

Quality of life in enlargement countries

Third European Quality of Life Survey – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

[Click for contents](#)

Contents

Subjective well-being	1
Health and mental well-being	3
Living standards	3
Work–life balance	5
Public services	6
Trust and tensions	8
Participation and exclusion	10
References	11

Country codes

EU27

The order of countries follows the EU protocol based on the alphabetical order of the geographical names of countries in their original language.

BE	Belgium	FR	France	AT	Austria
BG	Bulgaria	IT	Italy	PL	Poland
CZ	Czech Republic	CY	Cyprus	PT	Portugal
DK	Denmark	LV	Latvia	RO	Romania
DE	Germany	LT	Lithuania	SI	Slovenia
EE	Estonia	LU	Luxembourg	SK	Slovakia
IE	Ireland	HU	Hungary	FI	Finland
EL	Greece	MT	Malta	SE	Sweden
ES	Spain	NL	Netherlands	UK	United Kingdom

Enlargement countries

HR	Croatia	IS	Iceland
ME	Montenegro	MK	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ¹
RS	Serbia	TR	Turkey
XK	Kosovo ²		

¹ MK corresponds to ISO code 3166. This is a provisional code that does not prejudice in any way the definitive nomenclature for this country, which will be agreed following the conclusion of negotiations currently taking place under the auspices of the United Nations (http://www.iso.org/iso.country_codes/iso_3166_code_lists.htm).

² This code is used for practical purposes and is not an official ISO code.

This paper is one in a series on EU enlargement countries covered by the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) 2012: Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey. For background information including survey characteristics and definitions of indicators reported in this paper, please consult [Quality of life in enlargement countries: Third European Quality of Life Survey – Introduction](#).

Table 1: *Demographic profile, 2007, 2009 and 2012*

	2007	2009	2012
Population (1 January)	2,041,941	2,048,619	2,059,794
Age structure: people <15 years as % of total	18.9	18.1	17.2
Age structure: people 15–64 years as % of total	69.9	70.4	52.2
Age structure: people 65+ years as % of total	11.2	11.5	11.8
Women per 100 men	99.5	99.5	99.6
Life expectancy at birth, men	72	72	n.a.
Life expectancy at birth, women	76	76	n.a.

Note: n.a. = not available.

Subjective well-being

Table 2: *Subjective well-being*

	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Range of 34 surveyed countries				EU27
		Minimum		Maximum		
Life satisfaction (scale of 1–10)	6.7	Bulgaria	5.5	Denmark	8.4	7.1
Happiness (scale of 1–10)	7.2	Bulgaria	6.3	Iceland	8.3	7.4
Optimism about the future (% 'agree' or 'strongly agree')	65%	Greece	20%	Iceland	87%	52%

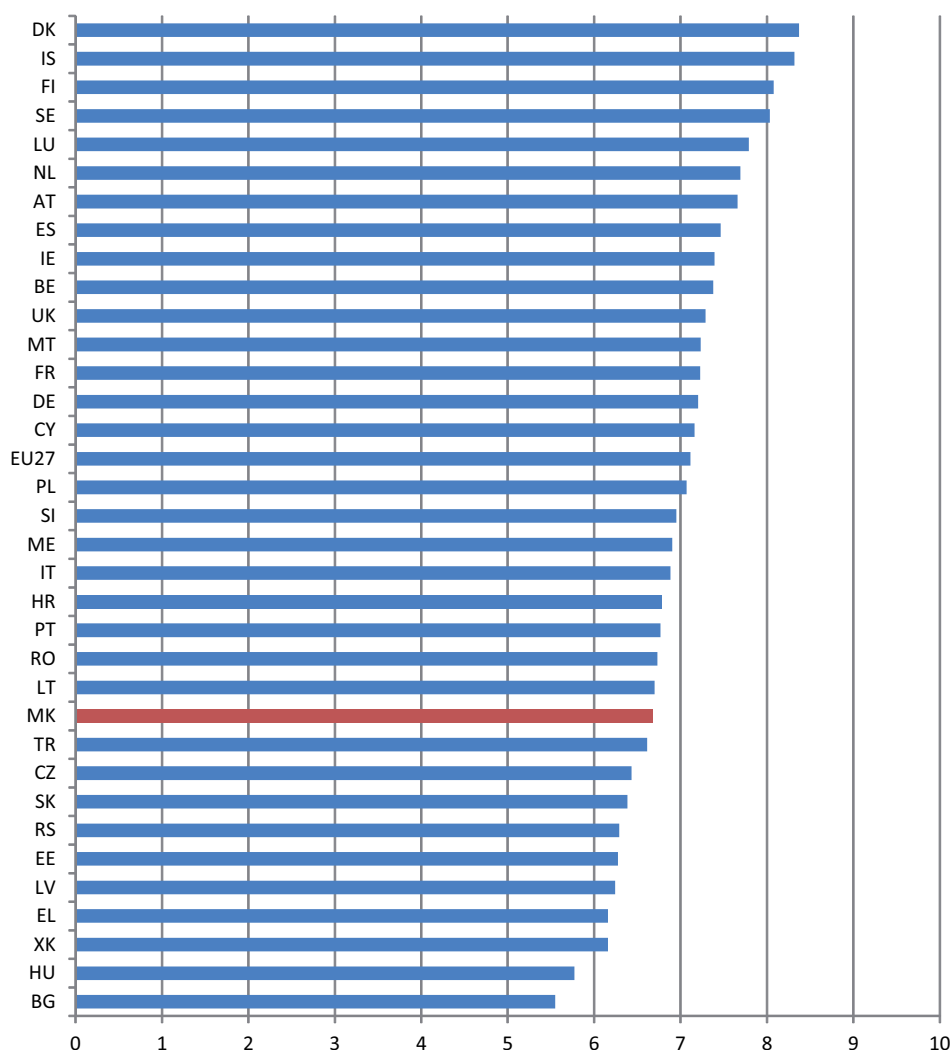
One way of measuring a society's progress is by assessing the subjective well-being of its citizens, to complement the more usual economic information, such as gross domestic product (GDP). In this report, three subjective well-being measures are examined: life satisfaction, happiness and optimism.

On average, people in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia rate their life satisfaction at 6.8 on a scale of 1 to 10. This is below the average of 7.1 found in the EU27 where life satisfaction ranges from 5.5 in Bulgaria to 8.4 in Denmark (Figure 1). Seven EU Member States have lower life satisfaction levels.

In general, people rate their satisfaction with life less positively than their happiness. This is also the case in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with a happiness rating of 7.2. This gap tends to be largest in countries where life satisfaction is low, suggesting that people are able to compensate for dissatisfaction with their quality of life through, for instance, family relationships and personal adjustments. The gap between life satisfaction and happiness (around -0.5) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is somewhat larger than it is in the EU27 as a whole (-0.3), and somewhat smaller than the gap noted in Bulgaria (-0.8), where life satisfaction is lowest.

The EQLS overview report shows that health, income, unemployment and age have the most significant association with subjective well-being in the EU (Eurofound, 2012). Data analysis indicates that the most important predictor of life satisfaction in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is income, followed by unemployment, bad health and age.

Figure 1: *Life satisfaction*



Note: Scale of 1–10.

A comparison of mean scores shows widespread inequality in well-being between those assessing their health as good (7.2) and those who feel it is bad (5.0). Life satisfaction ranges from 5.4 for people in the lowest income quartile to 7.2 in the highest quartile. Unemployed people report a life satisfaction score of 5.7, which is a full point below the country’s average. The commonly exhibited U-shape for age, whereby well-being drops midway in life, is present, with life satisfaction levels highest among 18–24-year-olds (7.5) and lowest among those aged 50–64 years (6.1).

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 65% of people say they are optimistic about the future; as with all the other surveyed enlargement countries, this is above the EU27 average of 52%. There are only five Member States where optimism levels are higher.

Across social groups optimism decreases steadily with age, so that 83% of those aged 18–24 but only 50% of those aged 65 and over expressed optimism. Levels increase steadily with income, starting at 52% in the lowest income quartile and increasing to 71% in the highest income quartile. The level recorded for the unemployed (55%) is significantly below average. As noted in the EQLS overview report, the proportion of people feeling optimistic about the future has a positive correlation with average satisfaction with the economic situation in the country and with trust in the government.

Health and mental well-being

Table 3: *Health and mental well-being*

	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Range of 34 surveyed countries				EU27
		Minimum		Maximum		
Satisfaction with health (scale of 1–10)	7.7	Latvia	6.5	Cyprus	8.4	7.3
Mental well-being (scale of 0–100)	68	Serbia	54	Denmark	70	62.5

On average, satisfaction with their health among people in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is 7.7 on a scale of 1 to 10. This is above the average of 7.3 for the EU27, and a median position among the enlargement countries surveyed, where health satisfaction levels are lowest in Croatia (7.3) and highest in Montenegro and Iceland (both 8.0).

A comparison of health satisfaction levels between the different age groups highlights the importance of age; health decreases from 8.8 among those aged 18–24 years to 5.7 among those aged 65 and over.

Mental well-being has become a priority to monitor and address, because a substantial body of research shows that unemployment, poverty and social exclusion are detrimental to mental health. Good mental health is also positively associated with life satisfaction (Eurofound, 2012). The World Health Organization’s mental well-being index score, WHO-5, for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is 68, which is significantly above the EU27 average of 63 and nearly as high as the highest-scoring country, Denmark, with a score of 70.

There are significant inequalities based on income, with index scores ranging from 60 for the lowest income quartile to 71 for the highest income quartile. However, as noted in Croatia, unemployed people do not score significantly differently on the mental well-being index. This suggests that there might be sources of support that counteract a possible negative impact of unemployment.

As in the EU27, men’s score (71) is better than that of women (66), and this gender difference tends to hold when controlling for age. It should, however, be noted that the gender difference is negligible among those in the youngest age group, where mental health levels are well above average for both men (79) and women (78). What is particularly striking in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is the low level of mental well-being among women aged 70 and over (45).

Living standards

Table 4: *Living standards*

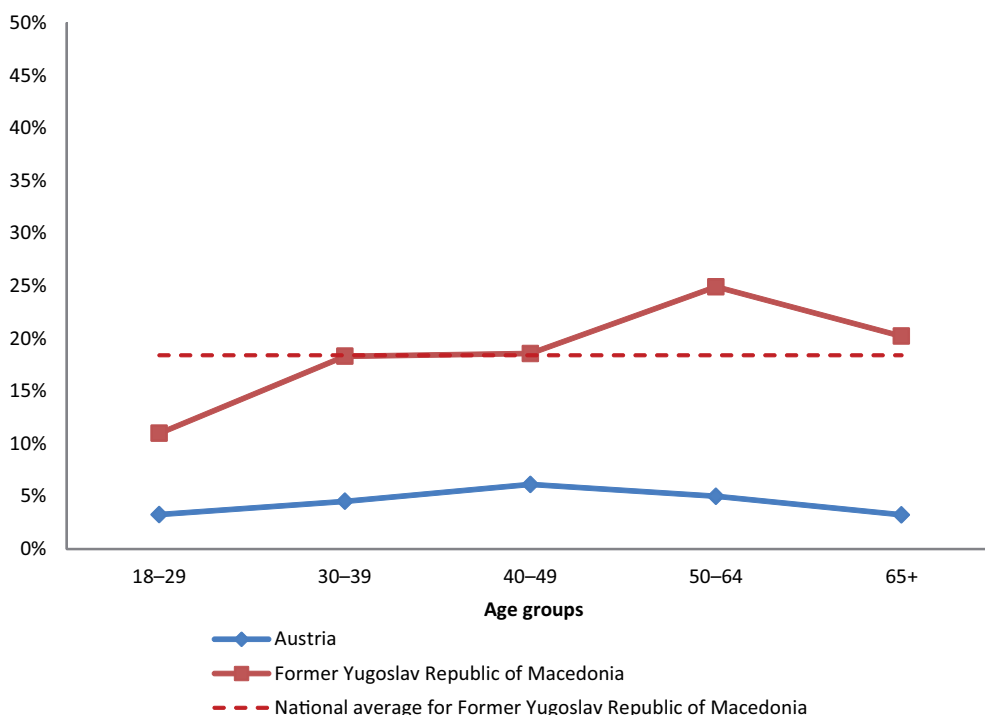
	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Range of 34 surveyed countries				EU27
		Minimum		Maximum		
Satisfaction with standard of living (scale of 1–10)	5.8	Bulgaria	4.7	Denmark	8.3	6.9
Difficulty making ends meet (% ‘difficult’ or ‘very difficult’)	18%	Denmark	3%	Greece	50%	17%
Number of items people cannot afford (scale of 0–6)	2.0	Luxembourg	0.3	Bulgaria	2.9	1.2
Informal debts (% in arrears over last 12 months)	5%	Malta	1%	Kosovo	21%	8%

Satisfaction with standard of living is 5.8 on a scale of 1 to 10, which is slightly higher than for Serbia (5.3) and the same as Hungary and Kosovo (both 5.8). It is, however, substantially below the average satisfaction with standard of living in the EU27, which is 6.9.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, together with Serbia and Kosovo, has the highest figures when it comes to measures of inequality, rates of poverty and the misery index.³ It is one of the most unequal countries in Europe, with a Gini coefficient of 40.8 and 27% of its population at risk of poverty (State Statistical Office, 2012). The population has a slightly higher risk of poverty than some of the EU27 countries, such as Bulgaria, Greece or Spain (all at 21%), and a considerably higher rate than the EU27 average, which is 16%.

Around 18% of the people in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have difficulty making ends meet, which is very close to the EU27 average of 19%. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is 17th out of 34 countries on this indicator. The shape of its age curve is typical for countries outside western Europe: experiencing difficulty making ends meet increases with age, but the most deprived age group are those aged 50–64 years (Figure 2). Young people are the least concerned over making ends meet (difficulties here were reported by 11% of this age group). This is a direct contrast to the situation in most countries in western Europe; young people in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia seem to be better off in this regard than the average European young person (15%).

Figure 2: People finding it difficult or very difficult to make ends meet by age group



³ The misery index is defined as the sum of the inflation rate (3.9 % in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2011) and the unemployment rate (31.4% in 2011), which gives an index score of 35.3. The figures are based on official national statistics (see <http://www.stat.gov.mk>).

With regard to material deprivation, people from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia cannot afford an average of two out of six items considered important for a decent standard of living.⁴ This is similar to other countries of the region, but more than the EU27 average of 1.4. Replacing worn-out furniture is the most common item that people in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia cannot afford.

Relatively few people have difficulties paying back informal loans. Only 5% claim this is the case, compared with 8% in the EU27.

Work–life balance

Table 5: *Work–life balance*

	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Range of 34 surveyed countries				EU27
		Minimum		Maximum		
Work–life conflict (on any dimension, % women)	78%	Italy	44%	Cyprus	86%	59%
Work–life conflict (on any dimension, % men)	67%	Italy	39%	Serbia	77%	54%
Doing household tasks at least several days a week, difference between women and men (percentage points)	53	Finland	11	Turkey	72	30
Women, economically inactive, willing to work (%)	65%	Kosovo	45%	Iceland	91%	70%

Reconciliation of work with life outside work matters for quality of life as well as for increasing opportunities for more people to work and for achieving gender balance. The EQLS asks employed people if they have problems fulfilling family or household responsibilities because work takes up too much time or they are too tired after work, and whether concentrating at work is difficult because of family responsibilities.

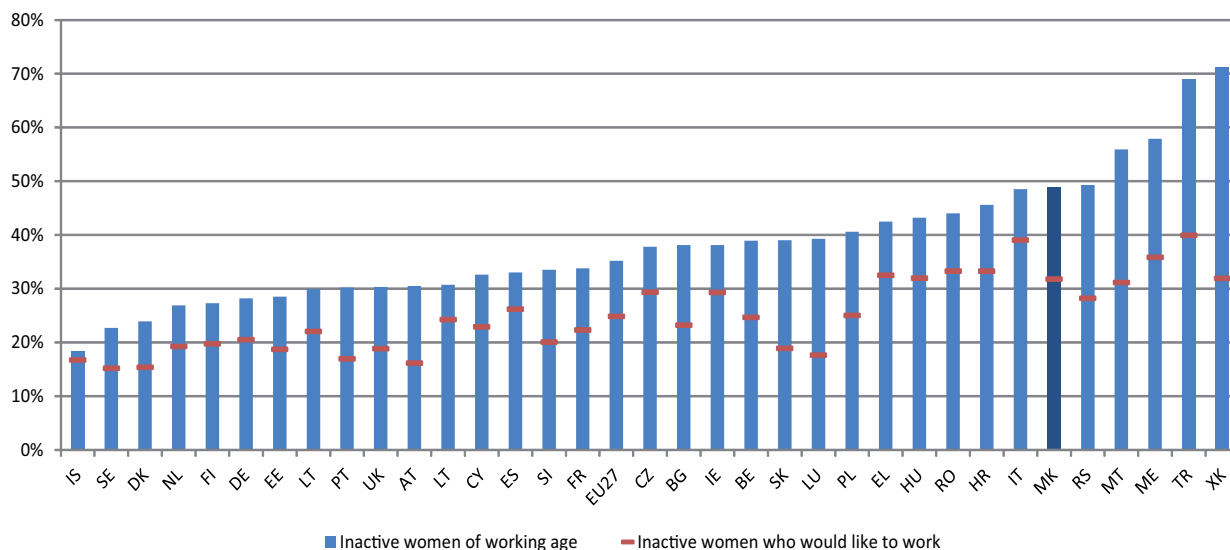
Similar to most other enlargement countries (except Iceland), work–life conflict in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is experienced by a comparatively large share of workers (72%). As in many countries, women experience a greater burden in balancing the demands of work and those outside the workplace. Government policy could address work organisation more effectively, including the issue of inflexible working time arrangements.

Life outside of work is, to a certain extent, shaped by the amount of daily household tasks and their distribution among family members. Household tasks can represent a significant extra burden on women if they are the main contributors to housework, especially if they also have a job. The difference between the contribution of women and that of men to household tasks in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is among the highest in Europe; however, it reflects the general trend found in all enlargement countries except Iceland.

A comparatively high proportion of working age women living in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are outside the labour force (49%). However, around two-thirds of inactive women would like to have paid work (Figure 3). This suggests that labour market participation could be increased by achieving greater gender balance in terms of work and family responsibilities.

⁴ These are: keeping the home adequately warm; paying for a week’s annual holiday away from home (not staying with relatives); having a meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day; replacing worn-out furniture; buying new clothes rather than second-hand ones; inviting friends or family for a drink or meal at least once a month.

Figure 3: Proportion of inactive working age women in the labour market and the proportion of these who would like to work



Source: European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) and EQLS

Public services

Table 6: Public services

	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Range of 34 surveyed countries		EU27
		Minimum	Maximum	
Cost as a problem to see a doctor (% very difficult)	5%	UK 1%	Greece 28%	8%
Households with children <12 years using childcare services	23%	Turkey 7%	Sweden 69%	34%
Proportion using public transport	81%	Cyprus 50%	Turkey 97%	87%

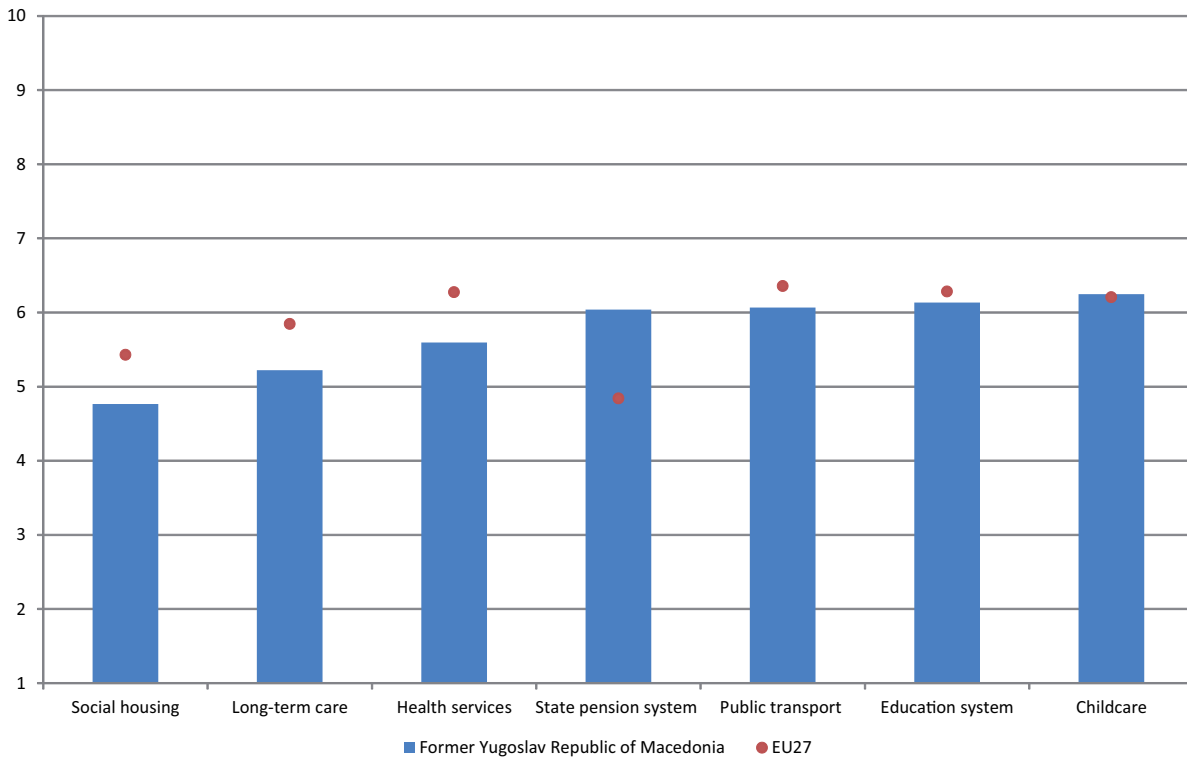
Of the public services asked about in the EQLS, people living in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia give the highest quality ratings to the education system (6.1 out of 10) and childcare (6.2); these levels are similar to the EU average (Figure 4). The proportion of people with children who use childcare services (23%) is similar to that in other countries of the western Balkan region, but is lower than the EU average (34%).

Quality of health services is rated at 5.6, while it is 6.3 in the EU27. However, reported difficulties seeing a doctor (such as distance, delay in getting an appointment or long waiting times) are at considerably lower levels than those on average in the EU27. Cost poses a great difficulty to only 5% of people – a somewhat smaller problem than in many other European countries.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the quality of social housing and long-term care are ranked lowest of the public services.

The country stands out in relation to the relatively high ranking given to the state pension system. This deserves further study, since in many countries this item tends to receive the lowest or nearly the lowest quality assessment.

Figure 4: Ratings of quality of public services

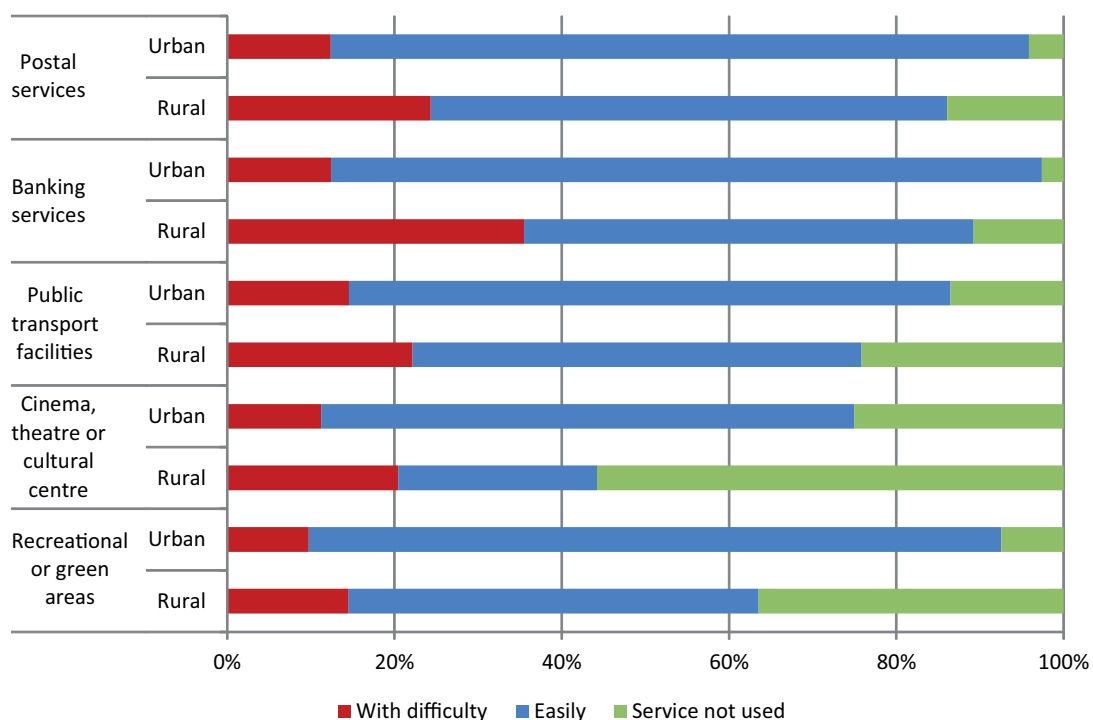


Note: Scale of 1–10.

The rural population is considerably more disadvantaged than the urban population in many respects. For those living in a rural area, problems are experienced by 36% in accessing banking services, 24% in accessing postal services, and 20% in accessing cultural facilities (Figure 5). In addition, 56% of the rural population say they do not use the cinema, the theatre or cultural centres at all.

A further 22% of the rural population experiences great difficulties in accessing public transport services.

Figure 5: Access to neighbourhood services, % of respondents



Trust and tensions

Table 7: Trust and tensions

	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Range of 34 surveyed countries				EU27
		Minimum		Maximum		
Trust in people (scale of 1–10)	3.6	Cyprus	1.9	Finland	7.1	5.1
Trust in the government (scale of 1–10)	4.2	Greece	2.1	Luxembourg	6.5	4.0
Trust in local authorities (scale of 1–10)	4.1	Serbia	3.3	Luxembourg	6.7	5.2
Tension between different racial or ethnic groups (% perceiving ‘a lot of tension’)	43%	Iceland	11%	Czech Republic	68%	37%
Tension between poor people and rich people (% perceiving ‘a lot of tension’)	37%	Denmark	4%	Hungary	71%	35%

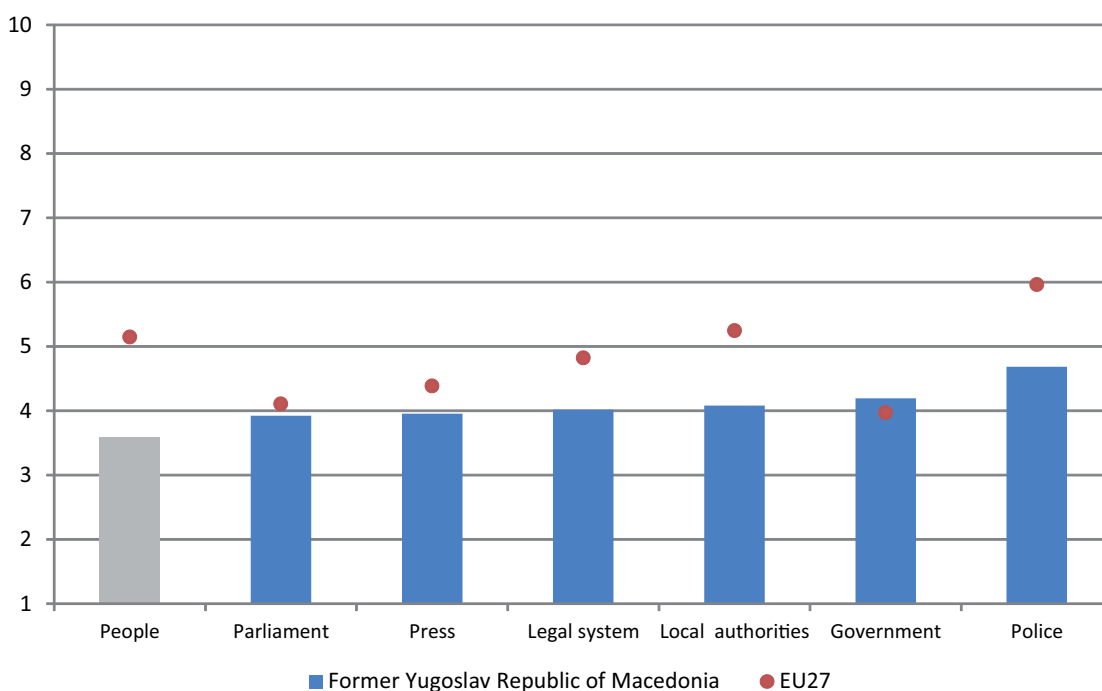
This section looks at trust in people, trust in public institutions and the perceived tensions between various groups in society.

Trust in other people is seen as a key indicator of social capital. Overall the level of general trust in people in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is 3.6 on a scale of 1 to 10 (Figure 6). Comparing this with the findings for the EU27 (average score of 5.1) shows that trust in other people is higher in all Member States except Cyprus. It is also higher in the other enlargement countries surveyed.

Analysis of sociodemographic factors shows that in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, unlike what is typically found in other countries, trust levels do not differ depending on people’s education, age, income or level of material deprivation. In other words, trust in others tends to be low across all sections of society. This pattern suggests that there might be other divisions in society negatively affecting trust, such as an ethnic cleavage.

Whereas in most countries trust in public institutions is lower than trust in other people, the opposite is the case in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. There, trust in the government is 4.2, and a similar level of trust is found for nearly all public institutions. Furthermore, compared with the previous EQLS wave, trust in others is now even lower (down from 3.8 in the 2007 EQLS), while trust in the government has gone up (from 3.2 in 2007). Trust in the government is just above the EU27 average of 4.0. While trust in the government is higher than in some of the other non-EU countries (Serbia has the lowest level), there are many countries where levels are much higher (the highest level is found in Luxembourg).

Figure 6: *Trust in people and in institutions*



Note: Scale of 1–10.

Moving to the area of social cohesion, more than two out of five (42%) of those surveyed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia believe there is a lot of tension between different racial groups in their country. This is the highest reported level among the seven enlargement countries included in the EQLS. One of the reasons for this widespread sense of tension may be the ethnic structure of the country, which includes a large Albanian minority.

Perceptions are more moderate when it comes to the perceived tensions between poor people and rich people, with 37% perceiving such tension. However, this average percentage conceals large differences of opinion depending on people’s own economic situation: 54% of the people who are most materially deprived believe there is a lot of tension between rich and poor people, as do 50% of unemployed people and 48% of those in the lowest income quartile.

Participation and exclusion

Table 8: *Participation and exclusion*

	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Range of 34 surveyed countries				EU27
		Minimum		Maximum		
Index of perceived social exclusion (scale of 1–5)	2.4	Denmark	1.6	Cyprus	3.0	2.2
Participation in voluntary work	29%	Montenegro	9%	Kosovo	61%	32%
Civic and political involvement	22%	Turkey	8%	Iceland	61%	25%

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia scores above the EU27 average on the perceived social exclusion index (2.4), which is based on questions about feeling left out of society, experiencing complications in life, and recognition of one’s activities. Those who feel excluded more than others are people in the lowest income quartile (2.8), those with the lowest primary education (3.0) and unemployed people (2.8). The sense of exclusion among older people (65+) does not differ from the average.

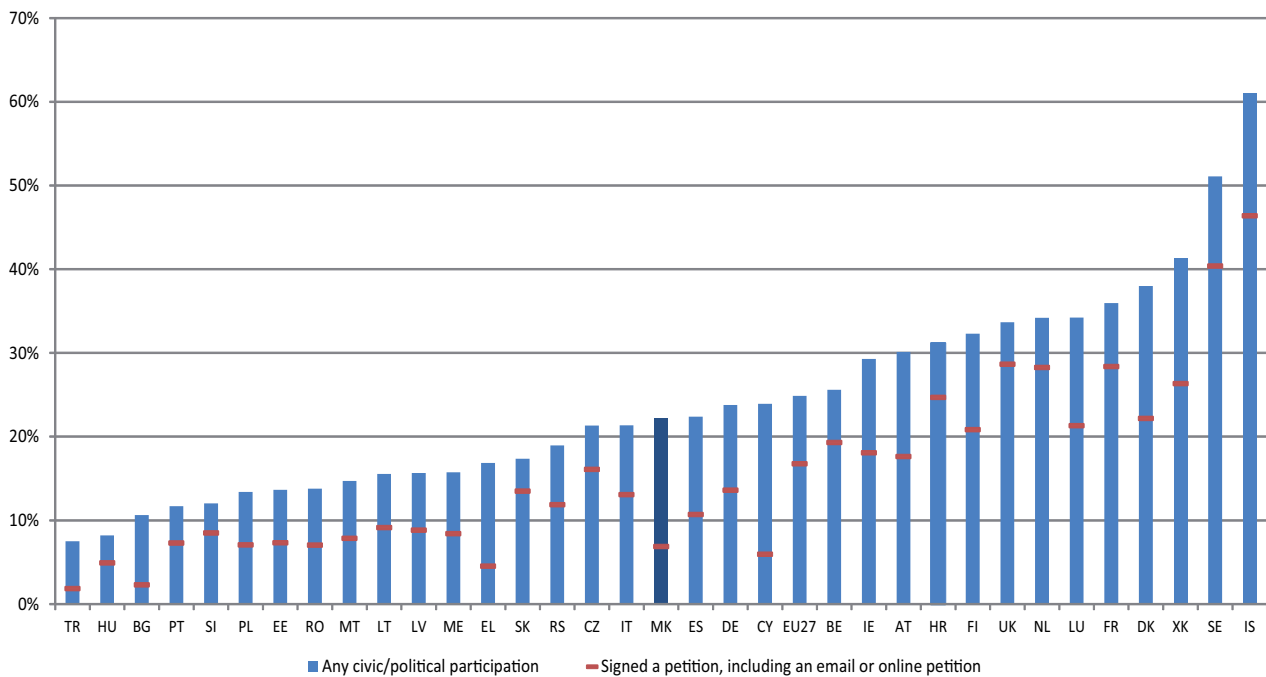
Participation can improve one’s subjective well-being and help to overcome a sense of exclusion. Overall, the country’s rate of people who have some experience of civic or political involvement is 22% (Figure 7). The proportion of people who had contacted a politician or an official, or attended a meeting or a demonstration is 20%, which is above the EU27 average of 16%. However, the rate of petition signatories in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, at 7%, is among the lowest.

Civic or political involvement via the aforementioned direct contacts (excluding petitions) is more pronounced among people aged 25–49 years, those with a higher education level, and those with a higher income. There is also a notable gender difference: 26% for men and 14% for women.

Involvement in unpaid voluntary work at least once a year is reported by 29%; this rate is a little lower than the EU27 average of 32%.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Croatia and Turkey have the smallest proportion of people (5%) who expressed a wish to spend more time volunteering (the EU27 average is 23%). However, in order for volunteering to happen, personal motivation is not the only relevant factor; the legal framework and infrastructure can also matter.

Figure 7: Civic and political involvement, % of respondents



The approach in the EQLS reflects an increasingly global movement that goes beyond an exclusive focus on economic progress towards measuring broader public policy goals, embracing a greater consideration of quality of life.

For more aspects of quality of life and a more extensive set of the EQLS results, please access the [Survey Mapping Tool](#) on the Eurofound website.

Visit the Eurofound website for the forthcoming report on trends in quality of life in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, based on an analysis of the 2007 and 2012 waves of the survey.

References

Eurofound (2012), *Quality of life in Europe: Impacts of the crisis*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

State Statistical Office (2012), ‘Laeken poverty indicators in 2010’, available at <http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2012/4.1.12.83.pdf>.

