

Ten million of children aged less than 15 years lives in European Union

New publication of Eurostat

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USPA NEWS - How many children live in the European Union? And how has their share in the population evolved and is expected to change in the future? Answers to these and other questions can be found in the flagship publication “‘Being young in Europe today’ issued by Eurostat.

Are the youngest children cared for more often by their parents, relatives, a child-minder or through a day-care centre? How do young people make the switch from school to work? How are they affected by information and communication technologies in their everyday lives? This new Eurostat publication provides an overview of the wealth of information related to children (those aged 0-14) and young people (15-29). These statistics play an important role in evaluating progress toward the EU Youth Strategy.

As Mariana Kotzeva, Deputy Director-General and Chief Editor of Eurostat, says in the foreword of the publication: “This flagship publication on children and young people, focusing on their concerns and interests, also illustrates Eurostat’s efforts to be closer to EU citizens by addressing specific themes that are highly relevant for the general public. It aims to provide an insight into the past, current and future situation of our youngest fellow citizens. The objective is to shed light on what it means “to be young in Europe today’, ranging from attending school and participating in sport and leisure activities, to leaving the parental home and entering professional life.”^[2]

In 2014, the EU registered 10 million fewer children aged less than 15 than in 1994. The share of children in the total population decreased over the last twenty years in all Member States, except Denmark. The largest reductions in the proportion of children in the population were observed in Cyprus (from 25.2% in 1994 to 16.3% in 2014, or -8.9 percentage points), Poland (-8.7 pp), Slovakia (-8.2 pp) and Malta (-8.0 pp). In 2014, Ireland (22.0%) recorded by far the largest proportion of children, followed by France (18.6%), the United Kingdom (17.6%), Denmark (17.2%), Sweden (17.1%) and Belgium (17.0%). In contrast, in 2014 the lowest shares of young people were observed in Germany (13.1%), Bulgaria (13.7%) and Italy (13.9%).

At EU level, children accounted for 15.6% of the total population in 2014, down from 18.6% in 1994. Based on population projections, the share of people aged less than 15 is expected to rise by 2050 in nine Member States compared with 2014, with the highest increases being projected for Lithuania (from 14.6% in 2014 to 16.6% in 2050, or +2.0 percentage points) and Latvia (+1.2 pp). On the other hand, Slovakia (from 15.3% in 2014 to 11.8% in 2050, or -3.5 pp), Portugal (-3.1 pp), Ireland (-2.6 pp), and Spain (-2.0 pp) could register the largest decreases in the share of children in their total population. At EU level, the share of children is expected to slightly decrease in the future, from 15.6% in 2014 to 15.0% by 2050.

In the EU, the average age of young people leaving the parental household stood at 26.1 in 2013. Significant differences can be observed across Member States. In 2013, the three Nordic Member States were, by far, the countries where young people left home earliest: at 19.6 years in Sweden, 21.0 years in Denmark and 21.9 years in Finland. They were followed by the Netherlands (23.5), France (23.6) and Germany (23.9). At the opposite end of the scale, young people in Croatia remained the longest in the parental household, with an average age of 31.9, ahead of Slovakia (30.7), Malta (30.1), and Italy (29.9).

It should also be noted that in every EU Member State, young women tend to leave the parental household earlier than men, the highest differences between the genders being registered in Bulgaria (26.8 years for women, compared with 31.3 for men), Romania (26.2 vs. 30.7) and Croatia (30.2 vs. 33.7). In 2014, almost 9 out of 10 persons (87%) aged 16-29 used the internet on a daily basis in the EU, while this proportion fell to 65% for the total population.

Moreover, almost three-quarters (74%) of young people in the EU used a mobile phone to access the internet, compared with less than half (44%) of the total population. Regarding on-line activities, young people in the EU were more likely to use the internet to make phone or video calls (46% of people aged 16-29, compared with 29% for the total population), to participate in social networks (82% compared with 46%) and to consult wikis for reference (65% compared with 44% in 2013).

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