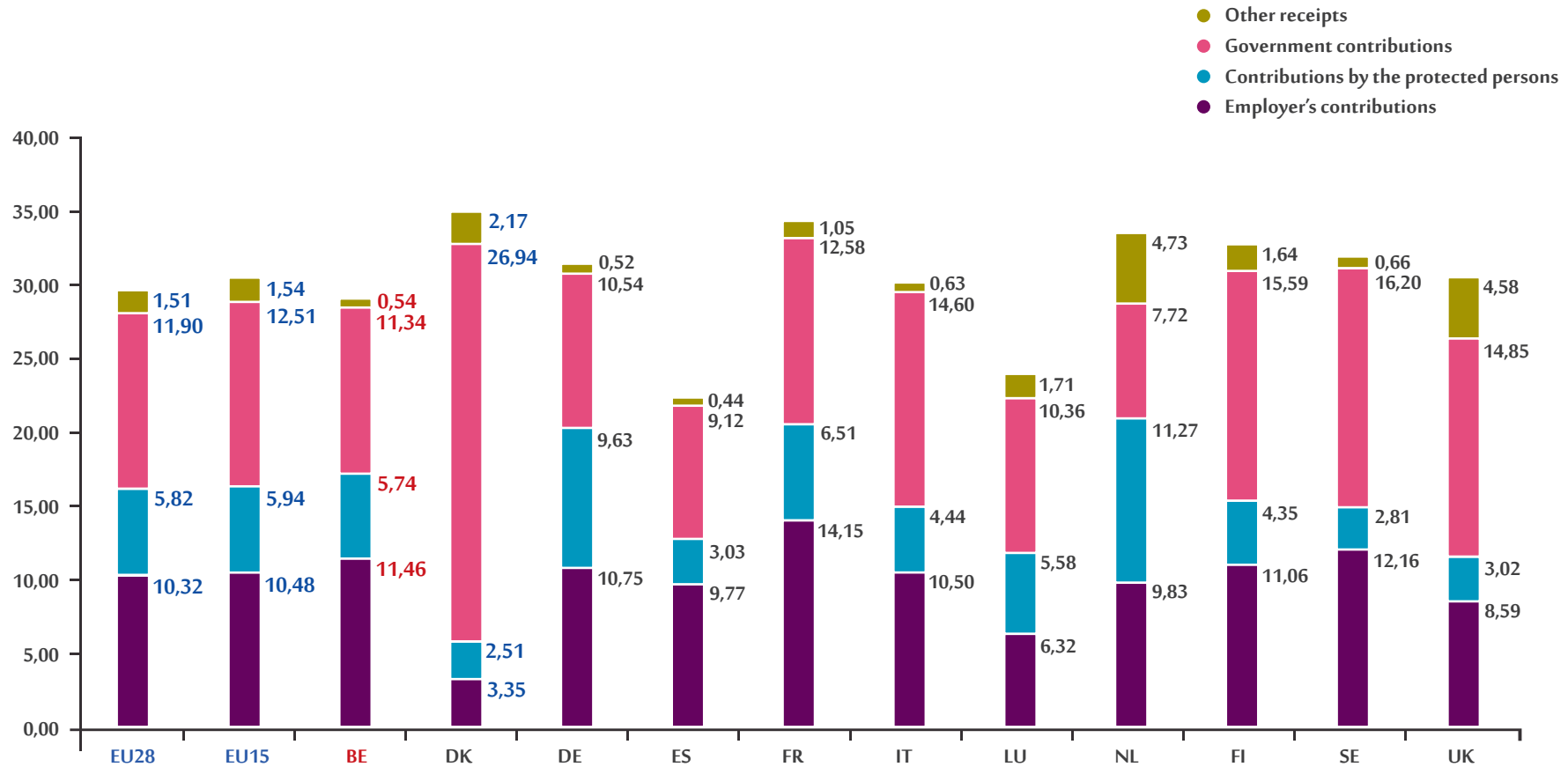
	Employers' contributions		Protected persons' contributions		Government contributions		Other receipts		Total	
	In % of GDP	In % of TSR	In % of GDP	In % of TSR	In % of GDP	In % of TSR	In % of GDP	In % of TSR	In % of GDP	In million EUR
<b>EU28</b>	<b>10,32</b>	<b>34,92</b>	<b>5,82</b>	<b>19,69</b>	<b>11,90</b>	<b>40,28</b>	<b>1,51</b>	<b>5,10</b>	<b>29,55</b>	<b>4.428.203,97</b>
<b>EU15</b>	<b>10,48</b>	<b>34,40</b>	<b>5,94</b>	<b>19,49</b>	<b>12,51</b>	<b>41,07</b>	<b>1,54</b>	<b>5,05</b>	<b>30,47</b>	<b>4.193.669,25</b>
<b>BE</b>	<b>11,46</b>	<b>39,41</b>	<b>5,74</b>	<b>19,76</b>	<b>11,34</b>	<b>38,99</b>	<b>0,54</b>	<b>1,84</b>	<b>29,07</b>	<b>125.116,29</b>
DK	3,35	9,58	2,51	7,18	26,94	77,04	2,17	6,19	34,96	98.986,04
DE	10,75	34,20	9,63	30,64	10,53	33,51	0,52	1,65	31,43	984.929,92
ES	9,77	43,70	3,03	13,54	9,12	40,77	0,44	1,99	22,36	249.015,02
FR	14,15	41,26	6,51	18,99	12,58	36,68	1,05	3,07	34,29	766.081,12
IT	10,50	34,80	4,44	14,73	14,60	48,38	0,63	2,09	30,17	511.544,00
LU	6,32	26,37	5,58	23,28	10,36	43,20	1,71	7,15	23,97	13.152,48
NL	9,83	29,29	11,27	33,59	7,72	23,03	4,73	14,09	33,54	237.606,00
FI	11,06	33,90	4,35	13,32	15,59	47,77	1,64	5,02	32,63	70.973,33
SE	12,16	38,22	2,81	8,82	16,20	50,90	0,66	2,07	31,83	148.415,87
UK	8,59	28,22	3,02	9,93	14,85	48,76	3,98	13,08	30,45	741.407,27

Source : Eurostat / FPS Social security

In 2016, the main sources of funding for social protection in the EU were social contributions (54,61 % of total receipts for the UE28). In Belgium, social contributions payable by employers are higher than the European average. As far as protected persons' contributions are concerned, Belgium's figures are 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, Hungary, Poland, Romania, 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 2016



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 of their social expenditure.

**Table 6 : Structure of social protection expenditure in 2016**

	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>4.047.659,98</b>	<b>27,01</b>	<b>112.956,67</b>	<b>0,76</b>	<b>42.601,35</b>	<b>0,28</b>	<b>4.203.218,01</b>	<b>28,05</b>
<b>EU15</b>	<b>3.822.873,56</b>	<b>27,77</b>	<b>108.374,45</b>	<b>0,79</b>	<b>40.990,95</b>	<b>0,30</b>	<b>3.972.238,96</b>	<b>28,86</b>
<b>BE</b>	<b>119.263,99</b>	<b>27,71</b>	<b>4.666,25</b>	<b>1,10</b>	<b>1.843,63</b>	<b>0,43</b>	<b>125.773,87</b>	<b>29,22</b>
DK	84.150,22	29,72	3.578,59	1,27	0,00	0,00	87.728,81	30,99
DE	891.278,10	28,44	34.423,64	1,10	4.122,02	0,13	929.823,76	29,67
ES	260.908,61	23,42	4.619,32	0,41	44,84	0,00	265.572,77	23,84
FR	715.108,24	32,01	28.640,53	1,28	22.320,32	1,00	766.069,09	34,29
IT	480.102,00	28,31	10.381,00	0,61	8.027,00	0,47	498.510,00	29,40
LU	11.471,19	20,91	172,69	0,31	19,39	0,04	11.663,27	21,26
NL	198.458,00	28,02	8.358,00	1,18	2.052,00	0,29	208.868,00	29,49
FI	67.680,38	31,12	1.146,57	0,53	0,00	0,00	68.826,95	31,65
SE	134.636,02	28,87	2.657,12	0,57	0,00	0,00	137.293,14	29,44
UK	624.559,33	25,65	4.787,43	0,20	0,00	0,00	629.346,75	25,85

Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

Chart 5 : Social expenditure in % of GDP in 2016



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 the share of national wealth redistributed by each country.

**Table 7 : Social benefits in % of GDP in 2016**

In % of GDP	Sickness / Health Care	Disability	Old-age	Survivors	Family / Children	Unemployment	Housing	Social exclusion
EU28	7,95	2,00	10,85	1,48	2,35	1,25	0,54	0,59
EU15	8,20	2,06	11,09	1,50	2,38	1,33	0,58	0,62
BE	7,37	2,39	10,62	1,82	2,08	2,51	0,23	0,69
DK	6,14	3,89	11,07	1,65	3,39	1,39	0,68	1,52
DE	9,94	2,29	9,18	1,83	3,24	1,00	0,55	0,41
ES	6,19	1,69	9,69	2,33	1,25	1,94	0,10	0,23
FR	9,16	2,06	12,85	1,72	2,44	1,98	0,82	0,98
IT	6,55	1,65	13,78	2,58	1,76	1,70	0,04	0,26
LU	5,15	2,25	6,62	1,63	3,23	1,22	0,34	0,47
NL	9,22	2,63	10,81	1,12	1,13	1,33	0,47	1,31
FI	7,06	3,07	12,67	0,82	3,08	2,57	0,76	1,09
SE	7,48	3,14	12,17	0,31	2,98	1,02	0,41	1,36
UK	8,35	1,70	10,76	0,08	2,55	0,36	1,25	0,60

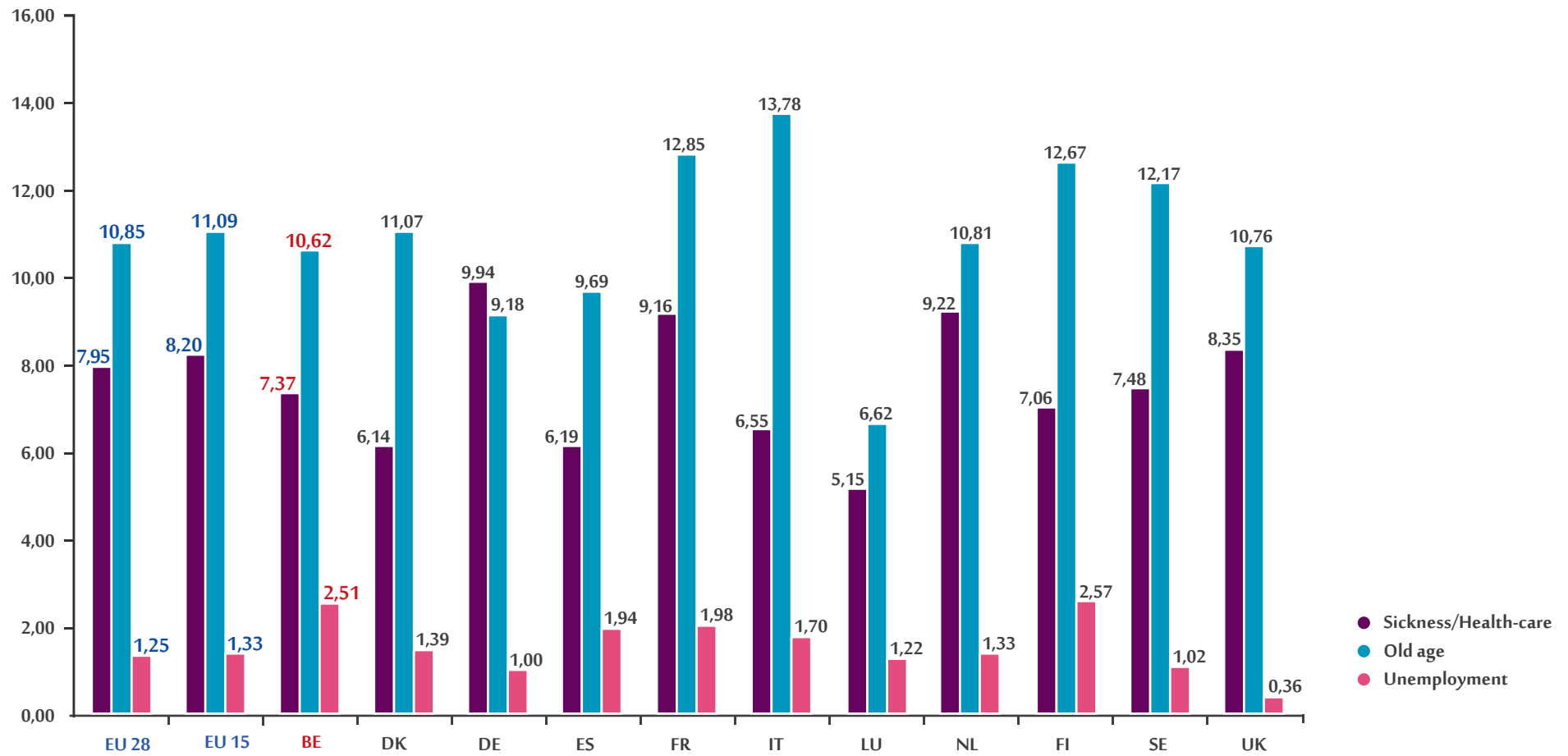
Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

Table 7 shows the weight of each function in the various Member States of the European Union. In 2016, our country is above the EU28 average except for the Sickness/Health Care, Old-age, Family/Children and Housing functions.

Age-related expenditure is particularly high for Italy, France, Finland and Sweden. For Belgium, this expenditure (10,62 % of GDP) is below the European average, which amounts to 10,85 % of GDP for 2016.

With regard to the Unemployment function, two countries are well above the European average, namely Belgium and Finland. In Belgium there is a link with the extent of our unemployment system over time. Every year, we can see a decrease in unemployment expenditure in percentage of GDP. Unemployment expenditure as a percentage of GDP declined from 3,4% of GDP in 2014 to 2,5% of GDP in 2016. This can be explained by several factors; especially various measures taken by the government (see above: point 1 C).

Chart 6 : Distribution of social benefits for the Sickness/Health Care, Old-age and Unemployment functions in % of GDP in 2016



Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

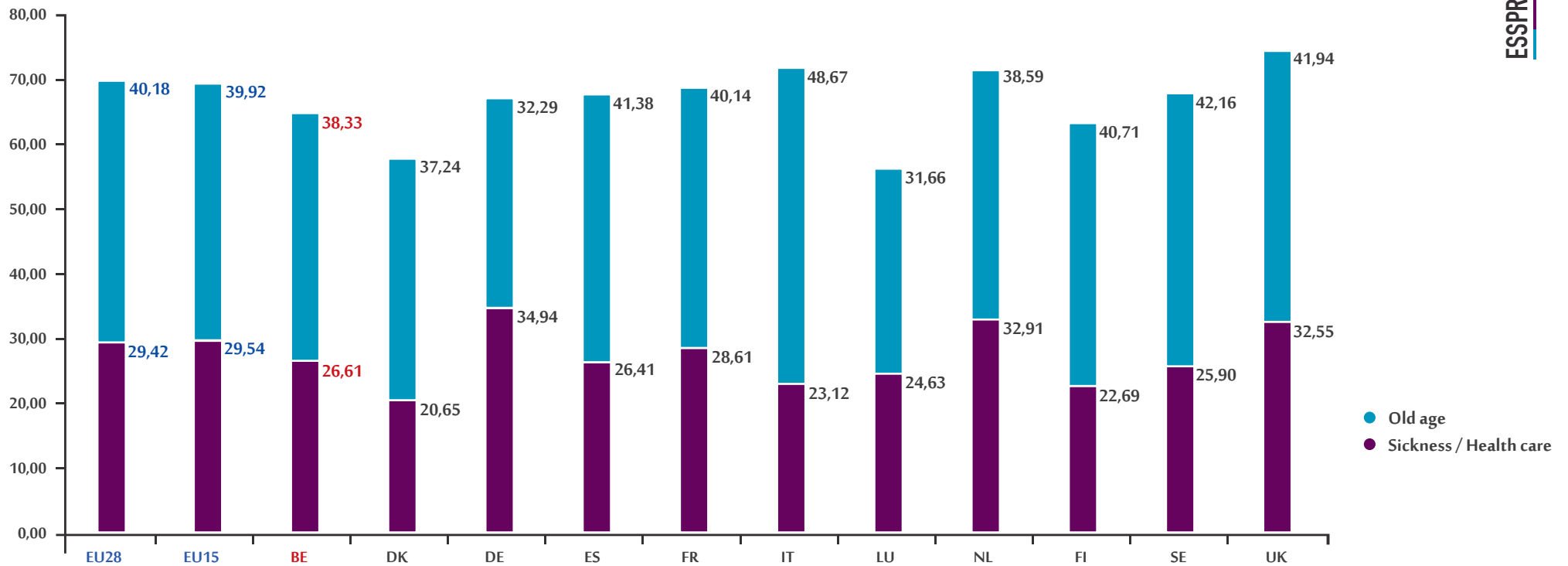
**Table 8 : Social benefits in % of total social benefits in 2016**

In % of GDP	Sickness / Health Care	Disability	Old-age	Survivors	Family / Children	Unemployment	Housing	Social exclusion
EU28	29,42	7,40	40,18	5,47	8,70	4,64	2,00	2,18
EU15	29,54	7,40	39,92	5,41	8,59	4,81	2,09	2,24
BE	26,61	8,61	38,33	6,56	7,49	9,05	0,84	2,50
DK	20,65	13,08	37,24	5,56	11,41	4,66	2,29	5,11
DE	34,94	8,04	32,29	6,42	11,39	3,52	1,94	1,46
ES	26,41	7,22	41,38	9,96	5,34	8,27	0,44	0,98
FR	28,61	6,42	40,14	5,38	7,64	6,19	2,57	3,05
IT	23,12	5,84	48,67	9,10	6,20	6,02	0,13	0,93
LU	24,63	10,76	31,66	7,79	15,43	5,84	1,62	2,27
NL	32,91	9,38	38,59	3,99	4,03	4,73	1,69	4,67
FI	22,69	9,86	40,71	2,64	9,90	8,26	2,43	3,51
SE	25,90	10,87	42,16	1,07	10,31	3,54	1,44	4,71
UK	32,55	6,62	41,94	0,31	9,94	1,42	4,87	2,34

Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

Table 8 shows the share of each function in total social 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 social benefits in 2016**



Source : Eurostat / FPS Social Security

We can see in Chart 7 that Old-age and Sickness/Health Care benefits account for more than half of total benefits. The European average (for the EU28) 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 64,94%

## 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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