## The Countries of Europe

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Introduction

The European Union’s single market is also the basis for today’s practically unrestricted freedom of movement, which also extends to work and social benefits. For this reason, being familiar with the different labour markets, social security schemes and legal systems will become increasingly important for people living in a free Europe.

The “Social Security Compass for Europe” database, released and regularly updated online and on DVD by the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS), provides a detailed comparison of social systems across the countries of the European Union. The database contains extensive information on various areas of social security, including work, occupational safety, illness, healthcare, family benefits, disability and social hardship, just to name a few.

A comparison of the social security systems in the EU member states is only meaningful if the facts and data on this important European issue are examined in the context of the general cultural, geographic, political and economic key figures. At the same time it is possible to trace how the different systems of social security in each country mirror social development and changes.

This publication provides basic information about the 28 EU member countries. It includes the country’s official name, political system, population, language(s) and administrative structure, as well as key political and economic key figures, like the gross domestic product, average income, unemployment rate and population structure. A brief portrait introduces each country’s description.

Of course we can only provide a brief selection of the numerous facts and figures which can give the reader a closer understanding of a country. But this background can help the reader to put into relation the information about the various social systems, and the actual impact on the people who live in the EU becomes tangible. This publication is therefore specifically designed for use in further training and education.
A journey over the rolling hills of Tuscany, a hike through the Scottish highlands or a trip to the cities of Paris or Budapest, a holiday in the Polish region of Masuria, a visit to a German automobile plant or a furniture factory in Slovenia – Europe offers countless facets that combine to create the quality of life we enjoy on our continent. This holds true for the geographic diversity, key economic areas and social matters throughout Europe.

The cultural wealth and economic potential of these countries has gradually unfolded as the European Union has developed over the years. Examining important points and key figures of the various European Union countries is an opportunity to experience and learn more about the diversity of our continent.

The culture, language, geographic structure, political system and, in particular, the basic economic data of each country also shape its social reality. Europe is a continent of diversity and special individual characteristics. For this reason, it is important to look at each of the 28 member nations in order to fully comprehend the future challenges and perspectives Europe is facing as a whole.
Union of diversity

The European Union has grown dramatically over the past several years, totalling 28 members since 2013. Today, over 500 million people live in the EU member states, which stretch across an area spanning approximately 4.3 million km². They all aspire to live their lives in peace and security, and hope the same for future generations to come.

The peaceful co-existence of people across Europe reflects how much the population has grown together since World War II. At the same time, this development is the result of constant efforts on the part of the member nations. The expansion of the European Union at the beginning of this century means an enormous challenge for everyone involved, and is not without its tensions.
The great wealth of the European Union lies in its diverse cultures and traditions. These do make it necessary, however, to find and establish shared standards and regulations for the people in the member states to live together. The day-to-day work of European policy involves unifying such differing political systems; geographic, historic and economic conditions, as well as strong traditions and ways of thinking across the continent.

The differences in traditions, political systems, economic possibilities and conditions, as well as business and financial policy, seem to emerge more clearly in social policy than in any other sector. The social security systems in the individual countries of the European Union are shaped by established structures on the one hand, and economic and political developments on the other. This is why the EU aims to coordinate and harmonise the many different social protection and social security systems for the people of Europe.

Europe is a continent of diversity – and this is especially true of the social security systems in the EU member nations. As these countries grow closer together, they do not lose their unique features and traditions, or their histories and strengths. Instead, their development is harmonised. This can make daily life simpler and more transparent across the member states. This harmonisation process is the ultimate goal for social Europe.

In order to appreciate and preserve the wealth and diversity on our continent, we first need to recognise this. Getting to know our neighbours and communicating with them is an essential foundation for our steady convergence. It has also provided the basis for the peaceful co-existence of people throughout Europe for around 70 years. The social security systems in the EU are very significant in this respect. They indicate where Europe stands today, but also reveal the continent’s historic development and the challenges it will face in future.
The Languages of Europe

A journey through the European Union is always a linguistic one. The freedom of movement within the European Union allows us to experience this diversity first hand – whether visiting a neighbouring country on holiday or spending an extended period of time there, or living and working in another EU member country. The national language is one of the first direct impressions a person can have of a country and its residents.
Most people in the European Union are native German speakers. Almost 90 million people within the European Union speak German: 81.2 million in Germany, and 8.6 million in Austria. Belgium also has a sizable German-speaking community of 76,300 people. There are also German-speaking populations in Luxembourg and South Tyrol, as well as smaller groups of native speakers in Romania and Hungary.

French follows German as the second most commonly spoken language, with around 70 million native speakers. In addition to the 64.3 million people in France, there are about four million native French speakers in the Walloon Region of Belgium, as well as the French-speaking population in Luxembourg.

English is a close third place, with 64.9 million native speakers in the United Kingdom and 4.6 million in the Republic of Ireland – the majority of Gaelic speakers also count English as their mother tongue. English is also the second official language in Malta. Around 70 million native English speakers live in Europe.

Italian is the fourth most spoken language in Europe, with about 61 million speakers. This is followed by Spanish, with 46.4 million people, and Polish with 38 million native speakers. Dutch, with around 23 million speakers – 16.9 million in the Netherlands and around 6 million in the Belgian region of Flanders – and Romanian (19.9 million) are next on the list.

There are five different languages that are each spoken by about 10 million people in Europe: Greek, with 10.9 million native speakers in Greece as well as the Greek-speaking population of Cyprus (778,000), Portuguese (10.4 million), Czech (10.5 million), Hungarian (9.9 million) and Swedish, with around 10 million speakers – 9.7 million in Sweden and the community of 290,000 Swedish speakers in Finland.
The official languages of the EU

The European Union has a total of 24 official languages. In addition to the languages most widely spoken in Europe – German, French, English, Italian, Spanish and Polish – the less common ones shape the richness and diversity of the continent’s culture.

These include the national languages of Bulgarian, spoken by 7.2 million people, Danish, with 5.7 million speakers, Finnish (5.5 million), Slovakian (5.4 million), Croatian (4.2 million) Lithuanian (2.9 million), Latvian (2.1 million), Slovenian (2.0 million) and Estonian (1.3 million speakers). Fewer than one million people in the EU are native speakers of Irish, Maltese and Luxembourgish. The Turkish speaking population in Cyprus is a special exception.
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The 24 official languages of the EU

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Source:
Fischer Weltalmanach 2014
Majority language communities

Almost 20 percent of EU residents are native German speakers, making it the most frequently spoken native language in the EU. Another 14 percent of Europeans speak German as a foreign language.

Around 30 percent of EU residents speak German – which took second place in the list of the most widespread European languages. Leading the list was English, the most spoken language in the European Union at 51 percent. Of this, “only” 13 percent of them were native speakers and 38 percent spoke
English as a foreign language: the most widely spread language in Europe. In third place is French, with 14 percent native speakers and 14 percent of people who speak French as a foreign language.

This linguistic diversity plays an essential role in Europe’s economic and cultural wealth. The table in this section provides a helpful overview.

**The working languages of the EU**

So-called working languages are used to ensure that people can work as effectively as possible in the European Union’s institutions. Representatives from 28 nations work with 24 official languages here. The EU institutions can decide which regulations are used to govern language use.

In the most important EU entities, this means: All documents submitted need to be translated into the working language of English, French and German. The so-called three language regime is in place here. English has become the language for normal conversations. When it comes to internal meetings, English has become the common language of choice.

In contrast, the following applies in the Council of the European Union: Minister-level negotiations and discussions are always translated into all official languages. The permanent representatives’ committee also allows for a three-language regime of English, French and German.

Finally, the European Parliament has interpreters to translate in and out of all of the European Union’s official languages in the plenum and committees. Official parliamentary communication with the member states takes place in the corresponding official language of the state.

Decisions of the European Court of Justice must be translated into all official languages. The European institutions reflect a level of diversity that is not always easy to manage with 24 official languages.
Old cultural languages

Europe’s linguistic atlas also has a variety of other facets. Historic languages are spoken in a number of small areas that are conscious of their traditions. Many of these languages have been and continue to be endangered by the dominance of the national or official languages: Basque, Breton, Frisian, Irish, Sami, Scottish Gaelic, Sorbian and Welsh are just a few examples of the diversity in the area of old cultural languages.

People who travel through Europe today can see the resurgence of these languages – thanks in part to the European Union’s regional support programmes. City and street signs in these regions are printed in both languages to make people aware of their existence. Several radio and television programmes – like BBC Alba in Scotland, RTE in Ireland, Sámi Radio in Finland and TV Breizh in France – show this linguistic diversity. Websites, newspapers and books also carry on the tradition of these old languages, and many are even taught in schools across Europe today.
Political systems

The EU member states are all parliamentary democracies or republics. Seven of them are also constitutional monarchies, and 21 are presidential republics.

Monarchs serve as the heads of state in Belgium (King Philippe), Denmark (Queen Margrethe II), Luxembourg (Grand Duke Henri), the Netherlands (King Willem-Alexander), Sweden (King Carl XVI Gustav), Spain (King Felipe VI.) and the United Kingdom (Queen Elizabeth II). The British monarch is the most “tenured” leader in Europe: She celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, marking the 60th anniversary of her accession to the throne, on 6 February 2012.

Citizens in all EU countries can vote as of age 18 with one exception – in Austria, people can vote as of age 16. Five EU countries, namely Belgium, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg and Cyprus, even have compulsory voting. Parliamentary and presidential elections in countries without monarchies are held at different intervals ranging from every four to six years.
Area and geography

Not only do the EU member nations have different histories, languages and cultures – they also vary greatly in terms of geographic structure and area. The combined area of two countries, namely France (544,300 km²) and Spain (506,000 km²), covers over a half million square kilometres. They lead the ranking in terms of EU country size, followed by Sweden (438,600 km²), Germany (357,300 km²), Finland (338,400 km²), Poland (312,700 km²) and Italy (302,100 km²).

The United Kingdom and Romania are in the middle of the list, with 248,500 km² and 238,400 km² respectively, followed by a group of countries with areas between 132,00 km² (Greece) and 20,300 km² (Slovenia). Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta have total areas smaller than 10,000 km².
Mountains

The geographic structure of these countries is far more expressive than the raw data: Mountains, coastlines, islands, rivers and lakes have a major impact on the geopolitical and economic development of the EU.

The highest peak in the Alps as well as Europe is Mont Blanc, at 4,810 m, located between France and Italy. It divides and links the countries to the north and south of the Alps. In 1965, an 11.6 km-long tunnel was opened between Chamonix on the French side and Courmayeur in the Aosta Valley. It has since become an important transportation connection between the two countries.

Bulgaria’s highest peak, Musala, at 2,925 m, is seven metres higher than Greece’s tallest mountain, Mytikas, located in the Olympus Mountains (2,918 m), and nearly as tall as the Zugspitze (2,962 m). The four largest mountain ranges in France, the largest EU country in terms of area, are the Alps, Pyrenees, Massif Central and Vosges.

Oceans, seas and lakes

The Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, North and Baltic Seas, Irish Sea, Aegean and Ionian Seas, as well as the Black Sea form the natural border of water surrounding the European continent. Denmark, for example, consists of around 400 named islands. Finland is home to approximately 180,000 islands, and Sweden even has 221,800 islands. Finland is also home to a stunning 187,888 inland lakes. With 9,300 inland lakes, Poland has among the highest numbers of lakes in the world.

Germany’s ten largest islands are – in order of size – Rügen, Usedom, Fehmarn, Sylt, Föhr, Pellworm, Poel, Borkum, Norderney and Amrum. Rügen tops the list with 926 km², and Amrum is smallest with an area of just 20.5 km². One-quarter of the country of the Netherlands is located below sea level. Around 3,000 km of dikes protect the country from the sea.
Rivers

Rivers have always been essential to the economic development of countries. In ancient times, they served as natural transport routes in Europe. These bustling waterways simultaneously brought the different peoples and cultures of the European countries together. The longest rivers in the EU are the Danube, which measures 2,860 km from its mouth to its source, the Rhine at 1,233 km, the Elbe (1,094 km), the Vistula (1,047 km), the Loire (1,012 km) and the Tagus (1,007 km).

The Oder, Meuse, Rhône, Ebro and Po rivers, each between 1,000 km and 650 km in length, are also very significant for trade. They serve as important connecting routes throughout Europe.
Natural resources

Europe’s diversity is also reflected in the diversity of its natural resources. Iron, copper, cobalt, tin and silver, for example, are all found in the Ore Mountains between Germany and the Czech Republic. They shape the landscape and people of this region even today. Another example: 58 percent of the country of Slovenia is covered by forests today, making it one of Europe’s most forested nations. The forest is a major economic factor in Slovenia as the wood industry is a major employer.
The discovery of oil deposits off the coast of Scotland has changed the country and its people. The Mediterranean region is also home to a great deal of natural resources: The word “Kupfer” (copper) is derived from the Latin æes cyprium, which means “ore from Cyprus”. Copper has been mined on Cyprus since ancient times. Today, marble from the mountains on Cyprus is an important export.

These facts and figures illustrate how geography, geology and natural resources impact the living conditions of people in the various countries and regions of the European Union. A brief glance at the few random examples presented here clearly shows that all of these factors shape the development of each EU country – and, in turn, their social structures.

**Dependent territories**

The former colonial powers, namely France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal, have the most territories outside of the European continent. The United Kingdom has a total of 14 British Overseas Territories, including Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, Falkland Islands, Cayman Islands and Saint Helena.

French territory extends to the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Caribbean, French Guiana in South America, Réunion in the Indian Ocean, and Saint-Pierre and Miquelon in the Atlantic, to name a few. The Caribbean islands of Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten belong to the Netherlands. Azores and Madeira, located off the coast of West Africa, are part of Portugal, and Spain governs the Balearic and Canary Islands.
Comparing the Countries of Europe

EU-28

- EU-15
- Eastward expansion 2004 and 2007
- Accession Croatia 2013
## Country abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for the 28 European Union member nations in the tables in this brochure:

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Memberships

The EU countries are members of major international organisations. These memberships also reflect the history and individual development of each nation. Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom belong to the Group of Seven and 20 largest economies in the world (G7 and G20).

All 28 EU countries are members of the UNO and the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Of the 28 EU countries mentioned here, 22 of these are members of NATO. Finland, Ireland, Malta, Austria, Sweden and Cyprus are not NATO members. The OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, counts all EU countries among its members with the exception of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Croatia and Cyprus.
## EU country memberships

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Economy

The European Union represents an economic area of about a half billion people. The countries are just as diverse in their economic power as they are in terms of size, population, natural resources and technical know-how.

The table containing the gross domestic products of the 28 EU countries makes this very clear. Germany tops the list with a GDP of over 2,737.6 billion euros. It leads a group of industrial powers, followed by France (2,059.9 billion euros), the United Kingdom (1,899.1 billion euros), Italy (1,560.0 billion euros) and Spain (1,023.0 billion euros). The newer and smaller members of the EU are at the end of the list: Lithuania (34.6 billion euros), Latvia (23.4 billion euros), Estonia (18.6 billion euros), Cyprus (16.5 billion euros) and Malta (7.3 billion euros).
Gross domestic product of EU countries 2013
In respective prices, billions of EUR

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<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP (billion EUR)</th>
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<tr>
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</table>

Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Economic power per resident

The order changes when the GDP is calculated in terms of economic performance per individual: Luxembourg is at the top (83,400 euros), followed by Denmark (44,400 euros), Sweden (43,800 euros), Austria (37,000 euros) and the Netherlands (35,900 euros).

This is an indication of the Scandinavian countries’ performance in terms of social security systems – Finland is in seventh place with 35,600 euros. At the same time, it also shows the potential of the smaller European Union member nations.

In this analysis, Germany is ranked ninth in the table with a per capita GDP of 33,300 euros per year. The countries that joined the European Union in 2004, 2007 and 2013 are at the end of this list: Latvia (11,600 euros), Croatia and Poland (10,100 euros), Hungary (9,900 euros), Romania (7,100 euros) and Bulgaria (5,500 euros).
### GDP per capita 2013

#### in EUR

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP per capita 2013</th>
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<td>25,700</td>
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d) Break in series
e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available

Data as of June 2016 | Source: Eurostat
Unemployment

There are also major differences in unemployment rates throughout the 28 European Union countries. The lowest unemployment rate of 4.2 percent is registered in the Czech Republic. Germany follows in February 2016 with 4.3 percent on second place.

The highest unemployment rates are found in Portugal (12.2 percent), Cyprus (12.3 percent), Croatia (15.1 percent), Spain (20.4 percent) and Greece with 24.2 percent. In February 2016, the average unemployment rate for all EU countries was 8.9 percent - significantly higher than the United States, which has a jobless rate of 4.9 percent.
Population structure

There are also clear differences in the age structures of the EU member nations, albeit far less dramatic ones. By looking at the population structure, it is noticeable that several countries have an especially “young” population, such as Ireland.

In contrast, other countries, like Germany and Italy, have an especially high percentage of people over age 65. 2015 in Germany it amounts to round 21 percent of the entire population, in Italy even to 22 percent. In the 0 to 14-years age group Ireland heads the field. This population group amounts to 22 percent on the island republic.
The great diversity of the 28 European Union countries revealed in their key figures is what makes them so interesting to compare. A wide range of factors, key figures and developments shape the Europe of today, and allow a glimpse into the future potential of each member nation.

All of these elements lead to the fact that there are still major differences between EU countries - especially when it comes to their social security systems. At the same time, comparing the countries shows that the gaps between them have started to shrink over the past few years, and continue to do so today. This has a significant impact on social security in Europe which provides an important foundation for the Europe of tomorrow - promoting the prosperity and peaceful co-existence of the people on our continent.
Overview of facts and figures

The following pages present extensive information about all 28 European Union countries as well as the EU-28 as a whole. A six-page section is dedicated to each individual country.

The first two-page spread features a photo of the capital city or seat of government and short portrait of the corresponding member state.

On the next page informations about the official name, official languages, capital city, population, population and population density, as well as currency, government website and national holidays for each EU-member follows. A small map of the country with the most important rivers and capital city marked are also included as helpful details. Information about the official language, government, population, currency, national holiday, geographic information, etc., is listed also.

The second two-page spread provides further facts and figures; e.g. regarding the EU Commissioner delegated by the country and the number of seats in the European Parliament. The Heads of State and Government of the respective nation are pictured above. Further information like the gross annual income, minimum wages and demographic structures complete the scope of information. The details about youth unemployment (2015) refer to the population group of the 15 to 24 year olds. The adults with higher education are people aged 25 to 64 years who, at least, obtained A-levels.

There was a break in the series of 2014 data in last year’s edition due to the update of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The break was the result of changes in data collection. Some of the 2015 figures in this year’s publication vary so greatly from the previous ones because the introduction of the new ISCED no longer impacts these numbers.

The third two-page features data on the main topic of social security systems. The key figures for each EU member country are presented in relation to those of Germany and the EU 28 overall. The graphic presentation of data makes comparing the figures both quick and easy.
Total social security expenditures for 2013 are compared to respective prices as a percentage of the gross domestic product (BIP) in 2013, as well as in per capita purchasing power standards (PPS). PPS are considered an artificial currency which takes price differences between countries into account and improves the comparability of data.

Each country’s expenditures for pensions, illness and health care, family and children, as well as the disabled, are compared to Germany’s expenditures as well as those of the entire EU-28 in 2012. Another diagram shows the percentage of people impacted by severe poverty in 2012. Finally, the harmonised unemployment rate from February 2016 is shown in relation to Germany and the 28 EU member nations. In order to provide the most meaningful comparison, this publication only uses figures from the year in which consolidated data were available for each EU country.

Since the facts and figures in this publication are regularly updated as part of the extensive Social Security Compass for Europe database, this overview is based on the latest available information. As such, this publication is a current, accurate and reliable source for key data on European social systems.
History

The Republic of Austria has been a member of the European Union since 1995. Membership negotiations started 15 years previous, however. The treaty that Austria signed after World War II only made it possible for the country to join the EU after World War II after the fall of the Soviet Union. Two-thirds of Austrians voted for EU membership in a referendum on 12 June 1994. Austria and the European Union had a very close relationship prior to joining. The EEC countries and Austria had a free trade agreement in place since 1 January 1973.

The Republic of Austria followed the Habsburg (Austro-Hungarian) Empire after World War I. During the First Austrian Republic, in power from 1918 to 1933, the country introduced voting rights for women and laid the foundation for a social security system. Austria was part of the German Reich from 1938 to 1945 as a result of the so-called Anschluss.

Geography

Nearly 60 percent of the Republic of Austria is mountainous. The highest peaks are in the Eastern Alps, including the tallest summit, the Grossglockner.
at 3,798 m. The Alpine republic and its many ski resorts attract tourists from around the world. Thanks to its central, landlocked location in Europe, Austria has many neighbours: The country borders Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Italy, Slovakia, Hungary, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Austria is divided into nine federal states. The federal capital of Vienna is one of them. The country has a small-scale agriculture, with many organic farms that specialise in high-quality products. Around 34 percent of residents live in rural areas despite the steady decline in agricultural production – a regularly large number when compared to the rest of the European Union.

**Culture**

Austria has a long cultural tradition. The capital city of Vienna was a centre for music in the 18th and 19th centuries, and has an important theatre community today. The city’s coffeehouses, part of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, are places for writers, artists and intellectuals meet to share their ideas. In the early 20th century, these hosted such names as Schnitzler, Zweig, Kraus, Musil, Klimt, Kokoschka and Freud. UNESCO added the historic centres of Mozart’s birthplace Salzburg and the city of Graz to its list of World Heritage Sites. The tourism industry also thrives thanks to Austria’s many cultural offerings and festivals.

Since joining the EU, Austria has participated in European committees and programmes to promote cultural, educational and research cooperations, mostly with countries in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

**Economy**

In 2013, the gross domestic product (GDP) totalled 313.1 billion euros. This puts Austria in 10th place when compared to the rest of the EU, ahead of Denmark and behind Belgium. The pro capita GDP in the same year was one of the highest in the European Union: At 37,000 euros, Austria was in fourth place following Luxembourg, Denmark and Sweden.

Mining, energy and industry make up an important sector in Austria’s economy, making up 28 percent of the GDP. Many automotive industry suppliers are based here, along with several specialised mid-sized
companies, some of which are global market leaders in their segments. The machine construction industry is highly developed and has an outstanding global reputation. Today, agriculture and forestry make up just 1.4 percent of the country’s economic output. The lion’s share of the GDP goes to the service industry and tourism, which make up nearly 71 percent. Once heavily reliant on agriculture, Austria has since transitioned to a modern service economy.

Germany is the most important trade partner – in the field of services as well. Both countries also have a shared energy market. Renewable energies play a major role here, making up around 32 percent of primary energy. Around 65 percent of Austria’s total electricity demand is covered by renewable sources. The Austrian Alps as well as the regions along the Inn and Danube Rivers have traditionally led in hydroelectric power, and the east part of the country is home to many windfarms.

**Social security**

Austria’s residents have enjoyed social security benefits for around 130 years now: The first state workers’ compensation took effect in 1887, and statutory health insurance was established one year later. Today, 98.7 percent of Austrians are insured with one of 20 health insurance providers. People cannot simply choose their provider, however: this is based on their place of residence, profession and business affiliations.

Pensions started in 1906, when Austria introduced statutory pension insurance for “private sector servants”, or salaried employees. It did not apply to workers at the time. Statutory pension insurance for all employed people wasn’t introduced until 1938 as the Third Reich introduced the Reich Insurance Code in Austria.

Austrians have been protected from the risks of unemployment since 1920. The first family benefit legislation followed in 1948, entitling families to child benefits.

The First Austrian Republic from 1918 to 1933 established significant social laws, including the Austrian Chamber of Labour as the legal representation
The origins of the Austrian social service system date back to the time of the dual monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in power from 1867 to 1918. The valid legal basis for statutory social insurance is the General Social Security Act of 1955. Today, the family benefits are the only universal ones financed exclusively through taxes and employer contributions without any employee participation. The social insurance schemes provide all other social security benefits, and are financed through employer and beneficiary contributions. The exception is the guaranteed minimum income for people experiencing hardship. All nine federal states regulate and finance these payments individually at a state level. The federal government also funds 70 percent of maternity benefits.

The largest percentage of the federal budget was devoted to social security and healthcare in 2014. Austria contributed 71.5 billion euros for social security alone, along with 43.5 billion euros for pensions.
Specific features of the country’s social security

Many benefits are not structured consistently nation-wide, but are governed by each individual state. This also applies to measures for people with disabilities. Individual state committees ensure that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is enforced; the areas of competence differ from state to state. Styria, for example, has its own implementation plan for specific steps.

Most EU countries pay child benefit directly to the parents. In Austria, beneficiaries of legal age can submit a request to the tax office to have the funds transferred to their own bank accounts with consent from their parents or legal guardians.

Care allowances and payments for 24-hour care are financed through taxes. Austria also offers a number of other care benefits: All residents are entitled to benefits if they require mobile, outpatient, daily and inpatient care services. They do need to pay a percentage of the costs for the non-cash benefits, however. Social aspects are taken into account when determining the amount of the personal contribution.
Official name: Republik Österreich

Official language: German

Capital: Vienna (1.7 million residents, 2016)

Population (2015): 8.6 million

Population density (2014): 103.6 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Euro, since 2002

Government website: https://www.bka.gv.at/

National holiday: 26 October: Day of the Declaration of Neutrality 1955

Area (2014): 83,900 km²

Administrative structure: Nine states, including Vienna as the national capital

Geography: The Alps in the west and south, eastern provinces in the Danube Basin; highest peak: Grossglockner (3,798 m) in the Hohe Tauern Mountains
Head of state: Alexander van der Bellen
Head of government: Christian Kern

Political system:
Parliamentary democratic republic; parliament (Nationalrat): elections every five years; upper house of parliament (Bundesrat); direct elections for the Federal President every six years; right to vote as of age 16

Joined EU in:
1995

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
1.7 percent\textsuperscript{a), b)}

Memberships:
EU, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
18

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Johannes Hahn
Department: European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

\textsuperscript{a)} Provisional value, \textsuperscript{b)} Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013):
GDP total  313.1 billion euros
GDP per capita  37,000 euros

49,600 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
23,211 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
No minimum wage

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
6.1 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
10.6 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
84.6 percent

Population structure (2015):
Women  50.9 percent  Men  49.1 percent
Age distribution:
ages 0 - 14  14 percent  ages 15 - 64  67 percent  over 65  19 percent
Urban population  66 percent  Rural population  34 percent
**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
In percent of GDP (current prices)

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**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
Per head of population (PPS)

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**Expenditures for pensions 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

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**Illness/health care 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

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<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
**Benefits family/children 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961&lt;sup&gt;a)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550&lt;sup&gt;e)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Invalidity benefits 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690&lt;sup&gt;a)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477&lt;sup&gt;e)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013**
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total**
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a)</sup> Provisional value, <sup>e)</sup> Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

In 1957 Belgium was one of the six founding members of the European Economic Community (EEC), the forerunner of the European Union. The country founded the BeNeLux Union with neighbours Luxembourg and the Netherlands in 1958, creating an even more intensified economic group within the EEC. The capital city of Brussels is an important hub for European and global politics, and is the location of NATO. The city's Leopold Quarter is home to the European Union and EU Commission. The European Parliament and Council of the European Union also have representative offices in the Belgian capital.

Various major European powers dominated the country over various parts of its history. The French Revolution ended 82 years of Austrian dominance in 1795. The territory currently belonging to Belgium was ruled by France for two decades before being consolidated with large parts of the current BeNeLux region in the 1815 Congress of Vienna to become the „new“ Kingdom of the Netherlands. Belgium has been a constitutional hereditary monarchy with a two-chamber parliament since gaining independence from the Netherlands in 1830.
Belgium

The foundation for the social security system was laid in 1851, when insurance companies were officially recognised as a certain type of legal form.

Geography

The Kingdom of Belgium is located in the heart of the European Union. The majority of the country is shaped by flat farmland and gentle, rolling hills. The Ardennes in the northeast part of the country is an extensive forested mountain region. Tourists enjoy hiking in the wide variety of landscapes that span the country. The majority (98 percent) of the population lives in cities, with just 2 percent in rural areas.

The soil contains loess, which makes it very fertile. While only a small percentage of Belgium’s population is involved in agriculture, the country is able to produce around 80 percent of the food it needs. Belgium primarily grows fruits, vegetables, potatoes and grains. Farmers in the Ardennes and West Flanders raise livestock.

The country is divided into three political regions: Flanders (Dutch-speaking), Wallonia (French-speaking) and the Brussels-Capital region (bilingual). Belgium has three official languages: French, Dutch and German, which is only spoken in the eastern part of the country.

Culture

Due to the country’s division into three parts, Belgium’s cultural life takes place in different languages. The use of languages is still a sensitive topic in Belgium today, and leads to political disputes time and again. Language use in all parts of life is regulated by law. This is why there are no nationwide television stations, newspapers or other mass media. With the exception of the Royal Military Academy, the country’s universities only instruct in one language.

The country has a very diverse culinary scene due to its many different cultural influences. In contrast to what many people think, the world-
famous pommes frites come from Belgium – not France. People around the world also enjoy Belgium beer, waffles and chocolate, especially pralines.

The country has the largest number of award-winning chefs per capita. Belgium also has a wealth of talent in the arts: Painter René Magritte is known around the world for his Surrealist paintings, Jacques Brel for his melancholy, critical chansons, and Adolphe Sax for inventing the saxophone.

Craft guilds had a great deal of influence in Brussels city government in the 15th century. They met in the many guild houses surrounding the Grand Place, near the Town Hall. Many of these buildings were destroyed by French troops in August 1695, but rebuilt in elaborate Baroque style shortly thereafter. Their façades dominate the look of the Grand Place, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Economy

The service segment is the most important economic sector, generating around 77 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). While industry has a long tradition in Belgium, it only makes up around 22 percent of Belgium’s GDP today. The most important sectors of the economy are pharmaceuticals, chemicals and the food industry. Agriculture makes up a comparatively small percentage of the GDP at just 1 percent. When compared to the rest of Europe, Belgium had a per capita GDP of 34,500 euros in 2013, putting the country ahead of Germany in eighth place. The total GDP for the same year was nearly 383 billion euros, or ninth place in the EU.

Spanning around 70 km, the Belgian coast is home to several important harbours. Thanks to their central location in Europe, they are important centres for European imports and exports. After Rotterdam, Antwerp harbour is Europe’s second largest port, followed by Hamburg. Zeebrugge is the world’s largest port for the automotive industry. Belgium’s most important trading partners are France, Germany and the Netherlands.
Social security

The healthcare system, dates back to the second half of the 19th century, when workers joined together to form so-called mutual associations. These associations were designed to protect their members from the risks involved with illness, unemployment and disability.

These smaller associations were combined to form national associations based on their shared political and ideological goals at the beginning of the 20th century. These insurance companies still exist today and provide the basis for the country’s healthcare system. There are Christian, neutral, socialist and liberal organisations. There is also an insurance organisation for self-employed people and professional groups, as well as assistance fund for people who aren’t affiliated with any of these groups.
The pension system was introduced in 1900, and later adopted in parts by Italy and France. Legal protection in the event of work-related accidents followed in 1903, and was expanded in 1927 by a law governing illnesses caused on the job.

Belgium introduced a state subsidy for voluntary unemployment insurance starting in 1920. Today, unemployment insurance is required for all of the country’s workers and salaried employees, who share contributions with their employers. The first family benefits were introduced in 1930, and gradually made accessible to all classes of the population.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

The three official languages have led the Kingdom of Belgium to emerge as a federal state consisting of three communities and three regions. Each has its own separate government and parliament. The federal government is responsible for the social security systems, however.

Belgium’s social security system is financed through a so-called global contribution paid by employers and employees. A government subsidy and the opportunity for alternative financing through VAT supplement this basic contribution.

One special aspect of the healthcare system is that parts of it are financed by contributions from pharmaceutical companies on specific products. The amount of these contributions is based on the pharmaceutical industry’s sales on the Belgian market. Belgium’s healthcare system also has another unique feature dating back to its colonial past: Certain members of the former public services in Africa are entitled to cash and non-cash benefits.
Official name:
Koninkrijk België (Dutch)
Royaume de Belgique (French)
Königreich Belgien (German)

Official languages:
Dutch, French, German

Capital:
Brussels (1.2 million residents, 2015)

Population (2015):
11.3 million

Population density (2014):
370.3 inhabitants per km²

Currency:
Euro, since 2002

Government website:
http://www.foderale-regierung.be

National holiday:
21 July: Day the first King of the Belgians swore allegiance to the new Belgian constitution.
(Nationale feestdag, Fête nationale)

Fläche (2014): 30,500 km²

Administrative structure:
Three regions with houses of parliament:
• Dutch-speaking Flanders in the north
• French-speaking Walloon in the south
• capital region Brussels (French and Dutch)

Three communities with parliaments:
• Flemish Community (shared with Flanders)
• French Community
• German-speaking Community

Geography: 67 km-long coastline and flat coastal plains along the North Sea; the Ardennes in the southeast
**Political system:**
Constitutional monarchy; parliament consisting of the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate: members are elected for terms of no more than four years; compulsory voting as of age 18

**Joined EU in:**
Founding member (1951/1957)

**Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):**
2.2 percent\(^{a), b)}\)

**Memberships:**
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

**Seats in the European Parliament:**
21

**Commissioner in the European Commission:**
Marianne Thyssen
Department: Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

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\(^{a)}\) Provisional value, \(^{b)}\) Estimated value
**Belgium**

**Urban population** 98 percent

**Rural population** 2 percent

**Age distribution**
- Ages 0 - 14: 17 percent
- Ages 15 - 64: 65 percent
- Over 65: 18 percent

**Population structure (2015):**
- Women: 50.8 percent
- Men: 49.2 percent

**Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013):**
- GDP total: 382.7 billion euros
- GDP per capita: 34,500 euros

**Gross national income per capita p.a. (2014):**
47,240 US dollars

**Annual mean income (netto, 2014):**
21,705 euros

**Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):**
1,502 euros

**Unemployment rate (February 2016):**
8.6 percent

**Youth unemployment rate (2015):**
22.1 percent

**Adults who have completed higher education (2015):**
74.7 percent
**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
In percent of GDP (current prices)

- **BE**: 28.9
- **DE**: 27.7
- **EU**: 27.5

**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
Per head of population (PPS)

- **BE**: 9,056
- **DE**: 9,387
- **EU**: 7,325

**Expenditures for pensions 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **BE**: 3,687
- **DE**: 3,677
- **EU**: 3,024

**Illness/health care 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **BE**: 2,461
- **DE**: 2,949
- **EU**: 1,890

---

*Provisional value, Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat*
### Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>702</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477 e)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
BULGARIA

History

Bulgaria became a member of the European Union as part of the eastern expansion on 1 January 2007. The country has been an independent democratic republic since 1990.

The Red Army occupied Bulgaria in September 1944. The People’s Republic of Bulgaria was founded in 1946, and eventually became a member of the Warsaw Pact. The process of political disengagement started in 1989 with the creation of the “Union of Democratic Forces”. The movement formed after it was clear that the Bulgarian government did not intend to make any changes to the political system following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The first democratic elections in 1990 marked the end of the Communist era and the beginning of political and economic reforms in the country. The government started taking its first steps towards EU membership in the 1990s. In 2004, Bulgaria became a member of NATO and aligned its foreign policy more closely with the United States.
Geography

Bulgaria is located in the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. Lowlands formed by the Danube and Maritsa Rivers make up two-thirds of the country, with mountain ranges dominating the remaining landscape. The Balkan Mountains that give this region its name run through the middle of the country. Musala, part of the Rila mountain range, is the highest peak in the country, standing at 2,925 m. The eastern coast of the country bordering the Black Sea is very significant for both tourism and trade.

State territory also includes 81 smaller islands in the Danube River, which runs about 500 kilometres to form the country’s northern border with Romania. Conservation plays an important role in Bulgaria: The country has three national parks, 11 wildlife parks and 55 nature reserves. The best known is “Central Balkan National Park”, one of the EU’s largest and most important wildlife sanctuaries in the EU. Its thick forests surround tall boulders, deep ravines and many waterfalls.

Culture

Bulgaria is traditionally known for its folklore, customs and handicrafts. These were the only ways that people could preserve their identity during the 500 years of Ottoman rule between the 14th and 19th centuries.

Today, the capital city of Sofia serves as the political, cultural and economic centre of Bulgaria. It has been home to the university since the 19th century, and is the hub of many media companies today.

The country’s most important modern artist is Christo Jawaschew, who works with his wife, Jeanne-Claude. The couple have become famous around the world for their spectacular works. They wrapped major structures in cloth – including the Pont Neuf in Paris in 1985 and the Reichstag building in Berlin in 1995. In 2005, they installed over 7,500 gates with saffron-coloured fabric panels in New York’s Central Park in an artwork titled “The Gates”.

Bulgarian is the only written language in the EU to use the Cyrillic alphabet.
Economy

In 2013, Bulgaria had the lowest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of all EU countries at 5,500 euros. When compared to the rest of the EU, the country’s economic output of around 40 billion euros is in the bottom one-third. The economy has been growing since the global economic downturn of 2009: The GDP increased 1.7 percent in 2014.

Energy production, the food industry, metalworking and engineering are all important to the Bulgarian economy. Many automotive industry suppliers are based here. Bulgaria boasts the 9th highest ranked call centre and online technical support service business in the so-called outsourcing industry, one of the country’s largest growth sectors.
The most important trade partners for imports are Russia, Germany and Italy. Bulgaria primarily exports goods to Turkey, Germany and Italy.

**Social security**

Bulgaria’s first social insurance policies were written in the 19th century, starting with pension insurance. The first “social” law was enacted in 1886 to regulate provisions and care for people injured in military service. Before 1901, the country would establish pension funds for teachers, the clergy, civil servants, employees of civil authorities and military staff.

The law governing state insurance took effect in 1924, making Bulgaria the first country on the Balkan Peninsula to have a comprehensive social security system. The law covered various aspects of social security, including work accidents, illness, maternity, disability, ageing and surviving dependents. One year later, Bulgaria introduced labour market adjustment and unemployment insurance legislation. The individual insurance systems were financed independently of each other.

In 1941, the country established the “Institute for State Insurance” – an independent body to govern the social security system with representatives from the state authorities, workers and employers. Other types of pension funds were created in the years leading up to 1945, specifically for retailers, craftsmen, farmers and freelancers, as well as state and public officials.

The socialist government passed a law in 1948 that made the amount of the pension dependent on the amount of time the insured person worked, not just the amount of contributions paid. All independent insurance funds were unified and centralised in the 1950s under the supervision of the State Public Social Security Institute.

In 1984, the country founded the “Head Office of Social Security” as a state corporation under public law. The regional directorates for pension and public insurance were converted to regional representatives of the Head Office. This regional social security structure is still in place today.
The country adapted the system in line with western examples following the democratic upheaval of the mid-1990s. A 1999 law on additional voluntary insurance coverage laid the foundation for the third pillar of the pension system. The Social Security Law followed in 2000, regulating the first and second pillars of the pension insurance system along with benefits for illness, disability and unemployment, as well as for the elderly and surviving dependents.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

Bulgarian workers have been able to enjoy unlimited freedom of movement throughout the EU since 1 January 2014. People sent by recruiting companies to work abroad are exempted from the country’s compulsory insurance, but can still opt to insure themselves voluntarily on the basis of their self-declared income. Retirees who are working without a labour contract are also exempted from this insurance requirement. This exception also extends to seamen.

Parents benefit from extensive additional services, which balance out the relatively low child benefit payments. The state guarantees a lump-sum payment for each born child, a cash benefit for adoption and a monthly child-raising allowance for small children up to the age of two. Parents of children with disabilities receive higher child benefit payments. Each year, women with three or more children receive direct transport aid for free train and bus transportation within the country.
Official name: Republika Bălgarija (Република България)

Official language: Bulgarian

Capital: Sofia (1.3 million residents, 2015)

Population (2015): 7.2 million

Population density (2014): 66.3 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Lew

Government website: http://www.government.bg/

National holiday:
3 March: Liberation Day, Treaty of San Stefano, 1878

Area (2014): 111,000 km²

Administrative structure: 28 districts

Geography: Located in the east of the Balkan Peninsula, on the Black Sea; plateaus and mountains in the south; highest peak: Musala (2,925 m)
Political system:
Parliamentary republic; parliament: National Assembly, elected every four years; direct presidential elections every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
2007

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
1.4 percent\textsuperscript{a), b)}

Memberships:
EU, NATO, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
17

Commissioner in the European Commission:
-
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total 39.9 billion euros
GDP per capita 5,500 euros

7,620 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
3,311 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
215 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
7.4 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
21.6 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
81.9 percent

Population structure (2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51.4 percent</td>
<td></td>
<td>48.6 percent</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age distribution</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ages 0 - 14</td>
<td>14 percent</td>
<td>66 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 15 - 64</td>
<td>66 percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 65</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban population</th>
<th>Rural population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74 percent</td>
<td>26 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

- **BG**: 17.0
- **DE**: 27.7 \(^a\)
- **EU**: 27.5 \(^e\)

Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

- **BG**: 2,232
- **DE**: 9,387 \(^a\)
- **EU**: 7,325 \(^e\)

Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **BG**: 370
- **DE**: 3,677 \(^a\)
- **EU**: 3,024 \(^e\)

Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **BG**: 188
- **DE**: 2,949 \(^a\)
- **EU**: 1,890 \(^e\)

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^e\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BG</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>BG</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550</td>
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Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BG</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
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<td>DE</td>
<td></td>
<td>690</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BG</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BG</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

Croatia is the newest member to the European Union. The country joined 1 July 2013. Accession negotiations for full EU membership started in autumn of 2005 after Croatia previously held the status of a candidate country. A stabilisation and association agreement with the EU was already in effect by February 2005.

The country became part of the “Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” in 1945, which consisted of the states of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia. This artificially created community of states caused conflict throughout the region early on.

The Socialist republic of Yugoslavia established closer ties to the West in the 1960s following a series of political reforms. These especially helped Croatia, as it allowed many Western tourists to spend their holidays on the Adriatic coast. The first demonstrations in Croatia also date back to this period: People were upset that all foreign currencies collected from tourism needed to be paid directly to the central government.
Also the independence of the Croatian language as being separate from Serbian was also not officially recognised. In May 1991, over 90 percent of Croatian people voted for independence from the “Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” in a referendum. This was followed by a declaration of independence. Unlike other socialist countries, this breakup was not peaceful: The Yugoslav People’s Army, dominated by Serbia, tried to crush the attempts for independence with military force. This led to the Croatian War of Independence from 1991 to 1995.

Despite the stabilisation and association agreements with the EU, the membership negotiations themselves were very difficult. It was only possible to begin after the International Court of Justice for the former Yugoslavia confirmed Croatia’s full cooperation with the tribunal in 2005. In 2009, a border conflict between Slovenia and Croatia interrupted the membership negotiations for several months.

The history of an independent social security system in Croatia only dates back to the 1990s, following the end of the Croatian War.

Geography

Located in southern Europe, Croatia is at the point where central Europe meets the Balkans. Croatia is situated on the east side of the Adriatic Sea, just opposite Italy, and shares a border with Slovenia, Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Montenegro. The country is home to over 1,000 islands, of which only 48 are permanently populated. Nearly one-fourth of the Croatian population of around 4.3 million people lives in the area in and around the capital city of Zagreb. The Adriatic coast and its historically significant cities, Dubrovnik and Split, are especially popular among tourists.

Many fans of Westerns are familiar with the Croatian landscape, dotted with rivers, lakes and impressive rock formations. Many Karl May films were made here.
Culture

Folklore and traditional dress have a long tradition in Croatia. Like other modern Western countries, people rarely wear traditional garments in their everyday lives. They still play an important role at celebrations and many festive occasions, however. The dominant colours are red and white, which are also found on the national flag. The traditional music is played with an instrument called the Tamburica, a stringed instrument that looks and is played similar to the Russian Balalaika.

Probably the country’s best known historic cultural achievement is the spread of the tie, which is worn in practically every country on earth. The term „cravat“ was mentioned for the first time in a French encyclopaedia in the 17th century. It dates back to a piece of clothing worn by Croatian soldiers. They wore a „neckband“ with fringes to make them easy to recognise – the predecessor to the modern necktie. The French use the word “cravate”, the translation of Croat, “Hrvat”, or “Krawat”.
One of the most famous Croatians is inventor, physicist and electrical engineer Nikola Tesla. After Tesla emigrated to New York in 1884, he worked briefly for one of his greatest competitors, Thomas Alva Edison. Tesla researched alternating current and the wireless transmission of electricity. He is considered the developer of two-phase electric power. His name is also used by a prominent American manufacturer of electric cars.

Economy

Economic performance dropped around one-sixth since the financial crisis in 2008. The gross domestic product (GDP) increased for the first time again in 2015 by 1.6 percent. The unemployment rate in 2015 was 16.7 percent, one of the highest in the European Union. Croatia was in the bottom third of EU countries in per capita GDP at nearly 10,100 euros. The total GDP was nearly 42 billion euros in 2013.

The government that was sworn in in January 2016 is attempting to make substantial structural changes to strengthen the Croatian economy. The focus is on cutting the budget deficit that led to the deficit procedure initiated by the EU. The service sector is one of the most important branches of the economy, and it generates the majority of the GDP. This includes tourism, which plays a strong role. Around 14.3 million tourists visited Croatia in 2015, including 2.1 million Germans. Industry generates around 29 percent of the GDP, while agriculture makes up just 4 percent. The most important trading partners are Italy, Germany and Slovenia, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Social security

Pensions were the first area of social security to be regulated by law, which was passed in 1922. The Socialist Republic of Croatia also had laws governing family benefits (1949) and unemployment (1952), as well as sickness and maternity (1954). The country has only been independent since 1991. For this reason, many of today's social security laws have only been created or reformed in the past two decades, including a series of laws on pensions, disability and work-related illnesses. Coverage in the event of work-related accidents was provided by law in 2006. Other changes in social security legislation followed EU membership in 2013.
Specific features of the country‘s social security

Croatia invested around one-third of all revenues in social security in 2012, ranking them in the bottom third of EU member countries.

One special feature in the Croatian social security system is how doctors are paid. Unlike in Germany, doctors bound by contracts are not paid according to the services they provide, but by a so-called per person fee for each patient registered at their practices. Patients usually register with a doctor for a period of one year. The amount of this per capita payment is defined in accordance with the guidelines of the Croatian Health Insurance Fund.

People who receive guaranteed minimum income benefits also receive a grant for heating costs as additional compensation. They can assert a claim once each year.
Official name: Republika Hrvatska

Official language: Croatian

Capital: Zagreb (793,000 residents, 2015)

Population (2015): 4.2 million

Population density (2014): 74.9 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Kuna

Government website: https://vlada.gov.hr/en

National holiday: 25 June: Statehood Day 1991 (Dan državnosti)

Area (2014): 56,600 km²

Administrative structure: 20 counties and the special administrative unit of Zagreb, 543 cities and communities, some of which are very small

Geography: Primarily lowlands; 1,246 islands of varying sizes, 48 of which are permanently inhabited; many mountains and beaches
**Head of state:**
Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović

**Head of government:**
Andrej Plenković

**Political system:**
Parliamentary democracy; one chamber; elected every four years; presidential elections every five years; compulsory voting as of age 18

**Joined EU in:**
2013

**Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):**
0.8 percent\(^{a,i}\), \(^{b,j}\)

**Memberships:**
EU, NATO, OSZE, UNO

**Seats in the European Parliament:**
11

**Commissioner in the European Commission:**
Neven Mimica
Department: International Cooperation and Development

\(^{a)}\) Provisional value, \(^{b)}\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  43.1 billion euros
GDP per capita  10,100 euros

12,980 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
5,225 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
408 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
15.1 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
43.0 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
83.3 percent

Population structure (2015):
## Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>3,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat*
**Benefits family/children 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961   (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550   (e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Invalidity benefits 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690   (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477   (e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013**
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total**
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

The Republic of Cyprus has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 2003, and has been part of the Eurozone since 2008. Its territory comprises the southern portion of the island of Cyprus, which is located in the Mediterranean Sea. The northern part of the island, known as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, is not part of the EU.

Cyprus has a long and eventful history, and has been subject to various rulers. Its rich deposits of copper and strategic location have repeatedly attracted conquerors to its shores, including the Egyptians, Romans, Franks, Venetians and Ottomans. Starting in 1878, Cyprus was leased to Great Britain, which annexed the island at the start of World War One. In 1955, Greek Cypriots launched an underground uprising against British rule that continued until the island state won its interdependence in 1960.

The new constitution split control of the country between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, a set-up that resulted in years of bloody conflict between these two groups. In response to proposed changes to the constitution that would have put an end to this power-sharing arrangement, Turkish troops occupied the northern part of the country in 1974, and since this time the Turkish-Cypriot north and Greek-Cypriot
south have been separated by the so-called “Green Line”. UN peacekeepers are stationed in the buffer zone. The United Nations has been overseeing reunification talks, but these have made little progress for years now.

**Geography**

Cyprus is both the easternmost and southernmost island in the Mediterranean Sea. While its location makes it an interface between three continents, in a purely geographical sense it is considered to be part of Asia. The shipping routes leading past Cyprus link the ‘West’ with the ‘Orient’.

The island is home to extensive forests. Thanks to its fertile soil, the Mesaoria plain is the site of agricultural activities. The island’s year-round mild climate and 780-km coastline make it a favourite destination for tourists, yet at nearly 2,000 metres in elevation, the country’s highest point, Mount Olympus, is also a winter ski resort.

**Culture**

As a result of its many conquerors, the island bears traces of numerous cultures. Kolossi Castle was built by crusaders from the Knights Templar, and was later occupied by the Knights Hospitaller. Paphos Castle, located by the harbour, was originally a Frankish fort. There are also countless ruins from the ancient Greek and Roman periods. The primary remnants of the Byzantine period are churches, including ten that have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Legend has it that Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of beauty and love, was born on Cyprus, a fact that drew large numbers of pilgrims in ancient times. Even today, “Anhestiria”, a spring flower festival harking back to the customs of Greek mythology, is celebrated in May with parades and magnificent floral arrangements in numerous cities.

**Economy**

As a result of its copper deposits, Cyprus was a major trading centre in the ancient Mediterranean world. In fact, its copper resources were so
important that the metal derives its current name from the island: the Latin word for copper, cuprum, is derived from aes cyprium, which means Cypriot ore. Today services are the island’s most important economic sector. Thanks to tourism and the financial and corporate services sectors in particular, services made up 87 percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014. In the same year, industry accounted for 11 percent of the GDP and agriculture 2 percent.

As a result of the financial crisis, Cyprus was forced to request international assistance in 2013. With a GDP per capita of 19,000 euros in 2013, Cyprus was ranked exactly in the middle of EU states in 14th place. With a total GDP for 2013 of 16.5 billion euros, Cyprus ranks 27th within the EU, ahead of Malta.

Most of the country’s exports – primarily chemical products, foodstuffs such as potatoes, wine and citrus fruits, and raw materials – go to the United Kingdom and Greece; Germany is the fifth-largest destination. Motor vehicles, machinery and industrial supplies account for most imports. Germany is the fourth largest source of imports.

Social security

For a long time, malaria was a major problem on Cyprus, but following World War II the disease was successfully eradicated. Since Cyprus’s independence in 1960, healthcare services have been greatly expanded.

The state, unions and employer associations have worked together to establish a comprehensive social security network. In addition to social insurance, this includes support and services for surviving dependants, health and care services, education and housing benefits. Whereas very few people were insured during the colonial period, as a result of the new system, employees and the self-employed have been covered since 1964. Maternity leave, benefits for illness and work-related accidents, and unemployment benefits were also introduced. The social security system was revised and expanded once again in 1973 with the introduction of pensions for the elderly, surviving dependants and people with a limited ability to work, as well as pensions for people with disabilities.
Many benefits have been dependent on income since 1980. The social security system was most recently reformed in 2010, when a variety of new laws were enacted covering all aspects of the system apart from family and maternity benefits, which continue to be governed by rules introduced in 2002 (child benefit) and 2003 (maternity benefit).

Since 1970, social welfare benefits have been provided for both individuals and families in Cyprus. Since 1973 there has also been a payment that is intended to ensure that no citizen falls below subsistence level. It is paid to needy citizens in order to ensure that they can satisfy their basic needs, and is also accompanied by the availability of social support to improve the situation of those who are impacted.

Following the island’s partition in 1974, the focus of social security shifted from social development to social reconstruction: as a result of the economic crisis that was caused by the Turkish invasion, the government
was initially forced to reduce pensions by 20 percent, and to completely eliminate other benefits, such as unemployment benefit. It was not until 1977 that all social benefits could once again be granted at their former level.

Today Cyprus’s social security services administer social security benefits and support in the areas of employment, social assistance, assistance for the elderly, assistance for people with disabilities, community work and assistance for families and children.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

With regard to people suffering from social hardship, in 2014 Cyprus enacted a guaranteed minimum income that replaced the old social assistance provided by social welfare services. These benefits are now the responsibility of the Department of Social Insurance Services, and can be rendered either as monetary or non-monetary benefits. For retirees who are of limited financial means, there continue to be special benefits available from the social security services: a social pension for people over the age of 65 who are not entitled to a customary pension, and an allowance for retirees whose total annual income is below the poverty level.

People with disabilities are also to receive better support. In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2013 the first national action plan was announced for people with disabilities. The objective was to safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people with disabilities and eliminate all discrimination. This also entailed a review of all laws impacting the rights of persons with disabilities. The action plan defines all planned measures, responsibilities for their implementation, the schedule and the expected results.
Official name:
Kypriaki Dimokratía/Kýpros/Kύπρος (Greek)
Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti (Turkish)

Official language:
Greek, Turkish

Capital:
Nikosia (388,000 residents, administrative district; 2015)

Population (2015):
847,000

Population density (2014):
92.5 inhabitants per km²

Currency:
Euro, since 2008

Government website:
http://www.cyprus.gov.cy

National holiday:
1 October: Independence Day

Area (2014): 9,300 km²

Administrative structure: Six districts; the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots have been divided by the so-called Green Line since the 1974 Turkish occupation of the northern part of the island

Geography: Third-largest island in the Mediterranean Sea; Pentadaktylos Mountains in the north, the Troodos Mountains extend from the centre of the country to the southwest, fertile Mesaoria plain; highest peak: Olympos (1,952 m)
Head of State and Head of government: Nikos Anastasiades

Political system: Parliamentary presidential republic; parliamentary elections every five years; direct presidential elections every five years; compulsory voting as of age 18

Joined EU in: 2004

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015): 0.2 percent\textsuperscript{a), b)}

Memberships: EU, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament: 6

Commissioner in the European Commission: Christos Stylianides
Department: Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management

\textsuperscript{a)} Provisional value, \textsuperscript{b)} Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  16.5 billion euros
GDP per capita  19,000 euros

26,370 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
14,400 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
No minimum wage

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
12.3 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
32.8 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
78.1 percent

Population structure (2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49.0 percent</td>
<td>51.0 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age distribution c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ages 0 - 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban population</th>
<th>Rural population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67 percent</td>
<td>33 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) Deviation from 100 percent due to rounding
### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
*In percent of GDP (current prices)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
*Per head of population (PPS)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>4,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Expenditures for pensions 2013
*Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>1,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Illness/health care 2013
*Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*a) Provisional value,  
e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available  
Data as of June 2016  
Source: Eurostat*
## Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Provisional value, Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat*
The Czech Republic is a young country which only celebrated its independence in 1993. Immediately after this, it began to align itself with the West: first joining the Council of Europe and then NATO in 1999. It has been a member of the European Union since 2004.

The Czech Republic, formerly Bohemia and Moravia, was, up until its separation from Slovakia in 1993, subject to outside rule for many centuries. At the start of the 14th century, the reign of the Bohemian Przemyslid came to an end with the murder of King Wenceslaus III. In the middle part of the century, the German King Charles IV ultimately seized power and became the Holy Roman Emperor in 1355. He established Prague as the country’s capital.

The Czech Republic began to demand greater independence starting in the mid-19th century. This resulted in conflicts with Germany and Hungary. During the Austrian-Hungarian dual monarchy, both of these ethnic groups enjoyed greater rights than the Czech population. The Czech Republic and Slovakia merged to form Czechoslovakia in 1918, following World War I.
During the years of National Socialism, large parts of the country firstly fell to Germany in 1938. The country then came under control of the Soviet Union after a brief period of a new Czechoslovakian alliance. It took two attempts, the first, the “Prague Spring” in 1968, and the second, the “Velvet Revolution” in 1989, for the country to regain its independence.

The Czech Republic finally became an independent state after separating from Slovakia on 1 January 1993. Like the majority of former Communist states, the country established a modern social system which is regarded as one of the most effective in Europe.

**Geography**

The Czech Republic is landlocked: It is nestled between Germany, Poland, Slovakia and Austria. Hills and mountains make up 95 percent of the country. The mountains in which brown coal, black coal, uranium, lead, zinc, iron ore and graphite have been mined make up 11.5 percent of the country’s territory. Measuring 430 km, the Vltava is the country’s longest river. It starts in the Bohemian Forest and flows into the Elbe north of Prague.

Forests and mountains surround and divide up the country: The White Carpathians and the Beskid Mountains are located between Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The Bohemian Forest, the Upper Palatine Forest and the Erz Mountains form a natural border with Germany to the west. The Giant Mountains are a mountain range located in the north, between the Czech Republic and Poland. The Sněžka is the country’s highest peak at 1,602 m. It is covered in snow for nearly six months of the year. The river Thaya forms a natural border with Austria.

**Culture**

Prague is one of the oldest cities in Europe and an important cultural centre. The oldest European university was founded there in 1348 by Charles IV. He was extremely interested in the arts, the church and the sciences. Prague flourished under his rule and became a “Golden City”.
The cityscape is dominated by Gothic and Baroque buildings. Welcoming over five million tourists each year, Prague is one of the most frequently visited cities in Europe.

Prague represents a meeting point of Czech, German and Jewish culture and literature. Franz Kafka, one of the most important authors in German literature, was born here: Despite spending most of his life in Prague, he wrote in German. Writer and civil liberties activist Václav Havel became the first president of the new Czech Republic. Composers Anton Dvořák and Bedřich Smetana are famous around the world. Indeed, Smetana’s orchestral work “The Moldau” is played in concert halls the world over.

**Economy**

The Republic has a positive outlook when it comes to its economy: In 2015, the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) grew 4.3 percent to reach a new high since 2007. The service sector makes up 59 percent of the GDP, and industry also plays an important role. This, especially the automotive industry, is responsible for around 38 percent of the GDP. The film sector is also an significant branch of the economy.

The Czech Republic generated almost 272 billion euros from exports in 2015, a new record that corresponds to around 85 percent of the GDP. About one-third of foreign trade is with the country’s most important trading partner, Germany. The Czech Republic is also committed to developing strong trading relations outside of the EU, in particular with China and India.

**Social security**

As with most EU countries, social security in the Czech Republic started with a law to cover work-related accidents. It was passed back in 1887. Laws regulating illness and maternity were adopted the following year, and the first laws governing pensions were passed in 1906 and 1924. A law providing family benefits took effect after World War II. Support for the unemployed was not provided until after the fall of Communism in 1991, since there was no unemployment as such in this system. Following the end of Communist rule, the Czechoslovakian government planned a social
system which would comprise an active labour market and a liberal and pluralistic social security system. The aim was to provide insurance for all citizens. The result: A three-pillar system comprising social security, state aid and a “safety net”, which also assists those without insurance.

After the Czech Republic became an independent state in 1993, the government reformed the social security system even further. A law passed in 1994 allowed employees to make voluntary additional contributions to their pensions. In the following year, the Czech Republic raised the age of retirement, and adopted another law regulating benefits for the uninsured in emergency situations. The laws passed in the 1990s continue to apply but have, in part, been expanded with additional regulations. The Czech Republic began a series of social reforms in 2012, which the Ministry for Social Policy implemented in five stages and completed in 2013. The first improvements are already evident, especially in the organisation of the social security system, for example.
Specific features of the country’s social security

Child benefits are paid for a shorter period of time compared to other EU states: Parents/legal guardians may only claim this benefit up until the end of a child’s compulsory education, e.g. up to age 15. There are, however, exceptions to this rule. This allowance may be claimed up until the age of 26 if the child is still in school or completing job training, or if the child is unable to pursue training or gainful employment for health-related reasons. Foster families receive different forms of financial assistance. Subject to certain conditions, they may claim a foster child allowance, foster parent benefit, a fosterage grant, a vehicle allowance and a fosterage termination allowance.

The Czech Republic provides three different types of financial aid in social emergencies: There are subsistence grants, grants to cover basic needs, and grants for rent costs if the recipient’s income is below a certain level. The government can also pay immediate financial aid to individuals in exceptional, precarious situations.
Official name: Česká republika

Official language: Czech

Capital: Prag (1.3 million residents, 2015)

Population (2015): 10.5 million

Population density (2014): 136.3 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Czech koruna


National holiday: 28 October: St. Wenceslas Day
Czechoslovak declaration of independence
(Den vzniku samostatného československého státu)

Area (2014): 78,900 km²

Administrative structure: 14 regions

Geography: Hills and mountains cover 95 percent of the country:
southwest: Bohemian Forest, northwest: Ore Mountains, north: Sudetes Mountains; highest peak: Sněžka (1,602 m)
Head of state: Miloš Zeman
Head of government: Bohuslav Sobotka

**Political system:**
Parliamentary republic; parliament: Chamber of Deputies: members elected every four years, Senate: members elected every six years (partial elections every two years); the Parliament elects the President every five years; right to vote as of age 18

**Joined EU in:**
2004

**Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):**
2.1 percent\(^a\), \(^b\)

**Memberships:**
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

**Seats in the European Parliament:**
21

**Commissioner in the European Commission:**
Věra Jourová
Department: Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^b\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total 149.5 billion euros
GDP per capita 14,200 euros

18,350 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
7,622 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
366 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
4.2 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
12.6 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
93.2 percent

Population structure (2015):

**Women**
- 50.9 percent

**Men**
- 49.1 percent

**Age distribution**
- ages 0 - 14: 15 percent
- ages 15 - 64: 67 percent
- over 65: 18 percent

**Urban population**
- 73 percent

**Rural population**
- 27 percent
### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7% (^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5% (^e)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>4,589</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 (^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 (^e)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 (^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 (^e)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>679</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 (^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 (^e)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^e\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
   Data as of June 2016
   Source: Eurostat
History

The northern European kingdom of Denmark has been politically represented internationally and within Europe for many years now. The country joined NATO in 1949, and became a member of the European Economic Community in 1973, a predecessor of the European Union.

In the past, Denmark had a great deal of power despite its small size. The Vikings, who came from Denmark and other northern countries, had a major impact on European history in the ninth and tenth centuries. Practically all of Scandinavia was under primarily Danish rule during the Middle Ages. Denmark became a constitutional monarchy in 1849, and formed a parliament with two chambers.

Denmark was neutral in the First World War. The Nazis occupied the kingdom without resistance during World War II.

Today, the northern EU nation is a parliamentary monarchy. The Danes have a long tradition of being directly involved in their politics. For example, every transfer of sovereign rights needs to be approved by referendum.
Geography

The smallest and southernmost Scandinavian country is surrounded by the North and Baltic Seas, and has its only land border with Germany. The kingdom is connected to Sweden by streetcar and railway lines. Denmark consists of the Jutland peninsula, Zealand Island and well over 400 small and large islands. Even the capital city of Copenhagen extends across several islands.

Beach lovers enjoy the extensive coastline, which spans over 7,300 km. The landscape changes along the shoreline: The country‘s longest sand beaches are located on the west side of Jutland on the North Sea, while steep cliffs border the water in the north and east sections of Bornholm Island.

The world‘s largest island, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands also belong to Denmark. Greenland has been part of the kingdom since 1729. The island gained its autonomy in 1979, but Denmark retained control over Greenland‘s foreign and defence policy.

Culture

The Danes are known for their environmentally friendly and sustainable lifestyle, with many preferring to travel by bike instead of car. The country has over 10,000 km of cycling paths, with around 390 km in the capital city alone. Copenhagen is very bike-friendly, named the world‘s first “bike city” and the “best city for cyclists”. Since the 1920s, the bicycle has become an increasingly popular means of transportation for all social classes. Nearly half of Copenhagen‘s residents cycle to work.

The country also has a very rich literary tradition. Danish author Hans Christian Andersen wrote many world-famous fairy tales and stories, including “The Emperor‘s New Clothes” and the “Little Mermaid”. A sculpture of the latter decorates Copenhagen‘s harbour. The famed theologian, philosopher and writer Søren Kierkegaard also hails from this northern European kingdom, as well as writer Karen Blixen and internationally known designers like Arne Jacobsen.
Denmark started the process of electronically archiving its entire cultural heritage several years ago. As part of this effort, the Danish Ministry of Culture issued an official Danish Culture Canon consisting of works that best represent Denmark’s rich cultural heritage.

Economy

Many of the country’s mid-sized industrial and service companies are highly specialised, offering and utilising state-of-the-art technology. Influential international companies based in Denmark produce consumer electronics, toys and even insulation materials. There are a number of companies active in international shipping due to the country’s past as a seafaring nation. Some of Denmark’s beers are also known and enjoyed by people around the world.

Exports make up one-third of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). The most important trade partner is Denmark’s neighbour, Germany. Sweden and the United Kingdom are other important buyers of Danish products, such as machines (machine parts), food, pharmaceuticals and electronics. In 2013, services made up the largest share of the GDP at nearly 76 percent, followed by industry at 23 percent and agriculture at just 1 percent. Denmark’s total GDP in 2013 totalled over 249 billion euros, ranking 11th in the EU. Per capital GDP equalled 44,400 euros, which put Denmark in second place behind Luxembourg.

Denmark is a pioneer in renewable energies. The country started expanding its wind power facilities in the 1980s, and its exposed coasts have helped Denmark become a leading producer of wind energy today. Wind power stations cover nearly 20 percent of Denmark’s electricity needs.

Employment in traditional industrial sectors is on the decline. This is why Denmark is focusing on growth in the knowledge-based, high-tech industries of the future, such as biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, IT and environmental technologies.
Social security

The social democratic government in power in the 1930s decided that Denmark would become a welfare state. Today, nearly all government services are financed through taxes and contributions. The social security system is very extensive, which is why 30 percent of all working adults are employed by the public sector. The kingdom spent 77 percent of its revenues for its residents' social security in 2012, making the country number one in expenditures over Ireland and Cyprus.

The first legal regulations governing social security have been in place for a much longer period of time, prior to the emergence of the modern welfare state. The first pension system law was passed in 1891, followed by the first legislation providing assistance in the event of illness in the following year. Legal protection for work-related accidents followed in 1898. The first regulations to assist the unemployed took effect in 1907, and Danish families have been legally entitled to certain services since 1952. All of these laws were updated in line with current developments and replaced with new versions in the 2000s and 2010s.
Specific features of the country‘s social security

The Danish social security system does a great deal to accommodate people with disabilities in its labour market based on the idea of “flexicurity”: So-called flex jobs subsidised by the state were created to give people with disabilities under the age of 65 better opportunities to enter the job market. Municipalities evaluate the working capacity of the affected individuals and issue a flex job certificate as required. Employers then customise the work to each person, adapt the workplace as needed and accommodate all necessary breaks. It is also possible to reduce the number of working hours without impacting the person‘s salary. Earnings are based on the current minimum wage and each person’s ability to work. Denmark is considered a very family-friendly country that achieves a good balance between professional and family life. Certain families also receive special financial support: Parents who do not send their children to day care centres receive a child care allowance, and those still studying can receive financial benefits.

Denmark has two pension systems in place: a tax-financed national pension system for all citizens, and a subsidised supplementary pension scheme. The amount of the national pension is based on how many years the retiree has lived in Denmark. The Danish health care system is also financed by taxes, providing coverage for all citizens. Employers and workers exclusively bear the costs of the supplementary pension (ATP) and benefits for work-related accidents and unemployment.
Official name: Kongeriget Danmark

Official language: Danish

Capital: Copenhagen (559,000 residents, 2015)

Population (2015): 5.7 million

Population density (2014): 131.5 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Danish krone

Government website: http://www.stm.dk/

National holiday:
16 April: Birthday of Queen Margrethe II 1940 (Dronningens fødselsdag)
5 June: Constitution Day 1849 (Grundlovsdag)

Area (2014): 42,900 km² (not including the Faroe Islands and Greenland)

Administrative structure: Five regions; dependent territories: Faroe Islands, Greenland

Geography: Denmark is located on the Jutland Peninsula and approx. 400 islands; seas: North Sea, Skagerrak, Kattegat and Baltic Sea.
Head of state: Queen Margrethe II.

Head of government: Lars Løkke Rasmussen

Political system:
Constitutional monarchy; parliament (Folketing) with one chamber: members elected every four years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
1973

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
1.1 percent\textsuperscript{a), b)

Memberships:
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
13

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Margrethe Vestager
Department: Competition

\textsuperscript{a) Provisional value, \textsuperscript{b) Estimated value}
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  249.0 billion euros
GDP per capita  44,400 euros

61,330 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
27,861 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
No minimum wage

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
5.9 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
10.8 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
80.4 percent

Population structure (2015):

Women
50.4 percent

Men
49.6 percent

Age distribution

- ages 0 - 14: 17 percent
- ages 15 - 64: 64 percent
- over 65: 19 percent

Urban population
88 percent

Rural population
12 percent
**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
In percent of GDP (current prices)

- DK: 31.7 a)
- DE: 27.7 a)
- EU: 27.5 e)

**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
Per head of population (PPS)

- DK: 10,325 a)
- DE: 9,387 a)
- EU: 7,325 e)

**Expenditures for pensions 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- DK: 5,253 a)
- DE: 3,677 a)
- EU: 3,024 e)

**Illness/health care 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- DK: 2,489 a)
- DE: 2,949 a)
- EU: 1,890 e)

---

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>1,424 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>1,613 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
The small northern European nation joined the EU as part of its eastern expansion in 2004. Estonia has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1993, and introduced the euro in 2011. The Baltic Sea nation has an eventful history, shaped by the influence of the various nations that governed it.

The Estonian cities belonged to the Hanseatic League in the Middle Ages, and were greatly impacted by their close ties to Scandinavia. Estonia first became Russian in the 18th century under Peter the Great.

Before declaring its independence in 1990, Estonia was part of the Soviet Union and called the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. Germany and the Soviet Union were both interested in controlling the country during World War II. In 1940, the Soviet Union annexed the country after the Baltic Germans were relocated to the German Reich as part of the Hitler–Stalin Pact in 1939. The country was occupied by German troops in 1941 as part of Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union. The so-called Russification policy started in 1944, following the liberation by the Red Army. In some regions, the Estonians became the minority population in their own country as a result.
The history of the social security system started after Estonia left the Soviet Union. The social security systems in the former socialist countries were based on the laws of the USSR.

**Geography**

Estonia is the northernmost of the three Baltic States, and joins Finland as the northernmost countries in the European Union. It borders Latvia to the south, Russia to the east, and the Baltic Sea to the north and west. The coastline extends around 3,700 km.

Estonia’s highest point is the Suur Munamägi at 318 m, which can be translated as "Big Egg Mountain". The country is mostly flatland, and nearly half of the area is forested. The many rivers form an extensive network of waterways, some of which are used to generate energy. Peipus Lake, located between Estonia and Russia, is the fourth-largest in Europe.

**Culture**

Estonia’s capital is the old Hanseatic city of Tallinn, which has over 400,000 residents. Today, it is a popular tourist destination. Nearly 40 percent of residents are Russian. Thanks to its many mediaeval structures, UNESCO included the city’s historic centre with its completely intact city wall in its list of World Heritage Sites in 1997. Classic wooden buildings dominate the cityscape despite the Soviet concrete slab buildings that may tower between them. Tallinn was the European Capital of Culture in 2011.

The political development and settlement history of Estonia have made it an intercultural country. Estonian is the official language, but Russian is primarily spoken in several areas - including the northeast part of the country. The University of Tartu, Estonia’s only full university, was primarily German-speaking in the 19th century.

Estonia has a long musical tradition. Today, the country’s most prominent musician is modern classical composer Arvo Pärt. Conductors Neeme and Paavo Järvi are also well-known.
The Estonian people are very welcoming of modern IT and communication technologies. Computers, mobile phones and online banking are widely accepted and used. The country is proud of its innovative projects, such as the nationwide use of “e-government” and “e-learning”. Estonia introduced “e-voting” in 2005.

**Economy**

Tallinn is a significant Baltic Sea port for ferries, and is also the economic hub of the country. The capital city is home to around 40 percent of residents.

The government relies on a liberal economic policy. The central and southern parts of the country are most significant to the agricultural industry. The economy overcame the impact of the 2008 to 2009 financial crisis, and has since marked significant growth: It grew 7.6 percent in 2011 and 5.2 percent in 2012. Declining exports among important trade partners reduced growth to between just 1.6 percent and 2.9 percent in the years...
immediately following the crisis. With a gross domestic product (GDP) of 18.6 billion euros, Estonia was three places from last when compared to the rest of Europe in 2013. The per capita GDP in the same year was 13,900 euros, putting the country in 20th place EU-wide.

The most important economic sectors are financial services, transport, logistics, tourism and telecommunications industries. The service segment alone made up a total of 69 percent of the GDP in 2014, and industry generated 28 percent of GDP. Agriculture, forestry and fishing played a minor role in the same year, totalling only 3 percent of GFP. Fishing declines in particular are a consequence of the Russian ban on imports for foods from the EU.

Estonia’s most important export partners in the EU are Sweden, Finland and Latvia. It imports goods primarily from Finland, Germany and Sweden.

**Social security**

The country’s earliest social security laws were passed in the few years following the 1918 October revolution, during which Estonia demanded its independence from Russia. The first such law, enacted in 1922, governed family benefits. Laws governing pensions, disability, illness, maternity and work-related accidents followed in 1924. Unemployment protection was not regulated by law until 1991, after Estonia broke away from the Soviet Union.

People in Estonia receive social benefits based on their residence, not their nationality. A large percentage of Estonia’s residents were born abroad.

Like in many other countries, Estonia’s social security scheme is based on three contribution-based systems. The main pillars are pension, health and unemployment insurance. The first two are financed through a social tax, while unemployment insurance is funded through contributions. Family benefits, national unemployment insurance, the national state pension, survivorship annuities and social benefits for people with disabilities are not contribution-based, but are financed by the state.
Specific features of the country’s social security

Everyone is covered in Estonia – even people who haven’t paid anything or only very little into the social security system. People who earn below the poverty line receive assistance to improve their lives. A contribution-based pension system as well as a tax-financed national pension system for all residents provides support for the elderly.

People with disabilities can travel more easily in Estonia than in many other countries: The airport and harbour in the capital city, Tallinn, are fully accessible. Severely disabled people, their companions and seeing-eye dogs can also travel throughout the entire country free of charge.

The state provides additional benefits to people in special situations. For example, parents currently completing military or civil service receive an increased child benefit. Students with disabilities receive an education allowance if they attend 10th to 12th grade at secondary school, college or vocational school.

The Estonian social security system is the only one in the EU to reward its citizens for being courageous. Anyone who has sustained an injury that makes them unable to work as the result of preventing a crime, protecting national or public interests, or in saving someone’s life receives 30 percent more in sickness benefits.
Official name: Eesti Vabariik

Official language: Estonian

Capital: Tallinn (431,000 residents, 2015)

Population (2015): 1.3 million

Population density (2014): 30.3 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Euro, since 2011

Government website: https://valitsus.ee/en

National holiday: 24 February: Independence day (Eesti Vabariigi aastapäev)

Area (2014): 45,200 km²

Administrative structure: 15 counties

Geography: Northernmost Baltic state on the east coast of the Baltic Sea; mostly flat land with several lakes and 1,520 islands
**Political system:**
Republic; parliament: legislative branch (Riigikogu), members are elected every four years; parliament elects the president every five years; right to vote as of age 18

**Joined EU in:**
2004

**Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):**
0.3 percent\(^a\), \(^b\)

**Memberships:**
EU, NATO, OSZE, OECD, UNO

**Seats in the European Parliament:**
6

**Commissioner in the European Commission:**
Andrus Ansip (Vice-President of the Commission)
Department: Digital Single Market

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^b\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  18.6 billion euros
GDP per capita  13,900 euros

19,010 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
7,217 euros\(^d\)

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
490 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
6.3 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
13.1 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
91.1 percent

Population structure (2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 0 - 14</td>
<td>16 percent</td>
<td>19 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15 - 64</td>
<td>65 percent</td>
<td>65 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>19 percent</td>
<td>19 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^d\) Break in series
**Total expenditure on social protection 2015**
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total expenditure on social protection 2015**
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>2,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenditures for pensions 2015**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Illness/health care 2015**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
### Benefits family/children 2015
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Invalidity benefits 2015
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2015
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available  
Data as of June 2016  
Source: Eurostat
History

The Nordic country joined the European Union in 1995 and is the only Nordic EU member nation to introduce the euro as its currency. Finland's independence and Western orientation were preceded by many years of foreign domination: Finland belonged to Sweden starting in the 14th century, before being transferred to Russia in the early 19th century. The Finnish country was able to retain most of its autonomy at first. In 1899, however, Russia started to impose its rule across the country: Finnish men were required to serve in the Russian army, and Russian became one of the country's official languages. Civil disobedience grew in response to this so-called Russification.

In the course of the February Revolution in Russia and the abdication of the czar, Finland was able to declare its independence on 6 December 1917 and end the era as an autonomous grand duchy. Finland came under Soviet influence during World War II, but officially remained an independent country. Finland turned towards the West after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991. Since then, Finland has continued to expand and develop its social security system, which is as sophisticated as those of its Nordic neighbours.
Geography

The Republic of Finland is the northernmost nation in the European Union. It borders Sweden, Norway, Russia and the Baltic Sea. One-third of its area extends above the Arctic Circle. This geographic position allows natives and tourists to experience the midnight sun during the summertime, when it stays light at night. People can also marvel at the natural spectacle of the northern lights in clear skies between dusk and dawn. Visits to traditional Finnish saunas help people get through the cold weather.

There is still a great deal of pristine wilderness in Finland. This northernmost country is also one of the least populated countries in Europe. Most people live in the southern part of the country and the capital city, Helsinki. Pristine wilderness, nature and green space makes up over half of the country’s territory. Finland is also known as the land of a thousand lakes, home to around 180,000 lakes.

Culture

The entire country has a strong cultural infrastructure, which is actively enjoyed by its residents. People can marvel at over 286,000 artworks in more than 300 museums throughout Finland.

The Finns are enthusiastic readers. A close-knit network of public libraries makes literature accessible to all residents throughout the country. Finnish authors profit from the very diverse landscape of publishers, and their work is sponsored by many stipends and honoured with literary awards. Finland was also the guest country at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2014. despite this, Finnish authors still do not enjoy the same recognition as their Swedish neighbours. Classical music fans are familiar with composer Jean Sibelius, and modern architecture aficionados appreciate the designs of Alvar Aalto.

Education and information are very important in Finland, which is why the government devotes a great deal of funding to education, further training and research. It’s paying off: Finnish workers are among the world’s best educated, helping to make the country one of the most informed societies on earth.
Finland has two official languages: Finnish and Swedish. Around 6 percent of the population speak Swedish. The indigenous Sami have a population of nearly 9,000 in Finland, and still speak the Sami language. This has a special status in certain communities. The Sami currently live in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia. They are recognised as an ethnic minority, and their culture receives special protection.

**Economy**

The 2007/2008 economic crisis hit Finland very hard after profiting greatly from globalisation as a country dependent on its exports. Specifically the metal and electrical industries, along with the chemical, wood and paper industries were an important economic factor for the country, making up nearly 70 percent of exports. The service sector is the most important economic driver for the country, amounting to nearly 70 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Industry was responsible for around 27 percent of GDP, while agriculture plays a far less significant role with 3 percent. Finland had a GDP of 193.4 billion euros in 2013, ranking 12th compared to the rest of the EU. The country generated per capita GDP of 35,600 euros, putting the country in the top one-third of EU nations.

Finland’s three most important trade partners are Sweden, Germany and Russia. Around 30 percent of Finnish exports go to these countries. Trade with Germany has proven to be especially robust: Exports increased 35 percent in 2014 as German automobile manufacturers relied more heavily on their northern neighbour for production.

Finland sells 80 percent of its export goods to other European countries.

**Social security**

Most Western European countries first established insurance policies for work-related accidents due to industrial progress, and then added further social security funds as an extension of health insurance. Agricultural professions have dominated the labour market in Finland longer than in other countries, and social security in these areas started in pension plans and disability. These were especially important to protect farmers after their working years.
The government wanted to reduce differences between classes by adopting sociopolitical measures at the end of the 19th century. The first such laws were targeted towards certain groups, and not towards society as a whole. In 1924, for example, a state pension was established, but only for civil servants at first.

All residents were granted social protection as part of the pension reform adopted in 1937. Social benefits were expanded after World War II, and only reached the levels of the other Nordic countries in the 1980s. Assistance for families became law in 1948. Unemployment benefits have been available since 1960, and the legal foundation for sickness benefits has been in place since 1963. Most of today's benefits are based on laws passed in the 1990s and 2000s. Only the regulations for work-related accidents and illnesses have been in place longer: since 1948 and 1988 respectively. Despite their declining numbers, farmers still enjoy special protection under the farmer accident insurance law from 1981. They aren't
required to insure themselves as self-employed people, and the state pays nearly one-third of the costs.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

New parents in Finland can spend a great deal of time with their children: Mothers and fathers can take an additional 158 days of paid parental leave in addition to 105 days of paid maternity leave. Fathers can also take 54 days of paid paternity leave.

The Finnish state pays subsidies for child care in the home and at corresponding facilities. The „baby packet“, containing things like rompers, diapers, clothing, toys and a picture book, is unique in the European Union. Parents can request this package from the social insurance institution in place of a flat-fee payment.

Immigrants can receive financial assistance to help integrate into Finnish society and find jobs. They first need to develop an integration plan with the work agency and their residential community, and follow it within three years after entering the country.
Official name: Suomen Tasavalta/Suomi (Finnish) Republiken Finland (Swedish)

Official languages: Finnish, Schwedish

Capital: Helsinki (631,000 residents, 2016)

Population (2015): 5.5 million

Population density (2014): 18.0 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Euro, since 2002

Government website: http://valtioneuvosto.fi/

National holiday: 6 December: Independence day (Itsenäisyyspäivä)

Area (2014): 338,400 km²

Administrative structure: 20 regions; Six provinces as well as the Åland Islands; 336 municipalities incl. 16 on the Åland Islands; dependent territories: Åland Islands

Geography: One of the northernmost countries in the world; one-third of the country is located north of the Arctic Circle; many islands (180,000) and inland lakes (187,888)
Political system:
Parliamentary republic; parliamentary elections every four years; direct presidential elections every six years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
1995

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
1.1 percent

Memberships:
EU, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
13

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Jyrki Katainen (Vice-President of the Commission)
Department: Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness

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\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^b\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total 193.4 billion euros
GDP per capita 35,600 euros

48,440 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
23,702 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
No minimum wage

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
9.2 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
22.4 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
87.7 percent

Population structure (2015):

- Women: 50.8 percent
- Men: 49.2 percent

- Age distribution:
  - ages 0 - 14: 16 percent
  - ages 15 - 64: 63 percent
  - over 65: 20 percent

- Urban population: 84 percent
- Rural population: 16 percent

Deviation from 100 percent due to rounding
Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>9,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expeditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>4,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>2,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
**Benefits family/children 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>1,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Invalidity benefits 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>1,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013**
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total**
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
FRANCE

History

France has shaped and influenced European history over many centuries. The French Republic played a significant political role in both World Wars in the past century. Today, France is represented in all important international coalitions and is a major power in global politics. France was a member of NATO and the United Nations from the very beginning, and a founding member of the predecessors of the European Union, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Community (EC). France declared itself a republic five times in its many changes of government. The Fifth Republic was declared in 1958 and still exists today.

The monarchy, in place since the ninth century, ended abruptly in 1789: The French Revolution began with the storming of the Bastille, Paris‘ city prison – a bloody fight against the hierarchical society that ended with the assassination of the royal family. The First Republic, declared in 1792, ended in 1799 when Napoleon took power. He ruled as emperor until 1814/15. Kings from the House of Bourbon governed again until 1848, followed by the Second Republic. The Third Republic started after the defeat of Emperor Napoleon III in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and ended with the German occupation in 1940.
France's colonial empire, consisting of Algeria and other countries primarily in North and West Africa as well as several Southeast Asian nations, fell apart after the war. These events along with the economic reconstruction following World War II made up the time of the Fourth Republic. Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer promoted reconciliation between France and Germany during the Fifth Republic, a process still considered exemplary. The Fifth Republic of France today is one of the world’s most highly developed countries, with very high standards in health care and social security.

Geography

The French Republic is the largest EU nation in terms of area. It stretches from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Alps. Wide expanses of land in the north are used for agriculture. Europe’s tallest peak, the Mont Blanc (4,810 m), is located in the French Alps at the Italian border. The Pyrenees form the country’s border with Spain. The Mediterranean coast, including the Côte d’Azur, is a popular tourist destination in the south of France.

One of the world's longest cable-stayed bridges, the Millau Viaduct, was opened in southern France in 2004. At a height of 343 m, it is the tallest structure in France. The European Union helped to finance the bridge's construction.

The capital city of Paris is the most densely populated major city in Europe, and the second-largest metropolitan area in the EU. The Seine River divides the city into the right and left banks, parts of which are included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

Culture

France is home to many of Europe’s most important authors and thinkers: Blaise Pascal, Voltaire, Gustave Flaubert, Honoré de Balzac, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, just to name a few. They are known internationally for their philosophical and literary works. Many French are also world famous, including Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne,
Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse and Georges Braque. Well-known composers include Jean-Philippe Rameau, Georges Bizet, Claude Debussy and Pierre Boulez. French directors and actors also play an important role in modern film.

France hasn’t just made a name for itself for its art and intellectual history – even its cuisine is known and appreciated around the world. French wines, including Bordeaux, are enjoyed by connoisseurs around the world, fetching high prices. The perfect pairing, cheese, is produced throughout the entire country. The republic produces over 300 varieties.

The fashion world also looks to France: Stars and international celebrities attend the many shows at Paris Fashion Week, held twice a year since 1973. The entire world uses the terms “haute couture” for the truly sophisticated creations often only seen on the runway, and “prêt-à-porter” for everyday fashion.

Economy

France is Europe’s most important industrial country next to Germany. The republic’s economy ranks sixth world-wide. France felt the effects of the financial and economic crisis like all other European countries, but has experienced economic growth again since 2014. The gross domestic product (GDP) was around 2,060 billion euros in 2013, making it the second-highest in the EU.

France is the most visited country in the world, welcoming around 83 million foreign tourists each year – more people than actually live in the country. This is why the service and tourism industries are such an important economic driver for the country – this sector generated 79 percent of the GDP in 2014. Industry made up around 19 percent of GDP, and agriculture 2 percent. The aviation, energy, agriculture, food, luxury goods, pharmaceutical, chemical and electronics industries are especially valuable for the country economically.

As in previous years, Germany was one of France’s most important bilateral trading partners in 2015, with trading volume of over 170 billion euros. The
country traded a great deal of goods with China, Italy, Belgium, the United States, Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

**Social security**

The history of the modern social state started in France after World War II. The first approaches to social security existed among workers as early as the mid-19th century, who joined forces in cooperatives, or so-called mutuelles, to protect themselves from sickness and disability. Industrialisation made such protection necessary. Initially, however, the state was not involved in safeguarding against these risks.

The government took its first steps around the turn of the century, introducing welfare for people in need with the social laws of 1893 and 1905. Workers were still responsible for themselves, however. Statutory social security according to the German model was never completely enacted despite the passage of several corresponding laws in 1928 and 1930.

After establishing a state social security system for all citizens following the liberation in 1944, France faced a problem: The many cooperatives and organisations formed among employees throughout the years
couldn't simply be brought together into a social insurance system. Many people feared that standardising the services would lead to poorer quality assistance and benefits than before. This is why there are still special systems in place in addition to the statutory social insurance for certain occupation groups, such as farmers, the self-employed and certain companies, like the French national railway.

Many of the laws currently in effect date back to the period following World War II. Maternity and health insurance reforms weren't enacted until 2004, for example. New services for the unemployed were adopted in 2009.

Specific features of the country’s social security

Most EU countries graduate the child benefit according to the number and age of children in each family. In France, child benefits and allowances are only granted to children over age 14 once the second child is born. All parents of children ages three and under receive a childbirth or adoption premium along with childcare benefits. Families in need also receive additional assistance at the beginning of the school year for children between the ages of six and 18. Additional benefits are available for orphans and children with disabilities.

In contrast to other EU countries, France has a national collective agreement that regulates the continuation of salary payments in the event of illness. This is based by the length of employment, and can be improved through employer negotiations.

Assistance for people experiencing social hardship is aligned with various sections of the population and their needs: General assistance ensures the subsistence level of working residents, while people with disabilities, reduced earning capacity and the elderly receive special benefit payments. People applying for asylum, foreigners from certain countries, stateless persons and repatriates receive assistance while they wait for their claims to be processed.
Official name: République française/France

Official language: French

Capital: Paris (2.2 million residents, 2016)

Population (2015): 64.3 million\(^a\), \(^b\) (not including overseas regions)

Population density (2014): 104.5 inhabitants per km\(^2\)

Currency: Euro, since 2002

Government website: http://www.gouvernement.fr/en

National holiday: 14 July: Bastille Day 1789 (Fête nationale)

Area (2014): 544,300 km\(^2\)\(^b\) (not including overseas regions)

Administrative structure: 22 regions, 96 departments (not including overseas regions); dependent territories: Caribbean: Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Barthélemy, St. Martin; Indian Ocean: Réunion, Mayotte; South America: French Guiana; Pacific: French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna; Atlantic: Saint-Pierre and Miquelon; French Southern and Antarctic Lands

Geography: Seas: Atlantic and Mediterranean Seas; main mountain ranges: Pyrenees, Massif Central, Alps, Vosges; highest peak: Mont Blanc (4,810 m)

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\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^b\) Estimated value
Head of state: François Hollande

Head of government: Bernard Cazeneuve

Political system:
Parliamentary semi-presidential republic; National Assembly elected every five years, Senate every six years; direct presidential elections every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
Founding member (1951/57)

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
13.1 percent

Memberships:
EU, G7, G20, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
74

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Pierre Moscovici
Department: Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs

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a) Provisional value, b) Estimated value, d) Break in series
Population structure (2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age distribution</th>
<th>ages 0 - 14</th>
<th>ages 15 - 64</th>
<th>over 65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>percent</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban population</th>
<th>Rural population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) Deviation from 100 percent due to rounding
**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>31.8 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>EUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>9,494 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenditures for pensions 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>EUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>4,299 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Illness/health care 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>EUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>2,604 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
**Benefits family/children 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

FR 707\(^{a})\)
DE 961\(^{a})\)
EU 550\(^{e})\)

**Invalidity benefits 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

FR 594\(^{a})\)
DE 690\(^{a})\)
EU 477\(^{e})\)

**Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013**
In percent of the total population

FR 4.9
DE 5.4
EU 9.6

**Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total**
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

FR 10.2
DE 4.3
EU 8.9

\(^{a})\) Provisional value, \(^{e})\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

The Federal Republic of Germany as it exists today has only been around since 1990. The signing of the Two-Plus-Four Treaty in September 1990 in Moscow cleared the way for the former Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic (DDR) to merge. This treaty between the two German states and the four victorious powers of World War II established the national sovereignty of a unified Germany.

At the end of the 1950s, the former Federal Republic of Germany joined five other nations to form the EEC, one of the predecessors of the European Union. The Federal Republic also played a major role in introducing the euro and establishing the monetary union. Germany adopted the common currency at the beginning of 2002.

Germany has a very long history, and has impacted and shaped Europe's destiny in many eras. The Holy Roman Empire ruled from the Late Middle Ages until 1806, also referred to as the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” after the 15th century. The last German king, Franz II, abdicated in 1806 during the Napoleonic Wars, also known as the Coalition Wars. An alliance of several states, including Prussia, fought against France and
defeated Napoleon in the sixth Coalition War. The Congress of Vienna in 1814/15 redefined Europe’s borders and even formed new countries, such as the German Confederation. This consisted of 38 independent states, but was not considered a nation.

The German Confederation was abolished following the signing of the Treaty of Prague in 1866. The Northern and Southern German Confederations didn’t join forces until the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, forming the German Empire with its new constitution on 1 January 1871. Emperor Wilhelm II abdicated following the German defeat in World War I, and the National Assembly representatives drew up a new constitution in Weimar in 1919, forming the “Weimar Republic”. The Treaty of Versailles was signed in Paris in June 1919, ending World War I under international law. The treaty gave Germany and the Allied Powers sole responsibility for the war. Germany was forced to make various territorial concessions, shrinking its national territory by 70,000 km², pay high reparations to the victorious countries, and disarm.

Many Germans considered the effects of the war humiliating, and the impact of the global economic crisis allowed Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) to rise to political power. Hitler attacked Poland in 1939, an action that started World War II. At the end of the war in 1945, the representatives of the victorious countries – Churchill, Truman and Stalin – signed a protocol governing how to manage defeated Germany. The Potsdam Agreement divided Germany into four zones, each controlled by one of the four victorious countries: France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States.

A conflict between the victorious countries led the Soviet Union to form the GDR (German Democratic Republic) in its zone of occupation. This dispute was caused in part by the issue of reparations. The foundation of the GDR was a direct response to the Federal Republic of Germany founded by the three western Allies. The GDR government started building the Berlin Wall in summer 1961. This initially divided Berlin into western and eastern zones. Eventually, the wall and inner-German border would divide the two German countries for decades. The capital of the Federal Republic of Germany was Bonn, and the GDR capital was East Berlin.
Nearly 30 years after the fall of the Berlin wall, unified Germany has the largest population of any EU member state: around 82 million people. The extensive social security system has been a model for other countries since its beginnings in the 19th century.

Geography

Germany is neighboured by 10 countries due to its central location in Europe. All of them are members of the EU, except for Switzerland: Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and the Czech Republic.

The north of the Federal Republic of Germany is mostly flatland, with coastal regions especially suitable for producing wind energy. The country’s many low-lying areas are used for agriculture. The extensive dunes and beaches along the North and Baltic Sea coasts are main tourist attractions. The highlands in the country are full of mixed forests, such as the Thuringian Forest and Odenwald.
Germany is home to several rivers. The longest of these, the Rhine River, shapes the western part of the country. Its shores are dotted with many castles and ruins. The Elbe flows from the Czech Republic, extending from Saxony to the North Sea. Hikers enjoy exploring the Elbe Sandstone Mountains in Saxon Switzerland. Lake Constance, an expansive inland lake, is located in the south. It is shared by Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Southern Germany is also home to the popular Alps, popular among skiers and hikers. The country’s highest peak is the Zugspitze at 2,962 m.

Culture

The capital city of Berlin has become a major international metropolis following German reunification. People from around the world are drawn to the city’s politics, media, culture and academics. Tourists especially appreciate Berlin’s cultural offerings and vibrant nightlife. In the south, Munich attracts many international visitors interested in its cultural treasures as well as its famed Oktoberfest, which is imitated in countries around the world.

People often refer to Germany as the “land of poets and thinkers”. Many famous cultural figures were from Germany, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich von Schiller, Friedrich Nietzsche and Immanuel Kant, as well as renowned composers like Johann Sebastian Bach, Georg Friedrich Händel and Ludwig van Beethoven. Artworks by Albrecht Dürer and Caspar David Friedrich are displayed in museums around the globe.

In 1517, Martin Luther nailed his famed 95 Theses to the door of Wittenberg Castle Church. In this document, he demanded the reformation of the church. Instead, this led to a split between Catholic and Evangelical churches.

Economy

The Federal Republic of Germany is the most economically powerful nation in the EU. In 2013, Germany led the EU with a gross domestic product (GDP) of 2,737.6 billion euros. The per capita GDP of 33,300 euros put Germany in ninth place when compared to the rest of the EU.
People around the world equate the “Made in Germany” trademark with outstanding quality. In 2015, Germany generated 1.2 trillion euros in exports. Trade volumes with other EU member states totalled nearly 694 billion euros. The United States was Germany’s most important export partner, buying goods valued at around 114 billion euros. France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and China are other significant trading partners. In the same year, Germany imported goods amounting to 948 billion euros, mostly from China, the Netherlands, France and the United States.

Industry and the building sector made up nearly one-third of the GDP at 31 percent, while agriculture barely totalled 1 percent. Today, Germany’s service segment generates just over 68 percent of the GDP.

Social security

Like many other EU countries, industrialisation was the driving force of modern social legislation. At the end of the 19th century, work-related accidents, illness or old age forced several workers to live in poverty or beg. To prevent the workers from becoming more radical, Reich Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and Emperor Wilhelm I drew up social legislation starting in 1881. The first German statutory health insurance, “health insurance for workers”, took effect in 1883. This made the German Empire a pioneer in social security in the world at the time, and the first country to provide such benefits at the national level.

Other areas of social security followed the introduction of health insurance in 1883. Accident insurance became available in 1884. In 1889, Germany implemented legal regulations to take care of aging and disabled employees. The social system expanded continuously over time: social security for employees took effect in 1912, and unemployment insurance in 1927. Long-term care insurance is the newest branch of social security, which has been implemented gradually since 1994. Today, Germany's social security system consists of state health and long-term care insurance, as well as accident, pension and unemployment insurance. Carriers have merged together to manage these various social insurance schemes as federal associations. The insured employees and their employers finance the carriers and their services through their contributions. Only the child benefit, paid to families
since 1954, is financed through tax revenue. The statutory health insurance pays maternity benefits.

With the exception of the laws governing health insurance and maternity, enacted in 1988, the currently valid social laws date from the period following German reunification. The country reformed its pension system with a new retirement package in 2014, and also updated its long-term care insurance with the Long-term Care Restructuring Law (Pflege-Neuausrichtungs-Gesetz (PNG)) in 2012. The pension reform package includes a full pension as of age 63 in certain conditions, the mothers’ pension, improvements in the disability pension and increases in the rehabilitation budget. The PNG specifically expands outpatient benefits and services for people with dementia. It gives people in need of care and their relatives more options for private and outpatient care. The change in legislation also makes it possible for the state to subsidise optional private risk provisions for the first time. These changes take into account the demographic challenges facing all EU countries.
**Specific features of the country‘s social security**

Child-raising periods impact the amount of people‘s pension entitlements. They are calculated as contribution periods with average earnings. This better recognises child-raising periods for parents, and increases mothers‘ pensions.

Special features of the social security system have also emerged from the German reunification process. Wages and salaries are still different in the old and new German states, which also impacts people‘s pensions. These are still higher in the western part of the country than in the east.

Since 2009, all residents are required to have health insurance. In 2015, the majority (87 percent) of Germans were insured by a statutory health insurance company. Residents have the choice between a number of independent health insurance providers, as well as private health insurance, which is reserved for people in specific professions or above a certain income. Around 11 percent of people have this type of insurance. A small segment of the population has its own special insurance policies, such as the police and armed forces.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is being implemented in Germany in the national action plan “Make it easy. Our path to an inclusive society“ („Einfach machen. Unser Weg in eine inklusive Gesellschaft“). By 2022, for example, all public transportation is to be fully accessible to everyone.
Official name: Bundesrepublik Deutschland

Official language: German

Capital: Berlin (3.5 million residents, 2015)

Population (2015): 81.2 million

Population density (2014): 226.6 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Euro, since 2002

Government website: https://www.bundesregierung.de/

National holiday: 3 October: German Unity Day 1990 (Tag der Deutschen Einheit)

Area (2014): 357,300 km²

Administrative structure: 16 states, each with its own state constitution, parliament and government

Geography: Seas: North and Baltic Seas; ten largest islands: Rügen, Usedom, Fehmarn, Sylt, Föhr, Pellworm, Poel, Borkum, Norderney, Amrum; mountains: the Alps; highest peak: Zugspitze (2,962 m)
Political system:
Democratic parliamentary republic; parliament (Bundestag): elections every four years; Bundesrat (federal council of states); Federal President elected by the Federal Convention every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
Founding member (1951/57)

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
16.0 percent\(\text{a), b)}\)

Memberships:
EU, G7, G20, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
96

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Günther H. Oettinger
Department: Budget and Human Resources

\(\text{a) Provisional value, b) Estimated value} \)
Population structure (2015):

- Women: 50.9 percent
- Men: 49.1 percent
- Ages 0 - 14: 13 percent
- Ages 15 - 64: 66 percent
- Over 65: 21 percent
- Urban population: 75 percent
- Rural population: 25 percent

Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013):
- GDP total: 2,737.6 billion euros
- GDP per capita: 33,300 euros

- 47,590 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
- 19,773 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
- 1,473 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
- 4.3 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
- 7.2 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
- 86.8 percent
**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
In percent of GDP (current prices)

- DE: 27.7 a)
- EU: 27.5 e)

**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
Per head of population (PPS)

- DE: 9,387 a)
- EU: 7,325 e)

**Expenditures for pensions 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- DE: 3,677 a)
- EU: 3,024 e)

**Illness/health care 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- DE: 2,949 a)
- EU: 1,890 e)

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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
**Benefits family/children 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

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**Invalidity benefits 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

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**Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013**
In percent of the total population

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**Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total**
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

Practically no other country has shaped the historic and cultural legacy of the Western world like ancient Greece. Since 1981, the country has been a member of the European Community (EC), one of the EU's predecessors, and has belonged to the Eurozone since 2001. An association agreement with the European Economic Community (EEC) has been in effect since 1961. The actual accession talks couldn't start until 1976 because of the military coup that took over power in spring 1967. After five years of negotiations, the country became the 10th member of the European Community in 1981.

The political situation in Greece was very tense after the end of World War II. This led to a civil war, and the conservative government crushed the Communist partisans with extreme harshness. Right-wing offers staged a coup in 1967 to prevent the anticipated victory of the socialist United Democratic Left in the next election.

The totalitarian military regime collapsed in 1974, but not before the military brutally supressed a student uprising. The attempted unification with the Republic of Cyprus also failed. Greek citizens then voted for the return of democracy in a public referendum.
During ancient times (800 B.C. – 146 B.C.), Greece extended all the way to Asia Minor, a territory that currently belongs to Turkey. Due to the many outstanding cultural achievements in the areas of philosophy, the natural sciences, written history and literature, Greece is often described as the “cradle of Europe”. In addition to these scientific and cultural accomplishments, the beginnings of modern social security can also be observed in ancient Greece. People with illnesses were able to take refuge in the temples of Asclepius, the god of medicine, as early as the 5th century B.C.

**Geography**

Greece is one of Europe’s sunniest and warmest countries, located in the southeast part of the continent. The country is made up of the Greek mainland at the southern end of the Balkan Peninsula and the Peloponnese Peninsula, which was separated from the mainland by the canal of the Isthmus of Corinth (1893). Several islands in the Aegean Sea, Ionian Sea and Libyan Sea also belong to Greece.

Mount Olympus dominates the landscape of the country’s east coast. The tallest peak is the Mytikas at nearly 3,000 m. Many myths from ancient Greece are centred around the mountain, considered the home of the gods.

**Culture**

Greek is the oldest language spoken on earth still recorded in writing. People today speak Modern Greek. The famed works of ancient times are written in ancient Greek, including Homer’s epic poems the Iliad and the Odyssey, which are among the very first examples of European literature in existence. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle laid the foundation for Western philosophy. Schoolchildren around the world still study the mathematical findings of Euclid and Pythagoras today. Greek art is primarily associated with its ancient sculptures, including the Venus de Milo, one of the most famous statues.

Greek architecture reached a very high standard even in ancient times. Many buildings from the era have lasted over the centuries, and continue...
to be popular tourist destinations each year. One of the most famous structures is the Acropolis, the symbol of the capital city, Athens.

The national assembly once met at the marketplace in ancient Greece. The debates held here are considered the origins of democracy.

**Economy**

Traditionally a nation of seafarers and also an agricultural producer, Greece is currently experiencing a major economic crisis. The European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund have been supporting the country in its reform efforts.
The service industry has been growing steadily over the past several years, making up 84 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2014. Industry and agriculture have declined over this same period of time, totalling just 13 percent and 4 percent respectively in 2014.

**Social security**

The roots of social security in Greece date back to ancient times in part, but that system had very little in common with the one in place today. Ancient Greece believed in the healing powers of the god of Asclepius. The templates, usually located in remote places, provided medical care to the sick and frail. The entire population didn't benefit from these services however. It’s assumed that patients were required to pay for their treatment. According to tradition, treatments were provided in exchange for a sacrificial offering. In addition to this religious community, larger cities also had public doctors who would see patients. The traces of Asclepius are still visible today: The serpent-entwined rod of Asclepius is still used as the symbol for medicine.

The current social security system was created following the end of the military junta in 1974. The social goals were redefined with the aim of balancing out regional disparities and expanding social security. Many laws passed in the 1980s were designed to promote social justice. However, the institutions and public authorities were unable to implement any wide-reaching social reforms.

Greece established a national health services system in 1983 to halt the advancing privatisation in the field of health care. This made more services available to the public free of charge, which led to overcrowded hospitals. The first adjustments to lighten the burden on the system were made in the early 1990s, when a fee was introduced to keep hospitals from being overwhelmed. The government has made additional efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of the healthcare system since 1993.

The other areas of social security have developed in a similar way. The first laws on retirement, disability, work-related accidents, unemployment and family benefits were passed between 1914 and 1958. There were several rounds of reforms in these fields during this time. The current legislation
governing pensions, disability, illness, maternity and unemployment was adopted in 2012 and adapted as a result of the economic crisis.

Specific features of the country's social security

The social security system was also affected by Greek financial crisis. Contributions for family benefits were abolished by law in 2014. Individual benefits for mothers and children, such as subsidies to cover the cost of childbirth, maternity benefits, special family assistance and childcare benefit are still paid.

A guaranteed minimum income system for people experiencing social hardship has never been present in Greece. The government started the „Guaranteed minimum income“ pilot programme in November 2014. This also includes measures to integrate and reintegrate people able to work into the labour market. It is designed for individuals and families living in poverty.

Employees and employers pay statutory health insurance contributions. Residents without insurance can request health booklets that give them one year of free access to the national health system, and extensions are possible in certain situations. This also covers spouses and dependants.
**Official name:**
Elliniki Dimokratia (Ελληνική Δημοκρατία)

**Official language:**
Greek

**Capital:**
Athens (664,000 residents, 2011)

**Population (2015):**
10.9 million

**Population density (2014):**
83.3 inhabitants per km²

**Currency:**
Euro, since 2002

**Government website:**
http://www.primeminister.gr/english/

**National holiday:**
25 March: Independence Day, Anniversary of the declaration of the start of War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire 1821 (Mariä Verkündigung, Ευαγγελισμού)

28 October: Ochi day, Celebration of the Greek refusal to the Italian ultimatum 1940 (Imera tou Ochi, Επέτειος του Οχί)

**Area (2014):** 132,000 km²

**Administrative structure:** Seven administrations, 13 regions; Mount Athos, an autonomous area (monastic republic); dependent territories: Mount Athos – monastic republic

**Geography:** Southernmost country on the Balkan Peninsula; 2,000 islands in the Aegean and Ionian Seas (of these, approx. 165 populated); highest peak: Mytikas (Mount Olympus, 2,918 m)
Head of state: Prokopis Pavlopoulos
Head of government: Alexis Tsipras

**Political system:**
Parliamentary republic; one chamber, members elected for four-year terms; parliament elects president every five years; compulsory voting as of age 18

**Joined EU in:**
1981

**Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):**
2.1 percent

**Memberships:**
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

**Seats in the European Parliament:**
21

**Commissioner in the European Commission:**
Dimitris Avramopoulos
Department: Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship

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[a] Provisional value, [b] Estimated value
Greece

Population structure (2015):
Rural population 22 percent
Urban population 78 percent

Ages 0 - 14 15 percent
Ages 15 - 64 64 percent
Over 65 21 percent

Men 48.8 percent
Women 51.2 percent

Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013):
GDP total 182.1 billion euros
GDP per capita 18,700 euros

Gross national income per capita p.a. (2013):
22,610 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
7,680 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
684 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
24.2 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
49.8 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
70.4 percent

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Population structure (2015):

**Women**
- Ages 0 - 14: 15 percent
- Ages 15 - 64: 64 percent
- Over 65: 21 percent

**Men**
- Ages 0 - 14: 15 percent
- Ages 15 - 64: 64 percent
- Over 65: 21 percent

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Population distribution:
- Urban population: 78 percent
- Rural population: 22 percent

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Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of 2013, data for 2014 not available
### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

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### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

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### Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

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### Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
### Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

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### Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

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### Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

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<td>EU</td>
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### Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

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<td>EU</td>
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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
HUNGARY

History

The formerly Communist nation became a member of the EU in 2004. Although the economy began to take off after the fall of Communism, Hungary was forced to accept international assistance after the financial and economic crisis of 2007.

After many centuries as an independent kingdom, most of the country was occupied by the Ottoman Empire in 1526. The Habsburgs conquered the entire country in 1686. In 1848, Hungary attempted to overthrow its Habsburg rulers, but was unsuccessful. From the middle of the 19th century, the country became an equal partner of Austria during the final phase of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary was in existence from 1867 to 1918. Hungary once again became an independent kingdom after World War I, although it was effectively under the authoritarian rule of former Admiral Miklós Horthy. The redrawing of the country’s borders after the war resulted in some five million ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring countries, a fact that has complicated Hungary’s relationships with its neighbours right down to the present day.
Hungary was allied with Germany during World War II, and German troops marched into the country shortly before the war ended in 1944. After this, Hungary was occupied by the Red Army, marking the start of Communist rule. Even though the Red Army put down the popular uprising that occurred in 1956, Hungary later became the first Eastern European country to win a range of economic freedoms.

On 27 June 1989 Hungary’s Foreign Minister, Gyula Horn, and Austria’s Foreign Minister, Alois Mock, joined together to symbolically cut the barbed wire marking the border between the two states. East German citizens who had been on holiday in Hungary took advantage of this opportunity to flee through Austria to West Germany. During the same year, a new constitution came into force proclaiming the Republic of Hungary, and the new government has been steadily expanding its social security programmes ever since.

**Geography**

Hungary is located between Austria and the Balkan States in Central Europe. Much of the country consists of fertile flatlands that are used for agriculture. Hungary’s vast Puszta lowlands are home to livestock activities. Lake Balaton, the largest inland lake in Central Europe, is located in western Hungary. In contrast, the northern part of the country is mountainous and wooded, and locals and holidaymakers alike make use of the area’s numerous hot springs, thermal baths and spas for relaxation.

The Danube flows through the middle of the country, and splits the capital city Budapest into two districts, Buda and Pest.

**Culture**

The various foreign rulers of the country have left behind many traces of their cultures. Its churches, castles and monasteries have been built in a wide variety of styles, making them reflective of different facets of the country’s history. Not only is the influence of Roman settlers and Ottoman besiegers visible, but also a blend of Austrian and Hungarian architectural styles.
Many old customs have retained their vitality in rural areas, including traditional costumes, embroidery and zither playing. Hungary was also home to famous classical composers such as Franz Liszt, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, and the well-known operetta “The Merry Widow” was written by Franz Lehár. Victor Vasarely is a prominent representative of the fine arts with his graphic op art images.

Economy

The economic crisis had a negative impact on exports that started in 2008 and lasted for a number of years, although export earnings have been growing again for a while now. The economy is also expanding: Economic growth in 2015 was approx. 2.9 percent, and growth of between 2 percent and 5 percent is expected for 2016. At the same time, government debt has been declining. In 2013, Hungary was able to exit the Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) for the first time since joining the EU. The government has set itself ambitious targets: It wants to make Hungary Europe's most competitive economy, and intends to achieve this goal by establishing a new legal framework and creating one million new jobs.

More than three quarters of Hungarian exports go to the EU, with Germany alone accounting for one-quarter. This makes Germany far and away Hungary's most important economic partner. In 2014 the country's trade surplus amounted to approx. 6.5 billion euros, with Germany accounting for some 3.5 billion euros of this sum.

Services made up nearly 64 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014, and industry 31 percent. In comparison with other EU countries, agriculture accounts for a proportionally large share of the economy at approx. 5 percent of GDP. In 2013 Hungary’s total Gross Domestic Product amounted to 97.9 billion euros, putting it in 18th place within the EU, while its GDP per capital was 9,900 euros, the third-lowest figure in the EU, behind only Romania and Bulgaria.

Social security

Hungary’s first modern insurance programme was instituted in 1907 with its national fund for workers offering illness and accident benefits. The
first national social insurance institute was established in 1928 during the Horthy era, which was the forerunner of the current National Health Insurance Fund of Hungary (OEP). The benefits provided by the institute made Hungary’s healthcare system one of Eastern Europe’s most advanced of its time. The Hungarian government also placed tremendous emphasis on social security during the communist period.

Hungary’s modern social security system has its roots in the 1970s and 1980s. The country made its first changes to the constitution in 1972 relating to universal support for the ill, the elderly and people with disabilities. Benefits for pregnant women and working mothers were also introduced during the same year, measures that were intended to help combat a decline in the population.

As a result of public health legislation from the same year, all citizens had a right to free medical care as of 1975. The Social Insurance Act of
1975 established the same conditions for all population groups, meaning that everyone was entitled to the same level of benefits. Hungary started systematically expanding the benefits available under the social security system at the same time. By the late 1980s, 85 percent of pensioners were already receiving pension insurance benefits. In 1987, Hungary became the first Communist country to subsidise jobs for the unemployed through public programmes, and 1988 saw the introduction of an unemployment benefit.

Most of the laws currently in force are from the 1990s and 2000s. The government was forced to cut a series of benefits recently as a result of budgetary constraints, particularly allowances for families.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

Hungary does not have an overarching system for ensuring a guaranteed minimum income. Instead, people can take advantage of a variety of programmes in accordance with their level of need. For example, there is a disability pension, a non-contributory old-age pension for people with very low incomes, and specific benefits for people who are unemployed and without certified training. Those in need are also entitled to healthcare services.

Care services are available within the framework of the healthcare and social security system. Those who are entitled to these services include the elderly, people with disabilities, psychiatric patients, addicts and the homeless. These care services do not include payments, but anyone who provides care for family members, friends or other related persons on a non-professional basis can receive payments from the state.

The state subsidises vocational training for people with disabilities. The Hungarian work agency offers them training in regional centres that is tailored to their specific disabilities. Afterwards, they can get jobs in protected workshops that are also supported by the state.
Official name:
Magyarország

Official language:
Hungarian

Capital:
Budapest (1.7 million residents, 2011)

Population (2015):
9.9 million

Population density (2014):
106.1 inhabitants per km²

Currency:
Forint

Government website:
http://www.kormany.hu/en

National holiday:
15 March: National Day, Memory of the 1848-49 Revolution and War of Independence (Nemzeti ünnep)
20 August: Saint Stephen’s Day, Memory of the foundation of the State and King Saint Stephen the State Founder (Szent István ünnepe)
23 October: Memorial day of the revolution 1956 and of the proclamation of the Third Hungarian Republic 1989 both (Nemzeti ünnepe)

Area (2014): 93,000 km²

Administrative structure: 198 districts (since 2013), 20 counties (megye)

Geography: Mostly flat, landlocked country; Great Hungarian Plain covers nearly half the country; Puszta: Pannonian steppe; Lake Balaton: the largest lake in Central Europe
Political system: Parliamentary republic; National Assembly elections every four years; presidential elections every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in: 2004

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015): 1.9 percent\(^{a), b)}\)

Memberships: EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament: 21

Commissioner in the European Commission: Tibor Navracsics
Department: Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

\(^{a)} Provisional value, \(^{b)} Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  97.9 billion euros
GDP per capita  9,900 euros

13,340 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):  
4,512 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):  
353 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):  
5.7 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):  
17.3 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):  
83.2 percent

---

Population structure (2015):

- **Women**: 52.4 percent
- **Men**: 47.6 percent

**Age distribution**

- Ages 0 - 14: 15 percent
- Ages 15 - 64: 68 percent
- Over 65: 18 percent

- **Urban population**: 71 percent
- **Rural population**: 29 percent

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<sup>c</sup> Deviation from 100 percent due to rounding
### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>2,949</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
### Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HU</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HU</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>129</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HU</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>27.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HU</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat*
IRELAND

History

Ireland became a member of the EU as part of the first northern expansion in 1973, along with the United Kingdom and Denmark. The country has been part of the Eurozone since the currency's introduction in 2002.

The history of Ireland is shaped by the Christianisation in the 4th and 5th centuries. The best-known missionary was Patrick, Ireland's patron saint. A strong monastic culture developed over the centuries to following, with many abbots holding as much power as the many regional kings. The Vikings took advantage of these divisions starting at the end of the 8th century. They repeatedly attacked the coastal regions before starting to found permanent settlements, including the city of Dublin. Ireland came under English power at the end of the 12th century; which lasted until 1921 when Ireland became a Republic independent of the United Kingdom. The six northern countries form Northern Ireland, which is still part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Since Ireland was under English rule, the beginnings of social security in this country are nearly identical to those in the United Kingdom. Individual legislation in this area was only passed after Ireland declared its independence.
Geography

Ireland is an island nation in northwest Europe known for its beautiful landscapes. The country is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and south, and the Irish Sea to the east. The famed rugged, mountainous west coast and fertile flatlands with lush green meadows extend across great expanses of the country's interior. This is why Ireland is also called the “green island”.

The weather is often rainy and windy, and vegetation fairly sparse despite the favourable climate. Intensive logging has left just a small part of the island forested. The landscape features extensive moors and broad prairies.

Culture

Ireland’s Celtic heritage is still vibrant and evident in many parts of the country today. Despite the major influence of the English language, Gaelic (Irish) is the first official language. City and street signs are still written in Gaelic, even though this language is only spoken by around 90,000 people in the so-called Gaeltachts, Irish-speaking regions on the west coast of the country. Another example is the Halloween holiday, which most people associate with the United States. It was first observed in Ireland in the 5th century, and stems from the Celtic solstice celebration.

Irish culture is also very popular in countries around the world. People especially enjoy Irish folklore. Irish dance groups combine traditional tap dancing with Celtic music, and are very successful internationally. Traditional Irish instruments are the harp, fiddle and flute. Ireland boasts a long literary tradition, with famous names such as James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker. Irish pubs and St Patrick’s Day on 17 March are some of the country’s cultural exports.

Economy

Since the 1990s, Ireland’s national economy shifted to a specialisation in the export of high-tech products. Many international companies, especially internet organisations, have their European headquarters in Ireland. The main reasons for this are the comparatively low business tax,
English language and access to the European Single Market. The 2007 financial crisis hit the country especially hard, and it became dependent on assistance from the European Financial Stability Facility. Thanks to its successful austerity policy, Ireland was able to once again generate nearly 5 percent in economic growth in 2014.

The gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013 was 164 billion euros, putting Ireland in the middle when compared to the rest of Europe. Ireland’s per capita GDP was 35,600 euros in 2013, or sixth place in the EU. Services made up approx. 73 percent of GDP, industry around 26 percent and agriculture 1.6 percent. Ireland’s most important trading partners include Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Social security

Most of the origins of Ireland’s social security system can be traced to English legislation due to the country’s relatively late independence from the United Kingdom. The English Poor Law from 1834, which originally only applied to Wales and England, was adapted to Ireland’s needs in 1838. Unlike such laws today, this assistance was limited to so-called workhouses where people in need and beggars could stay instead of living on the street.

Support for employees followed with the Workmen’s Compensation Act in 1897. This guaranteed financial compensation for workers in the event of work-related accidents. Employees were required to prove that the accident happened during working hours in order to receive these benefits. Another law designed to help the unemployed find work was the Labour Exchanges Act of 1909.

Passed in 1908, the Old Age Pensions Act is considered one of the foundations of the country’s current social security system. Retirees were paid a weekly pension starting at age 70. The actual pension itself was relatively small to motivate workers to make their own provisions. Assistance for people with disabilities was introduced with the National Insurance Act in 1911, modelled after comparable German laws.
Unlike other countries, which conducted major legal reforms after becoming independent, Ireland initially kept its laws after 1921 and gradually adapted them in line with developing circumstances over the course of time. Today, there are three different types of social security benefits in Ireland. A differentiation is made between social insurance, means-tested and universal payments, such as the child benefit.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

The amount of benefits paid for people with illnesses depend on whether they have a full or limited entitlement. People ages 70 or older who have
a gross income of less than 500 euros are fully entitled to benefits, and are not required to pay any advance fees for doctor visits. This is covered by the Health Service Executive. These patients are not free to choose whatever doctor they like, however.

The Irish healthcare system also uses special entitlement cards to provide basic medical care for people in need. There are two different types of cards based on people's incomes. The size of their families is also taken into consideration. The so-called Medical Card allows people with very small incomes to get certain medical services free of charge. This includes doctor visits, prescriptions, dental and vision treatments and prenatal care. People who earn more can request the GP Visit Card, which gives them free examinations at general practitioners.
Official name:
Poblacht Na h’Éireann (irish)
Republic of Ireland (english)

Official languages:
Irisch, English

Capital:
Dublin (525,000 residents, 2015)

Population (2015):
4.6 million\(^a\)

Population density (2014):
67.5 inhabitants per km\(^2\)

Currency:
Euro, since 2002

Government website:
http://www.gov.ie

National holiday:
17 March: St. Patrick’s Day
(Lá Fhéile Pádraig)

Area (2014): 69,800 km\(^2\)

Administrative structure: Four provinces with 26 counties and four county boroughs

Geography: Island nation; shares northern border with the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland); landscape: primarily plains, low hills, bogs and lakes; seas: Irish Sea and Atlantic Ocean

\(^a\) Provisional value
Political system:
Parliamentary semi-presidential republic; National Assembly elected every five years, Senate every six years; direct presidential elections every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
1973

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
0.9 percent\(^a\), \(^b\)

Memberships:
EU, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
11

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Phil Hogan
Department: Agriculture and Rural Development

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^b\) Estimated value
Population structure (2015):

**Women** 50.1 percent  
**Men** 49.9 percent

**Age distribution**
- ages 0 - 14: 22 percent  
- ages 15 - 64: 65 percent  
- over 65: 13 percent

**Urban population** 63 percent  
**Rural population** 37 percent

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**Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)**
- GDP total: 164.0 billion euros  
- GDP per capita: 35,600 euros

**Gross national income per capita p.a. (2014):**
- 46,520 US dollars

**Annual mean income (netto, 2014):**
- 19,477 euros

**Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):**
- 1,546 euros

**Unemployment rate (February 2016):**
- 8.8 percent

**Youth unemployment rate (2015):**
- 20.9 percent

**Adults who have completed higher education (2015):**
- 79.8 percent
### Total expenditure on social protection 2015
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 (^e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total expenditure on social protection 2015
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 (^e)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Expenditures for pensions 2015
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 (^e)</td>
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### Illness/health care 2015
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>2,714</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 (^e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^e\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Benefits family/children 2015
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Invalidity benefits 2015
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>448</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2015
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>9.9</td>
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<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
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Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>8.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

Italy is one of the six founding members of the European Economic Community EEC, a predecessor to the EU. With 73 seats in the European Parliament, Italy is only third behind France and Germany in the number of delegates. This number is based on the size of the countries as well as their populations.

The Roman Empire, the predecessor of modern Italy, was one of the world’s most important political and cultural centres in ancient times. Rome continued its expansion in the 4th century B.C. During its heyday, the Roman Empire covered massive sections of the European continent as well as territories in North Africa and the Arabian region. The empire’s practically untouchable dominance in Europe only ended with the invasion of the Goths and Lombards in the fifth century. Over the centuries, the former global power became a pawn of the other major European powers. Finally, in the 19th century, the Italian national movement Risorgimento promoted the unification and consolidation of the various Italian states. After three wars for independence, Victor Emmanuel II became King of Italy in 1861.
The Kingdom lasted for around 60 years, and was dissolved with Benito Mussolini’s rise to power in 1922. Mussolini named himself the “Duce”, or leader, of the totalitarian state that formed. His goal was to return Italy to the glory of the ancient Roman Empire. During World War II, Italian troops under Mussolini fought on the side of the Germans from 1940 to 1943. After being liberated by Allied troops, Italy became a parliamentary republic, with a parliament consisting of two houses in 1946.

**Geography**

Italy is located on a boot-shaped peninsula surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea in southern Europe. Italian territory also includes the two large islands of Sicily and Sardinia, as well as a series of small island groups.

Italy’s landscapes are very diverse, making the country one of Europe’s most popular travel destinations. The north is home to the Alps, glaciers, lakes and skiing regions, which form the border to France, Austria, Slovenia and Switzerland. The Po Valley extends to the south of the Alps before the land mass tapers to form the famous Italian boot. Sandy beaches and cliffs line the over 7,000 km of coastline. The Apennine Mountains cross the boot from north to south.

Fruit, citrus fruits, olives and grapes grow very well in Italy thanks to the Mediterranean climate. Italy was the world’s largest wine producer in 2015, followed by France. The country also has the most active volcanos in Europe.

The most famous of these are Vesuvius, which towers over the city of Naples, and Mount Etna on the island of Sicily. There are also two independent states within Italian territory: Vatican City and San Marino.

**Culture**

The beginnings of Italian culture date back to ancient times. The structures from this time weren’t the only things to inspire later generations: Roman
law is still the basis for most European legal systems. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, Italy was the cradle of the Renaissance, shaping art and research across the entire European continent. The most famous universal scholars of the Renaissance, Galileo Galilei and Leonardo da Vinci, promoted modern research with ideas that were far ahead of their times.

Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Donatello, Botticelli and Raphael – this are just a few of the very long list of important Italian artists. Among the most famous works include da Vinci’s “Mona Lisa” and “The Birth of Venus” by Botticelli, as well as Michelangelo’s famous “David” sculpture. Italy is also home to many notable musicians and composers, such as Antonio Vivaldi, Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini and Niccolò Paganini. The country is widely known as the birthplace of opera, and Italian is still the language of this art form today. Italian literature and film still have an outstanding international reputation.

Italian cuisine is very popular, and considered one of the most influential in the world. Leading exports pizza and pasta are found practically everywhere on earth. One of the reasons for this is that many Italians have left their homeland over the centuries, and introduced these culinary specialties in their new countries. In 2010, UNESCO added the Mediterranean diet to its Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Economy

The Italian economy suffered greatly during the 2007 financial crisis: Compared to the high before the crisis, economic performance has dropped around 9 percent. Italy was able to generated economic growth of 0.8 percent by 2015. The situation on the job market is also problematic. Many young Italians need jobs: In 2014, 42.7 percent of young Italians were unemployed. The overall unemployment rate in 2015 was 12.6 percent.

The service sector makes up the greatest share of the gross domestic product (GDP) in Italy, at 74.4 percent. The high-earning tourism business plays a very important role here. Important industries include aircraft,
machine, ship and vehicle manufacturing, as well as the textile and food industries. The different industries made up a total of 23.4 percent of GDP. Agriculture plays a less significant role, contributing just 2.2 percent to GDP. Wine, cheese and olive oil production are very important to the Italian economy.

Social security

The state made its first efforts to establish a strong legal framework for social security at the end of the 19th century. Industrialisation, which started relatively late in Northern Italy in the 1860s, introduced a number of new problems: Workers injured themselves more frequently on the job, or became ill as a result of their work. The area of work-related accidents was the first to be governed by law in 1898. The same year also saw the establishment of a voluntary insurance system for ageing and invalidity protection targeted specifically towards factory workers. The benefits were paid from a national fund, which was financed through member contributions and state support. Financial security in old age and invalidity became mandatory for all employees in a law passed in 1919. Unemployment insurance was also passed into law the same year.
Family and mother benefits play a special role in Italy's social security system. The social significance of the family led to the adoption of a law in 1912 that guaranteed maternity leave for mothers before and after childbirth. The National Social Security Institute originally managed and paid child benefits each week. The weekly benefits designed for male workers in private industries were established in a collective agreement for unions and employers' associations in 1934. A law passed in 1937 expanded these benefits to include mothers in need. Benefits in the event of illness weren't covered by law until 1943.

Today, it is necessary for all private-sector employees and self-employed workers to register for general compulsory insurance. The most important social insurance agency is the National Institute for Social Security, which has also insured public servants, athletes and workers in the entertainment industry since 2012. These groups previously had their own social insurance schemes. Journalists and people working in various professions, such as doctors, lawyers, engineers and architects, still have their own individual systems.

**Specific features of the country's social security**

Social security for families is very strong. Italy offers a number of different benefits based on the size of the family.

A special indicator, the so-called ISEE (Indicatore della Situazione Economica Equivalente), makes it possible to evaluate each family's economic situation. It takes income, assets and family composition into account when calculating benefits. When determining pension payments following a work-related accident, for example, the amount of benefit is adjusted for the spouse and every dependent child. The ISEE indicator also helps in calculating welfare assistance, which differs depending on the community and region.
**Official name:**
Repubblica Italiana

**Official language:**
Italian

**Capital:**
Rome (2.7 million residents, 2015)

**Population (2015):**
60.8 million

**Population density (2014):**
201.2 inhabitants per km²

**Currency:**
Euro, since 2002

**Government website:**
http://www.governo.it/

**National holiday:**
2 June: Republic Day, Birth of the Italian Republic 1946
(Festa della Repubblica)

**Area (2014):** 302,100 km²

**Administrative structure:** 20 regions; special status for five regions: Aosta Valley, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige

**Geography:** Peninsula with approx. 70 other islands, like Sicily, Sardinia and Elba; seas: Mediterranean Sea; primarily mountainous; highest peak: Mont Blanc in the Alps (4,810 m)
**Political system:**
Parliamentary republic; parliament: members elected every five years; Constituent Assembly elects President every seven years; compulsory voting as of age 18

**Joined EU in:**
Founding member (1951/57)

**Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):**
12.0 percent\(^{a), b)}\)

**Memberships:**
EU, G7, G20, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

**Seats in the European Parliament:**
73

**Commissioner in the European Commission:**
Federica Mogherini (Vice-President of the Commission)
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

\(^{a)}\) Provisional value, \(^{b)}\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  1,560.0 billion euros
GDP per capita  25,600 euros

34,580 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
15,759 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
No minimum wage

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
11.7 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
40.3 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
59.9 percent

Population structure (2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 0 - 14</td>
<td>14 percent</td>
<td>14 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15 - 64</td>
<td>64 percent</td>
<td>64 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>22 percent</td>
<td>22 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population</td>
<td>69 percent</td>
<td>69 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural population</td>
<td>31 percent</td>
<td>31 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>28.6 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Per head (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>7,391 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expeditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Per head (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>3,759 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Per head (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>1,539 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
**Benefits family/children 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- IT: 269 a)
- DE: 961 a)
- EU: 550 e)

**Invalidity benefits 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- IT: 355 a)
- DE: 690 a)
- EU: 477 e)

**Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013**
In percent of the total population

- IT: 12.3
- DE: 5.4
- EU: 9.6

**Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total**
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

- IT: 11.7
- DE: 4.3
- EU: 8.9

---

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Latvia

History

Latvia joined the EU and NATO in 2004, and is the second-newest member of the Eurozone. Like many other Eastern European countries, Latvia was controlled by Russia and later by the Soviet Union (USSR). Russian domination ended with the country’s declaration of independence in 1918, won in the Latvian War for Independence. Afterwards, Latvia was a parliamentary democracy until a coup in 1934 put an authoritarian regime in power.

Latvian independence ended with the occupation of Soviet troops in 1940. Anyone who revolted or rebelled against the Soviet Union was sent to labour camps in Central Asia. The Nazis occupied the Baltic country from 1941 to 1944, when the Red Army reclaimed control.

Nationalist and environmental activists staged the first major anti-Soviet protests in 1986, followed by several riots and uprisings designed to regain Latvian independence. In 1990, the Supreme Council in Latvia declared that independence should be restored to the country. Independence was officially announced after the collapse of the USSR in August of the same year. Today, Latvia is once again a parliamentary democracy, and the former Soviet-influenced social security system has evolved into a modern safety net for its residents.
Geography

Latvia belongs to the Baltic States, and borders EU member countries Lithuania and Estonia. It also shares a border with Russia and Belarus. Located in northeast Europe, the landscape is shaped by lowlands, over 3,000 lakes, moors, swampland and expansive forests that cover over 40 percent of the country. They provide the raw materials necessary for the country's woodworking industry as well as a wildlife habitat. Tourists interested in ecology and nature can visit the country's many significant protected areas, and marvel at the biodiversity of nearly 27,700 registered varieties of plants and animals.

Latvia's Baltic Sea coast spans 531 km and is very pristine. The landscape was shaped by glaciers: Mounds of boulders weighing tonnes were left near the sea after the ice retreated.

Culture

Latvian is one of Europe's oldest languages. It belongs to the Indo-European family of languages, and is related to Sanskrit, which was spoken in ancient India. The country's diverse art and music traditions also date back centuries: According to estimates, there are over one million Latvian folk songs, called “dainas” in Latvian. Violinist Gidon Kremer was born in the region now belonging to Latvia, and plays Latvian music. Other Latvian natives are film director Sergei Eisenstein and painter Mark Rothko.

Name days are still very important to elderly and middle-aged Latvians. Originally a religious celebration to honour saints, name days are now a tradition observed world-wide. In some places, people celebrate name days more than birthdays. The Latvian Academy of Sciences regularly reviews and checks this list, which features the names of Evangelical/Lutheran saints as well as pagan gods and mythological figures. Obsolete names are replaced by modern ones.

The Latvians celebrated the 800th birthday of their capital city, Riga, in 2001. The Hanseatic city is the largest in a sparsely populated region, and was named one the European Capitals of Culture in 2014. The well-
preserved historic centre and Art Nouveau architecture in its Central District are listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

**Economy**

Agriculture powered Latvia’s economy for many years: The neighbouring Baltic Sea was the site of the robust fishing industry, and trees were cut from the many forests and processed inland. Like the other Baltic States, Latvia embraced the free market economy after gaining its independence from the USSR. Most exports go to direct neighbours Lithuania, Russia and Estonia. The Latvians import the majority of their goods from Lithuania, Germany (e.g. vehicles and chemicals) and Poland.

Today, the service sector is the most important branch of the economy. In 2014, it made up 73.4 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), followed by industry at 23.4 percent, consisting of machine and vehicle manufacturing, foods and metalworking. Agriculture totalled around 3.3 percent of GDP in 2014, a relatively high figure when compared to the rest of Europe.

With a total GDP of 23.4 billion euros in 2013, Latvia was towards the end of the ranking of all EU member countries. Only Estonia, Cyprus and Malta had lower GDPs. The per capita GDP in 2013 was around 11,600 euros. Despite these still low figures, the Baltic nation has managed to overcome the economic and financial crisis, with economic performance growing steadily since 2010.

**Social security**

The first Latvian social security laws were passed in the 1920s: pension (1922), coverage in the event of illness (1924) and work-related accidents (1927). The social security system was adapted to Soviet regulations while the country belonged to the USSR.

After regaining its independence, the Latvian government enacted new social security legislation – governing family benefits in 1990, and unemployment benefits in 1991. The Soviet model did not allow for
unemployment, which is why the country lacked regulations in this area. Latvia updated all other existing laws in the 1990s and 2000s after leaving the USSR.

The Cabinet of Ministers created the State Social Fund in February 1994. This was designed to manage the revenues and expenditures of the social insurance agencies, pay pensions and other benefits, and manage local branch offices. The aim was to create the basis for a modern social security system, make existing processes more efficient and improve customer service. The State Social Insurance Agency replaced the Social Fund on 1 January 1998. The legal status of the agency was changed in 2004 from a non-profit organisation to a state agency run by the Ministry for Social Affairs.
Specific features of the country’s social security

Latvia does a great deal to promote preventive care. Several preventive care treatments and visits are covered by health insurance, including certain types of cancer screenings for adults, and vision and dental examinations for children. Low earners in need are not required to pay contributions for their health insurance.

Care services are financed through taxes in Latvia and are only provided in kind. Every resident is entitled to these social services, whatever their age and income.

After the nuclear catastrophe in Ukraine’s Chernobyl power plant in April 1986, many Latvians were drafted to assist in the clean-up efforts or volunteered to help. Victims of the accident and helpers are generally not required to pay for treatments for health issues caused by the effects of radiation.
**Official name:**
Latvijas Republika/Latvija

**Official language:**
Latvian

**Capital:**
Riga (702,000 residents, 2016)

**Population (2015):**
2.0 million

**Population density (2014):**
32.0 inhabitants per km²

**Currency:**
Euro, since 2014

**Government website:**
http://www.mk.gov.lv/en

**Area (2014):** 64,600 km²

**Administrative structure:** Nine cities, 109 municipalities

**Geography:** Mostly plains and vast forests; several lakes; on the Baltic Sea

**National holiday:**
4 May: Restoration of Independence day 1990 (Latvijas Republikas neatkarības atjaunošanu)

18 November: Republic Day, proclamation of independence of Latvia 1918 (Latvijas Neatkarības proklamēšanas diena)
**Political system:**
Parliamentary republic; parliamentary elections every four years; presidential elections every four years; right to vote as of age 18

**Joined EU in:**
2004

**Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):**
0.4 percent\(^{a,b}\)

**Memberships:**
EU, NATO, OSZE, UNO

**Seats in the European Parliament:**
8

**Commissioner in the European Commission:**
Valdis Dombrovskis (Vice-President of the Commission)
Department: Euro, Social Dialogue, Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union

\(^{a}\) Provisional value, \(^{b}\) Estimated value
**Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)**
- GDP total: 23.4 billion euros
- GDP per capita: 11,600 euros

**Gross national income per capita p.a. (2014):**
- 15,250 US dollars

**Annual mean income (netto, 2014):**
- 5,203 euros

**Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):**
- 370 euros

**Unemployment rate (February 2016):**
- 9.8 percent

**Youth unemployment rate (2015):**
- 16.3 percent

**Adults who have completed higher education (2015):**
- 90.1 percent

**Population structure (2015):**

- **Women:** 54.2 percent
- **Men:** 45.8 percent

- **Age distribution**
  - ages 0 - 14: 16 percent
  - ages 15 - 64: 65 percent
  - over 65: 19 percent

- **Urban population:** 68 percent
- **Rural population:** 32 percent
### Total expenditure on social protection 2013

**In percent of GDP (current prices)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>14.2 a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Total expenditure on social protection 2013

**Per head of population (PPS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>2,440 a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 e)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Expenditures for pensions 2013

**Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>623 a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Illness/health care 2013

**Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>242 a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
**Benefits family/children 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **LV**: 90<sup>a)</sup>
- **DE**: 961<sup>a)</sup>
- **EU**: 550<sup>e)</sup>

**Invalidity benefits 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **LV**: 92<sup>a)</sup>
- **DE**: 690<sup>a)</sup>
- **EU**: 477<sup>e)</sup>

**Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013**
In percent of the total population

- **LV**: 24.0
- **DE**: 5.4
- **EU**: 9.6

**Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total**
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

- **LV**: 9.8
- **DE**: 4.3
- **EU**: 8.9

---

<sup>a)</sup> Provisional value, <sup>e)</sup> Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

The former member of the Soviet Union (USSR) has been part of the European Union and NATO since 2004. The Baltic State is also the newest member of the European Monetary Union, having introduced the euro as its currency on 1 January 2015.

Like many other EU countries, the republic has been controlled by various different countries in its history: Russia, Sweden, France and Germany have all occupied the Baltic country at some point over time. Lithuania became independent in 1918. Around 20 years later, in 1939, the Soviets forced Lithuania to accept the establishment of military bases on its territory. The Soviet army marched into the country one year later, followed by the German occupation in 1941. Lithuania became part of the USSR once again after being liberated by the Red Army in 1944.

In 1988, a group of writers and intellectuals called “Sąjūdis” started the “Reform Movement of Lithuania” with the aim of achieving the country’s independence from the Soviet Union. The Parliament approved the declaration of Lithuania’s sovereignty in 1989. In 1990 and 1991, however, the situation escalated as the country fought for its independence. The USSR initiated an economic blockade, and special units used force
against the country's citizens. The majority of Lithuanians voted for their sovereignty in a referendum in February 1991, and this was finally recognised by the Soviet Union in September 1991. Lithuania immediately joined the United Nations, and adopted a new constitution in 1992 that included a new social security system.

**Geography**

Lithuania is the largest and southernmost of the three Baltic nations. The landscape is dominated by thick, pristine forests, beautiful coastlines, moors and pastures, which are enjoyed by hikers. The tributaries of over 2,800 lakes provide ideal locations for water sports. Massive stretches of the primarily flat country are protected. There are five national parks, including the Curonian Spit, founded in 1991 and since designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Tourists flock to the dunes along the Baltic Sea and the many charming fishing villages found there. A wealth of flora and fauna thrives in nature reserves and protected areas throughout the country.

In 1989, experts at the French National Geographic Institute re-estimated the boundaries of Europe and determined that the geographic centre of Europe is in the village of Purnuškės, north of the Lithuanian capital city Vilnius.

Lithuania's neighbours are Poland, Belarus, Latvia and the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, formerly known as Königsberg.

**Culture**

After many years of being isolated from the West during Soviet rule, Lithuania is very involved in Western and Eastern European culture. Cultural politics are considered an important means of establishing and expanding international contacts. The country does a great deal to promote music, theatre, film and literature. Lithuanian artists frequent cultural events abroad, and the republic welcomes creative artists from around the world. The cultural policy should also help Lithuanians living abroad maintain contact with their native culture and language.
The Historic Centre of Vilnius has been a UNESCO World Heritage Centre since 1994 and attracts large numbers of tourists. The Lithuanian capital is also referred to as the Rome of the East for its many cathedrals. Vilnius University is one of the oldest in Europe. Lithuania is also home to several museums. The Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Museum in Kaunas owns nearly the entire estate of the artist and composer. Čiurlionis (1875-1911) was a Symbolist painter, and his work is considered the most valuable legacy of Lithuanian art history.

Economy

Despite a strict austerity policy, Lithuania's national debt has nearly doubled since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2009. At the same time, the economy is growing at a rate of 2 to 3 percent each year. Lithuania ranks in the bottom third of EU member states with a gross domestic product (GDP) of 34.6 billion euros and per capita GDP of 11,700 euros in 2013.
Retail and services make up the largest share of the GDP with 60 percent, the largest share, followed by nearly 20 percent industry, and agriculture and fishing each approx. 3 percent. Important export goods include food, clothing and textiles, fertilisers, metal products, furniture, wood and plastics. In addition its Baltic neighbours, Lithuania’s trading partners include Poland, Scandinavia and Russia. Trade with Russia has declined due to tensions over the conflict in Ukraine. Lithuania is heavily dependent on Russia for energy production, importing nearly all of its gas and electricity from there. A liquefied petroleum gas terminal started operation in 2014 to help reduce this dependency. A power link between Lithuania, Poland and Sweden has also been running since December 2015.

Social security

The first social security measures date back to 1918. When the Soviet Union took control of the country in 1939, unemployment benefits were eliminated as these were by definition unnecessary. At the same time, residents received extensive healthcare, pension and inclusion services.

Like in all former Soviet republics, Lithuania’s current social security system was established after the country regained independence in the 1990s. A new social insurance act was implemented in 1991, which initially protected residents who became ill or lost their jobs. The Constitution of 1992 guarantees citizens all of the social rights they had during Soviet times. The Constitution pays special attention to family issues: It defines the right to paid maternity leave, for example. Consistent with this regulation, the first family assistance laws took effect in 1994 and were eventually updated in 2004. The Constitution also prohibits forced labour, regulates union and strike authorisations, paid annual holiday, free health care and other pension and disability services. Citizens in need are guaranteed a minimum income. Protection in the event of work-related accidents was added in 1999. Lithuania introduced unemployment benefits into law in the 2000s and also passed job creation legislation. The country enacted reforms in the areas of illness, maternity and the pension system (in 2012).
Specific features of the country’s social security

Lithuania has specific regulations for certain professional groups that apply when calculating pension entitlements. For example, there is no assessment limit for employed artists for Specific regulations apply for certain professional groups when it comes to old-age and disability pensions as well as survivorship annuities. Contributions from farmers and their partners are based on their declared income. Other employees are required to pay a fixed percentage.

Two systems are in pace to protect residents experiencing social hardship: financial assistance in the form of welfare, and a support pension paid to people with disabilities and the elderly, for example. Agriculture is a major business in Lithuania, and it is taken into account when calculating benefits: Estates with forests and bodies of water are considered property, and impact the amount of benefits. The income farmers earn through livestock is also incorporated to a certain degree.

The state pays health insurance contributions for certain groups of people, including people who volunteered to help clean up the Chernobyl nuclear accident as well as citizens who were imprisoned during the German occupation.
Official name: Lietuvos Respublika/Lietuva

Official language: Lithuanian

Capital: Vilnius (530,000 residents, 2015)

Population (2015): 2.9 million

Population density (2014): 46.8 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Euro, since 2015

Government website: https://lrv.lt/en/

National holiday:
16 February: Day of Restoration of the State of Lithuania 1918 (Lietuvos valstybės atkūrimo diena)
11 March: Day of Restoration of Independence of Lithuania 1990 (Lietuvos nepriklausomybės atkūrimo diena)
6 July: Statehood Day, coronation of the first king, Mindaugas, 1253 (Valstybės/Lietuvos karaliaus Mindaugo karūnavimo)

Area (2014): 65,300 km²

Administrative structure: Ten counties with 60 self-governing municipalities

Geography: Largest and southernmost of the three Baltic states; primarily flat, about 30 percent forestland; many lakes, bogs and marshes; on the Baltic Sea
European Overview

Political system:
Parliamentary republic; parliamentary elections every four years; direct presidential elections every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
2004

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
0.6 percent\textsuperscript{a), b)}

Memberships:
EU, NATO, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
11

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Vytenis Andriukaitis
Department: Health and Food Safety

\textsuperscript{a) Provisional value, b) Estimated value}
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  34.6 billion euros
GDP per capita  11,700 euros

15,410 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
4,823 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
350 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
8.5 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
16.3 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
93.5 percent

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Population structure (2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age distribution</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ages 0 - 14</td>
<td>19 percent</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 15 - 64</td>
<td>67 percent</td>
<td>67 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 65</td>
<td>19 percent</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rural population  33 percent
Urban population  67 percent

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c) Deviation from 100 percent due to rounding
### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>14.5 a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>605 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>341 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
### Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>94 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>116 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

The small country at the heart of the European Union is one of the founding members of the union of states: In 1957, it was one of the six nations to sign the Treaties of Rome, which brought the European Economic Community to life. Together with Belgium and the Netherlands, the parliamentary monarchy of Luxembourg also forms the BeNeLux nations – a customs and economic union.

The name of the country comes from Lützelburg, which was first mentioned in a document in 963. The county originally belonged to the Franconian Empire and in the 14th century became part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation ruled by John of Luxembourg. Only in 1815 did it become an independent Grand Duchy as part of the Congress of Vienna. Although it did not belong to the Kingdom of the United Netherlands, it was controlled by the Dutch King from 1815 to 1890, who was Grand Duke of sovereign Luxembourg in the personal union. Only after his death in 1890 did Luxembourg achieve full independence. During the two World Wars, German troops occupied the neutral country. In September 1944, Luxembourg was liberated by US troops.
Today, Luxembourg is home to the European Court (EuGH), the European Court of Auditors (EuRH), the European Parliament Secretariat, the European Investment Bank (EIB), various departments of the European Commission and the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF). Luxembourg is also the meeting place and the Council of the European Union. In 1985, Luxembourg and other European nations concluded the Schengen Agreement, which regulates the reduction of border checks between certain EU countries. One year later, the country was awarded the Charlemagne Prize for its services related to the European Union.

The history of the country’s social security system started in the early 20th century.

**Geography**

The Kingdom of Luxembourg, one of the smallest territorial states in the world, has a moderate central European climate. The region of Ösling, part of the Ardennes, is located in the north of the country. This densely wooded region accounts for around one-third of the country’s territory. On average, Ösling is 400 to 500 m above sea level and is famous for its picturesque landscape. Ösling is characterized by its wooded low mountain ranges and deep river valleys. It is also home to large numbers of deer and wild boar, birds of prey and other rare bird species.

At approximately 300 m above sea level, the somewhat lower southern part of the country, the so-called Gutland, is used for farming and wine growing at the Mosel.

**Culture**

Luxembourg is a multi-cultural nation and many of its inhabitants are multi-lingual. Despite its small size, it is home to people of more than 150 nationalities and almost half of the population is foreign-born. The Portuguese are the largest group of immigrants, making up almost 17 percent of the total population of Luxembourg. The cultural life is also influenced by this diversity of nationalities.
Luxembourg's capital city of the same name is full of contrasts. Modern contemporary buildings stand beside the ruins of old forts and castles. The remains of the Luxembourg (Lützelburg) Fortress can still be viewed in the Old Town and were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994.

Good food is of great importance in Luxembourg. Specialties from across the globe can be found in the restaurants of the capital city. The national cuisine is extremely hearty. National dishes include smoked pork with broad beans and bean soup with potatoes.

Economy

The economy has changed profoundly since the beginning of the 1970s. Instead of heavy industry and farming, the financial sector is now an important pillar of the Luxembourg economy. Alongside London, Zurich, Hong Kong and Frankfurt am Main, the city of Luxembourg is one of the world's most important financial locations. Over 20 percent of workers in Luxembourg are employed in the financial sector. This is also evident in the shares of the economic sectors in the gross domestic product (GDP). Around 88 percent of the GDP is generated by the service sector. Heavy industry and farming, which were of great importance up into the 1970s, now only account for around 11.7 percent or 0.3 percent respectively.

Despite the small national territory and the low population compared to other European countries, the country has a very good economic performance. In 2013, the GDP was 45.5 billion euros, which places it in the lower one-third in a European comparison. In terms of the amount generated per capita, however, Luxembourg is at the top of the ranking with 83,400 euros. Denmark follows far behind in second place with 44,400 euros. Luxembourg is also ahead when it comes to minimum wage, with a sum of 1,923 euros a month in 2016.

Social security

In 2016, the social security system in Luxembourg celebrated its 115th anniversary. The first law on mandatory health insurance was passed on July 31 1901. Back then, the country was a so-called monoindustry in which
iron and steel were produced and processed and belonged to the German customs union. The legislation was based on the Bismarckian social security system. A law on work-related accidents followed in April 1902. The benefits were directed towards office workers as well as industry workers, but only up to a certain income level. The pension was regulated nine years later, in May 1911.

Following the First World War, the economy was weakened and companies were forced to close as a result. In 1920, miners and steelworkers founded a new trade union. In the same year, the government introduced the eight-hour working day. The social conditions, however, continued to deteriorate and in 1921, the first general strike in the history of the country took place. These protests, among other things, were responsible for the introduction of unemployment benefits.

Like Germany, pensions are partially funded by state contributions and originally only applied to workers. The pension scheme for employees wasn't introduced until 1931. During this time, pressures in the workplace intensified and work-related accidents became more frequent. In order to
better manage the care of employees, further changes were made to the law in 1927 and 1933. Health insurance, work-related accident insurance and pension scheme were combined in one system.

While the country was under German occupation during World War II from 1940 to 1944, the German insurance system replaced national laws. After 1945, the country again passed its own laws for social security. In October 1947, for example, family benefits were introduced for all employees, with an aim to provide families with some relief from the economic impacts of the war.

Today, Luxembourg has a comprehensive social security system. Many services are covered by the insurance companies. The contributions are covered equally by employee and employer, and account for a fixed percentage of the employee’s salary.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

Due to the size and population of the country, the social security system has several specific features. Under certain conditions, for example, it is possible for people with disabilities to attend a specialized school abroad. These exemption clauses also exist in the healthcare sector. For example, patients can also go to a hospital abroad if this has been approved by the health insurance company.

Another special feature is the jurisdiction in social security-related disputes, which lies with the mediation court for social security and the Higher Social Insurance Board.
Luxembourg

Official name:
Großherzogtum Luxemburg (German)
Grand-Duché de Luxembourg (French)
Groussherzogtum Lëtzebuerg (Luxembourgish)

Official languages:
Luxembourgish (national language), German, French

Capital:
Luxembourg (111,000 residents, 2016)

Population (2015):
563,000

Population density (2014):
215.1 inhabitants per km²

Currency:
Euro, since 2002

Government website:
http://www.gouvernement.lu/

National holiday:
23 June: National Holiday (Sovereign’s birthday)

Area (2014): 2,600 km²

Administrative structure: Three districts with 12 cantons

Geography: Rolling hills and forests; important rivers: Moselle, Sauer, Our and Alzette
Political system:
Constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy; parliamentary elections every five years; compulsory voting as of age 18

Joined EU in:
Founding member (1951/57)

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
0.1 percent\(^{a), b})

Memberships:
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
6

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Jean-Claude Juncker
President of the European Commission

\(^{a})\) Provisional value, \(^{b})\) Estimated value
**Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)**
GDP total  45.5 billion euros  
GDP per capita  83,400 euros

**Gross national income per capita p.a. (2014):**
75,960 US dollars

**Annual mean income (netto, 2014):**
34,320 euros

**Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):**
1,923 euros

**Unemployment rate (February 2016):**
6.2 percent

**Youth unemployment rate (2015):**
17.3 percent\(^d\)

**Adults who have completed higher education (2015):**
76.0 percent\(^d\)

---

**Population structure (2015):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 0 - 14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15 - 64</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^d\) Break in series
## Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7&lt;sup&gt;a)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5&lt;sup&gt;e)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>24,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387&lt;sup&gt;a)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325&lt;sup&gt;e)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>6,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677&lt;sup&gt;a)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024&lt;sup&gt;e)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>4,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949&lt;sup&gt;a)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890&lt;sup&gt;e)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a)</sup> Provisional value, <sup>e)</sup>Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>2,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>1,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
For many centuries, the smallest EU member state was under the influence of various political powers: The Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans, as well as the Arabs and the French all occupied the country at various points in time. Malta was a British crown colony in the 19th century before becoming independent in 1964. In December 1974, a new constitution was adopted and Malta became a republic. The island nation joined the European Union in 2004 and adopted the euro as its official currency in 2008.

During World War II, Malta was the target of many bombardments by the German and Italian troops, as the Mediterranean isle was an important base for the British Royal Navy. In 1942, King George VI awarded the people of Malta with the “George Cross” for heroism – Britain’s highest civilian distinction. Malta was granted the right to self-government in 1947, but the island nation did not become fully autonomous until 1964.

Following the victory of the nationalist party in the election, the country moved politically towards the EU from 1987 and in 1990, the country finally applied for membership. The accession process, however, was put on hold for a while after the Labour Party won the election in 1996.
After another change in government, the nationalist party was able to successfully continue negotiations with the EU just two years later. In 2002, the EU agreed to accept Malta’s application for membership, and 53 percent of voters supported joining in a national referendum the following year. Today, Malta has a strong social security system, and the healthcare system in particular has an excellent reputation.

**Geography**

With an area of just 300 km², the republic is the smallest nation in the European Union. It encompasses a total of seven islands: the main islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino, as well as four unpopulated islands. Malta is located south of Sicily, in the Mediterranean between the European and African continents. The average summer temperature is 30 degrees Celsius, making the islands a popular holiday destination. With steep cliffs, rocky heathlands and overgrown valleys, Malta has a wide array of landscapes.

The landscape of the island of Gozo is perfect for walking – for example along the “Dingli Cliffs”, which are named after a famous Maltese Renaissance architect. There, visitors can admire the Mediterranean coast or sunset from the highest point (220 m) in Malta.

**Culture**

The Maltese islands are home to many significant cultural monuments: Great Neolithic temples stood in Malta a good 1,000 years before the Egyptians had even started building the pyramids. These megalithic temples are the oldest self-supporting constructions in the world, and can be admired in many parts of the Maltese landscape. Cave chapels and remote knights‘ castles can also be found in many parts of the islands.

The fortress “St. James Cavalier Centre for Creativity” has been elaborately renovated and restored. Since 2000, the ancient building has provided a venue for contemporary art exhibitions, concerts and film screenings. The “National Museum of Fine Arts” is also housed in an historical building. There, works of art from the early Renaissance period are displayed as well as works from contemporary artists. Both cultural sites can be found in the capital city of Valletta, which will be the European Capital of Culture in 2018.
Economy

Due to its small size, the island republic is strongly dependent on imports and exports. A total of 32 percent of all goods are exported to Europe, 27 percent to Africa and 20 percent to Asia. Over two-thirds of all imports come from Europe, the majority from the EU.

The economy is strongly shaped by the tourism business, with 20 percent of jobs dependent on this sector. Around one million people visit the island every year. In 2015, the Germans were the third-largest group of visitors, with around 142,000 travellers visiting the island. The shipping sector is also very significant, with the container free port in Birżebbuġa playing an important role for cargo handling in the Mediterranean. The country aims to expand its maritime economy further in future.
In 2010, services – primarily tourism – accounted for around 65 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). This share has grown steadily over the past year. In 2000, the service sector and industry accounted for almost equal portions of the GDP, with each at around 50 percent. In 2010, industry brought in around 33 percent of the republic's GDP and farming only 2 percent. With a GDP of 17,200 euros per capita in 2013, Malta is in 16th place in a European ranking and thus in the mid-range. In the same year, the small republic generated 7.3 billion euros. This puts it at the end of the scale, but this is primarily due to the country's relatively small population.

**Social security**

The history of social security in the island nation began with the settlement of the Knights of St. John in 1530. This was followed by the Sovereign Order of Malta, which was located in Malta until 1798. The knights were known for their generosity. They founded the “Sacra Infermeria” hospital, which was open to everyone and supported the poor.

A new chapter in the island nation's history began with the colonization by Great Britain in 1800. The Maltese lost their independence, but the universal healthcare system retained its outstanding quality.

The country introduced most of its new social security measures following World War II. Until 1986, social security was anchored in three different laws: the Pension Law, the Law on Social Assistance, and the National Insurance Law. In 1987, these three laws were combined in the Social Security Act. Pension reforms passed in 2006 apply in addition to this consolidated law.

Malta has always worked to develop and reinforce their social security system, even in less positive economic times. In 1990, the government published the paper “A Caring Society in a Changing World”, in which Malta not only adopts the position of a welfare state, but also of a welfare society. Assistance has been gradually transitioning from cash payments to benefits in kind for some time now.
Specific features of the country's social security

In Malta, students who participate full-time in an apprenticeship, course or other career training programmes must pay the global contribution from part of their salary. This generally accounts for 10 percent of the weekly basic salary, but is capped at a certain upper limit.

Welfare recipients are not the only ones who receive a monetary payment to cover their water and electricity costs – the aid can also be paid for health-related reasons, for example. For this, the head of the household must prove that a household member uses an above-average amount of water and electricity as the result of an illness.

There are two public hospitals in Malta: The Gozo General Hospital in Victoria on the island of Gozo, and the Mater Dei Hospital in Birkirkara on Malta. These and the country's private hospitals offer a high standard of healthcare. Emergency cases among others are attended to in regional health centres.
Official name: Republikka ta’ Malta

Official languages: Maltese, English

Capital: Valletta (6,000 residents, 2015)

Population (2015): 429,000

Population density (2014): 1,352.4 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Euro, since 2008


National holiday:
31 March: Freedom Day 1979 (Jum il-Ħelsien)
7 June: Workers’ uprising 1919 (Sette Giugno)
8 September: Victory Day 1565 (Jum il-Vitorja)
21 September: Independence Day 1964 (Jum l-Indipendenza)
13 December: Republic Day 1974 (Jum ir-Repubblika)

Area (2014): 300 km²

Administrative structure: Six districts with 60 local councils

Geography: Archipelago of seven islands in the Mediterranean Sea, of these, three are inhabited; diverse coastal landscape
**Head of state:**
Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca

**Head of government:**
Joseph Muscat

**Political system:**
Constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy; parliamentary elections every five years; right to vote as of age 18

**Joined EU in:**
2004

**Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):**
0.1 percent\(^a, b\)

**Memberships:**
EU, OSZE, UNO

**Seats in the European Parliament:**
6

**Commissioner in the European Commission:**
Karmenu Vella
Department: Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

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\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^b\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  7.3 billion euros
GDP per capita  17,200 euros

Gross national income per capita p.a. (2013):
21,000 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
12,787 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
728 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
5.0 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
11.8 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
43.5 percent

Population structure (2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age distribution</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ages 0 - 14</td>
<td>14 percent</td>
<td>14 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 15 - 64</td>
<td>66 percent</td>
<td>66 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 65</td>
<td>19 percent</td>
<td>19 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Urban population: 95 percent
Rural population: 5 percent

---

c) Deviation from 100 percent due to rounding
f) Data as of 2013, data for 2014 not available
## Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>4,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>1,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>5.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
   Data as of June 2016
   Source: Eurostat
The Kingdom of the Netherlands is one of the founding members of the European Economic Community, a forerunner of the EU. It adopted the euro as its currency in 2002. The Netherlands form the BeNeLux region with members Belgium and Luxembourg. The government is based in The Hague, not the capital city of Amsterdam. The Hague also plays a very significant role in international politics: It is home to the headquarters of Europol and the International Court of Justice.

The Netherlands belonged to Spain and also to Austria over its very tumultuous history. The country became one of the world’s most important maritime trading nations in the 17th century. At the same time, the Netherlands would also become one of the largest European colonial powers, with extensive holdings overseas and a trade network spanning the globe. The country lost its dominant position after several wars, however, and became part of the Batavian Republic following the French Revolution. The southern part of the republic – today’s Belgium – belonged to France for many years. This era ended in 1813 with
the independence of the Northern and Southern Netherlands, and the establishment of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands two years later. Belgium broke away again and became independent in 1830.

The Netherlands were occupied by German forces during World War II. The country started reconstruction following the war, and established its welfare state. Today, the Netherlands are a parliamentary monarchy.

Geography

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is located on the North Sea coast in the northwest part of the European Union. Direct neighbours are Belgium to the south and Germany in the east. The five Dutch islands of Texel, Vlieland, Terschelling, Ameland and Schiermonnikoog are located between the Wadden Sea and North Sea.

The landscape of the Netherlands is shaped by water. About 26 percent of the flat inland areas are below sea level. This and the country’s location at the mouth of the Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt Rivers make the Netherlands particularly susceptible to flooding. Many dykes and dams spanning a total of around 3,000 km protect the country from flooding, and have helped reclaim a great deal of land from the sea for centuries. The best known flood barrier in the Netherlands is the Oosterscheldekering, a combination between a dyke and dam. The entire barrier construction is 9 km long.

The country’s major urban areas have grown considerably in the past 50 years alone. Over half of the population lives in or very close to a metropolitan area. The largest population centre is the “Randstad”, which includes parts of the provinces of North and South Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland, as well as the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht.

The port city of Amsterdam is a popular tourist destination. Known as the “Venice of the North”, the city is shaped by its network of picturesque canals.
Culture

Many famous artists were born in the Netherlands, including Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Breugel, Jan Vermeer, Vincent Van Gogh and Piet Mondrian. Dutch artists, especially the Rembrandt school, shaped the Dutch Golden Age of painting from 1620 to 1680. At its peak, around 700 painters produced around 70,000 works per year. Nowhere on earth was so much art produced in such a short period of time. Culture and the arts flourished during this period, partially due to the many people from around the world who fled persecution and embraced religious freedom in the Netherlands. Many writers and academics took this opportunity to teach, research and publish their work in their new home.

The Netherlands have traditionally been a tolerant, liberal country. Political leaders have proven to be willing to compromise in the past, and the Kingdom has been a pioneer in many areas in the 21st century as well. In 2000, the Netherlands was the first country to legalise same-sex marriages. The nation also passed a law allowing euthanasia in 2001 – the first on earth to do so at the time.
Economy

The country has two important hubs for international trade: Schiphol Airport and Rotterdam, Europe’s largest seaport. This is the only harbour among the world’s ten largest not located in Asia. According to WTO rankings, the Netherlands is regularly ranked the fifth largest export country in the world, behind China, the United States, Germany and Japan.

The Netherlands are the world’s second largest agricultural exporter after the United States: Gardening and animal breeding products make up around 20 percent of exports. About 60 percent of the country’s exports go to neighbour Germany. Despite the large amount of exports, the Kingdom only generates around 2 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) in this sector. Agricultural products only make up around 10 percent of imports. The Netherlands primarily acquire grains and feed for its livestock sector from abroad.

The service sector contributed around 77 percent to the GDP in 2014, while industry – including machine and vehicle manufacturing, food and beverages, and chemicals – made up 21 percent. The most important service industries are banking, insurance and legal services, as well as retail, restaurants and repair facilities.

Social security

The Netherlands adopted their first social security laws in the 20th century. These covered work-related accidents and pensions for people who were ill or unable to work, but in reality provided very few benefits.

Social Minister Willem Drees started to expand the welfare state in the Netherlands in the 1940s. This was possible thanks to the rapid economic recovery following World War II and the decline in unemployment. The government even paid pensions to elderly people without incomes, and passed the General Old Age Pensions Act in 1957. Drees’ successors introduced additional benefits, including child benefits in 1963 and social welfare two years later. This gave families and the destitute a right to financial assistance, which meant that they were no longer dependent on donations or help from church-based organisations. The state carried the
costs of social security and all of its benefits, the public healthcare system, and education.

Many laws passed in the 1960s are still in effect today. The Netherlands introduced new regulations for healthcare, families, people with disabilities and maternity benefits in the late 1990s and 2000s.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

Support for people with disabilities and reduced earning capacity is based on the age, employment situation and ability to work of each applicant. The Work and Income According to Labour Capacity (WIA) Act, which took effect 1 January 2006, covers all risks stemming from reduced earning capacity. The assistance provided to people with only partially limited earning capacity is more geared towards rehabilitation rather than ensuring a minimum income. Regulations are also in effect that provide a guaranteed minimum income for people with full disabilities if they have no or little chance for recovery. Young people who are unable to work as a result of a disability also receive state support provided this disability was determined before age 18 or while they were in school.

Working women in the Netherlands are entitled to maternity benefits, even if they are self-employed. They receive 100 percent of their regular wage up to a certain maximum threshold. This limit is linked to the minimum wage for self-employed women.
**Official name:**
Koninkrijk der Nederlanden

**Official language:**
Dutch

**Capital:**
Amsterdam (834,000 residents, 2016)

**Seat of Government:**
The Hague

**Population (2015):**
16.9 million

**Population density (2014):**
500.7 inhabitants per km²

**Currency:**
Euro, since 2002

**Government website:**
https://www.government.nl/

**National holiday:**
27 April: King’s Day (Koningsdag)

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**Area (2014):** 41,500 km²

**Administrative structure:** Twelve provinces. The Netherlands belong to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which consists of the European area with the BES islands and the islands of Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten (also in the Caribbean).

**Geography:** Lowlands shaped by the coast, one-quarter of the country is below sea level; 3,000 km of dikes, parts of the country (polders) were reclaimed from the sea; Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt Delta
Head of state:  
King Willem-Alexander

Head of government:  
Mark Rutte

Political system:  
Constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy; bicameral parliament elected every four years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:  
Founding member (1951/57)

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):  
3.3 percent

Memberships:  
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:  
26

Commissioner in the European Commission:  
Frans Timmermans (First Vice-President)  
Department: Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights

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a) Provisional value, b) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total 602.7 billion euros
GDP per capita 35,900 euros

51,860 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
20,891 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
1,508 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
6.5 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
11.3 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
76.4 percent

Population structure (2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.4 percent</td>
<td>49.6 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ages 0 - 14</th>
<th>ages 15 - 64</th>
<th>over 65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17 percent</td>
<td>65 percent</td>
<td>18 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Urban population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rural population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 percent</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>10,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>4,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>3,482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a) Provisional value, d) Break in series, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

NL  326 \(^{a), d)}\)
DE  961 \(^{a)}\)
EU  550 \(^{e)}\)

Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

NL  783 \(^{a), d)}\)
DE  690 \(^{a)}\)
EU  477 \(^{e)}\)

Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

NL  2.5
DE  5.4
EU  9.6

Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

NL  6.5
DE  4.3
EU  8.9

\(^{a)}\) Provisional value, \(^{d)}\) Break in series, \(^{e)}\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

Poland joined the European Union in the course of the fifth and, at the same time, biggest expansion to date in 2004 along with nine other states after the EU approved their adoption in December 2002. The final decision about whether to join the union, however, fell to Polish citizens, who voted in a referendum in summer 2003. 77 percent of the Polish voters elected membership.

Poland can look back on a varied history, having often been used as a pawn by the great powers. Following the Great War, Poland asserted its independence, which was internationally recognised and confirmed in 1919. In the years between the two World Wars, the lack of clearly defined borders in particular resulted in repeated conflicts with the neighbouring states of Germany, Lithuania and Ukraine.

Despite the existence of a non-aggression pact with Germany, German troops invaded their eastern neighbour on 1 September 1939, effectively heralding the start of World War II in Europe. The Red Army marched into Eastern Poland on 17 September as Hitler and Stalin had agreed in their pact. The Polish territory was granted to the west following the end of World War II. Around one-third of its eastern region was ceded to
the Soviet Union, while a quarter of Germany based on the 1937 borders became Polish. The new border between Germany and Poland now ran along the so-called Oder-Neisse line. East Germany recognised this border as early as in 1950, while West Germany did not do so until 7 December 1970.

Political upheavals in Poland were initiated by the foundation of the Solidarność (Solidarity) trade union under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa in 1980. The trade union was a key player in the sociopolitical revolution in the country. One of the government's primary responses to Solidarność's efforts was to impose martial law. Leading intellectuals and the Catholic Church were finally called in to mediate between the two sides. The Polish Round Table Talks attended among others by representatives of the workers' party, Solidarność, and the Catholic Church began in early 1989, with the result that the first free elections in the Eastern Bloc were held in Poland in June of the same year. This is largely viewed as the beginning of the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc. The first Polish laws on social security originated in the years following World War I when the country first achieved its independence.

Geography

The landscapes and flora encountered in Poland are incredibly varied: The sandy beaches of the Baltic Sea in the north and the mountainous swathes of the Carpathians and Sudetes in the south, countless green valleys, moors and the Masurian Lake District are all popular tourist destinations. Visitors can marvel at the country’s flora and fauna at Poland’s 23 national parks. One special location is the Białowieża National Park adjacent to the border with Belarus and boasts Europe’s last temperature primeval forest, which is also home to the last population of European bison.

Culture

The culture of Poland is intimately linked to the country’s tumultuous history. Following the split of the dualistic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the 18th century, signs of the desire for independence also became noticeable in art and culture. Prominent artists and musicians such as Frédéric François Chopin, one of the most influential and popular
composers of piano music, strived to support the independence movement in their homeland through their art. This cultural epoch went down in history under the slogan “w górę serca” (raise your hearts). A number of significant literary pieces were also produced for this movement, including for example the epics and poems of Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) and prose of the Nobel Prize in Literature winner Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916).

Culture is still very important to the country of Poland today. A wide range of cultural institutions such as the national museum, national opera and national philharmonic orchestra all receive state funding.

Economy

Poland’s economy has undergone a profound transformation since 1990 on its journey from a socialist planned economy to a modern free market.
economy. At the same time, the share of agriculture has been declining steadily ever since. This branch of the economy now contributes just 3.4 percent to the gross national product (GDP). Industry, including the once flourishing shipyard and shipping industry, accounts for 32.6 percent. Nowadays, however, the shipyard and shipping industry only plays a regional role. The service sector currently makes up the greatest share of the GDP at 64 percent.

Thanks to the positive economic growth seen in recent years, Poland now enjoys the eighth largest GDP in Europe at around 390 billion euros. Per capita GDP is another story, though: This averages 10,100 euros, ranking Poland close to last in a Europe-wide comparison.

The country’s most important trade partners are Germany, the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic, with many imports also coming from Russia and China.

**Social security**

The history of social security in Poland is closely linked to the strong significance of the Catholic faith in the country. The beginnings of social policy in the 20th century were heavily influenced by the teachings of the Catholic Church. The pressure to introduce legislation governing social security was heightened even more by the consequences of the First World War: many families were reduced to living below the breadline and the country required complete economical rebuilding. The first five years following Poland's independence (1918) saw the passing of the most important laws in the fields of health insurance (1920), unemployment (1924) and social welfare (1923). The first law on pensions entered into force in 1927, although it initially only applied to salaried employees. The law was supplemented in 1933 and has also provided security for workers ever since.

The social security services were abolished de facto when Germany seized power in Poland, with a new system based on socialist principles not being established until after the end of World War II. The country passed a law on 25 June 1954 to guarantee standardised provisions for retirement
arrangements and disability pensions for all workers. Poland also reformed other aspects of social security in line with socialist perspectives.

Inflation in the 1970s posed serious problems for the government, as the state-funded social security system was costing more and more money. The state responded by adapting legislation and introducing one-off measures in an attempt to counteract this development. Nonetheless, it proved possible to gradually extend the protection of the social security systems to all layers of the population.

Social security remained a central topic in politics following the revolution in Poland in 1990. Expenses for the sector were raised again following democratization. In today’s Poland, access to social benefits is a constitutional right. Article 67 states that every person has the right to social security if he is unable to work through no fault of his own or has reached retirement age.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

The nation’s past as a centrally controlled planned economy has also left its traces in the social security system. Although today relatively few people still earn their living from agriculture, there are still special national insurance funds for agriculturists such as the agriculturists’ pension fund and the agriculturists’ prevention and rehabilitation fund. The state adopts the contributions for the insured party up to businesses of a certain size.

The fund has its own administrative structure and there are special regulations for agriculturalists in almost all areas of social security. For example, the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund (Kasa Rolniczego Ubezpieczenia Społecznego – KRUS) is authorised to issue its own expert reports for individuals with disabilities and agriculturists can receive a special disability pension. The KRUS was established to realize tasks connected with full servicing of agriculturists’ social insurance. It also includes six rehabilitation centres for agriculturists along with a training and rehabilitation centre.
**Official name:**
Rzeczpospolita Polska

**Official language:**
Polish

**Capital:**
Warsaw (1.7 million residents, 2014)

**Population (2015):**
38.0 million

**Population density (2014):**
124.1 inhabitants per km²

**Currency:**
Złoty

**Government website:**

**National holiday:**
3 May: Constitution Day, First Polish Constitution 1791 (Święto Konstytucji Trzeciego Maja)

11 November: Independence day, restoration of Poland‘s sovereignty 1918 (Dzień Niepodległości)

**Area (2014):** 312,700 km²

**Administrative structure:**
16 voivodeships

**Geography:** Flatland on the Baltic Sea in the north; Carpathian Mountains form the southern border (highest peak in the High Tatras: Rysy, 2,503 m); among the highest number of lakes in the world, such as the Masurian Lake District
Head of state: Andrzej Duda  
Head of government: Beata Szydło

Political system:  
Parliamentary republic; parliamentary elections every four years; direct presidential elections every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:  
2004

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):  
7.5 percent\(^a\), \(^b\)

Memberships:  
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:  
51

Commissioner in the European Commission:  
Elżbieta Bieńkowska  
Department: Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^b\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  389.7 billion euros
GDP per capita  10,100 euros

13,680 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
5,336 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
431 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
6.5 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
20.8 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
90.8 percent

Population structure (2015):

Women: 51.6 percent
Men: 48.4 percent

Age distribution:
ages 0 - 14: 15 percent
ages 15 - 64: 70 percent
over 65: 16 percent

Urban population: 61 percent
Rural population: 39 percent

c) Deviation from 100 percent due to rounding
**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
In percent of GDP (current prices)

- **PL** 17.2 e)
- **DE** 27.7 a)
- **EU** 27.5 e)

**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
Per head of population (PPS)

- **PL** 3,351 e)
- **DE** 9,387 a)
- **EU** 7,325 a)

**Expenditures for pensions 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **PL** 936 e)
- **DE** 3,677 a)
- **EU** 3,024 e)

**Illness/health care 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **PL** 356 e)
- **DE** 2,949 a)
- **EU** 1,890 e)

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* a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
### Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PL</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71(^{\text{e)}})</td>
<td>961(^{\text{a)}})</td>
<td>550(^{\text{e)}})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PL</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>125(^{\text{e)}})</td>
<td>690(^{\text{a)}})</td>
<td>477(^{\text{e)}})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PL</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PL</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{\text{a)}}\) Provisional value, \(^{\text{e)}}\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

Portugal joined the European Community, a forerunner of the EU, together with Spain in early 1986. Fitting of the country’s long maritime tradition, the European Maritime Safety Agency is currently headquartered in Lisbon.

Vasco da Gama was one of Portugal's most important seafarers, the first to sail around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa and find a sea route to India. This discovery made the country one of the leading trade and maritime powers of the 15th and 16th centuries. Portugal founded colonies in the Americas, Africa, the Arabian region, India, Southeast Asia and China until sometime in the 17th century.

The First Portuguese Republic followed the end of the monarchy in 1910. This turbulent time saw a total of 45 different governments in power, until a military coup in 1926. This was followed by the “Estado Novo” or “new state”, a corporatist authoritarian dictatorship founded in 1933.

Uprisings, protests and armed conflicts arose in the Portuguese colonies after 1961 as they demanded their independence. The turmoil reached its peak in the early 1970s, eventually culminating in a leftist uprising among large segments of the army in 1974. These officers realised that
the costs of the hopeless, unpopular Colonial War made up almost half of the national budget, but that Portugal had no chance of winning. The so-called Carnation Revolution of 1974 was widely accepted by the country's residents. After the revolution, Portugal granted independence to all of its colonies, except for Macau in China, which became independent in 1999. The first presidential elections following the adoption of the new constitution in 1976 paved the way for the country to return to a parliamentary democracy like much of Western Europe. Acceptance into the European Community in 1986 secured the country's political and economic transformation.

Geography

The Portuguese Republic is the westernmost country in continental Europe, located on the Iberian Peninsula. Portugal borders Spain to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The former colonial power still holds the archipelago of Madeira and the Azores.

The northern part of the country has a relatively cool, humid climate, and is known for its gardens thanks to its comparably lush vegetation. The Serra da Estrela is the highest mountain range in the Portuguese mainland, especially popular among fans of winter sports. Tourists especially enjoy the southernmost region of Portugal, the Algarve, for its beautiful sandy beaches.

Culture

Portugal's past as a seafaring nation has left its mark in many different areas. The Manueline, for example, is Portugal’s unique, ornate late Gothic style of architecture characterised by its maritime embellishments. The building style was named after King Manuel I (1495-1521). Typical ornaments include ships’ ropes, mussels and boats. Many structures in Lisbon from this period were destroyed in the devastating earthquake of 1755, unfortunately.

Fado is the best known style of Portuguese music, and is even represents a lifestyle for the country’s people. It is melancholy and often associated with the theme of longing. Fado probably originated through the blending
of traditional seafarer songs with African rhythms from the colonies. The colonies and sailing also greatly impacted Portugal’s traditional cuisine. It’s no wonder that dried cod is the national dish, as it was the ideal provision for sailors to take on their long journeys. Today, the Portuguese use this as the main ingredient in a wide range of different preparations. It has been an essential part of Portuguese cuisine since the 13th century.

**Economy**

Beach tourism is an important source of revenue for Portugal, which is one of the world’s most visited countries. Especially popular among tourists are the Algarve region in the south, as well as the area surrounding the capital city of Lisbon.
The country has experienced ever-changing economic developments since joining the EU. Portugal achieved above-average growth and low unemployment rates around 4 percent at the turn of the millennium. The global economic crisis put an end to this positive growth, however. The economy had contracted several percent by 2013. Unemployment in March 2015 was 13.2 percent, one of the highest levels in the EU. The Portuguese economy has managed to recover thanks to great efforts on the part of the country.

The service sector is responsible for generating the lion’s share of the gross domestic product (GDP) (76.5 percent), which is in the middle when compared to the rest of Europe at 166.7 billion euros. Portugal was only ranked 18th in the EU in per capita GDP, which totalled 15,800 euros. The once strong agricultural economy only generated about 2.3 percent of the GDP. In many cases, almond crops and raw cork production has ceased to be profitable, and many of these businesses were required to close. Industry made up 21.2 percent of Portugal’s GDP.

Social security

The first state social security system started to emerge after the end of the monarchy in 1910. The First Portuguese Republic faced many challenges: The only social institutions funded by the state at this time were orphanages and hospitals. There was practically no foundation for social security in place at the time, and it was necessary to first establish these structures after 1910. The country adopted a new constitution in 1911 that legally enshrined people’s right to social assistance. Benefits in the event of work-related accidents were the first to be provided by law, which was passed in 1913.

Portugal had extensive plans for social programmes in 1919, but did not implement them. This was in part due to the major governmental instability at the time. This is why many of the basic provisions stem from the so-called Estado Novo (1933–1974). Pension and health insurance laws were passed in 1935, and regulations for family benefits followed in 1942. The social security system was very inefficient despite its legal basis. There was a lack of solid financing, and many benefits were provided inconsistently. The country attempted to modernise this system in the
1960s. Extensive reform only came once Portugal installed a democratic government in 1974, including improvements in the area of unemployment in 1975.

The social security system in place in Portugal today is based on the principle of general access. Three different systems are in place to guarantee social protection for all residents. Citizenship is designed to guarantee all Portuguese people their basic rights as citizens, social protection and equal opportunity. Employer and employee contributions finance the pension system and cover most areas of social security. The supplemental system consists of various voluntary subsystems in the form of pension savings plans, life insurance policies or other types of insurance.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

Families are especially important in Portuguese society, and this is reflected in the benefits provided by the country’s social security systems. For example, expecting parents receive prenatal child benefits paid for a period of six months starting at the 13th week of pregnancy. The country also has very family-friendly regulations to care for sick children. For example, even the grandparents of a sick child can receive a daily allowance for a maximum of 30 consecutive days.
Official name: República Portuguesa

Official language: Portuguese

Capital: Lisbon (548,000 residents, 2015)

Population (2015): 10.4 million\(^b\)

Population density (2014): 112.8 inhabitants per km\(^2\)

Currency: Euro, since 2002


National holiday: 10 June: Day of Portugal, day of the Portuguese Communities, death of national literary icon Luís de Camões 1580 (Dia de Portugal de Camões e das Comunidades Portuguesas)

Area (2014): 92,200 km\(^2\)

Administrative structure: 18 districts and two autonomous regions (Azores and Madeira); dependent territories: Azores and Madeira

Geography: Located on the Iberian Peninsula on the Atlantic Ocean; longest river: Tagus, divides the country into a green, mountainous north and a rather flat, dry south; southernmost region: Algarve

\(^b\) Estimated value
Head of state: Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa
Head of government: António Costa

Political system:
Parliamentary republic; parliamentary elections every four years; direct presidential elections every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
1986

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
2.0 percent\textsuperscript{a, b}

Memberships:
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
21

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Carlos Moedas
Department: Research, Science and Innovation

\textsuperscript{a) Provisional value, b) Estimated value}
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013):
GDP total  165.7 billion euros
GDP per capita  15,800 euros

21,360 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
8,229 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
618 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
12.2 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
32.0 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
45.1 percent

Population structure (2015):
Women 52.7 percent
Men 47.3 percent

Age distribution:
- ages 0 - 14 14 percent
- ages 15 - 64 65 percent
- over 65 21 percent

Urban population 63 percent
Rural population 37 percent
Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

- PT: 26.1
- DE: 27.7 (a)
- EU: 27.5 (e)

Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

- PT: 5,287
- DE: 9,387 (a)
- EU: 7,325 (e)

Expeditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- PT: 2,271
- DE: 3,677 (a)
- EU: 3,024 (e)

Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- PT: 897
- DE: 2,949 (a)
- EU: 1,890 (e)

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(a) Provisional value, (e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961(^{a)})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550(^{e)})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690(^{a)})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477(^{e)})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a)}\) Provisional value, \(^{e)}\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

Since 1989, Romania, the largest of the Balkan states, has been gradually aligning itself more and more with the West. The previously Communist country joined NATO in 2004 and the government signed the pact to join the European Union in 2005. The country finally became an EU member state in 2007.

Large swathes of today’s Romania were part of the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire for many years. The country finally became an autonomous kingdom in 1881. The Eastern European nation initially remained neutral in World War II before parts of the country were annexed by the Soviet Union in the summer of 1940. The country then fell under Soviet influence. The People’s Republic of Romania was founded in 1948 following the forced abdication of King Michael. The politics of the new republic had a significantly Communist flavour. President Nicolae Ceaușescu rose to power in 1965. Bloody revolts against the suppression of the population developed in 1989. The era of Communism ended with the execution of Ceaușescu and his wife.

The constitution of 1991 made Romania a republic with a multi-party system and a free market economy. It also paved the way for a modern
social state. However, political scandals, the harsh austerity policy and accusations of corruption have triggered protests again in recent years.

**Geography**

Romania is located in the southeast of the European Union and shares land borders with five different countries: Ukraine to the north, Serbia and Hungary to the west, Bulgaria to the south and Moldova to the east. The countryside is composed of relatively equal shares of mountains, plateaus and lowlands.

The mountainous regions of Romania are particularly impressive, including the Carpathians in the north of the country, with peaks taller than 2,500 metres. The mountain range separates the three historic regions of Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania. The largely untouched forests are home to the largest population of brown bears in Europe.

The Danube empties into the Black Sea in the south of the country. Its delta is an important biosphere reserve and most of it is protected. The mouth of the Danube became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993.

**Culture**

The Romanian population includes a number of ethnic minorities, such as Hungarians (6.5 percent) and Romany (3.3 percent). In regions where more than 20 percent of the population speaks a minority language, it is also used as a second language in administration, courts and schools.

Born in Sighișoara, Transylvania, Vlad III Drăculea (English: son of the dragon) ruled the Wallachians from 1456 to 1462. He was the source of many a politically motivated legend, predominantly dealing with his cruelty. This figure ultimately inspired the Irish author Bram Stoker’s vampire novel, Dracula, which made the region of Transylvania famous world-wide.

Sighișoara is one of the best preserved mediaeval cities in Romania. Tourists can visit a number of mediaeval buildings there, including Vlad III Drăculea’s house. The city with its towers, narrow streets, centuries-
old houses and elaborately designed churches is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Two of the most famous members of the Romanian art scene are sculptor Constantin Brâncuși and modern composer Györgi Ligeti.

**Economy**

Romania’s economy suffered greatly under the Ceaușescu dictatorship. International aid has allowed the Balkan state to improve its economic situation considerably in recent years, but Romania still remains one of the poorest countries in the EU: The gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013 was just 7,100 euros per capita, ranking Romania second-last in the EU, just ahead Bulgaria. Overall, however, Romania made 142.2 billion euros in the same year, ranking the country 17th in a European comparison. Alongside tourism, the automotive industry is a considerable source of employment. The service sector makes the largest contribution to the GDP (67 percent). At 27 percent, industry accounts for almost a third of the GDP, with main markets including electrical machine building, the textile industry and mining. The agricultural share of 5 percent is relatively high when compared to the rest of the EU. Main products include cereals, sugar beets, potatoes and grapes, with many areas also devoted to sheep breeding.

Machines, industrial products, agricultural products, minerals and fuels are predominantly exported to Germany, Italy, France and Hungary. Germany is also the largest import partner for the Eastern European country.

**Social security**

The origins of social security in Romania date back to the Christian-motivated assistance to the poor provided by the country’s monasteries as early as the 14th century. The public healthcare system has existed since the 18th century, but only the wealthy benefited from it at that time.

The country introduced several sociopolitical measures following World War I. The year 1920 saw the foundation of the Ministry for Employment, Health and Social Affairs with a department for social aid. The Social Service Act of 1930 introduced decentralised services at a regional level. In 1943, Romania passed a new law dividing the ministry’s responsibilities into the fields of social welfare, family protection and the protection of mothers and children.
The quality of the social benefits in Romania's Communist era plummeted dramatically, as it was assumed that there was no poverty and discrimination in this system. In theory, health services were available to the entire population free of charge. In practice, however, infant mortality was higher than in almost every other country in Europe. Pensions were only granted to employees of the state. The financial crisis in the 1970s only worsened the social security system services, and many people fell
below the poverty line. Pensioners in particular were only able to afford the essentials.

Romania restructured its entire social security system in the 1990s, following the fall of Communism. An act protecting the rights of people with disabilities has been in place since 1992. The country has also provided guaranteed minimum income benefits since 1995. The standardised statutory pension system has applied for all Romanian citizens since 2011, with the exception of freelancers, lawyers and employees of religious groups and organisations, who can opt for voluntary insurance.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

Winter in Romania is generally very cold. As a result, the government has provided heating allowances to those in need since 2011.

People with disabilities are entitled to care services regardless of their age. In all other cases, these services are only available starting at the age of retirement. The benefits provided for those requiring care are paid for by systems for invalidity, work-related accidents, occupational illnesses and old age. Romania introduced quality standards for social services and assistance, such as care and support, in 2014.
Official name: România

Official language: Romanian

Capital: Bucharest (1.9 million residents, 2013)\textsuperscript{b)}

Population (2015): 19.9 million\textsuperscript{b)}

Population density (2014): 86.5 inhabitants per km\textsuperscript{2}

Currency: Leu


National holiday: 1 December: National Day/Great Union (Ziua Marii Uniri)

Area (2014): 238,400 km\textsuperscript{2}

Administrative structure: 41 counties plus the capital

Geography: Roughly equal areas of mountainous, highlands and plains; the Carpathian Mountains separate the three historic regions Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania; Danube Delta on the Black Sea; highest peak: Moldoveanu (2,544 m)

\textsuperscript{b)} Estimated value
Head of state: 
Klaus Werner Iohannis

Head of government: 
Sorin Grindeanu

Political system:
Parliamentary republic; two-chamber parliament elected every four years; direct presidential elections every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
2007

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
3.9 percent\textsuperscript{a), b)\

Memberships:
EU, NATO, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
32

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Corina Crețu
Department: Regional Policy

\textsuperscript{a) Provisional value, b) Estimated value}
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total 142.2 billion euros
GDP per capita 7,100 euros

9,520 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
2,195 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
233 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
6.4 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
21.7 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
75.0 percent

Population structure (2015):
Women 51.6 percent
Men 48.4 percent

Age distribution
ages 0 - 14 16 percent
ages 15 - 64 67 percent
over 65 17 percent

Urban population 55 percent
Rural population 45 percent
### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>2,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RO</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td></td>
<td>961</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RO</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td></td>
<td>690</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td></td>
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<td>477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RO</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RO</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\text{a)}\) Provisional value, \(\text{e)}\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

Slovakia became a member of the EU in the scope of its largest expansion, when a total of ten new states joined the union on 1 January 2004. Slovakia also introduced the euro as its official currency five years later.

Slovakia formed part of the Kingdom of Hungary for over 800 years starting in the 11th century. A nationalist movement began to stir in Slovakia in the late 18th century, and ultimately a close cooperation developed between this and the one emerging in the neighbouring Czech Republic in the 19th century.

After the end of World War I in 1918, Slovakia and the Czech Republic proclaimed a joint state: Czechoslovakia. The Munich Agreement of 1938, signed by Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany, ceded swathes of the state’s land to Germany. With this move, the Nazi regime achieved its goal of incorporating the Sudetenland into its own territory. In March 1939, German troops occupied the territory of Czechoslovakia that had remained after the Munich Agreement. The Slovaks had attempted to proclaim an independent state one day prior to the German invasion. Shortly afterwards they concluded a protection treaty with Nazi Germany. This gave the Nazis a wide-reaching influence over Slovakia.
After World War II, Slovakia was occupied by the Red Army and became part of the newly refounded Czechoslovakia in 1948. The state belonged to the Eastern Bloc until the Velvet Revolution of 1989. At the beginning of the democratic turnaround, the subsequently independent countries remained united as the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. However, national differences and economic issues led to growing tensions between Czechs and Slovaks. As a result, the Federal Assembly passed an act on the peaceful dissolution into two states, which each became independent on 1 January 1993. Vladimír Mečiar led Slovakia in an increasingly authoritarian manner until 1998. Following the change in power in 1998, the liberal government threw open the country's doors and made attempts to align the country’s foreign policy more closely with the EU and USA. The history of social security in Slovakia dates back to the 18th century.

**Geography**

The southwest of the country, where it borders Austria and Western Hungary, is largely flat and interspersed with meandering rivers. This region is also home to the capital city of Bratislava. The northeast and centre of the country are mountainous, with the Carpathians dominating the landscape. The Tatra, the highest mountain range in the Carpathians, is home to the Kriváň, which is one of the highest peaks in Slovakia at just under 2,500 m. It has become a national symbol due to its unmistakeable shape. In the south of the country, the river Danube cuts its way through broad, fertile lowlands used for agriculture. Over 40 percent of the country is covered in forests.

**Culture**

Slovaks are very aware of their culture and their folklore plays an important role in cultural life. Traditional costumes, music, songs, dances and dialects vary extensively from region to region.

Probably the most famous artist of Slovak heritage is Andy Warhol, whose parents originated in what is now Slovakia. The co-founder and most significant representative of the American Pop art movement’s real name was actually Andrej Warhola. His extensive works include commercial art, paintings, films and books, among others.
The country’s national sport is ice hockey. The Slovak national team won the final against Russia and took home the gold medal at the world championships in 2002.

Economy

Slovakia is a relatively highly industrialised country thanks to extensive foreign investment. In 2014, industry contributed approximately 33 percent to the gross domestic product (GDP). The automotive industry is also an important branch of the economy, with Slovakia being the leading choice for Western European countries relocating their automobile production facilities to cut costs. Around 40 percent of all exports come from this sector. With over one million vehicles produced in 2015, the country also boasts the world’s highest number of vehicles produced per capita. The agricultural
Slovakia's contribution to the GDP of 4.5 percent is relatively high when compared to the rest of Europe. The service sector accounts for 62.5 percent.

Foreign trade is essential to the economy. The total volume in 2015 amounted to some 68 billion euros, marking an increase of almost 5 percent over the previous year. Around 80 percent of the goods are destined for other EU member states. Germany is the company’s most important trade partner and simultaneously one of the largest foreign investors. Around 500 German companies operate in Slovakia, providing jobs for approximately 100,000 people.

Compared with the rest of Europe, the country ranked 19th in 2013 with a GDP of 72.1 billion euros. The per capita GDP in the same year was 13,300 euros, putting the country in 21st place.

**Social security**

The first laws governing social security originate from the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to which Slovakia belonged until 1918. The first legislation in the field of pensions was passed as early as the late 18th century. However, the pensions introduced between 1771 and 1781 were reserved for “loyal” civil servants.

The first general and obligatory health insurance system was introduced over 100 years later in 1888. The government at the time followed the example established by the German health insurance system introduced by the Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. Negotiations concerning the legislation extended over several years. The services offered included free medical treatments, midwifery services and payments for illness lasting longer than three days.

The first legal provisions concerning work-related accidents were also passed at the same time. Pensions for salaried employees were introduced across the board in 1906, followed in 1924 by pensions for all workers. A law governing benefits for families was passed at the end of World War II. The government only passed laws providing assistance for the unemployed in 1991: There was no official unemployment during the Communist era (1945-1990), and therefore no need for legislation.
The healthcare system also bears signs of that time. It is state-run, and the costs for the citizens themselves remain minimal. The year 1994 saw the foundation of Sociálna poisťovňa, a social insurance agency financed by contributions from employees, employers and the State. Among other things, Sociálna poisťovňa is responsible for the fields of illness, surviving dependents, old age and unemployment. Many areas of the social security system were redefined after Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004.

**Specific features of the country's social security**

Police and career military officers enjoy their own social security system, provided they are Slovak citizens and not citizens of another country.

The unemployed are entitled to child support and an additional allowance for so-called family-related services. Unemployed people, job applicants and apprentices are also entitled to reimbursement for childcare costs.

If an illness or condition is deemed to be self-induced, the Slovak healthcare system stipulates that payments can be cut. For example, those who become ill as a result of alcohol or drug use are only entitled to half of the payments. If the illness or condition is the result of deliberate illegal activity, the person in question has no claim at all to payments. Failure to comply with a doctor’s orders can also result in payments being suspended for a period of 30 days.
Official name:
Slovenská republika/Slovensko

Official language:
Slovak

Capital:
Bratislava (420,000 residents, 2015)

Population (2015):
5.4 million

Population density (2014):
110.5 inhabitants per km²

Currency:
Euro, since 2009

Government website:
http://www.government.gov.sk/

National holiday:
29 August: Slovak National Uprising against Nazi Germany anniversary 1944 (Výročie Výročie Slovenského národného povstania)
1 September: Day of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (Deň Ústavy Slovenskej republiky)

Area (2014): 49,000 km²

Administrative structure: Eight regions (kraj)

Geography: Primarily mountainous with fertile Danube Plain in the south; Carpathian Mountains with the country’s symbolic mountain, Kriváň (2,494 m), in the High Tatras
Head of state: Andrej Kiska
Head of government: Robert Fico

Political system:
Parliamentary republic; parliament (National Council) elected every four years; direct presidential elections every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
2004

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
1.1 percent\textsuperscript{a}, \textsuperscript{b}

Memberships:
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
13

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Maroš Šefčovič (Vice-President of the Commission)
Department: Energy Union

\textsuperscript{a} Provisional value, \textsuperscript{b} Estimated value
Slovakia

**Population structure (2015):**

- **Women**: 51.5 percent
- **Men**: 48.5 percent

**Age distribution**

- **Ages 0 - 14**: 15 percent
- **Ages 15 - 64**: 71 percent
- **Over 65**: 14 percent

**Urban population**: 54 percent

**Rural population**: 46 percent

**Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013):**
- GDP total: 72.1 billion euros
- GDP per capita: 13,300 euros

**Gross national income per capita p.a. (2014):**
- 17,750 US dollars

**Annual mean income (netto, 2014):**
- 6,809 euros

**Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):**
- 405 euros

**Unemployment rate (February 2016):**
- 10.4 percent

**Youth unemployment rate (2015):**
- 26.5 percent

**Adults who have completed higher education (2015):**
- 91.4 percent
Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>17.9 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>3,810 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>9,387 a)</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expeditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>730 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>474 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
**Benefits family/children 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **SK**: 149 \(^a\)
- **DE**: 961 \(^a\)
- **EU**: 550 \(^e\)

**Invalidity benefits 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **SK**: 138 \(^a\)
- **DE**: 690 \(^a\)
- **EU**: 477 \(^e\)

**Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013**
In percent of the total population

- **SK**: 10.2
- **DE**: 5.4
- **EU**: 9.6

**Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total**
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

- **SK**: 10.4
- **DE**: 4.3
- **EU**: 8.9

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^e\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

This Central European country belonged to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until 1991. After Slovenia voted with an overwhelming majority for independence in 1990, the country declared its independence in June 1991. This triggered a military intervention by the Yugoslav People’s Army and the so-called Ten-Day War. A compromise was finally reached thanks to mediation by the United Nations and Austria, and the country finally became independent in October after the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army. Slovenia joined the EU in 2004. Three years later, it was the first former socialist state to introduce the euro.

After the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire following World War I, Slovenia became part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1918. However, numerous conflicts between the different ethnic groups and the German occupation in 1941 ultimately resulted in its disintegration. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to which Slovenia belonged, was founded at the end of World War II. After becoming independent, the country held its first parliamentary and presidential elections in 1992.
Slovenia reformed its social laws after joining the EU to adapt its social security systems in line with those of the other member states. Slovenia was also affected by the international financial crisis, and planned austerity measures led to a wave of protests among the population.

**Geography**

Slovenia is located in southern Central Europe. To the west it borders Italy, to the north Austria, to the south Croatia and to the northeast Hungary. The north of the country is dominated by the Alps. At 2,864 m, the Triglav is the highest peak of the Julian Alps. It is featured on both the 50 cent euro coin and the Slovenian flag. The southwest of the country is dominated by karst, a landscape with limestone caves and gorges. The country’s Adriatic coastline extends some 40 km between Italy and Croatia.

Slovenia is one of the most forested countries in the EU. Over half of its area is covered in woods, which are home to brown bears, wolves and lynxes. Nature conservation and the preservation of species both play an important role: Today, around 12 percent of the country is under protection, and 35.5 percent belongs to the Natura 2000 area. The aim of this coordinated network of EU protected areas is to help protect endangered wild native animal and plant species, and help preserve their natural habitats.

**Culture**

Language, customs and artisan craftwork have traditionally played a very important role in Slovenia, and many traditions are still observed today. Evidence of elaborate imperial Austrian architecture is still found in the cities today, and the Venetian influences are omnipresent on the Adriatic coast.

The country celebrates Culture Day every year on 8 February. This date marks the anniversary of the death of Slovenia’s most famous poet, France Prešeren, who amongst other things wrote the Slovenian national anthem. Such celebrates encourage people to continue their traditions of folk dances, handicrafts and other types of craftsmanship, such as lace making.
Economy

Slovenia is one of the more recent members of the EU, and enjoyed a significant economic upturn after joining. The international financial crisis caused a decline in economic growth starting in 2008, and the country entered into recession in 2012. The economy has been growing again since the fourth quarter of 2013. The main driving forces behind this growth are private consumer spending and exports. Products such as machine and transport accessories, chemical products and domestic goods are primarily purchased by Germany, Italy and Austria. These countries are also the most important import partners for the republic.
At around 65 percent, the service sector makes up the biggest share of the gross domestic product (GDP). Industry generates around 33 percent of the GDP and agriculture around 2 percent. With a GDP of 35.3 billion euros, the republic ranks fifth from last in the EU overall. And in terms of GDP per capita too, Slovenia ranks 17th in per capita GDP at 17,100 euros.

**Social security**

All Slovenian citizens were entitled to medical care during the former Yugoslav republic. Diseases deemed dangerous to society by the Socialist government were treated forcibly, including certain infections and mental illnesses. Employees were covered in the event of work-related illnesses and accidents; pregnant women, children, students and the elderly all received the necessary treatments. Expectant mothers were permitted to take maternity leave 28 days before their due date at the latest, and were compensated for any loss of earnings if they missed work to care for any sick children. The state social welfare system was in place for those without means and their families, for people with physical and mental disabilities, for alcoholics and drug addicts, as well as for older people without family members to care for them.

Since the country’s independence, Slovenia has made comprehensive reforms to its health system. It is regarded as one of the best-developed systems in Central and Eastern Europe.

The government needed to reform its pension system in 2000 in response to the aging population and the resulting reduction in labour force numbers. This increased the age of retirement, and the conditions for drawing a pension at an earlier age were adjusted. Slovenia adopted another pension reform in 2013. All other laws in relation to the social security system were adapted to reflect the changed circumstances in the late 2000s and 2010s after joining the EU. The country also built many social housing projects for low-income families at the end of the 1990s.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Work, Family and Social Affairs work together to achieve social policy targets and monitor their implementation. Dedicated agencies in Slovenia are responsible for
managing the insurance systems, and social partners are also involved here. In addition to the job centres, there are centres for social work and administration agency branches at the local level. In principle, the central state institutions are responsible for social security, while local authorities primarily provide welfare benefits.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

Unlike most EU countries, the child benefit is not based on the age or number of children, but on the net average wage. In order to be eligible for child benefits, the monthly average income per family member must not exceed 64 percent of the national net average wage in the previous year.

Compared with the rest of Europe, welfare benefits are only paid for a relatively short period of time. Once a claim has been approved, the beneficiary receives financial aid for three months. An extension up to six months is possible if the recipient’s situation has not changed during this initial period. In special cases, welfare benefits can be paid for up to twelve months or even on a permanent basis. There are two types of benefits: standard welfare and exceptional welfare. Authorities have a greater degree of discretion with the latter, and only grant this assistance to people experiencing temporary material difficulties.
Official name: Republika Slovenija

Official language: Slovenian

Capital: Ljubljana (278,000 residents, 2015)

Population (2015): 2.1 million

Population density (2014): 102.4 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Euro, since 2007


National holiday: 25 June: Statehood Day commemorates the act of independence in 1991 (Dan državnosti)

Area (2014): 20,300 km²

Administrative structure: 210 municipalities (občine), including eleven urban municipalities

Geography: Mountainous, over half of the country forested; highest peak: Triglav (2,864 m)
Head of state: Borut Pahor

Head of government: Miro Cerar

Political system:
Parliamentary republic; parliamentary elections every four years; direct presidential elections every five years; right to vote at age 18

Joined EU in:
2004

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
0.4 percent\(^{a), \, b)}\)

Memberships:
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
8

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Violeta Bulc
Department: Transport

\(^{a)}\) Provisional value, \(^{b)}\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total 35.3 billion euros
GDP per capita 17,100 euros

23,580 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
11,909 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2015):
791 euros\(^g\)

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
8.2 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
16.3 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
86.8 percent

Population structure (2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Distribution</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ages 0 - 14</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 15 - 64</td>
<td>67 percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 65</td>
<td>18 percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^g\) Data as of 2015, data for 2016 not available
Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>24.5 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>5,144 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>1,698 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>1,099 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Slovenia

Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>285 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>225 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
Like Portugal, Spain became a member of the European Community (EC), the forerunner of the EU, in 1986. This step ended the country's many years of isolation as a result of the Franco dictatorship. Even Spain's Basque population, who have been working to achieve independence for the Basque country since 1959, supported efforts to join the EC. The European Agency for Health and Safety at Work has been based in the Basque capital, Bilbao, since 1994.

Spain's recent history is shaped by the Franco dictatorship. A civil war, which would last three years, broke out in 1936 following a coup by right-wing military against the leftist liberal government. General Franco, who received military aid during the civil war from Hitler and Mussolini, took control in 1939 and established a military dictatorship. With this, he led the country into an enduring period of social lethargy and political isolation. He re-established the monarchy in 1947, and named Juan Carlos I as his successor after some deliberation in 1969. Juan Carlos I was not pronounced king until after Franco's death in 1975, however. He immediately started the process of democratization, and Spain became a parliamentary monarchy in 1978.
It became possible for Spain to initiate important reforms, especially in the field of social security, after adopting its constitution in 1978.

**Geography**

Spain is located in southwestern Europe on the Iberian Peninsula. The landscape is dominated by high plateaus and mountain ranges such as the Pyrenees, the Cantabrian Mountains and the Sierra Nevada. Spain borders France and the mini state of Andorra to the north, and Portugal to the west. The Balearic Islands, including Mallorca and Ibiza in the Mediterranean, and the Canary Islands, with Tenerife, Fuerteventura and Gran Canaria in the Atlantic, are very popular holiday destinations.

The interior of the country is shaped by barren mountains and dry plains. Mixed deciduous forests are restricted to the coastal regions. Thanks to the country’s relatively sparse population, Spain can still boast a large degree of biological diversity. For example, the forests remain home to a stable population of bears and wolves which have died out in large parts of Western Europe.

**Culture**

Spain was a major naval and colonial power for many centuries. Indeed, it is via this route that the influences of numerous non-European cultures reached Spain and Europe. The country has two major cultural and economic centres: the capital city Madrid and the port city Barcelona in Catalonia. Many traditions and folkloric elements are still celebrated today, including the Flamenco style of dance from Andalusia. In 2010 this was included on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list. Controversial bull fighting also has a long tradition in Spain, and plays an important role in the country’s economy: Nearly 200,000 jobs depend on it.

The Spanish author and the country’s most celebrated son, Miguel de Cervantes, describes a very different kind of battle in his best known literary work “Don Quixote”. Even today, the protagonist’s futile battle against the windmills is a common figure of speech. Important visual artists also come from Spain, including Pablo Picasso, Antonio Gaudí and
Salvador Dalí. Filmmakers such as Pedro Almodóvar and Carlos Saura are also well known around the world.

**Economy**

The Spanish economy suffered badly during the financial crisis in 2007, and its consequences can still be felt today. Youth unemployment in 2014 was around 53 percent, and the overall unemployment rate in March of the same year was about 23 percent. Despite the difficult economic situation, the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) was ranked fifth compared to the rest of Europe in 2013. The per capita GDP was in the middle.

Tourism is one of the country’s most important branches of the economy: The service sector generates over 70 percent of the GDP. Industry, in turn, represents 23 percent. The metalworking industry, machine engineering and petrochemistry all play a significant role here. Agriculture makes up around 2.3 percent. The country primarily cultivates crops, olives, citrus fruits and wine. Next to France, Germany is Spain’s most important trading partner.

**Social security**

The origins of the social security system in Spain can be traced back to the 19th century. In 1883, the country’s then liberal government founded a committee designed to establish social reforms. The first laws regulating work-related accidents passed in 1900. Over the following five decades, Spain adopted legislation to cover the key areas of social security. The year 1919 saw legislation for pensions, and maternity protection was introduced in 1923. Unemployment insurance followed in 1931, health insurance in 1942, and compulsory insurance for old age and disability in 1947.

This statutory coverage was not sufficient for many employees, however. In response, they established and organised their own system of special funds. The large number of different funds and the disparities between them meant that the social security measures in place for employees differed greatly and were extremely difficult to manage. Spain introduced its Social Security Act in 1963 with the aim of establishing a consistent and integral model. The state was to be become more closely involved in its financing and organisation.
Although these principles were anchored in the general law on social security from 1967, the reality was somewhat different: Many of the funds continued to exist, and responsibility for them was not clearly regulated. Spain passed a law in 1972 to improve the financing and effectiveness of the overall social security system, but this also failed to achieve the desired results. The protective measures improved, but the financing aspect had not been thought through.

Spain only initiated important new reforms following its transition to democracy (1975) and the adoption of the new constitution. According to article 41 of the constitution, the state should maintain a social security system which provides all citizens with sufficient support. Over the course of the 1980s, various measures were taken to stabilise and improve the
system. The 1990s brought major social changes to the country: The labour market changed, women were actively integrated into the workforce, and the free movement of workers played an even greater role. Statutory changes were necessary as a result, including flexible pension regulations, a reserve fund for social security and incentives to encourage people to work until an older age.

**Specific features of the country's social security**

The social security system in Spain has a number of distinctive features compared to other countries. One such feature is the so-called active integration income. It can be claimed for a maximum of eleven months by people who either do not receive any income, or whose income is less than 75 percent of the minimum wage. This is aimed essentially at the long-term unemployed between ages 45 and 65. Returning migrants, people with disabilities and victims of gender-specific violence may also claim this benefit.

Breastfeeding mothers receive an allowance for the first nine months of the child's life if they are unable to work due to breastfeeding. Mothers also receive a special allowance in the event of multiple births.
Official name:
Reino de España

Official language:
Spanish

Capital:
Madrid (3.1 million residents, metropolitan area, 2014)

Population (2015):
46.5 million

Population density (2014):
92.5 inhabitants per km²

Currency:
Euro, since 2002

Government website:
http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en

National holiday:
12 October: National holiday
(Fiesta nacional de España)

Area (2014): 506,000 km²

Administrative structure: 17 autonomous communities, 52 provinces including the exclaves; dependent territories: Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, cities of Ceuta and Melilla, Chafarinas Islands, Alhucemas and Vélez de la Gomera

Geography: Located on the Iberian Peninsula; seas: Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean; landscape dominated by plateaus and mountain ranges (like the Pyrenees and Sierra Nevada)
Head of state: King Felipe VI.
Head of government: Mariano Rajoy

Political system:
Constitutional monarchy; parliament: members elected every four years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
1986

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
9.1 percent\(^a, b\)

Memberships:
EU, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
54

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Miguel Arias Cañete
Department: Climate Action and Energy

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^b\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total 1,023.0 billion euros
GDP per capita 22,300 euros

29,390 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
13,269 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
764 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
20.4 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
48.3 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
57.4 percent

Population structure (2015):

Women
50.9 percent

Age distribution
ages 0 - 14
15 percent
ages 15 - 64
66 percent
over 65
19 percent

Urban population
80 percent

Rural population
20 percent

Men
49.1 percent
Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>25.2 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 (^e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>5,909 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 (^e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>2,337 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 (^e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>1,192 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 (^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 (^e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^e\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
### Benefits family/children 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>248</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Invalidity benefits 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>344</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
History

Following successful membership negotiations with the European Union, Sweden joined in the scope of the fourth expansion in 1995. The countries involved in this stage of the expansion – Sweden, Finland, Austria and Norway – held referendums on the joining. Norway voted against it. In contrast, over half of Swedish voters were in favour of the move, which had not been possible earlier due to the Cold War and Sweden’s policy of neutrality.

The Swedish state with its current borders has existed since Norway declared its independence in 1905. Finland, previously also under Swedish control, had already become part of Tsarist Russia back in 1809.

Today, Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. The country took its first steps towards democracy in 1866 when the mediaeval assembly was replaced with a bicameral parliament. Universal suffrage for men was not introduced until 1907, however. Prior to this, only men over the age of 35 and of a certain social standing were permitted to vote. Women earned the vote in 1921.
Unlike many other countries in the European Union, Sweden maintains an official policy of neutrality in foreign affairs and is not a member of NATO. When it comes to social security, Sweden follows the Nordic model. This political concept provides the basis for the welfare state in all Scandinavian countries, and is also referred to as the Swedish model.

Geography

Sweden is a very long country stretching between the latitudes 55° and 69° N, with part of the country extending north of the Arctic Circle. As a result, it has a very varied landscape: The south of the country is predominantly green and used for agriculture. A myriad of streams and rivers cross the countryside, and the coastline is shaped by the archipelago of small, rocky islands. The climate is very mild overall despite the country’s northern location, although the high mountains of the north are a polar climate region.

Central Sweden with its lush forests and countless lakes is a haven for fans of the great outdoors. The Falun red wooden cabins along the shores of the lakes are a well-known symbol of the country. People in northern Sweden enjoy the northern lights and polar night in winter, and marvel at the midnight sun in summer.

Culture

Midsummer’s Eve is one of the most widely known and ancient festivals in Sweden, having been celebrated throughout the country for centuries. It is the most important celebration in the year aside from Christmas. In addition to traditional dancing around the maypole, eating and drinking outdoors is also an essential highlight. Traditional fare includes pickled herring, new potatoes and fresh vegetables.

Sweden has also achieved international fame for its literature and music. One of the country’s most famous authors was Astrid Lindgren, whose numerous books for children and young adults have enchanted generation after generation. Many children today still enjoy the adventures of Pippi
Longstocking and laugh at the pranks pulled by Emil of Lönneberga. Adults are more likely to be found reading the Nordic noir masterpieces of authors such as Henning Mankell, Håkan Nesser and Anne Holt. The pop group ABBA stormed to the top of the charts in the 1970s with multiple number one hits.

One of the world’s most famous awards, the Nobel Prize, was established in the will of Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel. It has been awarded every 10 December in Oslo and Stockholm since 1901, and includes considerable
prize money. It was Nobel’s wish to honour people whose achievements make an outstanding contribution to humanity.

**Economy**

Sweden’s economy is largely export-oriented, which is why many globally operating companies have developed there over the years. As such, Sweden was able to compensate for the effects of the economic and financial crisis in Europe comparatively well: The gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 3.6 percent in 2015. The country’s GDP ranked 7th in the EU at approximately 421 billion euros in 2013. In terms of the GDP per capita, Sweden took third place with 43,800 euros.

Despite the incredibly successful timber industry, agriculture’s contribution to the GDP is just 1.4 percent. Around 10 percent of the national territory is used for agriculture. The largest share of the GDP, approx. 73 percent, is contributed by the service sector. Industry accounts for around 26 percent. Industry remained the most important branch of the economy up until the 1970s, when Sweden was one of the world’s leading industrial nations.

Sweden’s most important trade partners are Germany, the Nordic countries and the United States.

**Social security**

Before social security in Sweden came under state control, civil law dating back to 1734 dictated that the Swedish Church would aid the poor and destitute. Each parish was required to maintain a workhouse and take care of those in need. Financial security for employees became increasingly important as industrialisation progressed: Work-related accidents occurred regularly as health and safety measures were still practically non-existent. As a result, employees founded the first private health insurance associations. This at least afforded a certain financial security in the case of work-related accidents.

These came under state control and became subsidised in 1891. It wasn’t until 1961 that these private associations were replaced by insurance companies also responsible for pensions at the district level. Private
unemployment associations developed in a similar manner, and were also taken over by the state and subsidised in 1934.

Further milestones in social security included the act on compensation for work-related accidents in 1901, the national pension act of 1914 and the introduction of child benefits in 1948. The country has instituted major changes to social security since 2000. The aim of social security in Sweden is to treat all citizens equally and in a socially fair manner. In 2001, this principle was extended further to make all services available to anyone living or working in Sweden. The 21 social insurance agencies organised at the district level merged with the Swedish National Social Insurance Board in 2005. The aim of this was to shorten waiting times and standardise conditions across the country. The Swedish Social Insurance Inspectorate was founded in 2009 to monitor the activities of the Swedish National Social Insurance Board. The focus here is on ensuring compliance with legislation and analysing the efficiency of the social insurance system overall.

**Specific features of the country’s social security**

The social security system in Sweden is very advanced and plays a significant role in politics. The so-called ombudsmen represent a special feature of the system. These are appointed by the government or parliament, and are tasked with investigating complaints registered concerning the administration. The ombudsmen’s services are provided free of charge and are available to all citizens. Ombudsmen are granted special powers to fulfil their duties: For example, they have the right to demand any necessary records or files, and can get any written or verbal information necessary from all public authorities. The ombudsman’s duties are similar to those of a mediator, attempting to find a solution amiable to all parties. The ombudsmen are only answerable to Parliament.
Official name: Konungariket Sverige

Official language: Swedish

Capital: Stockholm (924,000 residents, 2016)


Population density (2014): 23.8 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Swedish krona

Government website: http://www.government.se/

National holiday: 6 June: National Day of Sweden (Svenska flaggans dag)

Area (2014): 438,600 km²

Administrative structure: 21 provinces (län)

Geography: Borders the Baltic Sea; around 221,800 islands; Scandes Mountain range along the border to Norway; highest peak: Kebnekaise (2,104 m)
Head of government: Stefan Löfven

Head of state: King Carl XVI. Gustaf

Political system: Constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy; parliamentary elections every four years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in: 1995

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015): 1.9 percent

Memberships: EU, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament: 20

Commissioner in the European Commission: Cecilia Malmström
Department: Trade

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^b\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  420.8 billion euros
GDP per capita  43,800 euros

61,570 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
27,120 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
No minimum wage

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
7.1 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
20.4 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
84.3 percent

Population structure (2015):

Women
50.0 percent

Age distribution
ages 0 - 14 17 percent
ages 15 - 64 63 percent
over 65 20 percent

Men
50.0 percent

Urban population
86 percent

Rural population
14 percent
Total expenditure on social protection 2013
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total expenditure on social protection 2013
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>9,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expeditures for pensions 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>4,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illness/health care 2013
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>2,796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
**Benefits family/children 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>1,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Invalidity benefits 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>1,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013**
In percent of the total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total**
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
  Data as of June 2016
  Source: Eurostat
History

The United Kingdom made several attempts to join the European Community (EC) before it was accepted as a member. It first applied to be included in the European Economic Community, a forerunner of the EU, in 1963. Its inclusion was repeatedly vetoed by France. Among the reasons given for this was that the United Kingdom only wanted to become a member for economic advantages. The British finally joined in 1973. By then, the EEC had become the European Community. Just two years later, a referendum was held to decide whether to remain in the EC. Around 67 percent voted to stay. The country later decided against adopting the euro and also did not sign the Schengen Agreement on reduced border controls.

Great Britain held a referendum on 23 June 2016 to decide whether or not to remain in the EU, and a narrow majority voted to leave. A clear majority of the Scottish population voted to remain in the EU. According to the contractual provisions, another two years will pass before the exit can be concluded.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a combination of England, Wales and Scotland, as well as Northern Ireland.
Wales has belonged to the Kingdom of England since the Act of Union in 1536. In 1707, the Kingdoms of England and Scotland joined together through another Act of Union. Finally, the Act for the establishment of the United Kingdom followed in 1800, which stated that Ireland also belonged to Great Britain.

Many of the Irish were opposed to this merger at the time. Above all, they resisted laws which discriminated against Catholics, the majority of the Irish population. The dissolution of the Act of Union targeted by the Irish in the 19th century remained unsuccessful for quite some time. Further attempts at achieving self-government through so-called home rule laws followed. These efforts failed twice. In 1912, a corresponding draft law was approved by the House of Commons. The Irish war of independence from 1919 to 1921 ultimately led to the establishment of the Free State of Ireland. Six counties in Northern Ireland with a mainly Protestant population remained in the United Kingdom, while the other parts of the country became the Republic of Ireland. In 1927, the name was officially changed to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

For centuries, the British Empire was a global power with numerous colonies on all continents. Only a few of the former colonies still belong to the United Kingdom as overseas territories. These include the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar and the Cayman Islands. Today, the country is joined with many of its former colonies in a loose coalition of sovereign states through the Commonwealth of Nations. Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of State of 16 nations, including Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The state healthcare system NHS (National Health Service) has been in place since 1948. In contrast to many other European countries, it is funded through taxes and not through social security.

**Geography**

The first thing anyone travelling by sea from mainland Europe to Great Britain will notice are the white chalk cliffs of Dover at the south coast of England. The steep cliff face, white and up to 106 m high, is a famous landmark. In the past, the steep cliffs warded off many an invader. Behind the cliffs is an expanse of green meadows and gentle hills. Wales is in the
west of the island, with its expansive beaches and steep rocky cliffs. The landscape becomes rougher towards the north. The rugged landscape of the Scottish highlands with its many mountains, lochs, islands and some deep estuaries is sparsely populated. More than 600 islands in total belong to Europe's largest island nation.

Culture

The British culture is very diverse. The four entities of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own regional cultures, which have been shaped by Celtic and Anglo-Saxon traditions. Influences from the former colonies are added to the mix.

The Kingdom has a long tradition in literature and theatre. Famous authors include Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, Robert Burns or Dylan Thomas. The most famous of all, however, is William Shakespeare. His plays and sonnets captivate people across the globe.

British musicians have played a key role in shaping many music genres. This includes bands like The Beatles or The Rolling Stones and stars such as David Bowie, Elton John, Phil Collins and Adele. Traditional folk music has experienced a revival in the past few years and enjoys great popularity.
Economy

The economy is one of the most deregulated and privatised national economies in the world and rests upon the principles of liberalisation, the free market and low taxation.

In the 18th century, England and Scotland were the birthplaces of the Industrial Revolution. Heavy industry, shipbuilding, coal mining as well as steel and textile production boomed. The importance of industry declined over the course of the 20th century while the service sector experienced constant growth. In 2014, it accounted for around 80 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). The financial services sector – especially banks and insurance companies – dominates this area of the economy.

The capital city of London is one of the largest cities in Europe, with over 14 million people living in its metropolitan area. It is a major international financial and economic centre. The City of London has the status of an independent legal entity. The special regulations which apply there have not only made it the economic centre of Greater London, but also one of the biggest financial locations in the world. Industry now only accounts for around 19.5 percent of the GDP, and farming made up around 0.5 percent in 2014.

Social security

The United Kingdom does not have one uniform system for social security. The basic system is the same in all four entities, but with regional differences.

The beginnings of modern social security in the United Kingdom date back to the New Poor Law of 1834. It was based on the Poor Law from 1601, which was implemented to ensure care for the needy population. In accordance with this law, the communities were responsible for their care. However, as this provision also made benefit fraud easier, it was replaced by a new version in 1834. Similar changes to the law were made in Scotland in 1845.
In 1897, the country passed its first law to protect workers and provide compensation in the event of work-related accidents. The first pension law followed in 1908 and was part of the major social reform of the liberal government. The pension was very small and was paid out to all needy people over age 70. The small pension was intended to encourage people to make their own private provisions for old age. This was followed three years later by the National Insurance Act of 1911, which regulated the areas of health and unemployment. In the health sector, sickness benefit and maternity allowances were introduced, among other things. A temporary unemployment benefit was also determined for those with no work. The general child allowance introduced after World War II in 1945 was designed to ease the burden on families in the post-war period.

Today, National Insurance (NI) in the United Kingdom mainly includes the areas of sickness, unemployment, old age, retirement and surviving dependants. The National Health Service (NHS) ensures basic medical treatment for anyone living in the United Kingdom. This includes general medicine, dental and optical examinations and treatments. There is a separate provision for child allowance and a system of tax credits for parents with dependent children.

**Specific features of the country's social security**

The NHS consists of four independent organizations in the entities. Established in 1948, the NHS is funded by taxes. Citizens are limited in their choice of physicians, and the place of residence usually determines which doctor is responsible. Hospitals generally hire specialised consultants, but patients require a referral from their doctor in order to be seen by a consultant.
**Official name:**
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

**Official language:**
English

**Capital:**
London (8.6 million residents, 2015)

**Population (2015):**
64.9 million

**Population density (2014):**
264.4 inhabitants per km²

**Currency:**
Pound sterling

**Government website:**
https://www.gov.uk/

**National holiday:**
Second Saturday in June:
  Her Majesty The Queen’s Official Birthday

**Area (2014):** 248,500 km²

**Administrative structure:** England: 34 counties, 46 unitary authorities, six metropolitan counties and Greater London; Wales: 22 unitary authorities; Scotland: 32 unitary authorities; Northern Ireland: 26 districts; dependent territories: Crown dependencies (only under authority of the British Crown, not the United Kingdom): Channel Island Bailiwicks of Guernsey and Jersey, Isle of Man; 14 British Overseas Territories: Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, British Antarctic Territory, British Indian Ocean Territory, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Pitcairn Islands, Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands, as well as Akrotiri and Dhekelia (Sovereign Base Areas on Cyprus)

**Geography:** In the Atlantic Ocean; rocky coasts, plateaus and lowlands; highest peak: Ben Nevis in Scotland (1,343 m)
Head of government:
Theresa May

Head of state:
Queen Elizabeth II.

Political system:
Constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy; House of Commons members elected at least every five years; right to vote as of age 18

Joined EU in:
1973

Population in percent of the total population of the EU (2015):
12.8 percent

Memberships:
EU, G7, G20, NATO, OECD, OSZE, UNO

Seats in the European Parliament:
73

Commissioner in the European Commission:
Julian King
Department: Security Union

\(^{a)}\) Provisional value, \(^{b)}\) Estimated value
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013)
GDP total  1,899.1 billion euros
GDP per capita  29,600 euros

43,390 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
20,584 euros

Monthly minimum wage (January 2016):
1,529 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
4.9 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
14.6 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
79.7 percent

Population structure (2015):

Women 50.7 percent
Men 49.3 percent

Age distribution
ages 0 - 14 18 percent
ages 15 - 64 64 percent
over 65 18 percent

Urban population 83 percent
Rural population 17 percent
**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
In percent of GDP (current prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>27.8 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27.7 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>27.5 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total expenditure on social protection 2013**
Per head of population (PPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>7,667 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>9,387 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>7,325 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenditures for pensions 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>3,597 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3,677 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>3,024 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Illness/health care 2013**
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2,688 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2,949 a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1,890 e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

a) Provisional value, e) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available
Data as of June 2016
Source: Eurostat
**Benefits family/children 2013**  
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **UK**: 942 \(^a\)
- **DE**: 961 \(^a\)
- **EU**: 550 \(^e\)

**Invalidity benefits 2013**  
Per head of population (EUR, constant 2005 prices)

- **UK**: 553 \(^a\)
- **DE**: 690 \(^a\)
- **EU**: 477 \(^e\)

**Rate of people affected by considerable material deprivation 2013**  
In percent of the total population

- **UK**: 8.3 \(^d\)
- **DE**: 5.4
- **EU**: 9.6

**Harmonised unemployment rates February 2016 - Total**  
In percent (seasonally adjusted)

- **UK**: 4.9
- **DE**: 4.3
- **EU**: 8.9

\(^a\) Provisional value, \(^d\) Break in series, \(^e\) Data as of 2012, data for 2013 not available  
Data as of June 2016  
Source: Eurostat
European Union

The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 28 countries in Europe. The European Single Market is the world’s largest economic region. Thanks to the European Monetary Union, people in 19 countries can pay for goods and services with the common currency, the euro.

In 1951, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands founded the European Coal and Steel Community. This was followed by the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. This eliminated customs duties between the member states. This economic community eventually became a political union with the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht on 7 February 1992, and has since called itself the European Union.

Since its beginnings, the European Union has considered itself a community of values designed to safeguard peace, freedom, democracy and pluralism on the European continent following the experiences of the two world wars. At the same time, the EU is a supportive society in which the more economically powerful nations support the less successful ones. After several expansions, today’s European Union is made up of 28 member nations who share the same laws, social and educational
standards, a common foreign and security policy, as well as a single monetary policy.

During a referendum held 23 June 2016 about whether the United Kingdom should stay in the EU, the Britons decided with a narrow majority to leave. According to provisions of contract it will take two more years until the withdrawal can be executed.

Each citizen of the European Union has the right to travel to another EU country without being checked at the border, and can also establish residence and work there. The member states may only limit access to certain public services.

Since its establishment, the EU has created a number of central institutions that organise political cooperation within the Union. The European Council, a committee of heads of states and governments, defines the EU’s general political priorities. This overarching institution is not directly involved in actual EU legislation. Instead, its job is to find compromises between the member states. The presidency rotates every six months.

EU residents vote for the European Parliament every five years. The Parliament is responsible for adopting the laws and directives of the European Union. The current president of the European Parliament is Martin Schulz from Germany, who was appointed in 2012. The European Commission is the executive of the union. Its 28 members, referred to as “Commissioners”, are nominated by the member states and need to have a hearing with the European Parliament. The president of the EU Commission is Luxembourg-native Jean-Claude Juncker.

The European Court of Justice, based in Luxembourg, is responsible for European case law. The European Central Bank in Frankfurt am Main and the national central banks combine to form the Eurosystem, the central banking system of the euro currency region.

These central institutions help coordinate and harmonise a number of different policy areas, including economic, financial, international, agricultural, energy, environmental and educational policy, as well as labour and social policy.
Official name: European union

Official languages: 24

Seat of the European Parliament: Strasbourg

Seat of the European Council: Brussels

Seat of the European Commission: Brussels

Formation: 1951 European Coal and Steel Community 1957 Treaties of Rome (European Economic Community (EEC), i. a.)

Population (2015): 506.3 million

Population density (2014): 116.7 inhabitants per km²

Currency: Euro and nine national currencies: British pound, Bulgarian lev, Danish krone, Latvian lats, Lithuanian litas, Polish złoty, Romanian leu, Swedish krona, Czech koruna, Hungarian forint

Government website: http://europa.eu/

Area (2014): 4,375,200 km² (not including overseas regions)

Administrative structure: 28 member countries; dependent territories of eight countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain.

Geography: Longest river: Danube (2,857 km); highest peak: Mont Blanc (4,810 m); largest lake: Vanern (5,648 km², Sweden)

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a) Provisional value, b) Estimated value, d) Break in series
President of the European Parliament: Martin Schulz (DE)
President of the European Council: Donald Tusk (PL)
President of the European Commission: Jean-Claude Juncker (LU)

National holidays:
5 May: Europe Day (European Council – Establishment of the Concil 1949)
9 May: Europe Day (European Union – Schuman declaration 1950)

Political system:
European Parliament: direct elections every five years; the European Parliament directly elects the President of the Parliament every two and a half years; the European Council elects the President of the European Council with a double majority every two and a half years; the European Council nominates the President of the European Commission, who is then confirmed by the European Parliament every five years

Memberships:
Individual European Union countries are members of the G8, G20, NATO, OECD, OSCE, UNO
Gross domestic product in respective prices (2013):
- GDP total: 13,068.6 billion euros
- GDP per capita: 25,700 euros

- 35,742 US dollars

Annual mean income (netto, 2014):
- 15,777 euros

Unemployment rate (February 2016):
- 8.9 percent

Youth unemployment rate (2015):
- 20.4 percent

Adults who have completed higher education (2015):
- 76.5 percent

Population structure (2015):
- Women: 51.1 percent
- Men: 48.9 percent

Age distribution:
- ages 0 - 14: 16 percent
- ages 15 - 64: 65 percent
- over 65: 19 percent

Urban population: 75 percent
Rural population: 25 percent

---

*d) Break in series

See the tables for the respective member states to compare the overall EU-28 values with those of the individual countries.
EU Institutions

European Parliament

Directly elected EU Institution responsible for legislation, supervision and budget issues, has 751 members. Founded in 1952 as the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community. First assembly as the European Parliament in 1962, first direct elections in 1979.

President: Martin Schulz
Location: Strasbourg (France), Brussels (Belgium), Luxembourg
Internet: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en

European Council

Determines the general political aims and priorities of the EU. The Council comprises the heads of state or government of the EU member nations, the President of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The European Council was founded as an informal forum in 1974, received official status in 1992, and finally became an official EU Institution in 2009.

President: Donald Tusk
Location: Brussels, Belgium
Council of the European Union

Negotiates and adopts EU legislation; coordinates the policy of the EU member states, helps shape the Union’s international and security policies; arranges international agreements; works with the Parliament to decide on the budget. The members are ministers from each EU country depending on the policy area in question. It was founded as the Council of the European Economic Community in 1958.

**Presidency:** The Presidency rotates every six months among the EU member states

**Location:** Brussels, Belgium


Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)

Interprets EU law and ensures that this is applied consistently in all EU countries. The Court of Justice consists of 28 Judges and 11 Advocates-General, mutually appointed by the member states. The Court is made up at least one judge per member state. The seven justices in the Civil Service Tribunal are nominated by the Council.

**Location:** Luxembourg

**Internet:** [http://curia.europa.eu](http://curia.europa.eu)
# European Commission

Promotes the general interests of the EU by making proposals for new European regulations and their adoption. Implement strategies and manages the EU's budget. The members make up a team – referred to as the “College” – of 28 Commissioners, one from each European country. The European Commission was founded in 1958.

**Location:** Brussels, Belgium  
**Internet:** [http://ec.europa.eu/index_de.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/index_de.htm)

## President

**Jean-Claude Juncker**, Luxembourg  
President of the European Commission

## The Commissioners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Frans Timmermans  | The Netherlands | First Vice-President  
**Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights** |
| Federica Mogherini | Italy         | Vice-President  
**High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy** |
| Andrus Ansip      | Estonia       | Vice-President  
**Digital Single Market** |


Maroš Šefčovič, Slovakia
Vice-President
Energy Union

Valdis Dombrovskis, Latvia
Vice-President
Euro, Social Dialogue, Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union

Jyrki Katainen, Finland
Vice-President
Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness

Günther H. Oettinger, Germany
Budget and Human Resources

Johannes Hahn, Austria
European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

Cecilia Malmström, Sweden
Trade

Neven Mimica, Croatia
International Cooperation and Development

Miguel Arias Cañete, Spain
Climate Action and Energy
Karmenu Vella, Malta
Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

Vytenis Andriukaitis, Lithuania
Health and Food Safety

Dimitris Avramopoulos, Greece
Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship

Marianne Thyssen, Belgium
Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

Pierre Moscovici, France
Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs

Christos Stylianides, Cyprus
Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management

Phil Hogan, Ireland
Agriculture and Rural Development

Violeta Bulc, Slovenia
Transport
Elżbieta Bieńkowska, Poland
*Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs*

Věra Jourová, Czech Republic
*Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality*

Tibor Navracsics, Hungary
*Education, Culture, Youth and Sport*

Corina Creţu, Romania
*Regional Policy*

Margrethe Vestager, Denmark
*Competition*

Carlos Moedas, Portugal
*Research, Science and Innovation*

Julian King, United Kingdom
*Security Union*
Links

Academic Network of European Disability Experts
www.disability-europe.net/en

EU-Bookshop
www.bookshop.europa.eu

EUR-Lex – Acces to European Union Law

EURES – European Job Network
www.ec.europa.eu/eures

Europe 2020 in all EU-Countries
www.ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

Europe – Summary of EU-Law, Labour Law and Work Organisation
www.europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/
employment_rights_and_work_organisation/index_en.htm

Europe Direct – Central EU Information Service
http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

European Commission
www.ec.europa.eu

European Commission – Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
www.ec.europa.eu/social

European Commission – European Social Fund
www.ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp?langId=en
European Coordination of Social Security Systems

European Council

European Health Insurance Card
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559&langId=en

European Ombudsman

European Parliament
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/

European Social Fund for Germany
www.esf.de

European Union
www.europa.eu

European Union – Agency for Fundamental Rights

European Union – Healthcare in the EU
http://europa.eu/eu-life/healthcare/index_en.htm

European Union – Statistics and Opinion Polls

Eurostat – Your Key to European Statistics
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en

The Federal Agency for Civic Education
www.eubuero.de
The Federal Agency for Civic Education
http://www.bpb.de/die-bpb/138852/federal-agency-for-civic-education

Federal Foreign Office
www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN

Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
www.bmfsfj.de

Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
www.bmas.de/EN

Historical Archives - European University Institute
www.eui.eu/Research/HistoricalArchivesOfEU

Information about Participation of Workers and Employees in the EU
http://worker-participation.eu/

Information of the European Union for Children

MISSOC – Mutual Information System on Social Protection
www.missoc.org

Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union Brussels

Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Interests of the Disabled
http://www.behindertenbeauftragte.de/EN/Englisch.html?nn=2950120

Social Security Compass Europe
www.sozialkompass.eu

Your Europe – Help and advice for EU nationals and their family
www.ec.europa.eu/youreurope
The “Social Security Compass for Europe”

The database

Sozialkompass Europa. Soziale Sicherheit im Vergleich, V 6.0

The central element of the “Social Security Compass for Europe” is an extensive collection of facts and data. This wealth of information is formatted in a convenient database, making it quick, clear and easy for users to compare the individual areas of social life. The database is available on the separately published DVD and online, and can also be downloaded from the internet.

www.sozialkompass.eu

DVD

Datenbank Sozialkompass Europa, V 6.0
Mit sämtlichen Begleit- und Hilfetexten

The DVD “Datenbank Sozialkompass Europa 6.0” contains the entire “Social Security Compass for Europe” database as an application for PC and Mac. The database visualises the similarities and differences between the various national social security systems. The DVD also contains the following brochures: „Sozialkompass Europa“ (complete version), „Soziales Europa von A-Z“, „Europäische Sozialpolitik. Ein Wegweiser durch das Internet“, „Die Länder Europas“ and the „FAQ“ for the “Social Security Compass for Europe”. It also includes helpful tips on how to use the database. In addition: easy-to-read and German sign language versions of companion publications, as well as supplementary publications about social Europe from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Order number D801
Print versions

Sozialkompass Europa. Soziale Sicherheit im Vergleich
Begleittexte zur Datenbank, 7. Auflage 2016

This brochure gives interested readers insights into the development of the European Union’s social security systems. It also compares various areas of the social security systems in the 28 EU member states. The publication is based on the interactive “Social Security Compass for Europe” database, which is updated each year along with the brochure. It covers a total of 15 topics: family, maternity leave, illness, care, disability, continued pay, unemployment, work-related accident, invalidity, ageing, surviving dependents, termination, co-determination, labour disputes and social hardship.

Order number A801


The publication uses descriptive graphics to present information about European social security systems. The figures for the individual EU countries are provided in direct comparison with Germany and the EU as a whole. A detailed profile also introduces each country. In addition to general information about the political system and expenditures for various areas of social policy (social protection, pensions, healthcare, family and children, invalids), the publication offers an overview of the unemployment rate, GDP, population structure and rate of those affected by considerable material deprivation.

Order number A871

This publication is a collection of important and interesting URLs from the entire EU sorted by member state. The links for each individual country are structured in line with the topics in the “Social Security Compass for Europe” issued by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Additional links cover the areas of general EU information, immigration, Europe-wide education, laws, travel and tourism, and social security. It is also possible to access the links at www.sozialkompass.eu and sort them by topic or country.

Order number A799


The glossary for the “Social Security Compass for Europe” provides explanations and definitions of important basic sociopolitical terms, including several references and sources. This document makes it easier to work with the interactive “Social Security Compass for Europe” database. It supports the database’s use in schools and educational institutions, and is also designed for all citizens interested in social policy and European politics. The PDF is identical to the online version available at www.sozialkompass.eu.

Bestellnummer A798
Easy-to-read publications

Hilfetexte in Leichter Sprache

Easy-to-read information is also available for the “Social Security Compass for Europe”: help texts explaining how to use the database, and simplified versions of the latest developments in Europe. All texts are available in PDF format online at:

http://www.sozialkompass.eu/sprache.html

Rat-Geber für Menschen mit Behinderungen in der Europäischen Union in Leichter Sprache

This is an easy-to-read overview of the state assistance available to people with disabilities in the European Union. Topics range from education, labour and inclusion, to resources for people with disabilities. It also covers the rights of people with disabilities and the EU's goals.

Order number A812L

Rat-Geber für Menschen mit Behinderungen in Leichter Sprache

The publication contains information on the topic of disability in Germany. It explains essential details in easy-to-read format, and people with disabilities tips for everyday life - including sections on childhood, learning and health. The appendix provides an overview of other interesting and useful easy-to-read publications.

Order number A749
English-language publications

The English versions are complete translations of the German brochures and have the same content.

Social Security Compass.
Social security in comparison
7th edition

Order number A802

The Countries of Europe.
Facts and key figures
3rd edition

Order number A871E

Social Europe from A to Z.
A glossary of basic sociopolitical terms
2nd edition

Order number A798E
Other website features

www.sozialkompass.eu offers the online database “Social Security Compass for Europe” as well as a number of other useful features. In addition to the extensive interactive glossary on social policy, you can find the latest news and information on social security in the EU – also in easy-to-read versions. Users can also find a comprehensive FAQ listing the most important questions about the “Social Security Compass for Europe” as well as an extensive collection of links including important and interesting URLs from each EU country.

Order information

You can order the companion publications to the “Social Security Compass for Europe” from www.bmas.de. The quickest and easiest way is to enter the order number corresponding to the publication in the search field. The system will then guide you through the order process. For more information on orders and contact options, please see page 350 in this brochure.
“Social policy” media package

“Social policy” is a media package focused on the topics of social security, the welfare state and labour market in Germany and Europe. These print and online materials are designed to help teachers and instructors prepare lessons on social policy by

- integrating basic didactic and methodical considerations and skills in the scope of lesson plans,
- presenting factual information structured into specific modules for secondary level I and II students in the form of texts, charts, quotes, perspectives and caricatures,
- offering differentiated assignments in line with tiered requirement areas,
- providing worksheets to demonstrate the results of learning this specialised information,
- providing background information for in-depth online research,
- providing materials for accessible education, e.g. easy-to-read materials for students, videos in German sign language on the accessible website, and all materials available for downloading as fully accessible PDF files.

These media are relevant to young people’s lives. They reveal how social policy and the current and future challenges of the welfare state impact each and every individual.
Website

The [www.sozialpolitik.com](http://www.sozialpolitik.com) website has a database of materials containing all PDF files of the printed booklets and charts. It currently contains around 300 materials for educational use, all of which are available for downloading free of charge. New, updated materials are added each month. Easy-to-read versions of several worksheets are also available. Lessons explaining important terms about the labour market and social security are also available in everyday language and easy-to-read versions.

Student magazine

The student magazine allows secondary level II students to work through basic information on state social policy and its individual divisions, either independently or in groups. It is divided into four main topic areas: politics, labour market, inclusion and security.

Each main area is assigned a number of sub-topics, which are presented on a two-page spread. Quotes or case studies often introduce these topics, which are supplemented by charts, graphics and statistics to help students in their work. Source texts from various interest groups sensitise students to controversial societal issues. Assignments on each two-page spread provide opportunities for more in-depth analysis.
Workbooks

The workbooks are primarily designed for secondary level I students and provide basic information about the topics of social security and policy in Europe. They focus on the following aspects:

„Grundwissen Sozialversicherung“ ("Basic information about social security") workbook:

- Social security and social justice
- Branches of social security
- Financing social security systems

„Grundwissen soziales Europa“ ("Basic Information about social Europe") workbook:

- Living, learning and working in Europe
- Co-determination among the citizens of the European Union
- Social security in the European Union

The „Grundwissen Sozialversicherung“ ("Basic information about social security") workshop is also available in an easy-to-read version for accessible or remedial instruction.

Teacher information and set of slides

The teacher information includes suggestions on the didactic and methodical use of the media package as well as worksheets which correspond to the chapters in the student magazine. They are designed to be copied and distributed to check the students’ progress, test their knowledge or help them prepare for exams. A series of 12 transparent slides provide supplementary charts and exercises relating to the chapters in the student magazine.
“Social policy” for inclusive education

The “Social policy” materials can be used in inclusive education. The aim is to give all students equal access to the most important information about social policy irrespective of their language skills or physical and cognitive capacities. The following materials are available:

**Easy-to-read workbook and worksheets:**
The “Basic information about social security” workbook was edited and designed to make it easy to understand for students with learning or language difficulties. An additional easy-to-read worksheet is also released online each quarter.

**Easy-to-read glossary and guidelines, sign language videos:**
The online glossary explains important terms about the labour market and social security in easy-to-read language. Guidelines in easy-to-read and German sign language versions are also available for the “Social policy” media package.

**Accessibility in accordance with BITV 2.0 (Federal Ordinance on Barrier-free Information Technology):**
Voice outputs of the [www.sozialpolitik.com](http://www.sozialpolitik.com) website and PDF files of the print materials are also available for use on the computer. Alternative texts are offered for graphics and photos, and type sizes can be adjusted as necessary. Clear contrasts make the content easier to read.

**Order information:**
Schools can order class sets of these materials free of charge:

Bestellservice Jugend und Bildung, 65341 Eltville
Fax: 0 61 23 9 23 82 44
E-Mail: jubi@vuservice.de
Internet: [www.sozialpolitik.com](http://www.sozialpolitik.com) or [www.jubi-shop.de](http://www.jubi-shop.de)
Order information

A 871e “The countries of Europe. Facts and key figures” 3nd edition 2016

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030 221 911 002

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030 221 911 003

Labour law:
030 221 911 004

Part-time employment, partial retirement, mini jobs:
030 221 911 005

Information for people with disabilities:
030 221 911 006

European Social Fund/Social Europe:
030 221 991 007

Employee equity participation:
030 221 911 008

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030 221 911 009

Information regarding the Minimum Wage:
030 60 28 00 28
Service for the deaf/hard of hearing:
   E-Mail: info.gehoerlos@bmas.bund.de
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   Fax: 030 221 911 017

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