

# **EUROMOD**

## **COUNTRY REPORT**



## **BELGIUM (BE)**

### **2016 - 2019**

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**EUROMOD version I2.0**



EUROMOD is a tax-benefit microsimulation model for the European Union (EU) that enables researchers and policy analysts to calculate, in a comparable manner, the effects of taxes and benefits on household incomes and work incentives for the population of each country and for the EU as a whole.

EUROMOD has been enlarged to cover 28 Member States and is updated to recent policy systems using data from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) as the input database, supported by DG-EMPL of the European Commission.

The European Commission is in the process of taking over responsibility for carrying out the annual update and release of EUROMOD. The transfer of responsibility is expected to be complete by the end of 2020 and the transition is being facilitated by close cooperation between the University of Essex and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission as well as Eurostat.

This report documents the work done in one annual update for Belgium. This work was carried out by the EUROMOD core developer team, based mainly in ISER at the University of Essex, in collaboration with a national team.

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The results presented in this report are derived using EUROMOD version I2.0. EUROMOD is continually being improved and the results presented here may not match those that would be obtained with later versions of EUROMOD. For more information, see: <https://www.euromod.ac.uk>

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## 1. BASIC INFORMATION

### 1.1 Basic information about the tax-benefit system

- The social security system and tax system are both almost entirely coordinated at the national level. However, a number of taxes and benefits do not belong to the national system and vary across the regions.

The revenue from taxation is collected at the national level and then it is divided over the different institutional levels (the federal level, the different regions (Brussels/ Flanders/ Wallonia) and the communities (Flemish community and French-speaking community)). Only municipalities' tax rates vary. Their collection however also takes place at the national level, after which these are transferred to the municipalities. The main exception in the national collection of taxes is the tax on real estate. This tax is administratively coordinated by the regions, while tax rates are set by the municipalities. Its revenue is split over the different administrative levels (municipalities, provinces, regions).

Benefits that are part of the social security system (unemployment, pensions, sickness and disability benefits, family allowances, income support) are within the competence of the federal government. The most important benefits that are within the competence of the regions are as follows. First, there are the benefits related to education (study allowances). Second, additional social assistance (in addition to income support) is also a regional matter. Third, since the mid-2000s, the compulsory “Flemish care insurance” was established, which is only applicable for inhabitants of the region of Flanders and optionally available for the inhabitants of Brussels. Since July 2014 the regional governments are responsible for child benefits. Until 2018, the eligibility and computational rules remained similar over regions, except for indexation. From 2019, the child benefits started to be reformed by the regional governments. Flanders introduced a new system in 2019, Wallonia changed some rules before reforming completely the system in 2020 and Brussels kept things unchanged until 2020.

- The fiscal year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December. Main benefit changes usually take place when price-indices reach a certain level. However, as wages increase at a higher pace than the indices, additional adjustments can also take place “outside the index”. This is possible when governments and social partners agree on the amount the benefits have to be raised to ensure they do not drop below subsistence levels.
- The official state pension age is 65 for men as well as for women. Before, there was a slight discrepancy between the pension age of men and women (2003-2005: 63 for women; 2006-2008: 64 for women). However, for a number of professions (miners, seafarers), exceptions to this rule apply. In general, however, the average effective retirement age is considerably lower, mainly due to systems of early retirement and supplementary unemployment benefits for older unemployed.
- Nursery classes for all children from the age of 2.5 years onwards are free of charge and universally accessible. Although the compulsory education age is 6 years, the enrolment rate in the Belgian nursery classes is traditionally very high. Being in education is compulsory from the age of 6 onwards, but since September 2009, children should at least have attended one year of nursery school to be admitted to primary school at the age of 6. Compulsory education counts until the age of 18 (by attending school or by home-schooling). Exceptions can be made from the age of 15 onwards. Pupils in an education stream leading to a specific, mostly technical profession can make use of an apprenticeship agreement, and combine part-time school attendance with working part-time in a firm, exercising their profession under guidance there.

For the family allowances, dependent children are in principle all children under 18 years. There are two exceptions to this rule. On the one hand, the child remains dependent until 21 if he or she is disabled. On the other hand, a child can remain dependent until the age of 25 if he or she

is in full-time education (including higher and advanced education), not married, and his/her net taxable income as well as the number of days a gainful occupation has been exercised do not exceed certain thresholds. The income thresholds are slightly higher for handicapped children as well as for children of lone parents. To qualify as a dependent child in the taxation system, the age restrictions are not applicable. The income thresholds are the same as for the family allowances.

- In the taxation system and social assistance system, a lone parent is defined as a parent of resident dependent children, who does not legally cohabit with or is married to a partner (whether or not the partner is the parent of the child is irrelevant).

In the taxation system, the amount of certain allowances depends on whether one is disabled to a certain degree. The degree is often expressed either as % decrease in functioning capacities or as points on a medical scale capturing the ability to live independently, and is being declared by a doctor. The threshold used for taxation allowances is a handicap of 66% or 9 points.

- The income tax system is an individual system. However, in the case of couples with a single earner, the system of the marital quotient applies. This consists of treating 30% of the total earnings of the couple as the income of the non-earning spouse (with a certain maximum). As a consequence of the progressivity of the Belgian tax rates, this amount is taxed at the lowest marginal tax rate instead of at the higher rate of the bracket in which the single earner's income would fall when treated as one entity.
- Capital income is usually taxed at the moment of remittance. This liberates the recipient from the obligation to declare the amounts in the tax return. If the capital income was not taxed at the moment of remittance, it has to be declared. It will then be taxed at a flat tax rate of 15%, except if it is beneficial for the recipient to treat capital income as regular income and to tax it at the standard rates (and brackets).
- All earning individuals are obliged to fill in a tax return if their income exceeds the minimum taxable income, except if their income consists entirely of a state pension or real estate income that is taxable only at the rate of cadastral income. As withholding tax is calculated taking only a few characteristics into account, differences between withholding tax and the final amount due are often considerable. A clearance of the balance usually takes place in the first half of the second year after the period in which the income has been received.
- All benefits and tax brackets are indexed to take account of inflation. Benefits usually rise every time price-indices reach a certain level. In 2015 there was no indexation the moment the price-index reached a 2% increase. This is part of the austerity measures of the federal government. Tax brackets and all related amounts are indexed on a yearly basis at the transition to the next fiscal year.
- Social assistance (the most important means-tested benefit in place) assesses entitlement according to benefit unit income. The benefit unit is the nuclear family - the couple (cohabiting or married) or single adult plus any dependent children. However, income from other first degree family members living together under the same roof and pooling income sources are taken into account for the means-test. Being assessed is the factual income at the moment of application for social assistance at the local Centre for Public Assistance (CPAS). The applicant has to declare all factual income, not only official. Some income sources (e.g. child benefits) are discarded in the means-test. The applicant/beneficiary is bound to provide all the necessary information and to contact the CPAS if something changed in his or her personal (financial) situation. The CPAS are obliged to revise the means-test on a yearly basis. However, it belongs to the discretionary power of the local Social Service Departments to do the assessment on a more frequent basis.

### 1.2 Social Benefits

This is an overview of the existing social benefits in Belgium. Our classification is thematic, which means that not all the benefits in one category are within the competence of the same administrative institution. For instance “guaranteed child allowances” are classified here under “family allowances”, while administratively this measure is part of social assistance. This overview includes all social benefits, including those currently not simulated within EUROMOD.

#### 1.2.1 Pensions

State pensions are financed by a “pay-as-you-go system”. This means that pensions of the currently retired are financed by contributions on wages of the currently employed (and not by their own savings). In addition to the state pension schemes listed hereunder, second pillar pensions provide a supplementary pension to employees, which is being built via the employer. Although it is voluntary, half of the Belgian working population takes part in a second pillar pension scheme, and its importance is increasing.

- *Old age pension*

In the state pension system (first pillar), three schemes are in place, depending on whether the retired person was an employee, a civil servant or a self-employed. For those workers who have fallen into more than one of these categories during their career, the rights acquired in the various systems are combined. Periods of involuntary unemployment (unemployment, sickness) are also taken into account. Besides the category one belongs to, the monthly benefit depends also on the course of one’s career, the earned wages and the family situation. Replacement rates for retired employees are typically 75% in the case of single earner couples, and 60% for all other pensioners. Because of upper ceilings on the pension amounts, the replacement rates for higher earners will in general be considerably lower.

- *Survivor pension*

The survivor pension is granted to the spouse following the death of the person who has built up pension rights. A few additional conditions apply (the spouse has to be over 45 years of age and be married for at least one year, or have a dependent child, or be permanently disabled).

- *Minimum pension (income guarantee for the elderly)*

A minimum pension is a right granted to all Belgian citizens. As it actually belongs to the social assistance category, it is discussed under this heading and its official name: income guarantee for the elderly (see □.b.)

- *Early retirement pension*

Early retirement pension is actually an unemployment benefit and is discussed under this heading as well (see 1.2.2.c.). The normal benefit is raised with an additional compensation, usually paid for by the former employer. Also, the early retired are exempt from the obligation to actively seek work that is common for the “normal” unemployed. From 2015 on, conditions for early retirement have become stricter.

#### 1.2.2 Unemployment benefits

Concerning unemployment benefits, three categories of recipients can be distinguished. Firstly, there are the indemnified unemployed. Under this heading the ordinary unemployment benefits are classified, but also the early retirement benefits. Secondly, some categories of employed persons are additionally being supported with unemployment benefits, for instance during temporary unemployment or during

training. The third category consists of employees who reduce their working hours with the support of unemployment benefits.

- ***The indemnified unemployed***

- a. *Ordinary unemployment benefits (after employment)*

This category includes both jobseekers and persons exempt from seeking work, such as those exempt because of social or familial reasons (and the older employees and early retired discussed in the next paragraph). The amount of the unemployment benefit is calculated on the basis of the previous salary, and a ceiling applies that is different depending on unemployment status. The replacement rate that applies thus depends on family situation (single, cohabitating, head of the family) and the length of the unemployment (degressive over time).

- b. *Full-time early retirement*

What is described here as “early” retirement is in fact a “bridge” between losing a job before the (legal) age of retirement and the actual retirement. Therefore, a part of this benefit is financed through the unemployment legislation and a part by the employer. The early retired are exempt from the obligation to actively seek work.

- c. *Unemployment benefit for older employees*

The older employees can be exempt from the obligation to seek work as well. In addition to the regular unemployment benefit, they receive an additional compensation, called the “seniority supplement”, which is paid for by the former employer.

- d. *Unemployment benefit after finishing studies*

Persons younger than 30 and without an employment history can receive unemployment benefits after finishing studies. The applicant must have finished his or her studies, be enrolled as a jobseeker for 310 workdays before he or she becomes eligible to receive the benefit. The benefit varies, depending on age and family situation (living alone, dependent family, etc.). The system was reformed in 2012, including a renaming of the benefit from “waiting allocation” to “professional integration allocation”.

- ***Support of employed people***

- a. *Temporary unemployed*

In contrast to the fully unemployed (discussed above), the temporary unemployed is bound by an employment contract, of which however the actual work is temporarily suspended (e.g. because of economic circumstances or weather conditions). Replacement rates are slightly higher than for the fully unemployed and do not decrease over time.

- b. *Part-time unemployed with preservation of rights and income guarantee benefit*

Employees avoiding full unemployment by working part-time, can preserve the rights of a full-time unemployed and can receive an income guarantee benefit when he or she fulfils a number of conditions with regard to reference gross wage and effort (apply for a full-time job with the employer if it becomes available).

- c. *Activation measures allowances*

A first measure consists of the exemption from seeking work while receiving the unemployment benefit for those who follow a course that is organized or subsidized by the regional departments of the employment agency, or an individual in professional training in a company or educational institute. Secondly, there are a number of ways in which unemployed who resume work, continue to be supported by the National Employment Office. A part of the wage consists of an activation measure allowance



(mostly for jobs in the social economy sector such as sheltered workshops, community work or home help).

- ***Support for the employed who reduce their working hours***

- a. *Part-time early retirement*

Full-time employees have the possibility to reduce their working hours, while receiving an additional supplement to the part-time wage (paid partly by the employer and partly by the National Employment Office), from the age of 55 years onwards.

- b. *Time credit*

Employees can interrupt their career full-time or part-time for a certain period. During this period, they remain under the same employment contract and receive compensation from the National Employment Office in the form of a career break allowance. After the break, they are entitled to the same rights as before. Different systems are elaborated for the different sectors ('time credit' is the name for the measure in the private sector). In each of the systems, besides a normal form, three special forms exist, targeted at specific needs to interrupt ones career (parental leave, palliative care leave, and medical assistance). From 1 January 2015 time credit without motivation has been abolished as part of the austerity measures of the federal government.

- ***Sickness & Disability Benefits***

- a. *Primary incapacity of work (sickness benefit)*

This term is applicable during the first year during which a person is medically incapable of work, but not because of an occupational injury or disease. The (degree of) incapacity of work has to be recognized by a doctor approved by the social security office. The system exists for both employees and self-employed. In any case, the person should have paid a certain amount of social contributions to be eligible for this benefit. During the first month of work incapacity, employees receive 60% of their gross wage (with a maximum dependent on family situation). The self-employed receive a fixed amount per day depending on the family situation.

- b. *Disability benefit*

The difference between the disability scheme and the sickness scheme is that the disability scheme starts after one has medically incapable of work for more than one year. For the employees, there is a difference in the replacement rates:

- 65% of the gross wage, if the person has dependants
- 55% of the gross wage in the case of a single person
- 40% of the gross wage when the person lives with someone else

All payments are subject to maximum limits per day. The disability benefit for the self-employed is increased by 3 to 4 €/day in the case the business is discontinued.

- c. *Occupational injury*

Workers are covered by an insurance against accidents at work, which each employer is obliged to have. Not only accidents which occur at the workplace but also accidents which happen on the way to or from work are classified as accidents at work. Self-employed persons are not automatically insured against accidents at work. A separate rule applies to civil servants.

- d. *Occupational disease*

There is a list of disorders which are recognised as occupational illnesses and which entitle the person suffering from one of the disorders to compensation. People who suffer from an illness not included on the list must prove that there is an established and direct link between the illness and their work. The benefit is paid for by the Fund for Occupational Diseases. If the disease is of a temporary nature, the

replacement rate is 90% of the last wage. In the case when one becomes permanently disabled, the benefit is calculated according to the degree to which one is declared disabled (in %) and the last wage. All workers and civil servants are insured against occupational illnesses, self-employed persons are not.

*e. Maternity leave*

Maternity leave consists of a period of 15 weeks around the birth of the child, during which the female employee is indemnified by the National Sickness and Invalidity Insurance Institute. The allowance amounts to 82% of the normal wage for the first 30 days of the leave. Afterwards, the replacement rate is reduced to 75%, limited with an installed maximum amount. The 15 weeks can be spread around the foreseen birth date as the mother wishes, starting at the earliest six weeks before the foreseen birth date. In the case of multiple births, maternity leave is extended by two weeks.

*f. Paternity leave*

Paternity leave guarantees to each employee within a period of four months after the birth of the child a leave of 10 days (to be spread as one wishes). During the first three days, the employer continues to pay the full wage. The other days, the National Sickness and Invalidity Insurance Institute pays an allowance of 82% of the wage, limited with a maximum amount per day.

### 1.2.3 Family Allowances

- *Ordinary child allowance*

Child allowance is paid to families with dependent children. In principle, children are dependent if they are younger than 18 years old. There are two exceptions to this rule. On the one hand, the child remains dependent until 21 if he or she is disabled. On the other hand, a child can remain dependent until the age of 25 if he or she is in full-time education (including higher and advanced education), not married, and if his/her net taxable income as well as the number of days a gainful occupation has been exercised does not exceed certain thresholds. The income thresholds are slightly higher for handicapped children as well as for children of lone parents.

In general a beneficiary, usually the father, is eligible for child allowance if his employer (or himself if he is self-employed) pays or paid social security contributions. The relevant rules for the computation of child allowances used to depend on the contribution scheme to which the employer of the beneficiary or the beneficiary himself contributed, but as of 2014 the three contribution schemes (for employers, self-employed and civil servants) are unified. If a beneficiary did not contribute to any of the social security contribution schemes he or she may still be eligible for child allowance through the system of guaranteed child allowance. The amount of child allowance depends on the birth order of the child. The guaranteed child allowance is means tested. Allowances for orphans do not depend on the child's birth order.

- *Supplements to the ordinary child allowance*

*a. Age-related supplements*

Age-related supplements are the same for all schemes as well as for orphans and the guaranteed child allowance.

*b. Social supplements*

The social supplements are primarily for children of beneficiaries that receive a replacement income: retirement pension, survival pension, unemployment benefits (full-time and longer than six months in unemployment), and disability benefits. There are income conditions that must be met by the beneficiary in order to be eligible for social supplements to child benefits.

*c. Supplements for disabled children*

Ordinary child allowances and orphan allowance can be supplemented with an allowance for handicapped children of up to 21 years of age and if the child has a disability of at least 66%. The amount of the supplement is based on the consequences of the condition both for the child himself/herself and for the family in the sense of a diminished degree of social activity and participation.

- ***Birth allowance***

The birth allowance or adoption allowance is granted to all new parents. The birth allowance for the first-born is higher than for all following births. In case of adoption, the allowance is only granted when the child that is adopted is eligible for child benefits. From the second child onwards, birth allowances will be lower, except in case of multiple births. A birth allowance can also be given in case of miscarriage as long as the pregnancy has lasted at least 180 days. The amounts differ over the regions.

- ***Adoption premium***

An adoption premium is granted at the moment of adoption and is independent of the contribution scheme.

- ***Study allowances***

Study allowances are granted to families with school-aged children whose means do not exceed a certain threshold. The study allowances are regulated by the three communities (French, Flemish and German speaking). In the French community, study allowances can be granted upon request to all families with children in secondary or tertiary education. In the Flemish community, all levels of educations (from pre-school to tertiary levels) are entitled to such benefits. The conditions for granting of study allowances as well as their amount depend on the household means and composition.

- ***Parental benefits***

- a. Maternity leave benefit*

Maternity leave benefit (moederschapsrustuitkering) is a benefit received by a new mother who is employed, self-employed or unemployed, if she paid sufficient social security contributions in the last 6 months. For employed and unemployed mothers, the maternity leave should start at least one week before the planned birth date and end at the earliest 9 weeks after the birth. Additionally, 5 weeks (+ 2 weeks in case of a multiple birth) can be added, of which maximum two before the obligatory leave (three in case of a multiple birth). The mother receives a benefit based on her wage/unemployment benefit. A self-employed mother receives a fixed amount per week, and only has 3 weeks obligatory maternity leave, 1 week before the planned birth date and two weeks after the actual birth. Additionally she has 9 (10 if multiple birth) weeks leave of which maximum 2 are taken before the mandatory period of maternity leave. The benefit accompanying the leave is differently calculated for employed, unemployed and self-employed mothers.

- b. Paternity leave benefit*

Paternity leave benefit (vaderschapsverlof) is the right to 10 days paid leave granted to new fathers in the first 4 months after the birth of their child. A female partner of a new mother is granted a birth leave benefit (geboorteverlof). These two benefits are only granted to employees, not to self-employed or unemployed people. The first three days of leave or paid by the employer, and is equal to the gross daily wage, while the other 7 days or paid by the national institute for sickness and disability, and the benefit is then smaller than the gross daily wage.

- c. Adoption leave benefit*

Adoption leave benefit (adoptieverlof) is granted to employees and self-employed who adopted a child younger than 8 years, when no maternity leave benefit was taken up for the child. The duration of the leave is 6 weeks if the child is younger than three, and 4 weeks if the child is between 3 and 8 years.

The amount of weeks is doubled if the child is disabled. Employed parents have to take the leave without interruption, while self-employed can take up the leave, and the accompanying benefit, in a half-time scheme. For employed parents the benefits is dependent on their wage, while self-employed receive a fixed benefit per week full-time, and half of it when they opt for the half-time scheme. The adoption leave benefit is modelled as a maternity/paternity leave benefit in case of adoption after birth, since we cannot distinguish adopted from non-adopted children. If the child is adopted at an older age, the adoption leave benefit is not modelled at all.

### *d. Parental leave benefit*

Parental leave benefits (ouderschapsverlof) is a benefit that is granted to maximum two parents per child, younger than 12. The leave is maximum 4 full-time months. It can be taken up per month, and each month can be taken up in a full-time scheme, half-time or 1/5<sup>th</sup>. In that case the parent keeps on working part-time (1/2 or 1/5 respectively) for resp. two and five months per full-time month. The benefit she receives is equivalently smaller. The benefit received per month is fixed for all employees, and is not dependent on the wage. The benefit is higher for single parents and for parents older than 50 years who take the leave in the 1/5 scheme.

## 1.2.4 Social Assistance

### • *Income support*

If the means of a person are below a certain threshold, that person is eligible for income support. Income support is provided up to the level of the minimum income, i.e. the amount of the benefit is equal to the minimum existence level minus the own means. In principle one needs to apply for social assistance at a local centre for public assistance (CPAS), a body which is present in each municipality. The CPAS have some discretionary power over the acceptance. For example, the CPAS can demand an individualized project for social (re)integration that the applicant has to agree to and follow in order to get and/or keep social assistance. The income support is for unlimited duration but each year the CPAS has to make a re-assessment of the personal situation of the applicant and can withdraw income support based on the results of that inquiry. The beneficiary is bound to contact the CPAS from the moment something changed in his or her personal (financial) situation. The benefit unit is the nuclear family - the couple (cohabiting or married) or single adult plus any dependent children. This means that if a person claims income support his/her spouse is automatically covered, i.e. (s)he cannot claim income support separately. However, income from other first degree family members living together under the same roof and pooling income sources are taken into account for the means-test. Being assessed is the factual income at the moment of application for social assistance at the local Centre for Public Assistance (CPAS). The applicant has to declare all factual income, not only official. Some income sources (e.g. child benefits) are discarded in the means-test.

### • *Income Support for the Elderly*

All persons aged 64 or above are eligible to receive income support for the elderly. There is a distinction for persons living alone and those living with others at the same address. A person without a partner but living with (a) minor child(ren) or adult child(ren) for whom child benefits are received and/or relatives (descendants) are considered as living alone and are eligible to receive the increased amount. Income support for the elderly is an individual right whether being married or not.

### • *Contribution towards disabled persons*

Disabled persons receive an allowance in line with their age and level of disability. The parents of disabled children receive higher child allowance if the child (until the age of 21) is at least two-thirds disabled. Disabled persons older than 21 receive an income replacement benefit if they can prove that their ability to earn an income is reduced by two-thirds compared to that of a non-disabled person. The

disabled person receives an integration allowance if a medical examination shows that the person's ability to live independently is restricted.

### 1.2.5 Other

- *Flemish care insurance*

The recently installed Flemish care insurance (2002) is an exception to the nationally organized social security system. It is a collective insurance to provide partial reimbursement for the costs of care (informal care, professional home care, or professional residential care). The care insurance is compulsory for inhabitants of Flanders, and optionally available to inhabitants of Brussels and to Europeans working in Belgium. The annual fee - €25 (in 2011) per person older than 25 - is to be paid to the health insurance fund one is registered with. From 2015 onward, the annual fee is €50.

### 1.2.6 Scope and scale

Table 1.1 Social benefits: recipients (as % of population) [2015-2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Total population</b>	<b>11,209,044</b>	<b>11,250,585</b>	<b>11,303,528</b>	<b>11,376,070</b>	n.a
Pensions (old age + survivors)	1,979,521	2,015,338	2,042,746	2,098,197	n.a
Unemployment Benefits	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Unemployment after employment	356,448	347,238	337,322	311,622	n.a
Unemployment after studies	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Unemployed older employees	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Full-time early retirement	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Part-time early retirement	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Temporary unemployed	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Part-time employed with income guarantee	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Other activation measures	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Career break (time-credit)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Sickness & disability benefits	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Maternity leave	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
(children giving right to) family allowances	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
(children giving right to) birth allowances	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Social assistance	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Income support*	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Income support for the elderly	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a

Notes: All categories group the different social insurance schemes. (\*) for income support, the number of benefit units is taken as an approximation for the number of recipients. However, in the third category of income support, at least two people (and possibly the whole family) are the beneficiaries of the benefit. Only counting the benefit unit implies that these families only count for “one” person. Therefore, it can be expected that the number presented, which refers to the number of benefit units, is a serious underestimation of the number of people that benefit from the social assistance. However, no statistics are held on the number of beneficiaries inside the benefit units, so it was impossible to calculate the percentage of *persons* that are recipients.

Source: Vademecum Social Security, RVA, RIZIV, POD MI, RVP, RKW, FBZ, FAO

Table 1.2 Social benefits: annual expenditure (as % of total government expenditure) [2013 – 2019]

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Government Expenditure for Social Protection (EUROSTAT) in millions of €	118,423	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Pensions (old age + survivors)	30.87	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Unemployment Benefits	7.63	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Unemployment after employment	3.31	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Unemployment after finishing studies	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Unemployed older employees	0.75	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Full-time early retirement	1.35	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Part-time early retirement	0.00	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Temporary unemployed	0.70	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Part-time employed with inc. guarantee	0.21	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other activation measures	0.61	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Career break (time-credit)	0.70	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Sickness & disability benefits	5.13	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Maternity leave	0.55	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Family allowances	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Birth allowances	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Social assistance	1.07	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Income support	0.67	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Income support for the elderly	0.40	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Notes: All categories group the different social insurance schemes.

No data available on government expenditure and expenditure on social protection in 2013-2019.

No data available for the expenditure of unemployment benefits after studies in 2012-2019.

Source: Vademecum Social Security, RVA, RIZIV, POD MI, RVP, RKW, FBZ, FAO

### 1.3 Social contributions

Social insurance contributions are different for wage earners on the public and private labour market, for blue and white collar workers, and for earned wages and for replacement income.

**Employers:** employers' social insurance contributions are calculated on the gross wage. The final total ratio ranges from 33% to 40.73% of the gross wage, dependent on the size of the firm and whether the employee is a blue or white collar worker.

**Employees:** social insurance contributions are paid on total gross earnings without ceiling and before income tax deductions. The tax base includes any advantages in money (and a limited number of fringe benefits), granted by the employer to the employee as a remuneration for the labour supplied. The standard rate of the social insurance contribution is 13.07% of total gross earnings. Social insurance contributions are calculated slightly differently for some income components of blue collar workers and white collar workers.

**Civil servants:** Social insurance contributions for wage earners on the public labour market *without statutory service* are the same as those for wage earners on the private labour market. The social insurance contributions for civil servants *with statutory service* are different than those for wage earners. The standard rate of the social insurance contribution for the civil servant is 11.05% of total gross earnings.

**The self-employed:** The full-time self-employed pay social insurance contributions on a quarterly basis based on their income in the third calendar year preceding the year of contribution. If the self-employed has not yet been active for three years a lump sum amount of contributions is levied which will be regulated later against real earned income.

**Retirement pensions, survival pensions and early retirement pensions:** Retirement and survival pension benefits are subject to a social insurance contribution of 3.55% for the funding of sickness and disability insurance. However, if the contribution would bring the pension amount below a certain threshold no contributions are due.

**Disability benefits:** On disability benefits received by wage earners a social insurance contribution of 3.5% is due to fund the pension insurance scheme. Again the contribution may not be due if the amount of benefits falls below a certain threshold. No contributions are due on benefits for primary disablement (first year).

**Occupational injury and disease:** The percentage applicable is 13.07% on benefits for either permanent or temporary disablement but no contribution is due on benefits for assistance by a third person.

**The unemployed:** do not pay social insurance contributions.

**Special professional categories:** a number of exceptions to the general calculation rules apply for a number of professional categories (independent child minders, seafarers, professional athletes with an employment contract, waiters, students employed by student contract, seasonal workers in horticulture or agriculture). Exceptions exist for both employee as well as employer contributions.

- *Scope and scale*

Table 1.3 Social contributions: annual revenue (in millions of €) [2015 – 2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Social contributions</b>	58,628	57,931	59,377	n.a.	n.a.
Employees (incl. civil servants)	16,962	17,110	17,642	n.a.	n.a.
Employers (incl. public administr.)	36,207	35,152	35,961	n.a.	n.a.
Self-employed	3,975	4,071	4,145	n.a.	n.a.
Unemployed	0	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Pensions	1,371	1,483	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other	113	115	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Notes: The other-category contains mainly contributions on disability benefits and occupational injury and disease.

Source: OECD revenue statistics – details of tax revenue, Belgium (2012-2015).

## 1.4 Taxes

### 1.4.1 Personal income taxes

Personal income taxes are calculated by applying a progressive rate structure to the net taxable income of an individual person. Net taxable income equals gross income minus the sum of social insurance contributions, professional expenses (only for working persons), and deductible expenses. For a more detailed description of the tax system, refer to section 2.6.

The tax calculation system is individual; however, in order to apply the correct credits and allowances, the level at which the tax return is to be filled is the nuclear family: the single person or married couple together with dependent children (and, occasionally, other dependent persons). To qualify as dependent the person's own income may not surpass certain limits. Otherwise the person is considered a separate tax unit.

In the case of one-earner couples the tax legislator allows for income sharing between spouses up to a certain limit. If one of the spouses earns less than 30% of total net taxable income from professional

activity, income between spouses is shared as if the higher earning spouse earned 70% of total household income from professional activity and the other spouse 30%.

Replacement incomes are taxable with the exception of social assistance, war pensions and benefits in case of a work-related accident or sickness for a person without any other income. Furthermore, replacement incomes give right to a tax credit, and total taxes on replacement income can be reduced to zero if they are below a given threshold and are the sole source of income.

### 1.4.2 Property and wealth taxes

Real estate taxes for house-owners are regulated at the regional level. The tax base is the “cadastral income”, an estimate of the hypothetical annual net rental income of the property. This is taxed at a basic levy rate of 2.5% for the Flemish Region and at a 1.25% rate for the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region. The municipalities decide on the level of the surtax (opcentiemen/centimes additionnelles). Reductions apply for specific family situations (having children, disabled household members), modest size and energy-efficiency of the dwelling. The real estate taxes are organised and collected at the regional level (slightly different systems apply in Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia).

Investment income is taxed at the source. On income from dividends, a 30% rate applies. Interest income from bonds is taxed at 15%, as is interest income from ones savings account. For natural persons, however, this last category is exempt from taxation as long as the interest income does not exceed a certain maximum amount.

For individuals or households, there exists no property tax on assets (or wealth tax). However, a number of taxes do apply on transactions of property (both movable and immovable). For immovable property, the most important category consists of registration taxes. For movable property, the main tax is the tax on stock exchange and carry-over transactions.

The inheritance tax can be seen as a form of wealth tax for individuals. This is a complex system with different rates (ranging from 3% to 80%) applying to different forms in which an inheritance can take place (money or in kind, descendants of which order).

### 1.4.3 Taxes on goods and services

The standard VAT rate is 21%. A lower rate of 6% exists for basic needs goods and services (e.g. food, books, pharmaceutical products, coffins) or 12% on a very limited number of intermediate-needs goods and services (e.g. construction of social housing).

Excise duties are levied on a number of products. Some important examples are mineral oils, tobacco, various alcoholic beverages, packaging.

A tax applies to individuals and corporations owning motor vehicles. The amount due depends on the type of motor vehicle, the cylinder capacity, the horse power and the type of fuel used.



- *Scope and scale*

Table 1.4 Taxes: revenue (in millions of €) [2015 – 2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Annual revenue</b>	<b>183,260</b>	<b>185,536</b>	<b>194,376</b>	<b>201,058</b>	<b>n.a.</b>
Most important components for households / natural persons:					
<b>Direct taxes</b>					
Personal income taxes	46,181	45,825	47,708	n.a.	n.a.
Real estate tax (part paid by hh)	3,407	3,535	3,586	n.a.	n.a.
Investment income tax	4,104	3,993	3,759	n.a.	n.a.
Registration taxes	3,899	4,065	4,342	n.a.	n.a.
Tax on stock exchange and carry-over transactions	287	219	296	n.a.	n.a.
Inheritance tax	2,510	2,365	2,526	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Indirect taxes</b>					
VAT	27,577	28,721	29,784	n.a.	n.a.
Excise duties	8,658	9,453	9,797	n.a.	n.a.
Motor vehicle tax (part paid by hh)	1,163	1,169	1,210	n.a.	n.a.

Notes: The annual revenue numbers reported in the first line exclude the revenue from social insurance contributions

Source: OECD Revenue Statistics – details of tax revenue, Belgium  
National Bank of Belgium, National Accounts 2016

## 2. SIMULATION OF TAXES AND BENEFITS IN EUROMOD

### 2.1 Scope of simulation

Not all the taxes and benefits mentioned in the previous section are simulated by EUROMOD. Some are entirely beyond its scope. Others are not possible to simulate accurately with the available data. They are included in the final output, but the rules governing them may not be changed by the model. Table 2.1 lists the main benefit categories, Table 2.2 the social insurance contributions and taxes.

Table 2.1 Simulation of benefits in EUROMOD [2015 – 2019]

	Variable name(s)	Treatment in EUROMOD					Why not fully simulated?
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Pensions	poa, psu	I	I	I	I	I	No data on contribution history
Unemployment benefits	bun, byr	I	I	I	I	I	In the baseline simulation, UBs are taken from the data.
Ordinary UB	bun_s	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	Simulation of UB and is implemented for new unemployed and is based on a number of assumptions. See below.
Early retirement benefit	byr_s	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	
Sickness & Disability benefits	pdi, phl	I	I	I	I	I	No information on disability
Family benefits							
Maternity leave	bfapl	I	I	I	I	I	No data to simulate
Child allowance	bch_s	S	S	S	S	S	No information on disability: child allowance for disabled children not simulated. No information on child care use.
Birth allowance	bchba_s	S	S	S	S	S	
Education related allowances	bed_s	I	I	I	I	S	No information on the community to which the households belong.
Social assistance							
Income support	bsa_s	S	S	S	S	S	Simulation of IS is based on a number of assumptions
Income support for elderly	bsaoa_s	S	S	S	S	S	Simulation of IS for the elderly is based on a number of assumptions and switched OFF in the baseline
Housing benefit	bho	I	I	I	I	I	No data to simulate

Notes: “E”: *excluded* from the model as it is neither included in the micro-data nor simulated;

“I”: *included* in the micro-data but not simulated;

“PS” *partially simulated* as some of its relevant rules are not simulated;

“S” *simulated* although some minor or very specific rules may not be simulated.

Table 2.2 Simulation of taxes and social contributions in EUROMOD [2015 – 2019]

	Variable name(s)	Treatment in EUROMOD					Why not fully simulated?
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
<b>Social contributions</b>							
Employees	tscee_s	S	S	S	S	S	Calculations for self-employed are based on the number of assumptions
Civil servants	tscee_s	S	S	S	S	S	
Self-employed	tscse_s	S	S	S	S	S	
Pensions	tscpe_s	S	S	S	S	S	
Disability	tscdb_s	S	S	S	S	S	
special contribution	tsceesp_s	S	S	S	S	S	
<b>Taxes</b>							
Personal income tax	tin_s	S	S	S	S	S	
Real estate	tinprtahm_s	S	S	S	S	S	
Investment income tax	tinkt_s	S	S	S	S	S	A uniform tax rate of 15% is assumed
Property transactions	-	E	E	E	E	E	No information available
Inheritance	-	E	E	E	E	E	No information available
VAT	-	E	E	E	E	E	No information available
Excise duties	-	E	E	E	E	E	No information available
Motor vehicle tax	-	E	E	E	E	E	No information available

Notes: “E” policy is *excluded* from the model’s scope as it is neither included in the microdata nor simulated; “PS” policy is *partially simulated* as some of its relevant rules are not simulated; “S” policy is *simulated* although some minor or very specific rules may not be simulated. Although there is a variable in SILC for property/wealth taxes, it is empty for Belgium, so it cannot be included in the model.

### 2.1.1 Part simulated tax-benefit components

- *Part-simulated benefits for unemployment*

In the simulation of unemployment benefits (bun\_s) the original value of unemployment benefits in the input data (bun) is used to determine eligibility. Unemployment benefits are not simulated in the baseline. The policy is switched to *toggle*. In the simulation of unemployment benefits there are three instances in which the calculation makes use of the original value of unemployment benefits in the input data (bun).

First, in the simulation of months in unemployment (i\_lunmy) the bun variable is used. Even if the initial value of months in unemployment (lunmy) is zero, this will be set to 1 if original unemployment benefits are positive. The output variable is i\_lunmy, reflecting number of months for which unemployment benefits are simulated.

Second, the original value bun is used in calculating the amount of months worked, to check if the qualifying period is met, i.e. i\_bunmw. If the initial value of unemployment benefits, bun, is zero, and the initial value of number of months in unemployment, lunmy, is positive, the months worked are set to zero. Only when the initial value of unemployment benefits (bun) is higher than zero there is accounted for age (dag), work history (liwwh) and months worked in the year (liwmy) in the simulation of months worked, i\_bunmw. This simulated variable is used in checking if the qualifying period is met, i.e. if the individual has worked enough to receive unemployment benefits.

Third, also in the simulation of the previous wage, yempv\_s, necessary to determine the amount of simulated unemployment benefits, is based on the original value of bun. Only when bun is positive, an imputed wage is used to determine the previous wage. When bun is equal to zero, and the initial value of months in unemployment (lunmy) is positive, the previous wage is assumed zero. When the simulated unemployment benefit is for newly unemployed individuals, an add on is used (yempv\_a). This results

in the simulated previous wage, `yempy_s`. All three variables `i_lunmy`, `i_bunmw` and `yempv_s` determine the value of `bun_s` (cfr. 0).

However, in the model that is now released, `bun` is set to zero in the beginning of the policy that is simulating `bun_s`. The reason is to avoid a double count of `bun` and `bun_s` in the income lists. Since the `bun_s` policy is on *toggle* in the baseline the `bun` variable is not affected. The simulation of unemployment benefits, `bun_s`, will always be zero, since it starts from the `bun=0` case for all individuals.

- ***Early retirement benefits***

Early retirement benefits, `byr_s`, are only simulated for those individuals that have an initial value for early retirement benefits, `byr`, that is positive. In other words, the eligibility condition of `byr_s` is having `byr` higher than zero. This policy is *off* in the baseline.

## 2.2 Simulated policies and order of simulation

### 2.2.1 Simulated policies

- ***Order of the simulated policies***

Table 2.3 shows the order of simulation (i.e. the spine).

At the beginning of the spine, in the policy called `BTA_be`, the user finds the switch related to the take-up correction of Income Support. In the baseline, the correction is switched ON and simulated values of Income Support are included in the disposable income. See section 0, for more details.

The first four policies concern the simulation of the social insurance contributions: for employees (including civil servants), for employers, for the self-employed, for pensioners (including early retirement pensioners), and for disability benefits. The social insurance contributions are deducted from gross income in order to calculate taxes.

For workers, professional expenses are additionally deducted in order to attain the taxable income. They are computed in the policy `tintace_be`.

The next policy `tinwh_be` contains the withholding tax legislation. In the baseline this policy is switched off, as the standard approach is to calculate final taxes.

Parental benefits policies - maternity benefit `bmact_be`, paternity benefit `bfact_be` and parental leave benefit - can be switched by the users and must be switched off in the baseline.

Policies `bun_be` and `byr_be`, which follow next, are also switched off in the baseline. They can be used for calculation of unemployment benefits for new unemployed (e.g. for modelling employment transitions or for calculation of replacements rates).

The following policies `tprhm_be` and `tin_be` calculate the final taxes.

After calculation of taxes due there is also a special contribution for social security (due by all wage earners). This contribution is computed separately since it is applied after taxes and hence does not influence net taxable income.

Following the contributions and taxes, the benefits are simulated. Family allowances include the birth allowance and the child benefits. Next, the most important categories of social assistance are simulated, i.e. income support as well as income support for the elderly. The latter is switched off in the baseline (see section 2.3.8 for more details).

Table 2.3 Simulated policies [2015 – 2019]

Section	Policy	Description	Main output	Year				
				2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
2.4.0	tscee_be	Employee social insurance contribution	tscee_s; tsbdb_s; tsceerd_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.4.0	tscer_be	Employer social insurance contribution	tscer_s; tscerrd_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.4.3	tspe_be	Pensioners contributions to health and disability insurance and solidarity contribution	tspe_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.4.2	tsce_be	Self-employed social insurance contribution	tsce_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.4.5	tcj_be	Flemish Care Insurance contribution	tcj_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.5	tintace_be	Deduction of professional expenses	tintace_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.5	tinwh_be	Withholding income tax; withholding special social insurance contribution	tinwh_s; tscwheesp_s	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF
2.3.4	bmact_be	Maternity leave benefit	bmact_s	SWITCH	SWITCH	SWITCH	SWITCH	SWITCH
2.3.5	bpact_be	Paternity leave benefit	bpact_s	SWITCH	SWITCH	SWITCH	SWITCH	SWITCH
2.3.6	bfapl_be	Parental leave benefit	bfapl_s	SWITCH	SWITCH	SWITCH	SWITCH	SWITCH
2.3.9	bun_be	Unemployment benefits	bun_s	TOGGLE	TOGGLE	TOGGLE	TOGGLE	TOGGLE
2.3.9	byr_be	Early retirement benefit	byr_s	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2.8	tprhm_be	Advance levy on immovable property	tprhm_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.5	tin_be	Income tax	tin_s; tinkt_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.4.2	tsceesp_be	Special social insurance contribution	tsceesp_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.3.2	bchba_be	Birth allowance	bchba_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.3.1	bch_be	Child benefits	bch_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.3.3	bed_be	Study allowances	bed_s					X
2.3.7	bsa_be	Income support	bsa_s	X	X	X	X	X
2.3.8	bsaoa_be	Income support for the elderly	bsaoa_s	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF

## 2.2.2 Structural changes in simulated policies, 2015-2019

- **Unemployment benefit**

- Increased dependency of benefit amounts on time spent in unemployment*

From 2013 onwards, the unemployment benefits become more dependent on the time that is spent in unemployment and one's work history before becoming unemployed. Benefits during the first three months are increased, and are thereafter decreased more rapidly over time. Also minimum limits for single persons and heads of family are lowered. Exceptions apply for persons with a work history of more than 20 years, for elderly unemployed (55+), and persons with a disability of at least 33%.

A complex bracket system with more than 60 categories is introduced, making the amount of benefit received closely dependent on the time spent in unemployment and previous work history. Because exactly this information is lacking from the SILC data, the simulation of the unemployment benefits is only a rough approximation.

- Waiting period*

The waiting period to receive unemployment benefits after studies is changed in 2012 from an age-dependent system to an age-independent system.

- *The federal tax shift*

Table 2.4 Overview of the federal tax shift for the period [2016-2020]

	<b>Impact on EUROMOD?</b>
<b>Tax decreases</b>	
<i>Personal income tax</i>	
◦ Introduction of one uniform tax free amount (as of January 2020)	Yes
◦ Abolition of the 30%-bracket in the federal tax schedule (as of January 2018)	Yes
◦ Increase of the upper limit of the 40%-bracket in the federal tax schedule (as of 2019)	Yes
◦ Introduction of one uniform rate of 30% for the lump sum deduction of professional expenses of employees (as of January 2018)	Yes
◦ Expansion of the fiscal workbonus (as of August 2015)	Yes
<i>Social security contributions</i>	
◦ Expansion of the reduction of social security contributions for employees (the social workbonus) (as of August 2015)	Yes
◦ Decrease of social security contributions for employers from 32.4% of gross earnings to 25% of gross wages (as of 2018)	Yes
◦ Decrease of social security contributions of self-employed from 22% of gross earnings to 20.5% of gross earnings (as of 2018)	Yes
◦ Expansion of the exemption of social security contributions for the first six recruitments by SMEs	No
<i>Corporate income tax</i>	
◦ Increase of tax deduction for investments by small companies from 4% to 8% (as of 2016)	No
◦ New tax deduction for investments in high-tech and start-ups	No
<b>Tax increases</b>	
<i>Indirect taxes</i>	
◦ Increase of VAT on electricity from 6% to 21% (as of September 1 <sup>st</sup> 2015)	No
◦ Gradual increase of excise taxes on diesel, alcohol and tobacco products (between November 1 <sup>st</sup> 2015 and January 2020)	No
◦ Introduction of a so-called “health tax” in the form of an increase in excises on sugar-containing beverages (as of January 1 <sup>st</sup> 2016)	No
<i>Capital income taxes</i>	
◦ Increase of regular capital income tax from 25% to 27% (withheld at the source)	Yes
◦ Introduction of a so-called “speculation tax” on capital gains from the sale of stocks and related financial instruments within six months after their acquisition	No
◦ Introduction of a new tax (the so-called “Cayman tax”) on capital income to Belgian residents originating from legal structures abroad	No
◦ Increase of taxes on financial transactions concerning stocks, real estate certificates and capitalization funds	No
<i>Corporate income tax</i>	
◦ Expansion of the system of “liquidation reserves” which allows small companies to assign part of their profits to a so-called liquidation reserve which is subject to an anticipatory tax of 10%, but on which later on no capital income tax is due when the reserve is liquidated to pay out dividends to the shareholders	No
◦ Introduction of an additional contribution of the financial sector in the form of the partial exclusion of bank capital from the tax deduction applicable to risk capital	No
◦ Introduction of a new tax on diamond traders equal to 0.55% of annual turnover	No
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	
◦ Non-indexation of certain tax expenditures until 2019 (such as tax credits for replacement incomes, the deduction for interests from savings in a savings account up to €1,880,...)	Yes
◦ Introduction of a partially advanced levy on retirement savings between 2015 and 2019 at a rate of 1% of pension capital	No
◦ Increase of court fees	No

As of 2016, the first of a series of “tax shift” measures have been implemented. This “tax shift” was conceived by the new federal government, which took office in October 2014, and consists of a considerable number of tax measures set to roll out between 2016 and 2020. The aim is to shift the burden of taxes and social security contributions away from labour towards non-labour sources of income such as sales (indirect taxes) and capital income. The measures that have already been implemented as of 2016 will be discussed in more detail further on. Table 2.4 provides a broad overview of the full set of measures which are to be implemented between 2016 and 2020 as part of the federal tax shift.

### 2.3 Social benefits

#### 2.3.1. Child benefit (kinderbijslag / allocations familiales) (*bch\_s*)

- *Brief description*

Following the 6<sup>th</sup> state reform, child benefits are regulated by the communities from 1 January 2019. Different systems are introduced in Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels and the German-speaking community. Flanders and the German-speaking community, the new system is fully implemented from 2019. In Wallonia, the reform takes place in two stages: some new rules are incorporated in 2019 but the transition will be complete by 1 January 2020. In Brussels, nothing changes in 2019.

##### A. Pre-2019 system

Child allowance is paid to families with dependent children. In principle, children are dependent if they are younger than 18 years old. The exceptions to this rule are twofold. On the one hand, the child remains dependent until 21 if he or she is disabled. On the other hand, a child can remain dependent until the age of 25 if he or she is in full-time education (including higher and advanced education), not married, and whose net taxable income as well as the number of days a gainful occupation has been exercised do not exceed certain thresholds. The income thresholds are slightly higher for disabled children as well as for children of lone parents. In EUROMOD the child benefits are simulated for dependent children younger than 18 years and for children 18 until 25 years old if the child is in full time education. Child benefits for disabled children cannot be calculated because of limitations in the data. Income thresholds for dependent children are also not simulated in EUROMOD.

The amount of child benefits depends on the birth rank of the child. The oldest one gets rank 1, the second oldest rank 2 and all the following children rank 3. If the number of beneficiary children decreases the remaining ones get a lower rank. The second oldest then becomes rank 1, etc.

The simulated supplements to the child allowance include a yearly supplement, monthly age-related supplements and monthly social supplements<sup>1</sup>. The *yearly supplement* (previously called the “back to school-premium”) is a yearly allowance for children in all schemes. The amount depends on the age of the child. *Age-related supplements* are the same for all schemes as well as for orphans and guaranteed family allowance. Only for the self-employed scheme there is a difference in that there is no age supplement for the youngest child that gives a right to child benefits nor is there an age supplement for an only child. The *social supplements* are primarily for children of beneficiaries that receive a replacement income: retirement pension, survival pension, unemployment benefits (full-time and longer than six months in unemployment), and disability benefits. There are income conditions that must be met in order to be eligible for social supplements to child benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> Supplements for disabled children are not simulated as this information is not available in the data.

### B. New systems

#### *Flanders (from 2019)*

The new system in Flanders is called ‘Groeipakket’. It applies to all children living in Flanders. The children born before 2019 continue to receive the old amounts plus some potential new supplements. The children born after 2019, those who were not entitled to child benefits before, and those who are orphaned receive new amounts. Given that all children are eligible to the new system, the means-test has been withdrawn. The new base amounts are no longer rank-dependent under the new system.

The attribution rules to social supplements become income-based and no longer depend on the professional situation of the parents. Social supplements are thus no longer limited to children of lone parents or beneficiaries of retirement pension, survival pension, unemployment and disability benefits.

The former yearly age-related supplement is replaced by a new ‘universal participation supplement’, that applies to all children (without distinction between recipients of social supplements and others). Two new participation supplements are introduced for all children: the childcare supplement and the pre-school yearly supplement.

#### *Wallonia (two-stage implementation in 2019 and 2020)*

In Wallonia, new rules are introduced in 2019 but the old amounts continue to apply for all children till 2020. From 2020, all newborns will receive new amounts. From 2019, all children turning 18 in 2019 will remain eligible to child benefits until 21 unless they receive unemployment benefits or work more than 240 euros per quarter. Orphan allocations still applies even if the surviving parent cohabitates with a new partner. As in Flanders, all low-income households can claim social supplements, whatever their professional situation.

#### *Brussels (from 2020)*

In Brussels, nothing changes until 2020. From 2020, a new system will be introduced for all children, that will receive new amounts unless they are below the previous amounts.

- ***Definitions***

The benefit unit is the nuclear family (tu\_cb\_be). The child allowance is paid to the person responsible for the upbringing of the child (in EUROMOD, the head of the tax unit is the default).

- ***Eligibility conditions***

There is no additional eligibility rule apart from the presence of dependent children in the family. The actual amounts, however, can differ slightly among the contributory categories of the beneficiary.

In Brussels and Wallonia, the beneficiary, in general the father, opens a right to child allowance if his employer (or himself if he is self-employed) pays or has paid social security contributions. The relevant rules for the computation of child allowances used to depend on the contribution scheme to which the employer of the beneficiary or the beneficiary himself contributed, but as of July 2014 the three contribution schemes (for employers, self-employed and civil servants) are unified. In case the beneficiary is currently not active on the labour market he can open a right to child allowance if he is sick, disabled or inactive due to occupational hazard or disease, if he is unemployed, or if he is a pensioner. If a beneficiary did not contribute to any of the social security contribution schemes he or she may still open a right to child allowance through the system of guaranteed child allowance. The guaranteed child allowance is means tested.

In Flanders, all children are entitled to child benefits from 2019.



In EUROMOD, the schemes of child allowance for wage earners, child allowance for self-employed and the guaranteed child allowance are simulated for the years before 2014. The scheme of child allowance for wage earners in the public sector is the same as the scheme of child allowance for wage earners in the private sector. From 2014 onwards only two schemes of child allowances are simulated: one system for employees, self-employed and wage earners in the public sector and another system for the guaranteed child allowances. From 2019, different systems are implemented for the three regions. The German-speaking community system is not simulated.

To be eligible for child allowance at least one of the parents of the dependent child has to receive an income from employment or self-employment, a sickness or disability benefit, an old age pension, a survivor pension, an early retirement pension or and unemployment benefit. If a person is not eligible for child allowances and yet is a parent of a dependent child, he or she is eligible for the guaranteed child allowance.

- **Income test**

- A. Old common system (still applied in Brussels and partially in Wallonia)

Before 2019 in all regions and in Brussels and Wallonia in 2019, the guaranteed child allowance is means tested and is for the most destitute families only. To be eligible the own means of the beneficiary and his or her partner (TU: *tu\_cb\_be*) may not exceed limits that are increased by 20% for each child from the second onward. Child benefits, scholarships, maintenance allowances, alimony, army indemnities, rents obtained by non-insured pensioners, allowances from private or public assistance (social assistance) and cadastral income are not included in the means test. The following formula is applied:

$$\text{Base amount} + \text{base amount} * 0.2 * [\text{number of children in the Tax Unit (tu\_cb\_be)}]$$

Table 2.5 Quarterly maximum amounts means test of the guaranteed child allowance [2015 – 2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*
Means test	4062.82	4144.08	4144.08	4260.25	4,311.10

Note: (\*) For 2019, the means test no longer exists in Flanders.

In order to be eligible for social supplements to child benefits, there are also income conditions that must be met. For lone parents with children the total amount of the replacement incomes and incomes from professional activity may not exceed the amounts of the means test depending on the household type.

Table 2.6 Means test for social supplements (gross amounts per month) [2015-2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*
Lone parents	2338.47	2385.24	2385.24	2452.41	2,501.28
Couples	2414.54	2462.83	2462.83	2531.55	2,582.00

Note: (\*) For 2019, this means test is only applied in Brussels.

- B. New systems in Flanders and Wallonia

From 2019, all children living in Flanders are entitled to child benefits so the means-tested benefits no longer exist. Moreover, the right to social supplements can be granted to all families in Flanders and Wallonia, whatever the source of incomes. The right only depends on incomes and the same threshold of 2582 Euro applies of to all families.

- **Benefit amount**

**Ordinary allowance**

A. Old common system

The *ordinary child allowance* received increases with the rank of the child. This gives Belgium a pro-natalist family benefit scheme (see Table 2.7). The amounts given below are the amounts for Flanders from 2017. They are 2% higher in Wallonia and in Brussels as of 2017, when Flanders skipped a standard indexation of all child benefits. These amounts are still applied in Wallonia and Brussels and for all children born before 2019 in Flanders.

Table 2.7 Amounts of the ordinary child allowance under the old system (Flanders\*, euro per month) [2015-2019]

Rank	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1 (oldest)	90.28	92.09	92.09	92.09	93.93
2	167.05	170.39	170.39	170.39	173.80
3	249.41	254.40	254.40	254.40	259.49

Note: (\*) Between 2017 and 2019 amounts are 2% higher for Wallonia and Brussels.

B. New system in Flanders

For all new-born in Flanders, the *ordinary child allowance* is no longer rank-dependent: it is equal to 162.20 Euro for all children. A supplement of 81.60 Euro is granted to children who lost one parent and of 163.20 Euro for those who lost their two parents.

**Yearly supplement**

A. Old common system (no longer applied in Flanders)

The yearly supplement increases with the age of the child. Table 2.8 shows the premium for the different age groups and Table 2.9 shows the supplement for persons who are eligible for one of the other supplements (i.e. social supplements and/or supplements for lone parents, disabled children or orphans). From 2013 onwards, children who are entitled to one of the aforementioned supplements receive an increased yearly supplement.

Table 2.8 Amounts of the yearly supplement under the old system (Flanders\*, euro per year) [2015-2019]

Age	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019**
0-5	20.00	20.40	20.40	20.40	21.23
6-11	43.00	43.86	43.86	43.86	45.63
12-17	60.00	61.20	61.20	61.20	63.67
18-24	80.00	81.60	81.60	81.60	84.89

Note: (\*) For 2017 and 2018 amounts are 2% higher for Wallonia and Brussels. (\*\*) In 2019, this supplement is replaced by the universal participation supplement in Flanders.

Table 2.9 Supplement for persons eligible for social supplements under the old system (Flanders\*, euro per year) [2015 – 2018]

Age	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019**
0-5	27.60	28.16	28.16	28.16	29.29
6-11	58.59	59.76	59.76	59.76	62.17
12-17	82.02	83.66	83.66	83.66	87.04
18-24	110.42	112.62	112.62	112.62	117.17

Note: (\*) For 2017 and 2018 amounts are 2% higher for Wallonia and Brussels. (\*\*) In 2019, this supplement disappears in Flanders.

#### B. New system for all children in Flanders

In Flanders, the former yearly age-related supplement is replaced by a new universal participation supplement, that applies to all children whatever their birth date. The age brackets change and no more distinction is made between recipients of social supplements and others. Table 2.10 gives the amounts of this new participation supplement.

Table 2.10 Universal participation supplement for all children in Flanders (euro per year) [2019]

Age	2019
0-4	20.40
5-11	35.70
12-17	51.00
18-24	61.20

On top of the universal participation supplement, two new participation supplements are introduced for all children in Flanders. The childcare supplement is granted to children that go to nonsubsidized private child care services. It amounts €3.23 per day of attendance. The pre-school yearly supplement (kleutertoeslag), is given to pre-school children between 3 and 4 years old. It is equal to €132.60 per year.

#### Age-related supplements

##### A. Old common system

*Age-related supplements* also increase with the age of the child (this also goes for orphans and guaranteed family allowance). The calculation rules are summarized in Table 2.11. They are still granted in Brussels and Wallonia and to children born before 2019 in Flanders.

Table 2.11 Amounts of age-related supplements under the old system (Flanders\*, euro per month) [2015 – 2019]

Rank	Age	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1	6-11	15.73	16.04	16.04	16.04	16.36
1	12-17	23.95	24.43	24.43	24.43	24.92
1	18-24	33.69	28.16	28.16	28.16	28.72
Other	6-11	31.36	31.99	31.99	31.99	32.63
Other	12-17	47.92	48.88	48.88	48.88	49.86
Other	18-24	60.93	62.15	62.15	62.15	63.40

Note: (\*) Between 2017 and 2019 amounts are 2% higher for Wallonia and Brussels.

B. New system in Flanders

The system that applies to new-borns in Flanders ('Groeipakket') does not include age-related supplements.

**Social supplements**

A. Old common system

Before 2019, *Social supplements* can be granted according to the social status of the beneficiary of the child benefit. Social supplements were primarily for children of beneficiaries that receive a replacement income: retirement pension, survival pension, unemployment benefits (full-time and longer than six months in unemployment) and disability benefits under a certain threshold. In 2019, eligibility remained the same in Brussels but changed in Flanders and Wallonia. The level of income becomes the only condition for granting the social supplement.

The amounts of the supplements are summarized in Table 2.12. For the disabled beneficiaries, the amounts differ for the first child. For lone parents, the social supplement is higher from the third child and following children.

Table 2.12 Amounts of the social supplements under the old system (Flanders\*, euro per month) [2015-2019]

Rank	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<i>Old common system</i>					
1	45.96	46.88	46.88	46.88	47.81
+ disabled employee	98.88	100.86	100.86	100.86	102.88
2	28.49	29.06	29.06	29.06	29.64
3	5.00	5.10	5.10	5.10	5.20
+ lone parent	22.97	23.43	23.43	23.43	23.90

Note: (\*) Between 2017 and 2019 amounts are 2% higher for Wallonia and Brussels.

B. New system in Flanders

The new Flemish system ('groeipakket') grants different amount of social supplements to new-borns. Lone parent families or families with disabled beneficiaries no longer receive a higher supplement. The amount depends on the number of children and not on the rank of the child. Families with more than three children and an income above 30,984 Euro can also receive a supplement.

Table 2.13 Amounts of the social supplements under the new system in Flanders (euro per month) [2015-2019]

Number of children	2019
1 to 2 children (income below €30,984)	51.00
+3 children (income below €30,984)	81.60
+3 children (income between €30,984 and €61,200)	61.20

### 2.3.2 Birth allowance (geboortepremie / prime de naissance) (*bchba\_s*)

From 2019, different rules are implemented in the three regions.

- **Brief description**

The birth allowance is granted to the parents of every child that is born. The adoption allowance is given to the parents that adopt a child and is eligible for child benefits. It is a fixed allowance that is not means tested. The amount only depends on the rank of the child (first-born or not). If the first-borns are twins then the amount for a first-born applies for both. A birth allowance can also be given in case of miscarriage as long as the pregnancy has lasted at least 180 days. The amounts are different per region.

- **Definitions**

The benefit unit is the nuclear family (*tu\_cb\_be*). The benefit is allocated to the mother unless she is absent. Adopted children cannot be distinguished in the data, therefore the benefit for adopted children is not modelled if their age is 1 year and above.

- **Eligibility conditions**

All new parents can apply for birth allowance or adoption allowance. The amounts for the birth allowance are independent of the contribution scheme.

- **Income test**

None.

- **Benefit amount**

Table 2.14 Amount of birth- / adoption allowance (euro per year) [2015 – 2019]

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Birth allowance</b>						
<b>Flanders</b>	first child	1223.11	1,247.48	1,247.58	1,247.58	1,122.00
	second child onwards	920.25	938.66	938.66	938.66	1,122.00
<b>Brussels and Wallonia</b>	first child	1223.11	1,247.58	1,272.52	1,272.52	1,297.92
	second child onwards	920.25	938.66	957.42	957.42	976.53
<b>Adoption allowance</b>						
<b>Flanders</b>		1223.11	1,247.58	1,247.58	1,247.58	1,122.00
<b>Brussels and Wallonia</b>		1223.11	1,247.58	1,272.52	1,272.52	1,297.92

### 2.3.3 Study allowances (studietoelagen / allocations d'études) (bed\_s)

- **Brief description**

Study allowances are granted to families with school-aged children upon request. The communities (French, Flemish and German speaking) apply different schemes. Given that it is not possible to identify the community to which the households belong in EUROMOD dataset, families living in Brussels are randomly entitled to either the French or the Flemish community. The study allowances for German speaking families are not simulated.

In the Flemish community, the study allowances are awarded according to a point system based on the household composition that determines the income limits for the means-test.

In the French community, the income limits depend on the level of education of the children and on the number of dependents within the household.

- **Eligibility conditions**

- A. French community

To be eligible for the study allowances in the French community, the student must be in full-time secondary or tertiary education, be younger than 35 years old and should not repeat a year after the third grade of secondary school.

- B. Flemish community

In Flanders, study allowances are granted to all levels of students, that are officially registered and who regularly attend classes. The students following advanced masters or bachelors, under diploma contract and or older than 22 in secondary education are not entitled to the benefit.

- **Income test**

- A. French community

The study allowances are means-tested and aimed at most destitute families only. The means of the family unit consist of taxable income, replacement and social assistance incomes, foreign incomes and incomes from international organization of all household members, except the candidate to study allowances and his or her (half)siblings. The incomes considered are those of the previous tax year (earned two years earlier). As the past incomes are not available in EUROMOD dataset, current incomes are used in the test.

Table 2.15 gives the income limits that apply in the French community. The income threshold varies according to the number of dependent children. The first two columns give the maximum amount of means to be eligible to the study allowances for students in secondary and tertiary education. The third column indicates the minimum level of income, under which the file of the candidate is transferred to a commission that examines the reported income and decides whether to grant a study allowance or not. The last two columns of the table display the thresholds from which the candidate becomes eligible for a special allowance and the income used in the computation of the allowance.

Table 2.15 Income limits for study allowances in the French community [academic year 2018-2019]

Number of dependent persons	Maximum for secondary education	Maximum for tertiary education	Minimum income	Threshold for the special allowance	Floor income (used in the computation of the allowance)
0	19,620.63	21,683.23	3,565.00	7,130.00	4,049.36
1	26,161.94	28,353.72	4,821.31	9,642.62	5,396.67
2	32,292.13	34,609.61	5,902.86	11,805.72	6,553.12
3	38,014.53	40,444.16	6,984.41	13,968.82	7,709.58
4	43,329.16	45,864.12	8,064.93	16,129.86	8,866.03
5+	5,314.63	5,419.96	1,080.52	2,161.04	1,156.48

B. Flemish community

The Flemish community distinguishes four categories of living units to assess the level of income of the students and the type of benefit they can claim. The first category consists of married or officially cohabiting students. Their incomes and the ones of their partner enter in the means test. The second category contains the students that earn a sufficient income to be considered as financially independent. The third category includes the dependent students. Their means consist of their parents' incomes. The last category, the single students, contains all the students who do not belong to the previous categories (e.g. the orphans).

Table 2.16 Determination of the number of points per living unit

Criteria for awarding points	Points
For every person in the living unit who is fiscally dependent on the person(s) whose incomes are considered.	1
For every student in the living unit who is no longer tax-dependent on the person(s) whose incomes are considered, because he or she has had means of subsistence, but who does not meet the conditions for independent, married or single student.	1
For every person in the living who is following tertiary education. The total number of points is reduced by 1 point and is never less than 0.	1
For every person who falls into one of the 2 upper categories and who is considered to be fiscally disabled (handicap percentage of minimum 66%).	1
For every person on whose income are considered and who is considered to be fiscally disabled (handicap percentage of minimum 66%).	1
One point per living unit with an independent or a single student.	1
One point per living unit with an independent or a single student who has dependents mentioned in one of the first two categories.	1
A minus point is applied if there are one or more non-relatives in the student's living unit who have an income. Disability benefits are not considered as income.	-1

The living unit income includes joint taxable income of the family, 80% of the alimony received (if not included in the joint taxable income), separately taxable income, assistance income, twice the indexed cadastral income for non-resident use, once the indexed cadastral income of real estate for professional use and foreign income or income acquired from a European international institution. A lump sum deduction is applied to this sum if 70% of incomes consist of replacement incomes (excl. pensions). The deduction is equal to 30% of the replacement income, with a maximum of €4720.

The composition of the living unit translates in a number of points that defines the income limits. Each dependent person or household member with a handicap counts for one point. Table 2.16 gives the details of the computation. Table 2.17 indicates the income limits per number of points.

Table 2.17 Income limits for study allowances in the Flemish community [academic year 2018-2019]

Points	Lower limit	Upper limit
0	8096.1	17845.86
1	14631.07	26356.47
2	16918.33	33019.28
3	18842.49	38338.43
4	20004.29	44105.48
5	21154	51216.27
6	22303.64	56031.46
7	23453.31	58607.07
8	24602.98	61182.64
9	25752.64	63814.15
10	26902.31	66613.71

- **Benefit amount**

A. French community,

The study allowance in the French community varies according to the household income, the education level, the living place of the student and the entitlement to child benefits. Students that live outside the family home (in boarding school or in students digs) receive a higher allowance. EUROMOD dataset does not allow to identify these students, so it is assumed that all students co-reside with their family unit. Students in tertiary educations that no longer receive child benefits (because they are older than 25), also receive a higher allowance.

The amounts of the different allowances are given in Table 2.18. A special allowance is granted to students with a family income below the threshold presented in the fourth column of Table 2.15 (and above the minimum income). If the family income lies between this threshold and the maximum income, the allowance is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Full allowance} * \text{floor income} / \text{incomes}$$

The lump sum allowance applies to students whose household income is entirely derived from social assistance.

Table 2.18 Yearly allowance amounts in the French community (euro per year) [academic year 2018-2019]

	Secondary education	Tertiary education with child benefits	Tertiary education without child benefits
Full allowance	450.90	2,182.29	2,733.01
Special allowance	585.63	2,908.54	3,263.21
Lump sum allowance	206.21	1,031.03	1,031.03

B. Flemish community

The Flemish community grants study allowances from the preschool education onwards. The type of allowance depends on the income level of the living unit, on the category of the living unit and on whether the student co-resides with his or her family (not observed in EUROMOD).



Table 2.19 gives the amounts of the different allowances. If the living unit income is equal to the upper limit, the family receives the minimum allowance. If the income lies between the lower and upper limit, the family receives the following intermediate allowance:

$$(lower\ limit - income) / (upper\ limit - lower\ limit) \times full\ allowance$$

If the income is equal or lower than the lower limit, the family receives the full allowance. If income is equal or lower than 10% of the upper limit, the family receives the special allowance.

Table 2.19 Yearly benefit amounts in the Flemish community (euro per year) [academic year 2018-2019]

	<b>Preschool education</b>	<b>Primary education</b>	<b>Secondary education, dependent student</b>	<b>Secondary education, other categories</b>	<b>Tertiary education</b>
Minimum allowance	96.69	108.78	135.48	596.87	265.9
Full allowance	96.69	163.17	599.96	2992.07	2469.8
Special allowance	96.69	217.56	758.67	2992.07	3584.03

### 2.3.4 Maternity leave benefit (bmact\_be)

- *Brief description*

The benefit is received by all mothers. Different benefit schemes exist for employed mothers, unemployed mothers and self-employed mothers.

- *Eligibility conditions*

Mothers who are employees or unemployed are eligible for the benefit if they have worked 120 days in the last six months before applying for the benefit, and have paid sufficient social security contributions. Holidays and days of unemployment are also seen as working days. If the mother has a part-time contract, she has to have worked at least 400 hours in the latest 18 months. Self-employed mothers are only eligible if they have paid two quarterly social security contributions. They are thus also confronted with a ‘waiting time’ of six months.

- *Income test*

This is not a means-tested benefit.

- *Benefit amount*

For employed or unemployed mothers the benefit is granted for 15 weeks of which maximum 6 weeks before the planned birth date. It starts at the latest 1 week before the planned birth date. If the birth takes place before the planned birth date, the days in between the actual and planned birth date are lost. If more than one child is born the maternity leave period, and accompanying benefit, is increased with 4 weeks of which 2 can be taken up before the birth.

Employed mothers receive the first 30 days of their leave 82% of their gross daily wage. The gross daily wage is calculated based on a six-days working week, and also the benefit amount is paid for six days per week. From the 31<sup>st</sup> day onwards they receive 75% of their gross daily wage. The daily wage considered for the calculation after the 31<sup>st</sup> day of leave, is limited up to a maximum, given in Table 2.20.

Table 2.20 Maximum daily wage considered for maternity leave benefit of employed and unemployed mothers and for paternity/birth leave benefit for the employed

		2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Payment</b>	Maximum daily wage considered for the benefit	135.91	138.63	139.74	142.53
<b>Subject to</b>	Withholding tax	11.11%	11.11%	11.11%	11.11%
	SIC	no	no	no	no

Unemployed mothers receive a basic amount that equals their unemployment benefit and additionally, 19.5% of the maximum daily wage given in Table 2.20, in the first 30 days and 15% of the maximum daily wage from the 31<sup>st</sup> day onwards.

Table 2.21 Maternity leave benefit amount for self-employed mothers per week

		2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Payment</b>	Benefit amount	458.30	467.47	475.41	484.90
<b>Subject to</b>	Withholding tax	11.11%	11.11%	11.11%	11.11%
	SIC	no	no	no	no

For self-employed mothers, mandatory leave is taken one week before the planned birth, and 2 weeks after the actual birth. Additionally, 9 weeks can be taken of which maximum 2 before the planned birth.

If more than one child is born, one extra week leave is granted. These 9 (or 10) weeks can also be taken half-time, in which case the duration is doubled, but the amount is only half of the full amount. The benefit amount is fixed and is given in Table 2.21.

The benefits are subject to the withholding tax on labour and replacement income, advance levy for the personal income tax. The rate is 11.11%. The amounts depicted in the table above are gross of this withholding tax.

- ***EUROMOD notes***

*We assume that duration of maternity leave depends on the month of birth of a child. The month of birth is assumed to be equal to the middle month of the quarter of birth reported in SILC. If child's month of birth is unavailable, the assumption is that the child is born in February (2<sup>nd</sup> month of the year). Where mothers are absent, fathers are assumed to receive the allowance for the same number of weeks as mothers.*

*The simulated benefit must be switched off in baselines.*

### 2.3.5 Paternity leave benefit – birth leave benefit (bpact\_be)

- ***Brief description***

Ten days of paternity leave are granted to new fathers in the first four months after the birth of the child(ren). The benefit is granted per birth, not per child. In case of a second mother, birth leave benefit is granted to her. The paternity leave and birth leave benefits cannot be combined. The 10 days of leave can be taken up together, or spread over the first four months after the birth.

- ***Eligibility conditions***

The benefit is granted to all employees, in both the public and private sector, who are fathers of the child for which the benefit is granted (paternity leave benefit), and to employees living legally together with the mother of the child (birth leave benefit). Self-employed or unemployed fathers/co-parents are not eligible.

Fathers or co-parents are only eligible for the benefit if they have worked 120 days in the last six months before applying for the benefit, and have paid sufficient social security contributions. Holidays and days of unemployment are also seen as working days. If the father or co-parent has a part-time contract, he/she has to have worked at least 400 hours in the latest 18 months.

- ***Income test***

This is not a means-tested benefit.

- ***Benefit amount***

The first three days of paternity leave or birth leave the full wage is paid by the employer of the beneficiary. Following 7 days of the leave a benefit is paid that equals 82% of the gross daily wage, limited to the maximum daily wage considered for the calculation of the amount, given in Table 2.20.

- ***EUROMOD notes***

*The simulated benefit must be switched off in baselines.*

### 2.3.6 Parental leave benefit (bfapl\_be)

- *Brief description*

Parental leave has is a benefit granted to two parents of each child younger than 12 years. If the child is disabled, the leave can be taken up until the child reaches the age of 21. It is a special form of a career break (*loopbaanonderbreking/tijdskrediet*). It is granted to all employees, however eligibility conditions are different in the private sector from the conditions in the public sector. Also, in the private sector the employee can delay the application for leave with three months. There are minor differences in the benefit system in certain branches of the public sector (E.g. teachers and employees of the autonomous public companies).

- *Eligibility conditions*

In the private sector the parent should have worked at least 12 months in the last 15 months with the employer. In the public sector, no such condition is present.

- *Income test*

This is not a means-tested benefit.

- *Benefit amount*

The maximum amount of leave is 4 months. Each month of leave can also be taken in part-time equivalent, if the parent is full-time employed. There are three options for the duration of the leave: (1) full time leave of 4 months, (2) ½ of full time leave of 8 months and (3) 1/5<sup>th</sup> of full time leave of 20 months.

When the parent works part time, the amount of the benefit is calculated relative to the work scheme. E.g., when a parent works half-time, and takes four months of full parental leave, they receive half of the amount of the benefit. There is an increase in the amount if the parent is older than 50, and she or he takes the leave in the 1/5 scheme, or half-time scheme. The increase was halved starting from 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2017. Since June 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 also a 1/10 scheme of the leave is possible.

The amount of the benefit is not dependent on the wage of the applicant. Since 2017 the amount has increased if the applicant is a single parent, both in the public and private sector.

Table 2.22 Amount of parental leave benefit (per month)

	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Full-time leave</b>				
Base amount	802.52	818.56	818.56	834.90
Single parent (only private sector)	/	1,129.61	1,129.61	1,313.48
<b>Half-time leave</b>				
Base amount	401.25	409.27	409.27	417.44
Single parent (only private sector)	/	564.80	564.80	656.74
50 or older	680.62	551.76	551.76	562.77
<b>One-fifth leave</b>				
Base amount	136.12	138.84	138.84	141.62
Single parent (only public sector)	183.06	186.71	186.71	190.44
Single parent (only private sector)	/	225.92	225.92	262.69
50 or older	272.25	208.69	208.69	212.42
<b>One-tenth leave</b>				
Base amount	/	/	/	70.81

Single parent (only public sector)	/	/	/	95.22
Single parent (only private sector)	/	/	/	131.34
50 or older	/	/	/	106.34

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The benefits are subject to withholding tax of 10,13% in case of full-time leave, and 17.15% in case of part-time leave. This is an advance levy for the personal income tax that is due on the benefits. The amounts shown in the table are gross of this withholding tax.

The fourth month of full-time leave, or last two months of half-time leave, or last five months of one-fifth time leave, or last ten months of one-tenth time leave are not compensated with a benefit if the child was born or adopted before 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2012.

- ***EUROMOD notes***

*The simulated benefit must be switched off in baselines.*

### 2.3.7 Income support (leefloon / revenu d'integration sociale) (*bsa\_s*)

- ***Brief description***

If the means of a person are less than a certain threshold, that person is eligible for income support up to the level of the minimum income. In order to receive income support, one needs to apply for it at the offices for public assistance (CPAS). These centres have some discretionary power over the acceptance. For example, the CPAS can demand an individualized project for social (re)integration that the applicant has to agree to and follow in order to get and/or keep income support. Here we assume full take-up (and acceptance of the application by the CPAS).

- ***Definitions***

The benefit unit is the nuclear family – the couple (cohabiting or married) or single adult plus any dependent children. In the social assistance legislation three categories are distinguished:

- category one: applicant living with partner and no dependent family
- category two: single (no partner, no dependents)
- category three: person with dependent family

If the applicant falls under category one, the income of the partner is accounted for in the determination of the income support level for the part that exceeds the income support level. If the applicant falls under category three, all of the partner's income, if there is a partner, is taken into account for the calculation of income support. In this case the right for his/her spouse is automatically covered, i.e. (s)he cannot claim for income support, and each spouse/partner gets half of the income support amount.

- ***Eligibility conditions***

Income support can be granted to all adult ( $\geq 18$ ) residents living in Belgium. It can be extended to minors if they no longer have a legal guardian following a marriage, if they are pregnant, or if they have dependent children. The focus here is on adults from 18 to 64 (from the age of 65 one is eligible for income support to the elderly). To become eligible, one has to apply for income support at the CPAS, which means the benefit is not automatically granted.

- ***Income test***

If the means of a person are less than a certain threshold that person is eligible for income support up to the level of the minimum income, i.e. the amount of income support is equal to the minimum existence level minus the own means. The means include all factual income, not only official income. The income

support is for unlimited duration but each year the CPAS will make a re-assessment of the personal situation of the applicant and can withdraw the income support based on the results of that inquiry. It belongs to the discretionary power of the CPAS to do the re-assessment on a more frequent basis. The applicant/beneficiary is bound to provide all the necessary information and to contact the CPAS if something changed in his or her personal (financial) situation.

Own means include the following:

- net occupational income (from employment)<sup>2</sup>
- replacement incomes
- income from real estate<sup>3</sup>
- income from equity: the first €6,200 of (financial) capital is not taken into account. For the part between €62,000 and €12,500, 6% is taken as income from capital and for the amount higher than €12,500 10% is taken into account as income from capital<sup>4</sup>

The following income components are not taken into account:

- benefits in-kind (such as meals)
- social assistance
- child benefits
- alimony for children
- study grants
- refundable tax credit for children

- ***Benefit amount***

**Table 2.23 Base amounts for income support (euro per month) [2015 – 2019]**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Category 1	544.91	578.27	589.82	595.13	607.01
Category 2	817.36	867.40	884.74	892.70	910.52
Category 3	1089.82	1156.53	1179.65	1190.27	1254.82

**Table 2.24 Disregarded amounts for income support (euro per year) [2015 – 2019]**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Category 1	155	155	155	155	155
Category 2	250	250	250	250	250
Category 3	310	310	310	310	310

If eligible after all calculations the final amount is equal to the base amount minus own income.

<sup>2</sup> To encourage employment for social assistance beneficiaries the first three years of employment €234.55 of net occupational income is discarded (not simulated).

<sup>3</sup> The calculation for income from real estate is the following: non-indexed cadastral income with an exemption of €750 plus €125 per dependent child (=child that gives right to child benefits). The result is then multiplied by 3 and taken into account in the means test. In case the property is rented one takes the rent received unless this should be less than the amount obtained when using the cadastral income. As social assistance is an individual right the income from real estate will be multiplied by the fraction representing the ownership of the person in the property (in case of shared ownership).

<sup>4</sup> Income stemming from the sale or donation of propert(y)(ies) within a period of 10 years preceding the application for social assistance. The same schedule applies as for income from capital. This is not simulated due to lacking information.

- ***Treatment of the simulated income support in EUROMOD***

In the baseline system **the simulated amounts of income support with take-up correction are included in the disposable income concept** rather than the amounts recorded in the EU-SILC. We adjust for the non take up of benefits with a simple random **non take-up correction** by applying the take-up proportion estimated as the ratio between the caseload recipients reported by the Official Statistics and those simulated to be entitled by EUROMOD. Once the simulated benefit is switched on in the spine, the correction for non take up is, by default, switched on as well. To switch the take-up correction off, a user needs to switch off the relevant policy sheet (BTA\_be) in the spine. The take-up probability mentioned above is defined in the relevant policy sheet at the end of the simulation. A user can change these probabilities or switch off the take-up correction.

However, the non take-up correction is still very rough and does not satisfactorily reflect the real take-up issues playing (large discretionary power of the CPAS, detailed means-test). The refinement of this is one of our planned further developments.

### 2.3.8 Income support for the elderly (inkomensgarantie voor ouderen / la garantie de revenus aux personnes âgées) (bsaoa\_s)

- ***Brief description***

Income support for the elderly is designed in the same way as the regular income support, but available for persons aged 65 or older. The categories are different than in the regular income support, as are the amounts.

- ***Definitions***

There is a distinction for persons living alone and those living with others at the same address (presumably couples). In fact a person without a partner but living with (a) minor child(ren) or adult child(ren) for whom child benefits are received and/or relatives (descendants) are considered as living alone and are eligible to receive the increased amount. Income support for the elderly is an individual right whether being married or not.

- ***Eligibility conditions***

All persons aged 65 or above are eligible to receive income support for the elderly.

- ***Income test***

Income on the benefit unit level (tu\_oa\_be) is taken into account as follows:

- 75% of gross employment income other than self-employment income
- gross income from self-employment minus incurred expenses (we assume expenses to be 5% as is the case for the lump sum expenses in the personal income tax)
- Income from capital. Similar rules apply as for income support: €6,200 exempted, from €6,200 to €18,600 consider 4% as income and beyond €18,600 take 10% as income from capital
- Income from real estate<sup>5</sup>
- pension income minus paid alimony and the result accounted for at 90%
- An additional €5,000 of gross income from employment and/or self-employment is exempt

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<sup>5</sup> Non-indexed cadastral income, with an exemption of €743.68 plus €123.95 per dependent child (=eligible for child allowance) (amounts remain constant over 2009-2017). The result is multiplied by 3 to get the income from real estate. If the property is rented the rent is taken into account, unless this should be less than the amount when cadastral income is taken. The resulting amount is multiplied by the part the person has in the property in case of shared ownership.

Not counted are:

- income support
- alimony received
- child benefits

As the income support is an individual right, in the calculation of the benefit amount (for the individual) the income used in the means-test will be divided by the number of persons in the benefit unit.

- ***Benefit amount***

Table 2.25 Base amounts for income support for the elderly (euro per person per year) [2015 – 2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Living alone	12,140.34	12,630.92	12,630.92	12,999.32	13,420.34
Living with partner	8,093.56	8,420.61	8,420.61	8,666.18	8,946.89

Table 2.26 Disregarded amounts in the income assessment for income support for the elderly

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Living alone	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Living with partner	625	625	625	625	625

The resulting income support is the base amount minus the income of the applicant.

- ***Treatment of the simulated income support for the elderly in EUROMOD***

The simulation of the income support for the elderly is implemented in the system but it is switched off in the baseline system and it is not included in the simulated disposable income.

It is unclear whether in the SILC survey this benefit was mistakenly recorded as regular pension income in the majority of the cases and is as such already included in the data. This hinders a correct interpretation of the simulated values.



### 2.3.9 Unemployment benefits (werkloosheidsuitkering / allocation de chômage) (*bun\_s*; *byr\_s*)

- **Brief description**

In the employment legislation one can distinguish three main groups (cfr. section 1.2.2): the indemnified unemployed, support for employed people, and support for the employed who reduce their working hours. The simulation of unemployment benefits will only be for the first group (also the most important group in size) and to a limited extent. The group of unemployed includes the unemployed after employment, the unemployed after finishing studies, the older unemployed and the early retired. In EUROMOD the unemployed after employment are simulated (early retirement is simulated separately). The unemployment benefits are implemented following the EUROMOD modelling conventions. Due to the limitations of the input data, the simulated unemployment benefits can only be used to calculate replacements rates.

From 2013 onwards, the *unemployment benefits became more dependent on the time that is spent in unemployment and one's work history before becoming unemployed. Benefits during the first three months were increased, and thereafter benefits decreased more rapidly over time. This resulted in a complex bracket system with more than 60 categories, making the amount of benefit received closely dependent on the time spent in unemployment and previous work history.*

- **Definitions**

Unemployed are subdivided into three categories according to household situation: 1) unemployed with dependent family; 2) singles; and 3) cohabitating unemployed (living with a partner, but no dependents). To determine whether a person is dependent or not one has to look at the earnings of this person. Earnings from a professional activity of the partner are not taken into account if they do not exceed €796.87 gross per month and stem from employment as wage earner. This implies that any self-employment income by the partner excludes the latter of being dependent, i.e. the unemployed will not be categorized as an unemployed with dependent family.

Pension benefits or benefits following industrial accidents or work-related illness are not taken into account as long as they do not exceed the maximum level per month. Other benefits, such as unemployment benefits and sickness and disability benefits other than industrial accidents or work-related illness, are always taken into account to determine whether the partner is dependent or not. It means that having unemployment benefits makes the partner not dependent.

If the unemployed lives with children then the income of a child (professional activities, unemployment benefits, and pensions, sickness or disability benefits) is not taken into account if it does not exceed €426.74 in case of income from professional activities or if it does not exceed €465.14 in case of unemployment benefits and sickness or disability benefits.

If the unemployed also lives with relatives up to the third degree, ascendants are considered dependent if their income does not exceed €1,375.36 (households without dependent children) or €2,230.85 (households with dependent children, or relatives recognized as disabled).

- **Eligibility conditions**

#### **Unemployment benefits after employment (general case)**

To be eligible to receive unemployment benefits an inactive person has to be in search of work. The unemployed person has to be involuntarily unemployed and without wages whatsoever. He or she has to be available for the labour market and has to be and remain registered as a person in search of work. Furthermore, the unemployed has to reside in Belgium, be fit for work, and has to meet age conditions.

### Unemployment benefits after studies

For students following graduation to be entitled to unemployment benefits they must prove a period of inactivity. The system was reformed in 2012 and renamed “professional integration time”. The waiting period of “professional integration time” is 310 days for persons under the age of 25.

### Unemployment benefits for older employees (werkloosheids met anciënniteits toeslag/ chômage avec d'ancienneté)

Older unemployed, aged 50 or more who had an active career of at least 20 years and who were unemployed for at least one year, use to be entitled to a seniority supplement. This system was abolished as of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2015.

### Early retirement benefits (werkloosheid met bedrijfstoeslag/ chômage avec complement d'entreprise)

To be eligible for conventional early retirement benefits the following conditions must be met:

- employee has to be fired by employer
- employee must be entitled to an additional supplement, paid by the employer or some specific fund, on the basis of a collective labour agreement
- employee must be eligible for regular unemployment benefits
- employee must be at least 62 years old (58 if subject to a special scheme<sup>6</sup> for early retirement)
- employee must have had an active career as wage earner of at least 40 years for men and 32 years for women (this can be lower if subject to a special scheme for early retirement).

- *Benefit amount*

### Unemployment benefits after studies

Table 2.27 Calculation table for unemployment benefits for young unemployed with no work history (euro per day) [2015 – 2019]

	Benefit per day				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Unemployed with dependent family	42.53	44.24	44.24	46.70	47.63
Single unemployed					
Younger than 18	12.09	12.57	12.57	13.08	13.34
18 or older but younger than 21	18.99	19.76	19.76	20.55	20.96
21 or older	31.46	32.73	32.73	34.33	35.02
Cohabiting unemployed					
Not cohabiting with privileged partner					
Younger than 18	10.25	10.67	10.67	11.00	11.22
18 or older	16.36	17.03	17.03	17.54	17.89
Cohabiting with privileged partner					
Younger than 18	10.86	11.29	11.29	11.92	12.15
18 or older	17.44	18.14	18.14	19.15	19.53

The unemployment benefits for young unemployed (younger than 25) with no work history (after the so-called “professional integration time”) are as follows: For young unemployed a further distinction is made within the category of cohabiting partners between normal and “privileged” partners. A partner

<sup>6</sup> This applies to employees in arduous occupations and night work, to disabled persons and in case of the restructuring of the firm.

is considered to be a “privileged” partner if his/her income consists solely of a lower unemployment benefit. In that case you are entitled to a higher benefit amount.

### Unemployment benefits after employment

For unemployed after a period of employment the unemployment benefit depends on household characteristics, as for the young unemployed (after studies), and on past labour market histories. In principle, benefits for unemployed after a period of employment are based on their (lost) wages. By applying the applicable percentage rule on the (lost) wage, the amount of the unemployment benefit is obtained. In the majority of cases, limitations apply so that the unemployment benefit varies between a maximum and a minimum level.

The percentages and lower and upper limits for unemployment benefits after a period of employment are given in the tables below. If not all conditions of previous earnings are fulfilled, the unemployment benefit is calculated using the reference wage of €1,593.81 (in 2019). Wages are only taken into account until a maximum wage:

Table 2.28 Wage ceilings for unemployment benefits (euro per month) [2018-2019]

	Period	2018	2019
Highest wage	1 <sup>st</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> month	2,619.09	2,671.37
Middle wage	7 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> month	2,441.04	2,489.76
Lowest wage	From 13 <sup>th</sup> month if cohabitants or dependent persons	2,281.09	2,326.62
Specific wage	From 13 <sup>th</sup> month if single unemployed	2,231.29	2,275.99

The amount of unemployment benefits is calculated as follows:

Table 2.29 Calculation table for unemployment benefits after employment [2019]

	Unemployed with dependent family (A)	Single unemployed (N)	Cohabiting unemployed (B)
Minimum amount (euro per day) (F)	48.89	40.48	30.05
Maximum amount (euro per day)	66.78	66.78	66.78
<i>First period (12 months)</i>			
1 <sup>st</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> month	$65\% \times w$	$65\% \times w$	$65\% \times w$
4 <sup>th</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> month	$60\% \times w$	$60\% \times w$	$60\% \times w$
7 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> month	$60\% \times w$	$60\% \times w$	$60\% \times w$
<i>Second period (max. 36 months)</i>			
13 <sup>th</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup> month	$60\% \times w$	55%	40%
+ 0-10 months <sup>7</sup>	$60\% \times w$	55%	40%
+ 1-6 months <sup>7</sup>	$60\% \times w - \frac{1}{5} \times A$	$55\% \times w - \frac{1}{5} \times A$	$40\% \times w - \frac{1}{5} \times A$
+ 1-6 months <sup>7</sup>	$60\% \times w - \frac{2}{5} \times A$	$55\% \times w - \frac{2}{5} \times A$	$40\% \times w - \frac{2}{5} \times A$
+ 1-6 months <sup>7</sup>	$60\% \times w - \frac{3}{5} \times A$	$55\% \times w - \frac{3}{5} \times A$	$40\% \times w - \frac{3}{5} \times A$
+ 1-6 months <sup>7</sup>	$60\% \times w - \frac{4}{5} \times A$	$55\% \times w - \frac{4}{5} \times A$	$40\% \times w - \frac{4}{5} \times A$
<i>Third period (indefinitely)</i>	F	F	F

Legend:  $A = 60\% \times w - F$ ; en  $w =$  last earned wage

During the first year of unemployment the benefits are the same for each category, beginning at a replacement rate of 65% in the first three months and decreasing to 60% for the remainder of the first year (with maximum amounts as discussed in Table 2.29). After the first year the replacement rate decreases to 55% for single unemployed and to 40% for cohabiting unemployed. During the second year of unemployment the benefits systematically decrease further at rate of one fifth of the difference

<sup>7</sup> Depending on the length of the work history.

between the last earned wage and the minimum benefit amount in each of five stages (the length of which depends on the work history of the unemployed) until the benefit eventually hits the level of the minimum benefit amount (this happens at the latest after 48 months of unemployment).

**Conventional early retirement**

The early retirement benefit paid by the unemployment office is a percentage of average lost but limited daily wages (ALDW). The benefits are calculated as follows (amounts for 2018):

Table 2.30 Calculation table for conventional early retirement benefits [2018]

	<b>Rule</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Early retirement benefits	60% of ALDW	€50.82 per day

The minimum legally required amount of the additional benefit to be paid by the employer is equal to half the difference between the net wages and the unemployment benefit. Net wages are gross wages minus social security contributions and withholding tax.

- ***Simulation of Unemployment Benefits in EUROMOD***

Unemployment benefits after employment are parameterized in EUROMOD but they are switched to *toggle* in the baseline. In order to simulate the unemployment benefits (mainly to calculate replacement rates), some additional variables are included in EUROMOD:

- Lnu: a dummy variable for new unemployed
- liwmy\_a: number of months in work in the year preceding unemployment (for new unemployed)
- yempv\_a: monthly gross wage in the year preceding unemployment (for new unemployed)
- yem\_a: monthly gross wage for new employed (previously yem00)
- lhw\_a: average weekly working hours for new employed (previously lhw00)

Such implementation is intended to simulate unemployment benefits for individuals observed in work (i.e. with positive earnings) and it is not intended to replace the recorded unemployment benefits (i.e. bun) of individuals observed in unemployment (i.e. without earnings necessary to simulate the unemployment benefits). As a consequence, the variable bun should not be modified.

The simulated unemployment benefits are recorded in the variable bun\_s. This variable is already included in the relevant income lists (e.g. taxable income). The variable bun\_s is initialized to 0 in the policy *InitVars\_be* in order to avoid any warning message when the policy *bun\_be* is switched off/toggle.

Because this simulation exercise serves the specific purpose of simulating the unemployment benefit in a hypothetical scenario it cannot serve to replace the recorded unemployment variable, and the variable bun\_s cannot be macrovalidated with external statistics. The variable bun\_s can only be simulated for the first year of unemployment.

## 2.4 Social contributions

### 2.4.1 Employee social contributions and employer social contributions (*tscee\_s, tscer\_s*)

- *Wage earners on the private labour market*

First the percentages will be listed for regular social insurance contributions. In some cases social insurance contributions can be reduced. The reductions will be treated in a later section.

#### Social insurance contributions before deductions

In total, social insurance contributions amount to 13.07% of gross earnings for employees, and to 30.4% to 37.4% of the gross wage for the employers, dependent on the size of the firm and whether the employee is a blue or white collar worker. For instance, blue collar workers don't pay social insurance contributions on their single holiday earnings (corresponding to 8% of their yearly wage). Thus, social insurance contributions for blue collar workers are calculated on 108% of their gross wage. Employees are eligible for a reduction in social insurance contributions, called "workbonus", if they satisfy certain income conditions.

The basic percentage for the calculation of the employer contributions used to correspond to the sum of the applicable percentages for the different components of the social insurance system for wage earners (see Table 2.31). However, following the 6<sup>th</sup> State Reform this direct relationship between the employer contribution and the different components of the social insurance system has been severed to create a so-called "globalized" basic percentage. In 2015 this globalized percentage was equal to the previous sum total of the different components<sup>8</sup>, but as of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 this base percentage is lowered to 22.65% as part of the first phase of a reform of the employer contribution scheme aimed at reducing the general or facial rate<sup>9</sup> of the employer contribution to 25% by 2018 (see Table 2.32).

Table 2.31 Former calculation of basic percentage for employer social insurance contributions [2018]

Components of social insurance system	Employer contributions
Pensions	8.86
Sickness and disability	2.35
Medical care	3.80
Unemployment	1.46
Family benefits	7.00
Accidents at work	0.3
Work-related illness/disease	1.00
Educational leave	0.05
Work integration/guidance programs for youth	0.05
Childcare	0.05
<b>Basic percentage</b>	<b>24.92</b>

Table 2.32 outlines the changes and the timeline of the proposed reform of the employer contributions for social insurance. In 2015 the general rate was 32.4%. This rate could then be reduced according to the so-called "structural deduction" based on the level of income of the worker (see further). After application of this structural deduction scheme, the facial rate of 32.4% was typically reduced to an effective rate between 19 and 29% of gross earnings.

Table 2.32 Timeline of proposed reform of employer contributions for social insurance as part of the

<sup>8</sup> Notably 24.92% for employees in the private sector, 24.82% for civil servants without statutory service and 17.82% for statutory civil servants (cfr. [www.socialsecurity.be](http://www.socialsecurity.be)).

<sup>9</sup> Meaning the regular rate (base percentage + wage moderation) before special contributions and reductions.

## federal tax shift [2016-2020]

Contribution rates (% of gross earnings)	Pre-reform	2016	2018	2020
Base rate	24.92%	22.65%	19.88%	19.88%
+ Contribution for wage moderation	7.08%	6.95%	5.12%	4.32%
+ Additional contribution for wage moderation for white collars	0.40%	0.40%	0.00%	0.00%
Facial (or general) rate	32.40%	30.00%	25.00%	24.20%

The reform contains a reduction of the base rate to 22.65% in 2016 and a further reduction to 19.88% in January 2018. The so-called wage moderation rate will be reduced from 5.67% to 4.27% in 2018. All this translates into a reduction of the facial rate for the employer contribution to social insurance from 32.40% in 2015 to 30% in 2016 and a further reduction to 25% in 2018. The reduction in the general/facial rate will be accompanied by a simplification of the “structural deduction” of employer contributions (see further).

Table 2.33 Employee and employer social insurance contribution for wage earners on the private labour market [2019]

	blue collar workers		white collar workers			
	% of gross earnings at 108%		total	% of gross earnings		total
	employee	employer		employee	employer	
<b>General contributions</b>	<b>13.07</b>	<b>19.88</b>		<b>13.07</b>	<b>19.88</b>	
Pensions	7.50			7.50		
Medical care	3.55			3.55		
Disability benefits	1.15			1.15		
Unemployment	0.87			0.87		
<b>Wage moderation</b>		<b>5,12</b>			<b>5,12</b>	
Wage moderation					5,12	
Extra wage moderation white collars					0	
<b>Annual vacation blue collar</b>		<b>5.57</b>				
<b>Extra unemployment</b>		<b>1.69</b>			<b>1.69</b>	
Extra unemployment insurance for companies with:						
10 employees or more		1.60			1.60	
Extra contribution wage moderation for companies with 10 employees or more		0.09			0.09	
<b>Special contributions</b>		<b>0.13</b>			<b>0.13</b>	
(Re)employment of vulnerable groups		0.10			0.10	
Special contribution work related illness		0.02			0.02	
Special contribution asbestos fund		0.01			0.01	
<b>Company closing fund</b>						
1 to 19 employees: general		0.14			0.14	
1 to 19 employees: wage moderation		0.01			0.01	
20 or more employees: general		0.19			0.19	
20 or more employees: wage moderation		0.01			0.01	
Temporary unemployment		0.10			0.10	
Wage moderation		0.01			0.01	
<b>Global total</b>						
1 to 9 employees	13.07	30.96	44.03	13.07	25.39	38.46
10 to 19 employees	13.07	32.65	45.72	13.07	27.08	40.15
20 or more employees	13.07	32.70	45.77	13.07	27.13	40.20

Single holiday earnings for civil servants are equal to the wage that would have been earned when not on holiday and the double holiday earnings consist of a lump sum amount and a variable part in percent of gross annual earnings.<sup>10</sup>

For white collar workers the percentages are applied on gross earnings received while working and on gross single holiday earnings. For blue collar workers the percentages are applied on 108% of their gross remunerations while working (and not on holiday earnings). In the case of blue collar workers single and double holiday earnings are not part of the remuneration concept on which social insurance contributions are levied. Moreover, white and blue collar workers also have to pay social insurance contributions on their double holiday earnings. For white collar workers this is 13.07%; blue collar workers also have to pay 13.07% and the calculation base is 6.80% of 108% of gross earnings in the year preceding the year of the holiday.

As the single holiday earnings of blue-collar workers consist of 8% of the gross wage, total social insurance contributions amount to the same as if 13.07% on 100% of total earnings were levied. Because it is impossible to distinguish holiday earnings from the data, this is the way it is simulated in EUROMOD.

An additional 10.27% on 108% of annual earnings<sup>11</sup> of the previous year is due by employers for blue collar workers to finance holiday earnings.<sup>12</sup>

### Employers' deductions on social insurance contributions

Employers can enjoy a structural deduction of social insurance contributions as a measure to stimulate employment. The structural deduction is applicable for all workers that are subject to all branches of social insurance. In reality this means that the structural deduction is for employers in the private sector only.

Table 2.34 Employers' deductions in social insurance contributions [2017]

Earnings in euro per quarter (I)	
Less than €7,038	$438 + 0.1369 * (7,038 - I)$
More than €13,669.09	$438 + 0.06 * (I - 13,669,09)$

Beginning in 2016 this system of structural deductions was downscaled and simplified as part of the tax shift. In 2017 the basic structural deduction is €438 per quarter for each full time worker.<sup>13</sup> This amount is increased for low income workers and high income workers according to the following scheme:

Table 2.35 Announced changes in employers' deductions in social insurance contributions [2018 – 2019]

Deduction as of:		
January 2018	$0.1280 * (8850 - I)$	for earnings per quarter (I) less than €8,850
January 2019	$0.1400 * (9035 - I)$	for earnings per quarter (I) less than €9,035

<sup>10</sup> The percentage of the variable part is linked to the evolution of the consumer price index that determines the gross wage due in March of the year of holiday.

<sup>11</sup> Again, 108% is on annual earnings exclusive of holiday earnings. In the implementation, 100% is used, as the employment income variable includes holiday earnings.

<sup>12</sup> Because in EUROMOD we only dispose of the earnings of the current income year, it is assumed that earnings have remained the same as the preceding year in order to calculate these contributions.

<sup>13</sup> The lump sum reduction of €438 is not applicable to employers in the non-profit sector as they enjoy other reductions (not simulated).

As of January 2018 the basic structural deduction as well as the deduction for high income workers is abolished. Nevertheless, the deduction for lower incomes is further strengthened in 2018 and will be again in 2019:

Besides the structural deduction there are several specific target-group reductions that aim to increase the employability of certain more vulnerable groups (not simulated). The structural deduction can be combined with only one target-group reduction.

To calculate the effective deduction, the above” theoretical” deduction, denote  $R$ , needs to be further adjusted taking into account the effective labour time. The effective deduction is calculated as follows:

$$D = R \times \mu \times b$$

with

$$\mu = \frac{\text{hours worked}}{38 \text{ hours}}$$

and

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 b = 1/\mu & \text{if } \mu \geq 0.80 \\
 b = 1.18 + 0.28 \times (\mu - 0.55) & \text{if } \mu \geq 0.55 \text{ and } \mu < 0.80 \\
 b = 1.18 & \text{if } \mu \geq 0.275 \text{ and } \mu < 0.55 \\
 b = 0 & \text{if } \mu < 0.275
 \end{array}$$

### Reductions in social insurance contributions for employees

Employees are eligible for a reduction in social insurance contributions, called “workbonus”, if they satisfy certain income conditions. The income used in the means-test is based on full-time equivalent income and requires a distinction between labour time expressed in days and one expressed in hours and minutes. The full-time equivalent income (FTE) is calculated as follows:

Table 2.36 Determination of the full-time equivalent income concept

Labour time measured in days	FTE=gross earnings * [(number of days per month corresponding to full-time position) / (number of days per month actually worked)]
Labour time measured in hours	FTE=gross earnings * [(number of hours per month corresponding to full-time position) / (number of hours per month actually worked)]

The basic reduction is then calculated according to the rules described in Table 2.37. The actual reduction is calculated by taking the basic reduction and multiplying it by the fraction of the actual number of hours or days worked (variable  $lhw$ ) to the corresponding number for a full-time position (38 hours per week). If the number of hours worked per week is more than 38 than we just take a ratio of 1, i.e. working full-time. For a full-time employee the workbonus is equal to the basic amount.

The amount of the basic reduction is different for blue and white collar workers. Since we cannot distinguish between these types based on our data, only the amount for white collar workers is simulated in EUROMOD.



Table 2.37 Employee social insurance reduction (“workbonus”, euro per month) [2015-2019]

Full-time equivalent income per month - bracket amounts for 2019	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>White collar workers</b>					
<=1,641.62	183.97	193.79	197.67	197.67	201.62
>1,641.62 and <=2,560.57	183.97-0.2082 *	193.79-0.2194 *	197.67-0.2194 *	197.67-0.2194 *	201.62-0.2194 *
	[FTE-1501.82]	[FTE-1577.89]	[FTE-1609.47]	[FTE-1609.47]	[FTE-1641.62]
>2,560.57	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Blue collar workers</b>					
<=1,641.62	-	209.29	213.48	213.48	217.75
>1,641.62 and <=2,560.57	-	209.29-0.2369*	213.48-0.2369*	213.48-0.2369*	217.75-0.2370*
		[FTE-1577.89]	[FTE-1609.47]	[FTE-1609.47]	[FTE-1641.62]
>2,560.57	-	0	0	0	0

- *Civil servants*

The employers’ contributions for civil servants with statutory service are different than those for wage earners. Moreover, there is a difference for civil servants working for the federal government and those working for local and provincial administrations<sup>14</sup>. Because the data did not allow making the distinction, all civil servants are simulated along the federal level scheme: a basic rate of 17.82%, an additional contribution for family allowances of 1.40% (which is not subject to wage moderation) and a contribution to wage moderation of 6.68% (=5.67%+0.0567\*17.82%)

Social insurance contributions for wage earners on the public labour market without statutory service are the same as those for wage earners on the private labour market. The only exception is that wage earners on the public labour market without statutory service do not have to pay contributions for company closure (company closure fund).

In principle the (public) employer of wage earners in the public sector without statutory service enjoys the same deductions as private employers if the employees are subject to all branches of social insurance (where required).

Since civil servants are generally not covered by all branches of social insurance they are subject to reduced rates of employees’ contributions. In principal the employees’ contributions for statutory civil servants consist of a contribution for sickness and disability benefits (3.55%) and (as of 2015) of a contribution for pensions (7.50%).

<sup>14</sup> The percentages for employees of local or provincial administrations are as follows

Type of contribution	Employee (% of gross earnings)	Employer (% of gross earnings)
Pensions	7.50	20.00
Sickness and disability benefits	3.55	3.80
Family benefits		5.25
Work-related illness		0.17
Wage moderation		7.48
Childcare		0.05

### Reductions employers' social insurance contributions

Also for employers in the public sector at local or provincial level programs exist that give right to a reduction of social insurance contributions (not simulated).

### Reductions employees' social insurance contributions

Certain low wage civil servants of local and provincial administration might be eligible for a reduction of personal social insurance contributions if the monthly wage mass does not exceed a certain amount (not simulated).

#### 2.4.2 Special social security contributions (*tsceesp\_s*)

After calculation of taxes due there is also a special contribution for social security that we mention separately since it is applied after taxes and hence does not influence net taxable income. This contribution is withheld each month and shown on the payslip. The final amount, however, is calculated on (fiscal) household level (*tu\_couple\_be*) and is settled together with the final personal income tax. The special contribution is due by all employees subject to the social insurance scheme for wage earners.<sup>15</sup>

The final settlement – as it is implemented in EUROMOD baseline – will be calculated according to the following schedule:

Table 2.38 Special social insurance contribution (final settlement) [2012-2019]

Gross net taxable household income (I)	Yearly in euro
<=18,592.02	0
>18,592.02 and <=21,070.96	0.09*(I-18,592.02)
>21,070.96 and <=60,161.85	223.10+0.013*(I-21,070.96)
>60,161.85	731.28

#### 2.4.3 Self-employed social contributions (*tsese\_s*)

In the context of the tax shift, the rate for self-employed social contributions was systematically reduced in years after 2016. Starting in 2016, the rate fell from 22% to 21.5%. In 2017 and 2018 this rate is further reduced to 21% and 20.5%, respectively.

Before 2015, self-employed paid social insurance contributions on a quarterly basis based on their income in the third calendar year preceding the year of contribution. However, as of 2015 these contributions are calculated based on earnings in the current year. So, the social insurance contributions for self-employed in 2015 are calculated on the income earned in 2015.

<sup>15</sup> The monthly withheld amounts are as follows [2012-2019]:

Gross monthly earnings in € (at 108% for blue collar workers) (I)	Single or spouse without income from professional activity (monthly amount in €)	Spouse with income from professional activity (monthly amount in €)
<1095.10	0	0
>=1095.10 and <1945.39	0	9.30
>=1945.39 and <2190.19	0.076*(I-1945.39) with a max. of 18.60	0.076*(I-1945.39) with a min. of 9.30 and a max. of 18.60
>=2180.19 and <6038.83	18.60+0.011*(I-2180.19)	18.60+0.011*(I-2180.19) with a max. of 51.64
>=6038.83	60.94	51.64

If the spouse of a self-employed works as an assistant there are two possibilities: he or she opts for a “mini-statute” or a “maxi-statute”. A mini-statute comprises only insurance for work-related illness and maternity benefits. A maxi-statute guarantees the same social protection as enjoyed by the self-employed in main activity. In the latter case the normal rules to calculate social insurance contributions apply. In the case of a mini-statute the social insurance contributions are calculated differently, but this is not simulated.

The self-employed, besides paying the contributions according to the rules set out above, also have to participate in the working costs of the social insurance funds to which they are affiliated. The percentages range between 3.5% and 4.7% on the contribution amounts (not simulated). Calculation of social insurance contributions of self-employed

The basis of calculation is net earnings, i.e. gross earnings net of professional costs and possible losses.

### Self-employed in main activity before retirement age

Table 2.39 Calculation structure of the social insurance contributions for self-employed in main activity before retirement age [2019]

Annual net indexed earnings (I)	Annual social insurance contribution
≤€59,795.61	$\max\{2,838.72, 0.205 \cdot I\}$
>€59,795.61 and ≤€88,119.80	$\min\{12,258.10 + 0.1416 \cdot (I - 59,795.61), 16,268.80\}$

The table above shows the calculation structure of the social insurance contributions for self-employed in main activity before retirement age in 2019. The structure of the calculation is similar in the other years, only the amounts are indexed. Minimum and maximum amounts for the contributions apply:

Table 2.40 Parameters for the social insurance contributions for self-employed in main activity before retirement [2015-2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Minimum contribution per year	€2,943.32	€2,797.28	€2,792.20	€2,777.84	€2,838.72
Maximum contribution per quarter	€4,110.32	€3,961.90	€3,977.09	€3,980.00	€4,067.20

### Self-employed in complementary activity before retirement age

When the self-employed activity is not the main activity of the individual, social insurance contributions are set differently. If net earnings are less than the threshold (cf. Table 2.41), no social insurance contributions are due. If net earnings exceed the threshold, the same schedule applies as for self-employed in main activity, but with a different minimum contribution.

Table 2.41 Social insurance contributions for self-employed in complementary activity before retirement age [2015 – 2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Yearly income threshold below which no contributions are due	1,423.90	1,439.42	1,471.01	1,449.14	1,531.99
Minimum contribution per quarter (if I > threshold)	81.40	77.37	77.23	76.83	78.51
Maximum contribution per quarter	4,146.22	3,961.90	3,977.09	3,980.00	4,067.20

### Self-employed after retirement age but without retirement pension benefits

The social insurance contributions on the earnings of individuals who are self-employed after retirement age and without receiving pension benefits largely follows the same calculation scheme as the self-employed in main activity before retirement age (two-bracketed structure in Table 2.39), however a minimum threshold applies (below which no contributions are due) and if income exceeds this threshold, the minimum contribution that is due is also different.

Table 2.42 Parameters of the social insurance contributions for self-employed after retirement age without pension benefits [2015 – 2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Yearly income threshold below which no contributions are due	2,847.81	2,878.84	2,942.03	2,998.29	3,063.98
Minimum contribution per quarter (if I>threshold)	162.82	154.74	154.46	153.66	157.03
Maximum contribution per quarter	4,110.32	3,961.90	3,977.09	3,980.00	4,067.20

### Self-employed activity in combination with pension benefits

For individuals that receive pension benefits rules exist about the combination of those benefits with a self-employed activity. In 2015 these rules have been considerably simplified. As of 2015 you can cumulate earnings from self-employed activity with pension benefits without limit from 65 years onwards (or if you have a full career of 45 years) provided your spouse does not receive a pension as head of the family (e.g. a pension with a replacement rate of 75%). Since this information is not available in EUROMOD we simply assume no limit on earnings from self-employed activity in combination with pension benefits. In this case social insurance contributions that are due on the net earnings from self-employed activity (in combination with a public old age pension) are as follows:

Table 2.43 Social insurance contributions for self-employed activity in combination with pension benefits [2019]

Annual net indexed earnings (I)	Annual social insurance contribution
< €3,063.98	0
>= €3,063.98 and <= €59,795.61	$\max\{450.41, 0.147 \cdot I\}$
> €59,795.61 and <= €88,119.80	$\min\{8,789.95 + 0.1416 \cdot (I - 59,795.61), 12,800.64\}$

For self-employed aged less than 65 and receiving one or more survival pensions the calculation structure of their social insurance contributions is the same as for self-employed in main activity.

## 2.4.4 Social insurance contributions paid on non-labour income (*tscope\_s*)

### Retirement and survival pensions

Retirement and survival pension benefits are subject to a social insurance contribution of 3.55% for the funding of sickness and disability insurance. However, if the contribution would bring the pension amount below a certain threshold, contributions are limited to the amount exceeding the threshold.

Table 2.44 Thresholds for social insurance contributions for retirement and survival pensions

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Pensioner without dependent family	1,413.84	1,442.08	1,470.90	1,470.90	1,500.36
Pensioner with dependent family	1,675.59	1,709.07	1,743.22	1,743.22	1,778.14

A second contribution (solidarity contribution) is withheld for pensions that exceed €2,999.51 for pensioners with dependent family (i.e. children) and €2,594.45 for pensioners without dependent family in 2019. This solidarity contribution has as purpose to increase solidarity among pensioners and is especially used to protect and preserve minimum pensions. The rate progressively increases from 0.5% to 2%. If the pension benefit exceeds €3,321.56 (€2,903.52) for pensioners with (without) dependent family the contribution percentage is 2%. These last amounts are for 2019.

Table 2.45 Calculation of social insurance contributions for pensioners [2019]

Without dependent family		With dependent family	
Pension amount in euro per month (P)	Contribution	Pension amount in euro per month (P)	Contribution
0.01-2,594.45	0	0.01-2,999.51	0
2,594.46- 2,674.68	$(P-2,594.45)*0.5$	2,999.52-3,092.26	$(P-2,999.51)*0.5$
2,674.69-2,873,57	$P*0.015$	3,092.27-3,287.31	$P*0.015$
2,873.58-2,903.51	$43.10+(P-2,873,57)*0.5$	3,287.32-3,321.55	$49.31+(P-3,287.31)*0.5$
$\geq 2,903.52$	$P*0.02$	$\geq 3,321.56$	$P*0.02$

#### Social insurance contributions on conventional early retirement benefits<sup>16</sup>

An employee has a right to a conventional early retirement if he or she is 58 years old with at least 25 years of professional activity. Part of the conventional early retirement is paid by the unemployment office and part is paid by the employer.

Although strictly speaking an unemployment benefit, the treatment of early retirement pensions concerning social insurance contributions is more similar to that on pensions. A social insurance contribution of 3.5% is withheld by the employer on the part paid by the employer to fund pension insurance and a contribution of 1% or 3%, depending on the start date of the early retirement is withheld by the unemployment office on the unemployment benefit. The 1% is for those whose early retirement started before 1997 and the 3% for those who retired early after 1997. For early retired the pension cannot fall below certain thresholds, which depend on the presence of dependent family. If it does, no contributions are due.

#### Social insurance contributions on disability benefits

On disability benefits received by wage earners a social insurance contribution of 3.5% is due to fund the pension insurance scheme. Again the payment of such contribution may not have as a consequence that the benefits fall below a certain threshold. If so, contributions are limited to the amount exceeding the threshold. The thresholds for beneficiaries with and without dependent family are summarized in Table 2.46. Contributions are not due on benefits for primary disablement (first year).

Table 2.46 Social insurance contributions on disability benefits (euro per day) [2015 – 2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Beneficiary without dependent family	47.63	48.58	49.55	49.55	50.54
Beneficiary with dependent family	57.37	58.52	59.69	59.69	60.88

#### Social insurance contributions on benefits for work-related sickness and disease and occupational injuries

The percentage applicable is 13.07% on benefits for either permanent or temporary disablement but no contribution is due on benefits for assistance by a third person. Because in the data, it is not possible to distinguish work-related sickness and disease and occupational injuries from regular sickness- and

<sup>16</sup> This is not simulated as it cannot be derived from the data which part is attributable to the employer and which part to the unemployment office as the rates differ.

disability-benefits, all sickness and disability benefits are treated as the regular category (see paragraph above). Thus, the social insurance contributions on occupational injuries and work-related sickness and disease are not implemented.

#### 2.4.5 Flemish care insurance contribution (tci\_s)

The Flemish Care Insurance provides a financial compensation of 130 EUR to people with care needs to cover part of their costs for non-medical care. Starting from October 2001 anyone over the age of 25 and living in Flanders is required to pay an annual fee to a healthcare fund. For people living in Brussels membership is voluntary. People can submit an application to their healthcare fund if they think they qualify for the Flemish care insurance system. The Flemish care insurance is financed on a lump sum basis.

Table 2.47 Annual Flemish care insurance contribution (euro per year) [2015 – 2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Member contribution	50	50	50	51	52
Member contribution if eligible for a higher compensation (pensioners, widows, orphan, etc.)	25	25	25	26	26

### 2.5 Withholding income tax (tinwh\_s)

- *Brief description*

The withholding income tax is a system of advance payments, each time one's salary or allowance is paid (mostly monthly, but also weekly or two-weekly is possible).<sup>17</sup> It seeks to approximate the final personal income taxes due. The rough lines of the calculation of the withholding tax are similar to the calculation of the personal income tax, however, it only takes into account the most important elements, and is in that way much less detailed, so differences can be considerable. A clearance of the balance between withholding tax (already paid) and final income taxes due (calculated on the basis of the filed tax returns which are due by the end of June of the year after the income reference year) usually takes place in the first half of the second year after the period in which the income has been received.

After subtracting social insurance contributions and (fixed) professional expenses in the case of employment income, the calculation of the withholding tax takes the following elements into account:

- Number of dependent children and persons
- Family situation: standard rates apply for single persons or couples (married or with cohabitation contract) in which both partners receive income. Differently, a deduction mechanism applies for couples in which only one of the partners receives income (to adjust for the 'marital quotient' that applies in the personal income tax system (cfr. paragraph 2.6.5).
- The type of payment (regular (recurrent) versus exceptional (non-recurrent)). The grade of detail of the available data prevents distinguishing between regular and exceptional payments, therefore, all income is treated as regular.

- *Tax base, schedule and allowances*

The basis for the calculation of the withholding tax is the reference income for one year. It is assumed that the present income is being received for one year.

<sup>17</sup> Strictly speaking, self-employment income is treated differently, with prepayments on a quarterly basis. However, as we cannot simulate this complex system, all income is treated as regular income.

First, social insurance contributions are deducted from the gross income. For the determination of the amount, see section 0.

For the determination of the amount to be deducted as professional expenses, see “deductions related to expenses” under paragraph 2.6.3.

After these two deductions, the schedule in Table 2.48 is applied to the resulting tax base (the reference net taxable yearly income). This schedule counts for both single persons, and fiscal couples (= married or consensual union with a legal basis) of which both partners receive income (employment income, pensions or other replacement incomes).

Table 2.48 Withholding tax schedule (euro per year) [2018-2019]

Band	2018		2019	
	Upper bound	Rate (%)	Upper bound	Rate (%)
1	12,600	26.75	12,860	26.75
2	18,610	42.80	19,630	42.80
3	39,660	48.15	40,470	48.15
4	∞	53.50	∞	53.50

For fiscal couples where only one spouse receives income higher than the above threshold, a specific mechanism applies. 30% of the net taxable yearly income of the earning spouse is first transferred to the other spouse, with a maximum of €10,930 (see also Table 2.59). This split part of the income is then treated as the net taxable yearly income of the non-earning spouse, and the above (individual) schedule is then applied to both parts of the income as if it were two separately gained incomes. This mechanism is entirely parallel to the marital quotient system in the personal income taxation (cfr. paragraph 2.6.5)

Next, a number of allowances are deducted from the resulting tax sum. First, a lump-sum deduction is subtracted (a fixed amount per earner in the case of a single person or dual earner family, and a different amount in the case of one-earner couples) from the total of calculated withholding tax. Next, a number of additional deductions apply that depend on the family situation (dependent children, other dependents, single parent or not). The applicable amounts (cf. Table 2.49) are additionally deducted from the obtained tax sum.

Table 2.49 Reductions from basic withholding tax (euro per year) [2015 – 2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Lump sum per person earning income	1,546.15	1,621.05	1,655.83	1,690.60	2,065.10
Lump sum for one-earner household	3,092.30	3,242.10	3,311.66	3,381.20	4130.20
For the first dependent child*	396	408	420	432	432
----- second -----*	672	708	720	732	816
----- third -----*	1,776	1,860	1,836	1,872	2,052
----- fourth -----*	2,352	2,472	2,472	2,412	2,496
----- fifth -----*	2,484	2,604	2,604	2,676	2,760
----- sixth -----*	2,472	2,592	2,592	2,700	2,772
----- seventh -----*	2,484	2,604	2,616	2,712	2,760
----- eighth -----*	2,664	2,796	2,868	2,916	3,048
For each child beyond the eighth*	2,760	2,892	2,952	3,012	3,072
For single persons	288	288	300	300	312
Single parents with dependent children	408	408	420	432	432
Not (re)married widow(er) with dependent children	408	408	420	432	432
For each other dependents*	408	408	420	432	432
If the taxpayer him/herself is handicapped	408	408	420	432	432
Ascendants and relatives older than 65*	812	840	852	876	960

\* if the child or dependent person is handicapped, she/he is counted double.

After applying the relevant deductions you get the equivalent of the yearly amount of withholding tax. Of course, the amount is then divided by the relevant period (e.g. divided by 12 for persons that are paid on a monthly basis) to obtain the amount that is actually withheld on the pay slip.

- **Special social insurance contribution – determination of withheld amount**

The special social insurance contribution is already discussed in paragraph 2.4.2. As mentioned there, it is withheld every month and appears on the pay slip. In this paragraph, only the calculation of the monthly withheld amount is explained. The final amount, however, is calculated after the settlement of taxes, according to the rules explained in paragraph 2.4.2.

Table 2.50 Calculation rules of the monthly withheld special social insurance contribution [2011-2019]

Monthly gross income = X	Single person	Spouse in dual earner couple
	Earning spouse in single earner couple	
	Monthly withheld amount (€)	
X < 1,095.10	0	0
1,095.10 <= X < 1,945.39	0	9.3
1,945.39 <= X < 2,190.19	7.6% of (X-1,945.39) With a maximum of 18,60	7.6% of (X-1,945.39) With a maximum of 18,60 and a minimum of 9,30
2,190.19 <= X < 6,038.83	18.60 + 1.1% of (X-2,190.19)	18.60 + 1.1% of (X-2,190.19) With a maximum of 51.64
X >= 6,038.83	60.94	51.64

Thresholds and amounts have remained unchanged over the period 2012-2019.

## 2.6 Personal income tax (tin\_s)

The tax structure has changed considerably because of the 6<sup>th</sup> State Reform. We highlight the two most important changes. First the regions now can levy personal income taxes autonomously, before it was the sole responsibility of the federal state. The rate structure and tax base remain the same, but after calculation of the *State tax* (see figure below), the taxes are multiplied by the so-called *autonomy factor*, reducing it to the *reduced State tax* (tinna\_s). Federal tax credits are then subtracted from the reduced State tax to get the federal personal income tax. Since the reform, the regions are now free to define a tax structure, based on the reduced State tax. By default the rate is fixed to 35.117%. This tax corrected for regional increases, reductions and credits forms the regional personal income tax. In Euromod, we do not make a distinction between federal and regional fiscal expenditures.



Figure 1: General principles - federal and regional PIT

Tax on separately taxed income	Basic tax according to the federal rate structure on aggregated taxed income	
	- tax on the zero-rate band	
	= tax to be distributed	
	- tax credit for pensions and replacement income	
	- tax credit for foreign income	
	= "principal"	
Adding up the tax on separately taxed income and the "principal" on aggregated taxed income		
Tax on interest, dividends, royalties, prizes attached to debenture bonds and capital gains on securities taxed as miscellaneous income	Tax on other income	
	= State tax	
	- (State tax * autonomy factor)	
	= <b>reduced State tax</b>	<b>Regional surcharges</b> on reduced State tax
		+ regional tax increases (47)
		- regional lump sum tax reductions (48)
		- regional tax credits (49)
	- other federal tax credits	
		balance; if = 0, it is possible to deduct the portion of the regional tax reductions and credits which could not be set off but which can be set off against the federal positive balance
		balance; if = 0, it is possible to deduct the portion of the federal tax credits which could not be set off but which can be set off against the Region's positive balance
	= <b>federal PIT (may be negative)</b>	= <b>regional PIT (may be negative)</b>
	= <b>total amount (may not be negative)</b>	
	+ federal increases	
	- non-refundable federal items which can be set off	
	- refundable federal and regional tax credits	
	- federal items which can be set off and refunded	
	+ municipal surcharges and agglomeration tax on the "total amount"	
	= <b>amount to be paid or refunded</b>	

Source: Tax Survey 2015 FPS Finance

### 2.6.1 Tax unit

The tax unit typically consists of a single person or married couple, (or couples with a legal union),<sup>18</sup> with dependent persons. Household members that satisfy one of the following conditions are possibly fiscally dependent:

- descendants of the taxpayer or his/her spouse (no age limits)
- children (up to 18 years old) who are not descendants but for whom the taxpayer or his/her spouse bears responsibility
- ascendants of the taxpayer or his/her spouse
- relatives of the taxpayer or his/her spouse
- individuals of whom the taxpayer was him- or herself dependent in the past, according to tax legislation.

To qualify as dependent one's own income may not surpass certain limits. If it does, the individual is considered a separate tax unit.

<sup>18</sup> Married couples form a fiscal unit from the year following the year of marriage onwards.

To determine a potentially dependent person's own means, the tax legislator takes into account both non-taxable and taxable income sources. Among the latter a further distinction is made between 1) occupational income, 2) real estate income, 3) income from assets, and 4) other income sources.

In case of income from a professional activity (occupational income) one compares 80% of gross taxable income<sup>19</sup> with gross taxable income minus the costs incurred to obtain this income and takes the lower of the two. The incurred costs can either be real or lump sum (cfr. section 2.6.3 for more details).<sup>20</sup>

For replacement incomes the standard rate of 80% is used to determine net own means from replacement income.

For income from unrented property the minimum is taken of cadastral income and 10/6 (developed) or 10/9 (undeveloped) of cadastral income minus real incurred costs.<sup>21</sup> If the property produces rental income then the minimum is taken of the received rent minus the real costs and 60% of the received rent for developed property or 80% of rent received for undeveloped property.<sup>22</sup>

Income from assets is counted in net own means as the minimum of gross income from assets minus real costs and 80% of gross income from assets.

For maintenance allowances (alimony) and income from non-taxable sources one takes 80% of the (gross) amount as net own means.

In the case of child allowances, birth and adoption allowances, scholarships, alimony and earnings of disabled children from employment in sheltered workplaces are not included in the means test for net own means and they are not taxable either.

In order to qualify as a dependent, the yearly net own means of children cannot exceed the thresholds summarized in Table 2.51. Other rules apply for assessing the dependency of (grand)parents. The principal amount remains the same, but if the persons are 65 or older and enjoy pensions, part of the latter (up until the maximum limit) is exempted, i.e. not considered in the determination of net own means. Couples of (grand)parents are assessed together: if their common yearly net own means are below the lower threshold, both (grand)parents are dependent. If net own means are exceeding the lower threshold but remain below the second threshold, only the (grand)parent with the lowest net own means is considered dependent. If net own means are above the second threshold then none of the (grand)parents are dependent.

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<sup>19</sup> Gross taxable income consists of gross earnings minus personal social security contributions. The special contribution for social security for households with income exceeding €18,592.02 is not deductible. Contributions paid by pensioners with a pension exceeding €991.57 a month are deductible (amounts unchanged over 2011-2014).

<sup>20</sup> In case of income from professional activity if the costs thus calculated should be lower than €350 then the latter amount applies (if not larger than gross taxable income). In the implementation, the choice for 80% of gross taxable income is assumed (in the definition of the income list).

<sup>21</sup> Not simulated due to lack of data.

<sup>22</sup> In the implementation, 60% of rent is assumed (variable ypr).

Table 2.51 Thresholds for net own means to assess dependency (euro per year) [2015 – 2019]

<b>Thresholds below which one is a dependent:</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Children in couple households	3,120	3,140	3,200	3,270	3,330
Children of lone parents	4,500	4,530	4,620	4,720	4,810
Single (grand)parent	3,120	3,140	3,200	3,270	3,330
Couple (grand)parents - both dependent (1 <sup>st</sup> threshold)	3,120	3,140	3,200	3,270	3,330
Couple (grand)parents - one dependent (2 <sup>nd</sup> threshold)	5,720	5,750	5,860	5,990	6,110
Amount to which pension is exempted from the assessment for (grand)parents older than 65	25,120	25,260	25,750	26,300	26,840

## 2.6.2 Exemptions

Following Verbist (2004), we define exemptions as “income components [that] are part of pre-tax income, but do not have to be declared to the tax authorities, and thus are not included in the concept of taxable income (e.g. child benefits in most countries)”.

In Belgium this applies for child benefits, study allowances, social assistance benefits, war pensions and benefits in case of a work-related accident or sickness for a person without any other income.

## 2.6.3 Tax deductions

Here, we define tax deductions as any amount subtracted from pre-tax income (including social insurance contributions).

In the Belgian tax system, a number of deductions apply. Two categories can be distinguished. First, the social insurance contributions are deducted from gross income. As social insurance contribution is extensively discussed in section 0, it is not treated here. Secondly, there are the deductions related to expenses. The expenses are subtracted from the total taxable income. The simulation possibilities of this category are limited. As detailed expenditure data lack from the data, it is impossible to reconstruct the deductions. Three exceptions to this apply: paid alimony, professional expenses and mortgage repayments. The net taxable income that results from the following rules can then further be reduced by declared expenses such as charitable donations, life insurance premiums, contributions to private pension plans and childcare costs (not simulated).

### 2.6.3.1 Alimony

Paid alimony is available in the data and is deductible up to 80% of the paid amounts if the beneficiary does not live in the same household as the taxpayer and the payment must be the result of a court order.

### 2.6.3.2 Professional expenses

For all workers, gross taxable income from a professional activity is reduced by the amount of professional expenses incurred, or by a lump sum amount, whichever is most favourable. In the case of real costs the taxpayer must prove these costs if asked for by the tax legislator. In EUROMOD, lump sum costs are simulated for every worker.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Self-employed usually don't make use of the system of assumed professional expenses, and usually choose to prove their costs by means of the invoices. In the EUROMOD database, the actual professional expenses of the self-employed are not available, so the wage-related formula is assumed to apply to their professional expenses as well.

As part of the tax shift the (lump sum) deduction of professional expenses for employees was simplified and increased over the period 2016-2018. As of 2018, there is only one rate. To determine the lump sum amount of professional expenses the following rates apply:

**Table 2.52 Schedule for lump sum deduction of professional expenses for employees (euro per year) [2015-2019]**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Upper bound 1	5,760	8,450	8,620	15,733.33	16,033.33
Upper bound 2	11,380	19,960	20,360	-	-
Upper bound 3	19,390	34,590	35,113	-	-
Upper bound 4	54,008	-	-	-	-
Rate 1 (%)	29.35	30.0	30.0	30.0	30.0
Rate 2 (%)	10.50	11.0	11.0	-	-
Rate 3 (%)	8.00	3.0	3.0	-	-
Rate 4 (%)	3.00	-	-	-	-
Maximum	3,960	4,240	4,320	4,720	4,810

Self-employed typically declare real incurred costs, but can also opt for a lumps sum deduction of professional expenses. The rate schedule is different from the schedule for employees (see Table 2.53).

**Table 2.53 Schedule for lump sum deduction of professional expenses for self-employed and co-working spouses (euro per year) [2015-2019]**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Upper bound 1	5,730	5,760	5,870	6,000	6,120,00
Upper bound 2	11,380	11,440	11,670	11,910	12,160.00
Upper bound 3	18,940	19,040	19,420	19,830	20,240.00
Upper bound 4	64,689	65,002	66,357	67,863	69,091.99
Rate 1 (%)	28.7	28.7	28.7	28.7	28.7
Rate 2 (%)	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Rate 3 (%)	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Rate 4 (%)	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Maximum	3,960	3,980	4,060	4,150	4,230

For managers only one rate of 3% on gross taxable income applies to determine the lump sum amount of work related costs with a maximum of €2,490 (in 2019).

### **2.6.3.3 Mortgage repayment**

In the past years, the tax treatment of the inhabited dwelling has changed considerably. In 2005, the taxation schemes have been replaced by a new ‘housing bonus’ (woonbonus/bonus logement) for the new mortgages. In 2015, the tax benefits related to the self-occupied dwelling became a regional competence. On one hand, old the tax relief measures that used to reduce the tax base were turned into a regional tax reduction. On the other hand, the tax treatment of the new mortgages started to diverge across regions.

In what follows, the current rules that apply in the different systems are described. All the rules concern the inhabited (unique) residence, given that the information available in EUROMOD dataset does not allow to observe the number of homes owned. The loan date determines which system applies.

A. Loans contracted before 2005

For the loans contracted before 2005, the ‘cadastral income’, was counted as real estate income in the taxable base until 2015. ‘Cadastral income’ (CI) corresponds to an estimation of the average normal net rent value of the property for one year (at the reference time, which is 1 January 1975). CI is subject to annual *indexing* (the index for tax year 2019 is 1.8230). Before 2015, there were 4 possibilities of tax relief an owner could cumulatively apply for: the normal interest deduction, the housing deduction, the additional interest deduction, and the tax credit for capital redemption payments.

In 2015, the CI for the own and sole dwelling became exempt from taxes and were removed from the tax base. As a result, the former deductions applied to cadastral income disappeared and were replaced by regional tax reductions for interests and capital payments:

- (a) *Regional tax reduction for interests payments at the rate of 12.5%* : a tax reduction is applied at the fixed rate of 12.5% of the interests paid. The interests are taken into account up to the amount of the indexed cadastral income. If there are remaining interest payments, the balance can be transferred to the other spouse, without exceeding the indexed cadastral income.
- (b) *Regional tax reduction for capital payments (bouwsparen/épargne logement)*: capital redemption for a mortgage loan with a term of at least 10 years entitles an owner-occupier to an extra tax reduction. This reduction is calculated on a maximum limit of the initial loan, which depends on the year in which the mortgage was concluded.
  - o Loans concluded from 01.01.1963 to 31.12.1988: only part of the total amount of the loan is taken into account for the tax reduction. The maximum amounts are listed in Table 2.55. For mortgages concluded from 01.05.1986 to 31.12.1988 we will assume a new medium sized house.

Table 2.54 Maximum amounts taken into account for loans concluded from 01.01.1963 to 31.12.1988

Date of the mortgage	Nature of the house	Maximum amount
from 01.01.1963 to 30.04.1986	medium sized house	9,915.74
from 01.05.1986 to 31.12.1988	medium sized house	9,915.74
	new medium sized house	49,578.70

If the total amount of the loan is lower or equal to the maximum amount, then the full amount of the capital payments can be declared. If not, the following formula is applied:

$$\text{capital payments} \times \text{maximum amount} / \text{total value of the loan}$$

The result is eligible for a tax reduction applied at the marginal tax rate, with a minimum of 30%.

- o Loans contracted from 01.01.1989 to 31.12.2004: again, only part of the total amount of the loan is taken into account for the tax reduction. The amounts are raised by 5%, 10%, 20% or 30% when there are 1, 2, 3 or more dependent children in the house. The maximum amounts are listed in Table 2.55 Table 2.55 Maximum amounts taken into account for loans concluded from 01.01.1989 to 31.12.2004, depending on the number of dependent children.
- o

	Number of dependent children				
	0	1	2	3	>3
1989	49.578,70	52.057,64	54.536,58	59.494,45	64.452,32
1990	51.115,64	53.668,95	56.222,25	61.353,65	66.460,25
1991	52.875,69	55.528,15	58.180,61	63.460,74	68.740,87
1992 to 1998	54.536,58	57.263,40	59.990,23	65.443,89	70.872,76
1999	55.057,15	57.808,77	60.560,39	66.063,62	71.566,86
2000	55.652,10	58.453,29	61.229,70	66.782,52	72.360,12
2001	57.570,00	60.440,00	63.320,00	69.080,00	74.830,00
2002	58.990,00	61.930,00	64.880,00	70.780,00	76.680,00
2003	59.960,00	62.950,00	65.950,00	71.950,00	77.940,00
2004	60.910,00	63.960,00	67.000,00	73.090,00	79.180,00

If the total amount of the mortgage is equal or lower than the maximum amount, the full amount of the capital payments can be declared. If not, the following formula is applied:

$$\text{capital payments} \times \text{maximum amount} / \text{total value of the loan}$$

The resulting amount is again calculated at the marginal income tax rate of the lender (with a minimum of 30%) and subtracted from the personal income tax, without exceeding it.

For mortgage loans that started before 2005, the above measures still apply. For mortgages concluded after 2004, however, an entirely new system was installed.

#### B. Loans contracted between 2005 and 2014

From 2005 onwards, the described measures have been abolished for new loans, and the CI of the self-occupied dwelling has become tax exempt in the personal income tax system. For owners with a mortgage loan that is contracted after 1 January 2005, the previous tax advantages have been replaced by the so-called ‘housing bonus’, which is only applicable for mortgages contracted for the own, self-occupied and only dwelling and that have a term of at least 10 years.

The interests and capital payments are taken into account up to a certain ceiling. The ceiling includes a standard amount and two possible increases: (a) during the first 10 years of the term of the mortgage and with (b) when there are three or more dependent children in the household on 1 January of the year that follow on the year in which the mortgage was concluded. The amount of the ceiling is given in Table 2.56.

Until 2015, the housing bonus was reducing the taxable income and was thus applied at the marginal tax rate. From 2015 onwards, the tax advantage was turned into a regional tax reduction, applied at the marginal tax rate of taxation, with a minimum of 30%. From this year, the amount of the ceiling started to diverge across regions.

#### *Aspects of policy that were not implemented*

- (1) There are conditions on the duration of the mortgage. We assume that those are fulfilled.
- (2) There are specific rules for social houses.
- (3) We do not really know if a house is medium sized. We assume it.
- (4) Specific rules apply for mortgages that were taken out to repay other mortgages.
- (5) There are also reductions for premiums paid for life insurances.

- (6) We do not know how many dependent children there were when the mortgage was concluded. We just count the current number of dependent children.
- (7) We assume that the owner obtained the house by buying it in the market. Different rules apply e.g. for houses acquired through inheritance.
- (8) Specific rules apply when one mortgage is taken out by multiple persons.
- (9) We do not know the number of houses owned. We assumed that the mortgage concerns the unique, self-occupied house.

Table 2.56 Housing bonus ceilings [2015-2019]

Type of replacement income	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<i>Flanders</i>					
Maximum (standard) housing bonus for loans until 2014	€2,280	€2,280	€2,280	€2,280	€2,280
Maximum (standard) housing bonus for loans from 2015	€1,520	€1,520	€1,520	€1,520	€1,520
Increase of max during first 10 years	€760	€760	€760	€760	€760
Increase of max for large families (3+ children)	€80	€80	€80	€80	€80
<i>Wallonia</i>					
Maximum (standard) housing bonus for loans until 2015	€2,290	€2,290	€2,290	€2,290	€2,290
Increase of max during first 10 years	€760	€760	€760	€760	€760
Increase of max for large families (3+ children)	€80	€80	€80	€80	€80
<i>Brussels</i>					
Maximum (standard) housing bonus for loans until 2016	€2,290	€2,300	€2,350	€2,400	€2,450
Increase of max during first 10 years	€760	€770	€780	€800	€820
Increase of max for large families (3+ children)	€80	€80	€80	€80	€80

#### C. Loans contracted in 2015

As part of the 6<sup>th</sup> State Reform, fiscal policy concerning the self-occupied housing was transferred to the regions as of January 2015. The housing bonus thus became a regional tax reduction. Brussels, Wallonia and Flanders maintained the structure of the instrument for mortgage loans contracted in 2015, with one important change: the benefit of the instrument is no longer defined by the marginal tax tariff but by a fixed rate varying across regions: 40% in Flanders and Wallonia and 45% in Brussels.

#### D. Loans contracted in 2016

As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, the different regional systems for mortgage repayments started to diverge more substantially.

##### *Flanders*

Flanders introduced the “integrated Woonbonus”, which consists of the integration of several other tax reductions for second, third and more houses (i.e. the tax reduction for long-term savings and normal interests) into the housing bonus. This effectively means that the other tax reductions for housing will no longer apply to mortgage loans contracted after January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016. Thus, as of this year the housing bonus is no longer limited to owners of one house only. Since the information on the number of houses one owns is not available in EUROMOD database, these changes have no implications for the simulation of the housing bonus in EUROMOD. The amounts and calculation of the tax reduction remain the same as in 2015. These amounts will no longer be indexed each year.

*Wallonia*

The Walloon region replaced the housing bonus with the ‘Chèque habitat’. The ‘Chèque habitat’ is conceived as a tax reduction for mortgage loans with a duration of at least 10 years contracted to buy or build your only house. In contrast to the housing bonus, the upper limit of the ‘Chèque habitat’ *decreases* with income, only applies to people with a yearly income below a certain threshold and can be used once per taxpayer for up to 20 years.

The base amount of the ‘Chèque habitat’ is €1,520 (the same as in Flanders). For annual incomes between €22,273 and €85,911 this amount is reduced by €1 for each income bracket of €78 above €22,273. People with yearly incomes higher than €85,911 no longer receive a tax reduction for mortgage repayments. The ‘Chèque habitat’ is increased by €125 for each dependent child in the household. The amount is reduced by 50% after 10 years.

The regional tax reduction is equal to the interests and capital payments up to the result of the computation.

Table 2.57 Calculation of the “Chèque habitat” [2019]

<b>Annual income (I)</b>	<b>Tax reduction</b>
<i>Base amount</i>	
< €22,273	1,520
€22,273 ≤ I < €85,911	1,520 – [(I-22,273)*1.275%]
≥ €85,911	0
<i>Additional increase</i>	
Increase for each dependent child	125

*Brussels*

For people living in Brussels the same rules as in 2015 apply for mortgages contracted before 2016. As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, however, the housing bonus has been abolished and replaced by a decrease in the registration fees for newly built or purchased houses. Due to a lack of data, this decrease cannot be simulated in EUROMOD.

E. Treatment of mortgage in uprated years

To avoid that we simulate a proportion-wise decrease in eligible households, we assume that in the years following the baseline: mortgage was concluded in the reported year +n (baseline year + n).

**2.6.4 Tax base**

To calculate personal income taxes we need to determine the tax base, i.e. net taxable income. This is done by subtracting the tax deductions discussed in section 2.6.3. from gross income,<sup>24</sup> excluding the tax credit for capital redemption.

<sup>24</sup> Losses that are incurred can be deducted from any positive income to establish taxable income. Moreover, losses are transferrable without limitation to other tax years to be set off against positive income. Because data from other years are not disposable, this is not simulated.



All replacement incomes are taxable except for the one exempt from taxation enumerated in section 2.6.2. (income support, war pensions and benefits in case of a work-related accident or sickness for a person without any other income).

For certain income from assets, such as dividends, interest from bonds and other fixed income securities, there is no obligation to declare since taxes are withheld at the source (simulated separately, see section 2.6.6.4.). Other income from assets such as income originated and collected abroad and interest on savings in a savings account should be declared.<sup>25</sup> Income from assets can be taxed separately or jointly with other income, whichever is more advantageous for the taxpayer. In EUROMOD it is assumed that separate taxation is more advantageous, because of the low average rate (15% on interest from savings in a savings account and 30% for income from other assets).

Other income sources include maintenance allowance (alimony) of which 80% is subject to taxation.

Occasional profits and benefits are taxed net of incurred costs. These do not include profits and benefits from regular exploitation of a private enterprise or estate, nor do they include winnings from lotteries or games.<sup>26</sup>

Some income items are taxed separately such as wages overdue, holiday allowance paid up-front, capital from collective insurance contracts. These are, however, not simulated because the data are not detailed enough in this respect.<sup>27</sup>

Also taxed separately are income from assets, awards, and certain subsidies (cfr. section 2.6.6.4).

### 2.6.5 Federal tax schedule

The rate structure in the table below is applied to individual net taxable income to determine the gross amount, before any other reductions (cfr. section 2.6.6), of personal income taxes. As a consequence of the tax shift implemented by the new administration, the federal tax schedule will be modified in several respects between 2016 and 2020. Firstly, the 30%-bracket will be abolished and integrated into the 25%-bracket. To this end, the upper limit of the 25%-bracket was raised in 2016 and will be further raised to reach the upper limit of the current 30%-bracket in income year 2018. Secondly, the 40%-bracket will be progressively broadened by raising the upper limit from €13,530 to €13,940 in 2018 and to €14,330 in 2019 (non-indexed amounts).

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<sup>25</sup> In case of savings accounts the first €1,880 in interest on savings per spouse is exempt from taxation altogether. As it is not possible to identify which income is from interest on savings accounts, this policy is switched off.

<sup>26</sup> For awards and subsidies the tax base is the received amount plus any withholding taxes minus gifts to Belgian universities or other recognized institutions for scientific research. Awards and subsidies are taxable only for the part that exceeds €3,910. (not simulated)

<sup>27</sup> It concerns the following items (not simulated) :

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Income from assets (stocks, bonds and other securities)	30%
Occasional profits	33%
Awards and subsidies	16.5%
Income from subletting and transfer lease	30%
Capital gain real estate	16.5%
Capital gain land (for construction)	33% if sold within 5 yrs of acquisition.; 16.5% otherwise
Wages and replacement incomes overdue	average tax rate previous year
Severance pay of more than €850 gross	Idem
Holiday earnings paid in advance	Idem
Capital from life or collective insurance contracts, or pension plans	33%, 16.5% or 8%

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Table 2.58 Tax schedule federal tax (euro per year) [2015 – 2019]

Tax brackets	Upper limits of yearly net taxable income					Rate
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1 <sup>st</sup> bracket	8,710	10,860	11,070	12,990	13,250	25%
2 <sup>nd</sup> bracket	12,400	12,470	12,720	-	-	30%
3 <sup>rd</sup> bracket	20,660	20,780	21,190	22,290	23,390	40%
4 <sup>th</sup> bracket	37,870	38,080	38,830	39,660	40,480	45%
5 <sup>th</sup> bracket	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	50%

As discussed above, the amount of income corresponding to the tax free amount is exempt from tax. This means that the rate structure applies on the entire net taxable income, and in the end the tax due on the base allowance (after applying the rate structure for that amount) is subtracted to obtain the final tax amount (see section 2.6.6).

In the case of married couples the tax legislator allows for income sharing between spouses up to a certain limit (the so-called ‘marital quotient system’). If one of the spouses earns less than 30% of the couple’s total net taxable income, income between spouses is shared as if the higher earning spouse earned 70% of total household income from professional activity and the other spouse 30%. The amount transferred is limited (amounts see Table 2.59) and may not exceed 30% of total household professional income. After this income sharing, the rate structure is applied to both individuals as if the income was their own individual income. This implies that the transferred part of the income is taxed against a much lower marginal rate than if it would have been had it not been transferred, i.e. if it had remained part of the income of the higher earning spouse.

In the case of self-employed part of the income can be transferred to the “co-working” spouse is slightly higher. The compensation should be in relation to the services provided by the spouse of the self-employed and cannot exceed 30% of total income earned with the help of the spouse. We assume that the sharing is in relation to the services.

If the professional income of one of the spouses is negative, this can be deducted from the earnings of the other spouse without, however, exceeding those earnings (not simulated).

Table 2.59 Marital quotient limits (euro per year) [2015 – 2019]

Type of replacement income	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Maximum amount transferred to the spouse	10,200	10,290	10,490	10,720	10,940
In case of co-working spouse for self-employed	13,240	13,360	13,620	13,910	14,200

### Municipality taxes

Municipality tax rates are collected in addition to the above tax schedule. The rates vary from 2.5% to 9.0%. As in the EUROMOD database we do not dispose of municipality information, these taxes are calculated taking 7.6% (Brussels), 7.2% (Flanders) and 7.9% (Wallonia) of calculated national taxes. This percentage corresponds to the proportion of aggregated municipality taxes / aggregated national taxes in the administrative fiscal data.

## 2.6.6 Tax credits

### 2.6.6.1 Tax free amounts for family size and composition

The tax legislator grants the taxpayer an income amount that is exempt from taxation. The exemption is from the bottom up. This means that the taxes due on that amount are calculated following the normal income brackets and applicable rates. The amount that is then obtained will be deducted from the final tax payment calculated on total net taxable income.

From 2016 onwards, the rates applied for the calculation of the tax free amount are no longer the same as the rates from the federal tax schedule. The changes to the tax brackets following the federal tax shift (as explained under 2.6.5.) will not be extended to the brackets used to calculate the tax free amounts. The brackets and applicable rates are given below.

Table 2.60 Tax schedule applied to calculate tax free amounts (euro per year) [2015-2019]

Tax brackets	Upper limits of yearly net taxable income					Rate
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1 <sup>st</sup> bracket	8,710	8,760	8,930	9,120	9,310	25%
2 <sup>nd</sup> bracket	12,400	12,470	12,720	12,990	13,250	30%
3 <sup>rd</sup> bracket	20,660	20,780	21,190	21,640	22,080	40%
4 <sup>th</sup> bracket	37,870	38,080	38,830	39,660	40,480	45%
5 <sup>th</sup> bracket	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	50%

The basic amount is applied per taxpaying person regardless of the marital status. It is the same for all individuals. In a cohabitating couple consisting of two tax units each person will individually get the basic amount allocated, and in a married couple that makes up a single tax unit, it will also be granted to each spouse separately. If the income of one of the married spouses is less than the basic exempted income amount however, the remainder can be transferred to the other spouse (if his or her income is sufficiently large).

If the taxpayer is disabled the basic amount is increased, and the tax free amount is further increased for each dependent child<sup>28</sup>, as well as for a number of specific family situations:

Table 2.61 Tax free amounts (euro per year) [2015 – 2019]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Basic amount (per taxpayer)	7,090	7,130	7,270	7,430	8,860
Disabled taxpayer	1,510	1,520	1,550	1,580	1,610
Amount per child for 1 <sup>st</sup> child	1,510	1,520	1,550	1,580	1,610
----- for 2 <sup>nd</sup> child	2,370	2,380	2,430	2,480	2,540
----- for 3 <sup>rd</sup> child	4,820	4,840	4,940	5,050	5,140
From fourth child onward	5,370	5,400	5,510	5,620	5,740
Ascendants and relatives older than 65	3,010	3,030	3,090	3,160	3,220
Other dependent person	1,510	1,520	1,550	1,580	1,610
Handicapped dependent person	1,510	1,520	1,550	1,580	1,610
Lone parent with dependent children	1,510	1,520	1,550	1,580	1,610
Max. amount refundable tax credit (per child)	430	440	440	450	460
Low taxable income	25,990	26,510	27,030	45,750	-
----- additional amount	280	290	300	300	-

If the tax free amount exceeds the actual income, the result is that no taxes have to be paid, but no compensation exists for the ‘remainder’ of the tax free amount, the part that one cannot ‘use’ because income is insufficient. However, if the increase of the tax free amount is due to increases related to children, then part of the tax free amount is refundable in the form of a tax credit for children, with maximum amount per child (see Table 2.61). The extra reduction for low income has been withdrawn in 2019.

<sup>28</sup> An extra lump sum increase of the tax deduction of €580 (2017) for each child younger than 3 is granted if no childcare costs are declared on the tax form for this child. (not simulated).

2.6.6.2 Credits in the case of replacement income

When part of one’s income stems from replacement income (unemployment benefits, early retirement benefits, sickness and disability benefits, pensions), tax credits are applicable to that part. In Table 2.62 the yearly basic tax credits are shown for different types of replacement income. For all types of replacement income, the assessment unit is the individual, i.e. the recipient’s family situation does not influence the amount of the credit. The amounts of the tax credits for replacement incomes (see table below) have not been indexed in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Table 2.62 Tax credits for replacement incomes [2015 – 2019]

Type of replacement income	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Pensions	2,024	2,024	2,024	2,067	1,802
Early retirement benefits	2,024	2,024	2,024	2,067	1,802
Unemployment benefits (incl. for elderly unemployed)	2,024	2,024	2,024	2,067	1,802
Sickness and disability benefits	2,598	2,598	2,598	2,653	2,401

These credits are further reduced “horizontally” and “vertically”.

**Horizontal limit**

The tax credit is limited to the proportion of replacement income in total net taxable income. A taxpayer receiving unemployment benefits of €2,500 and net taxable income from professional activity of €10,000 will only be eligible to receive 1/5 of the tax credit related to unemployment benefits ( $2500/(10000+2500)$ ), where €12,500 is the total net taxable income in this example. This rule is applied on the “calculation basis”, before application of the marital quotient system (cfr. section 2.6.5).

**Vertical limit**

The general rule which is applicable to all replacement incomes except the regular unemployment benefits is as follows, where R is the reduction after applying the horizontal limit, and NTI is net taxable income (at the level of the tax unit):

Table 2.63 Determination of vertical limit of the tax credit for replacement income (except regular unemployment benefits) [2019]

NTI < €23,380	$R' = R$
€23,380 ≤ NTI ≤ €46,750	$R' = R * 1/3 + [R * 2/3 * (46,750 - NTI) / 23,380]$
NTI > €46,750	$R' = R * 1/3$

In case of regular unemployment benefits the following rules apply:

Table 2.64 Determination of vertical limit of the tax credit for regular unemployment benefits [2019]

NTI < €23,380	$R' = R$
€23,380 ≤ NTI ≤ €29,180	$R' = R * (29,180 - NTI) / 5,800]$
NTI > €29,180	$R' = 0$

The reductions that are obtained after applying the horizontal and vertical limits cannot be more than that part of the tax that is proportional to the tax base on which they apply. It means that the reduction as a proportion of the total tax cannot be more than the replacement income as a proportion of total net taxable income.

After all the reductions the taxes due can be further reduced to zero in case taxable income’s sole component is replacement income –and only one type of replacement income– and does not exceed the amounts given in Table 2.65. In 2019, this further tax exemption has been deleted.

Table 2.65 Upper limits for further reduction to zero taxes in the case of pure replacement income [2015-2019]

Type of replacement income	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Unemployment benefits	17,569.48	17,569.48	17,631.14	17,631.14	-
Pensions, early retirement and other replacement income	15,158.54	15,158.54	15,568.12	15,568.12	-
Sickness and disability benefits	17,242.82	17,242.82	17,297.91	17,297.91	-

### 2.6.6.3 Refundable tax credit on low activity incomes

Low activity incomes are incomes from professional activity net of costs (either real or lump sum) that are not replacement incomes, wage incomes<sup>29</sup> or other separately taxed incomes. It implies that this tax credit is applicable only for self-employed and statutory civil servants. The base for the calculation of the credit is before application of the marital quotient and is calculated per spouse. The credit calculated according to the rules in the table below is limited to the ratio of activity income in total net income from professional activity. The maximum amount of the tax credit is €700 for self-employed and €320 for the co-working spouse (and €780 for employees in the public sector without a formal labour contract). The (refundable) tax credit is calculated as follows:

Table 2.66 Calculation of the tax credit for low activity incomes (euro per year)

Income (I) brackets		Tax credit
Lower bound (G <sub>1</sub> )	Upper bound (G <sub>2</sub> )	
0	I <sub>1</sub>	0
I <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>2</sub>	$C \times (I - G_1) / (G_2 - G_1)$
I <sub>2</sub>	I <sub>3</sub>	C
I <sub>3</sub>	I <sub>4</sub>	$C \times (G_2 - I) / (G_2 - G_1)$
I <sub>5</sub>	∞	0

Table 2.67 Refundable tax credit for low activity incomes parameters (euro per year) [2016-2019]

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Max. credit (general)	680	690	700	720
Max. credit (co-working spouse)	310	310	320	330
Max. credit (civil servant)	740	760	780	790
Min. net income for partial credit (I <sub>1</sub> )	5,010	5,100	5,210	5,320
Min. net income for full credit (I <sub>2</sub> )	6,680	6,810	6,960	7,100
Max. net income for full credit (I <sub>3</sub> )	16,710	17,040	17,400	17,760
Max. net income for partial credit (I <sub>4</sub> )	21,710	22,140	22,610	23,080

### 2.6.6.4 The fiscal workbonus

Wage earners that are not eligible for the tax credit on low activity incomes but who are eligible for a reduction in personal social security contributions (the “workbonus” as explained in section 2.6.3.3) are also eligible for an additional tax credit based on the amount of the reduction in personal social security contributions. This tax credit is calculated by multiplying the amount of the original workbonus with the rate as shown in the table below.

Table 2.68 Calculation of the fiscal workbonus [2016 – 2019]

	EUROMOD Parameter	2016	2017	2018	2019
% of social workbonus	\$tinfe_WagePrem_R	28.03	28.03	33.14	33.14

<sup>29</sup> Wage earners that are not eligible for this tax credit are in principle eligible for a reduction in personal social security contributions.

Max. amount	\$tinfe WagePrem Max	640	660	670	790
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## 2.7 Investment income taxes (*tinkt\_s*)

For certain income from assets, such as dividends, interest from bonds and other fixed income securities, there is no obligation to declare since taxes are withheld at the source. As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 an increased rate of 30% applies to most income form assets. However, the rate applied to income from interests on savings in a savings account remains at 15%.

In principle, income from assets can be taxed separately or jointly with other income, whichever is more advantageous for the taxpayer. The assumption in EUROMOD is that this income is taxed at the source and is hence not taken up in taxable income. Other income from assets such as income originated and collected abroad and interest on savings in a savings account should be declared. In case of savings accounts the first €1,880 in interest on savings per spouse is exempt from taxation altogether.

Because with the EUROMOD data it is not possible to distinguish whether investment income comes from abroad or not, or whether it originates from interest on a savings account or not, these details are not simulated. Hence, all investment income is treated in the same way and taxed at a standard rate of 30%.

## 2.8 Advanced levy on immovable property (*tprhm\_s*)

Real estate taxes are implemented as part of personal income tax.

*Cadastral Income.* Every property in the country is listed in the Cadastre (land registry) and an annual net rental income is assigned to it: the cadastral income. This value corresponds to the net rental income of the property on the 1st of January 1975, plus a ratio of adjustment to today prices, re-evaluated every year. To assess the cadastral income the Cadastral administration takes into account both the building itself (number of rooms, cellar, garage, general condition etc.) and more general factors affecting the building or its environment (ease of access, distance from main highways, etc.). Cadastral income needs to be declared on the tax form. However, taxes on cadastral income, Belgium’s main real estate tax, are paid separately. Therefore taxes due on cadastral income are “settled” against the final tax payment at a rate of 12.5% of the part of cadastral income that is effectively taken up in the tax base (the part concerning non-occupied real estate).

*Principles of the real estate tax.* The so-called “advance levy on immovable properties” (onroerende voorheffing / précompte immobilière) is a regional tax on immovable properties, outside the personal income tax. Its amount is based on the indexed cadastral income<sup>30</sup> (e.g. in 2019, the index was 1.823):

- Flemish Region: 3.97% of the indexed cadastral income
- Walloon Region and Brussel-Capital Region: 1.25%

The owner of a modest house (non-indexed cadastral income on all immovables <= 745 EUR) can obtain a reduction of 25%.

<sup>30</sup> If the property is the second home or rented to a natural person that does not use it for professional activities or rented to a legal person that is not a corporation and that sublets to (a) natural person(s) to use the property as residence then the indexed cadastral income is further increased by 40%. If the property is rented to a natural person for professional activity or to a corporation then the tax base is rental income net of a 40% lump sum cost allowance. The net rent may not be lower, however, than the indexed cadastral income plus 40% (not simulated).

*Surtaxes.* Provinces, agglomerations and municipalities can levy surtaxes on these regional taxes. These surtaxes are a percentage increase of the base levy. A surtax of 100 means that for each euro of regional tax, an additional euro is levied for local authorities. Since we do not have detailed information on the geographic position of the house, we use average surcharges for each region, as shown in Table 2.69. In 2016, the Brussels-Capital Region increased its surtax with 400 points. As a compensation for this increase, every household that owns a main residence in Brussels receives a lump-sum benefit of 120 euro per year per household (BE HOME compensation).

Table 2.69 Average surtaxes per region in % [2015 - 2019]

Total average surtaxes per region (municipality + agglomeration rates together)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Brussels	3389	3789	3789	3789	3789
Flanders	2012	2011	2010	1358	1358
Wallonia	4200	4200	4200	4200	4200

*Reductions for dependent children.* If the owner of the house has dependent children he may be entitled to a reduction, dependent on the region.

o **Flemish Region**

In the Flemish Region the owner is entitled to a reduction if he has two or more dependent children. The lump sum reductions are listed in Table 2.70. The amounts are indexed annually.

Table 2.70 Lump sum reductions for dependent children in the Flemish Region [2015 – 2019]

Number of dependent children	Reduction				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
2	7.62	7.66	7.81	12.68	12.94
3	12.06	12.13	12.37	20.07	20.48
4	16.89	16.99	17.32	28.10	28.67
5	22.14	22.27	22.70	36.83	37.59
6	27.77	27.93	28.48	46.19	47.14
7	33.83	34.02	34.69	56.26	57.41
8	40.31	40.53	41.33	67.03	68.41
9	47.17	47.43	48.37	78.44	80.05
10	54.48	54.78	55.86	90.61	92.47

o **Brussels Region**

In the Brussels-Capital Region the owner must have at least two children alive, including one dependent child. The owner then is entitled to a reduction of 10% for each dependent child.

o **Walloon Region**

In the Walloon Region a reduction of 125 euro is granted for each dependent person.

*Aspects of policy that were not implemented*

- Properties that are let as social houses are subject to a lower tax rate.
- Disabled persons and war disabled persons are entitled to a reduction, different for each region.
- Under certain conditions, there is a reduction for nonproductive houses.

- Houses for which an energy performance certificate (energieprestatiecertificaat) exists can enjoy a reduction.
- The reduction for modest houses for inhabitants of the Flemish Region is only applicable for houses that are in the Flemish Region. Our data does not cite the location of the house though. This is no problem, as we assume the house to be the only and the main residence of the owner.
- Average surcharges were used for each region, instead of detailed rates for each province, agglomeration and municipality.



### 3. DATA

#### 3.1 General description

We use the UDB SILC for Belgium, as provided by EUROSTAT. The survey took mainly place from March to September 2017. Some interviews also took place after September 2017, but they represent about 5 % of the interviews. The unit of assessment is the sociological household, defined as the persons living at the same address. The response rate for the total sample (“old” households (3/4) and “new” households (1/4) together) is defined as: (number of addresses successfully contacted / number of valid addresses contacted) \* (number of household interviews completed and accepted for the database / number of eligible households at contacted addresses).

Table 2.71 EUROMOD database description

	SILC 2017 - Income Year 2016
EUROMOD database	BE_2017_a4
Original name	EU-SILC_UDB_cBE17 – version 2018-09
Provider	Eurostat
Year of collection	2017
Period of collection	March-November
Income reference period	2016
Sampling	2-stage sampling; with stratification of sampling units (no clustering of sampling units)
Unit of assessment	Sociological household
Coverage	Private households
Sample size	14,028 individuals; 6,053 households
Response rate	61.6% (households)

#### 3.2 Data adjustment

Adjustments to variables are kept to a minimum. There is some minor data cleaning that is done to make sure that the households and relationships of individuals within households, are coherent (for example, that both partners identify each other correctly, to rule out inconsistencies in family structure).

In order to guarantee consistency between demographic variables and income variables which refer to the previous year (and on which EUROMOD simulation are based), all children born between the end of the income reference period and the data of interview have been dropped from the sample (54 newborns in 2016).

#### 3.3 Imputations and assumptions

##### 3.3.1 Time period

All income information in EU-SILC 2017 refers to the fiscal year 2016 (January – December). Monetary amounts in the original variables are normally expressed in yearly totals, unless otherwise indicated. Incomes and benefits are paid on a monthly basis in Belgium. For most income variables, information is included on how many months a certain wage or benefit was received.

For the construction of the EUROMOD database from EU-SILC, all monetary amounts are re-scaled to “an average month”, dividing them by 12.

For non-monetary variables, two reference periods co-exist in EU-SILC. On the one hand, with respect to the reference year (2016) there is relevant information included on e.g. activity status and household composition, complementing the income information. On the other hand, a number of questions (on e.g. education activity, child care) refer to the “current” state at the time of the interview.

In the EUROMOD database, the information refers as much as possible to the same reference period, to ensure a consistent picture with regard to income sources and non-monetary information such as labour market and socio-economic characteristics. Therefore, different sources of information available in EU-SILC are combined. In order of preference:

- 1) Direct information from EU-SILC referring to the income reference period (e.g. monthly labour market information) is being used where possible.
- 2) In addition, information on the income reference period is derived from the current reference period (e.g. education activity).
- 3) If no alternative is available, the current value is taken as the best proxy for the value during the income reference period (e.g. hours usually worked per week).

In this way, we approximate best the general consistency of the personal and household characteristics with the incomes that are reported.

### 3.3.2 Gross incomes

For the applicable income variables, gross and net incomes are both collected in the original data. Consistency checks between corresponding net and gross amounts were done by the National Statistics Office Belgium.

For the construction of the EUROMOD dataset, the gross amounts from EU-SILC were used (where applicable). The EUROMOD Working Paper EM16/14 “Gross incomes in the Belgian SILC dataset: an analysis by means of EUROMOD” by André Decoster, Dieter Vandelannoote, Toon Vanheukelom, and Gerlinde Verbist explores the choice for gross incomes by comparing SILC gross incomes (and the poverty and inequality estimated that stem these) to fiscal statistics on the one hand and a re-calibration approach based on SILC net incomes on the other hand. See: <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/publications/working-papers/euromod/em16-14>.

### 3.3.3 Disaggregation of harmonized variables

Early retired people are another important category in the Belgian tax-benefit system that is not identifiable from the SILC data. Moreover, respondents seem to have confused the legal status of “early retirement” with that of “older unemployed exempt from seeking work”. We have assumed that those who indicated ‘pensioner’ as an economic status and are over 58 years of age and receive unemployment benefits, as the early retired. Yet, care should be given to interpreting results for these subcategories.

Civil servants were randomly imputed using the percentage of civil servants per occupational category, a table that was derived from National SILC data. In order to impute the mortgage-related variables, a number of assumptions were made: for cadastral income (khooo), we assumed a linear ratio with imputed rent. We assumed the year that the household moved in the current property as the year when the mortgage was concluded (amoyl). Total loan value (amolv) was derived by assuming a total mortgage time of 25 years and an interest rate of 3.5%.

## 3.4 Updating

The factors that are used to update monetary variables from the mid-point of the data year to mid-point of simulation years until 2019 are shown in Table A.1 in Appendix 1: Updating factors.

No other updating adjustments are employed. Thus the distribution of characteristics (such as employment status and demographic variables) as well as the distribution of each income source that is not simulated, remain as they were in the 2017 data.

## 4. VALIDATION

### 4.1 Aggregate Validation

EUROMOD results are validated against external benchmarks. Detailed comparisons of the number of people receiving a given income component and total yearly amounts are shown in Appendix 2: Validation tables. Both market incomes and non-simulated taxes and benefits in the input dataset, as well as simulated taxes and benefits, are validated against external official data. The main discrepancies between EUROMOD results and external benchmarks are discussed in the following subsections. Factors that may explain the observed differences are also discussed.

#### 4.1.1 Components of disposable income

Table 4.1 compares the definition of disposable income in EUROMOD with the definition of the disposable income variable HY020 in EU-SILC.

Table 4.1 Components of disposable income

	EUROMOD 2016-2019	EU-SILC 2017
	ils_dispy	HY020
Employee cash or near cash income	+	+
Employer's social insurance contribution	0	0
Company car	-	+
Contributions to individual private pension plans	0	0
Cash benefits or losses from self-employment	+	+
Pension from individual private plans	0	0
<i>Unemployment benefits</i>	+	+
<i>Old-age benefits</i>	+	+
<i>Survivor' benefits</i>	+	+
Sickness benefits	+	+
Disability benefits	+	+
Education-related allowances	+	+
Income from rental of a property or land	-	+
<i>Family/children related allowances</i>	+	+
Social exclusion not elsewhere classified	+	+
Housing allowances	0	0
Regular inter-household cash transfer received	+	+
Interests, dividends, etc.	+	+
Income received by people aged under 16	+	+
Regular taxes on wealth	+	-
<i>Regular inter-household cash transfer paid</i>	-	-
<i>Tax on income and social contributions</i>	-	-
<i>Repayments/receipts for tax adjustment</i>	+	+

### 4.1.2 Validation of incomes inputted into the simulation

#### Number of employed and unemployed

Table 4.2 compares the number of employed and unemployed as derived from EU-SILC and used in EUROMOD, with external statistics. EUROMOD findings seem to slightly underestimate the number of employed people (by 3% for 2016, 2017 and 2018). With respect to the number of unemployed persons, in 2016 EUROMOD's underlying dataset overestimates it by 20%. The decrease in unemployment since then has resulted in EUROMOD overestimating the number of unemployed in 2017 and 2018 by 32% and 30% respectively.

#### Market income

Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 present EU-SILC statistics about the number of recipients and annual amounts of different market income components. External statistics about the number of recipients of the components are only available for employment and self-employment income. External statistics about the annual amounts of the components are available for employment income, self-employment income, rent income, private pensions, and imputed housing.

The number of recipients of employment income, as well as the total amount of employment income, is for the baseline year 2016 both higher in the EU-SILC than in the external figures (23% and 35%, respectively). However, the components of the income concept (wage) in this case are not entirely similar in the comparison. While income from employment in EUROMOD contains all holiday payments, bonuses and even meal vouchers, the income concept of the social insurance institution (external source) contains neither a substantial part of the holiday payments, nor performance-related bonuses, nor meal vouchers<sup>31</sup>.

The number of recipients of self-employment income in EU-SILC is much lower in the baseline year 2016 than in the external figure (-43%). This is probably due to the fact that self-employment is insufficiently covered in EU-SILC and can be caused by an underreporting of self-employment incomes in households for whom it concerns only small amounts. The annual amount, on the other hand, is more in line with these external figures (a ratio of 0.88 for 2016).

The EU-SILC values about the annual amount of rent income and private pensions are much lower than the external figures from the National Bank of Belgium (-59% for 2016) and from PensioPlus (-95% for 2016 and 2017), respectively. This strong divergence of rent income can be due to the fact that the number of recipients of rent income in EU-SILC is relatively low.

The values regarding imputed housing from the National Bank of Belgium are 27% higher than those of EU-SILC (for both 2016 and 2017). This can be explained by the fact that the methodology of the National Bank of Belgium and EU-SILC to calculate imputed housing is different.

#### Tax-benefit instruments included but not simulated

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<sup>31</sup> Previous investigations on the validation of gross wages for detailed job categories in EU-SILC (See table 54 in the Belgian EUROMOD Country Report 2005-2008) showed that gross wages were about 13% higher in SILC2006 than in the statistics from the National Statistics Office based on the Structure of Earning Survey. However, it is very difficult to construct fully comparable data. A first difficulty concerns the definition of 'full-time workers', which varies over surveys depending on structural design features such as the reference period. The second cause for the deviation between the SILC-aggregates and other sources is that in the SILC data, also bonuses and holiday earnings are counted as wages, whereas this is not explicitly stated in the other sources. This could explain the slight upward bias of the EUROMOD wages, which are based on SILC, in comparison to this external source.

Tables 4.5 shows the number of recipients of tax-benefit instruments included but not simulated in EUROMOD. External statistics are only available for unemployment benefits, the sum of old-age and survivor pension and for early retirement pension.

- The EU-SILC statistics about the number of recipients of the unemployment benefit are 32% lower than those of the National Unemployment Office for 2016 (26% lower than the statistic for 2017, and 22% lower for 2018). A possible explanation for this is that very short-term unemployed, who have received the benefit only for a limited period of time, have not reported this.
- Due to the lack of external information about old-age pensions and survivor pensions as separate components, we compared the sum of both components with figures from the National Bank of Belgium. The EU-SILC statistics corresponds very well with these figures, with only a slight underrepresentation of 3% for 2016, 6% for 2017, and of 8% for 2018. This slight underrepresentation can be due to the fact that only private households were sampled in the EU-SILC, so persons in collective households, such as nursing homes, are not represented in the survey.
- The number of recipients of early retirement pension is 2% higher in the administrative statistic about 2016 than the EU-SILC value. For 2017 and 2018 we see the opposite (ratios of 1.11 and 1.25 for 2017 and 2018 respectively).

External figures about the annual amounts of these tax-benefit instruments that are included but not simulated in EUROMOD are available for education-related allowances, housing benefits, unemployment benefits, old-age/survivor pension, and early retirement pension (see table 4.6).

- For the education-related allowances, we compared the EU-SILC figures with the expenditures on scholarships in the Flemish community and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. The EU-SILC values are lower than the external figures (-18% for 2016). This can partly be explained due to the absence of the expenses on scholarships by the German-speaking Community.
- Although only external statistics about the housing benefits in Flanders are used, they are still 14% higher than the EU-SILC value of 2016. This can be due to the fact that there are only a small amount of cases in EU-SILC who are entitled to housing benefits.
- The EU-SILC values about the unemployment benefits correspond relatively well with external statistics from the National Employment office (a ratio of 0.88 for 2016, 0.96 for 2017, and 1.06 for 2018).
- The EU-SILC values for old-age/survivor pension correspond well with the external figures from the National Bank of Belgium. They are only 4% higher for 2016 and 3% higher for 2017. These slightly higher expenditures for old-age/survivor pension, allow us to assume that the amounts reported as state pension might sometimes also include non-state pension income components, such as income support for the elderly (which counts as social assistance) and/or some types of private pensions.
- The EU-SILC annual amounts of early retirement pension are higher than the external statistics from the National Employment Office (12%, and 40% for 2016, and 2017 respectively).

### 4.1.3 Validation of outputted (simulated) incomes

Validation of simulated elements of tax-benefit instruments is carried out in relation to independent external sources and EU-SILC. Table 4.7 shows comparisons of the number of benefit recipients from the EUROMOD simulations with EU-SILC and official statistics based on administrative sources. Table 4.8a and 4.8b show the aggregate annual expenditure, or revenues from each tax benefit instrument, compared with EU-SILC and official statistics.

- *Child benefit*

The total expenditures simulated for child benefit are slightly underestimated when compared to the external statistics (with 4% for 2016 and 5% for 2017). Also, the number of recipients is slightly underestimated (with 3% and 4% respectively for 2016 and 2017). One reason for this might be that the children's disability status is not observed in the data, which means that the higher allowances for handicapped children cannot be simulated.

- *Birth allowance*

Figures about the number of recipients are available from FAMIFED and show that the EUROMOD simulation is an underestimation of about 10% for 2016 and 8% for 2017.

- *Income support*

The number of recipients is well estimated: the simulation captures about 99% to 100% of the persons receiving income support. The annual expenditures on income support, on the other hand, are overestimated, with a ratio of 1.14 for 2016, and 1.21 for 2017<sup>32</sup>.

- *Personal income tax*

The personal income tax is accurately simulated in EUROMOD. The differences with the administrative figures are +4% for 2016 and +8% for 2017.

- *Investment income tax*

The simulated investment income tax has a revenue that is only 18% of the administrative value of this tax revenue about 2016 (24% for 2017). In EU-SILC, income from assets cannot be distinguished by source, i.e. there is no information on the share of dividends, interests on savings accounts, interests on bonds, etc. Therefore the EUROMOD code implements an average tax rate on all capital income. The external statistics are related to the advanced levy on movable property and contain more income sources than capital income only. Both aspects can partly explain why the simulated income tax is an underestimation of the external figures.

- *Advanced levy on immovable property*

The EUROMOD simulation is an underestimation of the OECD figures about the tax-revenue from the advanced levy on immovable property (ratios of about .60). This can largely be explained by the fact that there is only information about the main residence in EU-SILC. The advanced levy on other buildings than the main residence is therefore not simulated in EUROMOD.

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<sup>32</sup> In Belgium, one has to distinguish between two measures for cash income support. First, regular income support (*regulier leefloon*) is allocated to Belgians and foreigners with a stable or long-term residence permit (Belgians, EU-citizens, foreigners with permanent residence permit). "Equivalent" cash income support (*equivalent leefloon*) is allocated to persons whose statute is very precarious, e.g. candidate refugees, undocumented residents or temporary residing foreigners. Both types of income support consist of the same amounts, only the financing is different. Previous validation analysis (cf. EUROMOD Country Report Belgium 2006-2010) revealed that persons receiving equivalent income support are barely captured in the SILC data, because only a small part of them belongs to the sample population of the SILC survey (the sample is drawn from the state register, while foreigners who receive equivalent income support are often registered in the foreigners register, and not in the state register). Therefore, the validation is carried out using the amounts and beneficiaries of regular income support only. One has to bear in mind, however, that this means that the most precarious foreign population in Belgium, for which on average the equivalent income support is an important income source, is not represented in these data.

- *Social insurance contributions*

The simulations of employees and employers social contributions and the special social security contributions are all overestimated compared to the administrative data (by 14%, 34% and 11% for 2016 respectively). The simulations of the social insurance contributions paid on non-labor income and the self-employed social contributions, on the other hand, are underestimated by 14%.

### 4.2 Income distribution

All income distribution results presented here are computed for individuals according to their household disposable income (HDI) equivalised by the “modified OECD” equivalence scale. HDI is calculated as the sum of all income sources of all household members net of income tax and social insurance contributions. The weights in the OECD equivalence scale are: first adult=1; additional people aged 14+ = 0.5; additional people aged under 14 = 0.3.

#### 4.2.1 Income inequality

Table 4.9 shows the distribution of equivalised disposable income. When compared to the original EU-SILC data, income inequality is lower in EUROMOD. Both Gini and the S80/S20 measure are about 17% lower for EUROMOD incomes than for SILC incomes. Looking at the average income per decile (equivalised), we can see that the underestimation in EUROMOD is mainly driven by divergence at the top of the income distribution. From the first decile to the seventh, there is an overestimation of up to 14%.

#### 4.2.2 Poverty

Table 4.10 shows, depending on the threshold chosen, a gap between the EUROMOD income poverty figures and the external source poverty figures (calculated on the basis of the EU-SILC data). For the 70% of median income threshold, the gap is between 16 and 19%; for the 60% of median income threshold, between 28 and 32%; for the 50% of median income threshold, between 28% and 31%, and for the 40% median income threshold, between 21 and 29%.

The size of the gap is due to a number of reasons. The poverty lines for the EUROMOD disposable incomes are slightly lower in comparison with the poverty lines calculated on the basis of the EU-SILC disposable income. This is due to the fact that the medians differ (cf. Table 4.9). The lower median values in EUROMOD leads to lower poverty lines (expressed as 60% of this median equivalent income), and thus possibly to lower poverty headcount according to these thresholds.

The estimated discrepancy between the poverty figures from EUROMOD and from EU-SILC is relatively evenly distributed over the age categories, except that there is an underestimation of 45% for the category 64+ (for 2016; for 2017 the underestimation is -51%, and for 2017 -50%).

### 4.3 Validation of minimum wage

The impact of simulating the minimum wage regulations is presented in Table 4.11. Adjustments for the minimum wage decrease the disposable income by 1%, the simulated taxes with 4%, and overestimates the total social assistance with 16%, for 2016. For all the other indicator, the impact is less than 0.2%.

### 4.4 Summary of “health warnings”

This final section summarises the main findings in terms of particular aspects of the Belgian part of EUROMOD or its database that should be borne in mind when planning appropriate uses of the model and in interpreting results.

- The sample is relatively small. Care should be taken in interpreting results for small subgroups.
- Although aggregates correspond to some extent, care should be taken in interpreting results for the elderly in receipt of income support, as well as the early-retired, as it is not completely clear how they were captured in the data.
- There is evidence to suggest that in some instances the SILC sample is not fully representative of the Belgian population. Especially persons and households with low earnings are underrepresented in these data.
- The simulated income support is adjusted for non-take-up of benefits using a random non-take-up correction of the number of beneficiaries.
- The simulated parental benefits (PBE extension) must be switched off in baselines.

## 5. REFERENCES

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Federal Public Service Economy, SMEs, self-employed and Energy – Statistics Directorate (Statistics Belgium) – including fiscal statistics.

Federal Public Service Social Integration, anti-Poverty Policy, Social Economy and Federal Urban Policy (FPS SI/POD MI/SPP IS) – Statistics on Social Integration

Federal Public Service Social Security (FPS SS/FOD SZ/SPF SS) – Statistics online

Flemish Care Insurance (<http://www.zorg-en-gezondheid.be/Flemish-care-insurance/Flemish-Care-Insurance/>)

Fund for Occupational Diseases Belgium (FOD/FBZ/FMP) - Reports

Fund for Accidents at Work Belgium (FAW/FAO/FAT) – Statistics and Studies

National Employment Office (NEO/RVA/ONEM) – Annual Reports, Statistics, Publications

National Institute for the Social Security of the Self-employed (NSSS/RSVZ/INASTI) – Statistics

National Institute for sickness and disability insurance (NISDI/RIZIV/INAMI)

National Labour Council (NLC/NAR/CNT) – Statistics

National Service for family allowances for employees (NSFA/RKW/ONAFST) – Annual Reports



National Service for Pensions (NSP/RVP/ONP) - Statistics

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Parliamentary Questions & Answers

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Vercauteren L. and Daems K. (1995), Niet gebruik van sociale zekerheid. Lokalisatie-Informatie-Begeleiding, Universitaire Instelling Antwerpen, Departement Rechten, Vakgroep sociaal recht, Antwerpen, 142 p.

## 6. SOURCES FOR TAX-BENEFIT DESCRIPTIONS/RULES

Non-technical introduction to social security: "Everything you have always wanted to know about social security" (in English):

[http://www.socialsecurity.fgov.be/docs/en/alwa2008\\_en.pdf](http://www.socialsecurity.fgov.be/docs/en/alwa2008_en.pdf)

Income tax legislation (in Dutch & French):

<http://ccff02.minfin.fgov.be/KMWeb/document.do?method=view&id=2849549a-92d4-435c-8f4a-ff90a442b1ff#findHighlighted>

Technical details on taxation system presented in a comprehensive way:

<http://www.monkey.be> (in Dutch & French, subscription required)

**APPENDIX 1: UPRATING FACTORS**

Table A.1 Uprating factors [2005-2019]

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
CPI	100.0	101.8	103.6	108.3	108.2	110.6	114.5	117.8	119.1	119.5	120.2	122.9	124.8	127.4	129.6
Health index	100.0	101.8	103.6	107.9	108.6	110.4	113.8	116.8	118.2	118.7	120.0	122.6	124.4	126.4	128.8
Old age pension	100.0	103.1	106.6	109.9	117.7	121.6	125.2	129.5	135.5	136.3	136.7	140.8	145.8	149.5	149.5
Social assist.	100.0	102.0	107.2	113.7	118.3	118.3	123.1	128.1	130.7	133.3	133.3	141.4	144.2	145.5	148.5
Hourly earnings	100.0	102.6	104.8	108.3	112.2	116.1	119.4	122.7	125	126.1	126.3	126.8	129.1	131.9	131.9
Dispos. income	100.0	104.7	110.8	113.8	108.1	117.8	118.8	122.8	122.8	124.6	126.5	131.6	138.7	138.7	138.7
Share value	100.0	115.3	149.2	113.1	65.5	79.7	83.1	68.3	83.1	101.8	117.9	109.8	122.5	121.8	116.7
Income replacement	100.0	102.0	107.2	113.7	118.3	118.3	120.7	128.1	130.7	133.3	133.3	138.7	141.4	145.5	148.4
Early retirem.	100.0	102.0	104.0	108.2	114.9	117.2	119.5	124.3	126.1	126.1	126.1	128.5	128.5	141.2	141.2
Unempl. ben. <=6m	100.0	102.0	104.1	109.3	129.1	124.7	136.0	138.7	150.3	150.3	150.3	152.2	155.2	159.6	162.8
Unempl. ben. 7+ m	100.0	102.0	104.1	109.3	120.3	117.6	120.7	125.0	130.1	130.1	130.1	131.7	134.3	138.1	140.9
Gen. wages	100.0	103.5	106.0	109.8	110.2	111.6	115.9	118.9	121.4	122.4	123.0	123.6	125.9	128.4	131.9

Sources: Indices like consumer price index and health index, as well as specific indices for non-benefit incomes (employment income, investment income, property income) are published by Belgostat (<http://www.nbb.be/belgostat>). Indices of benefits are published by the relevant public services (health, pensions). The updating factors for the other benefits are calculated on the basis of the evolution of the official benefit amounts for a representative category (income support, unemployment, family benefits).

APPENDIX 2: VALIDATION TABLES

	EUROMOD		External			Ratio			
	2016	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of employed	4426782	4540600	4587200	4699400	N/A	0.97	0.97	0.97	N/A
Number of unemployed	467527	389600	353700	300700	N/A	1.20	1.32	1.30	N/A

Table 4.2 Number of employed and unemployed

Sources: Number of employed: Eurostat

[http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa\\_egan&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_egan&lang=en)

Number of unemployed: Eurostat

[http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa\\_ugan&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_ugan&lang=en)

Table 4.3 Market income in EUROMOD –Number of recipients (in thousands)

	EUROMOD		External			Ratio			
	2016	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
Employment income	4261.6	3470.0	3875.4	3933.2	N/A	1.23	0.90	0.99	N/A
Fringe benefits	2144.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Self-employment income	598.7	1058.5	1087.8	1112.7	N/A	0.57	0.97	0.98	N/A
Investment income	4697.4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rent income	7563.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Private pensions	3.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Private transfers	267.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other income	11.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Paid private transfers	379.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Imputed housing	5888.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Sources: Employment income: National Social Security Office (RSZ)

<http://www.rsz.fgov.be/nl/statistieken/publicaties/loontrekkende-tewerkstelling>

Self-employment income: Social Security Self-employed Entrepreneurs (RSVZ):

[http://www.rsvz.be/sites/rsvz.be/files/publication/rsvz\\_jaarverslag\\_2017.pdf](http://www.rsvz.be/sites/rsvz.be/files/publication/rsvz_jaarverslag_2017.pdf);

[https://www.rsvz.be/sites/rsvz.be/files/publication/Persbericht\\_Jaarverslag\\_2018\\_0.pdf](https://www.rsvz.be/sites/rsvz.be/files/publication/Persbericht_Jaarverslag_2018_0.pdf)

Table 4.4 Market income in EUROMOD –Annual amounts (in mil.)

	EUROMOD				External				Ratio			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
Employment income	157181.5	160106.3	163285.5	163285.5	116830.7	132643.5	N/A	N/A	1.35	1.21	N/A	N/A
Fringe benefits	3601.4	3657.1	3733.3	3797.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Self-employment income	16707.3	17018.2	17356.1	17356.1	19037.9	22606.9	N/A	N/A	0.88	0.75	N/A	N/A
Investment income	2706.2	3019.2	3001.8	2876.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rent income	4339.5	4403.2	4474.0	4558.9	10523.5	10916.9	N/A	N/A	0.41	0.40	N/A	N/A
Private pensions	39.4	40.0	40.9	41.6	762	784	940	N/A	0.05	0.05	0.04	N/A
Private transfers	1027.3	1042.3	1059.1	1079.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other income	7.5	7.6	7.7	7.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Paid private transfers	1287.1	1305.9	1326.9	1352.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Imputed housing	29535.3	29991.9	30616.7	31145.4	23345.8	23547.3	N/A	N/A	1.27	1.27	N/A	N/A

Sources: Employment income: National Social Security Office (RSZ) <http://www.rsz.fgov.be/nl/statistieken/publicaties/lonen-en-bezoldigde-periodes>

Self-employment income: Social Security Self-employed Entrepreneurs (RSVZ) [https://rproxy.rsvz-inasti.fgov.be/WebSta/index\\_nl.htm](https://rproxy.rsvz-inasti.fgov.be/WebSta/index_nl.htm)

Rent income & imputed housing: National Bank of Belgium (NBB) <https://www.nbb.be/doc/dq/n/dq3/histo/nndc17.pdf>

Private pensions: PensioPlus <http://pensioplus.be/cgi?lg=nl&pag=2957&rec=0&frm=0&par=aybaltu>

Table 4.5 Tax benefit instruments included but not simulated in EUROMOD –Number of recipients/payers (in thousands)

	EUROMOD	External				Ratio			
	2016	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Benefits</b>									
Education related allowances	166.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Unemployment benefits	684.2	1000.3	926.8	895.3	N/A	0.68	0.74	0.76	N/A
Housing benefit	32.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Old-age pensions	2195.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Survivor pensions	50.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Old-age/ survivor pensions</i>	2245.7	2325.4	2377.3	2437.3	N/A	0.97	0.94	0.92	N/A
Sickness benefit	147.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Disability benefit	453.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Early retirement pension	93.0	94.5	84.1	74.5	N/A	0.98	1.11	1.25	N/A
Parental leave benefit	1523.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Old-age/survivor pensions: National Pension Office (RVP), Pension Office public sector (PDOS)

Early retirement pension: National Employment Office (RVA) <https://www.rva.be/nl/interactieve-statistieken>

Note: Old-age/survivor pension is not simulated in EUROMOD, but is the sum of old-age pensions and survivor pensions. Due to the lack of external statistics about the separate components we use this sum to make validation with external statistics possible.

At the moment, parental leave benefit is based on the SILC variable HY052. This variable includes since EU-SILC 2017 also birth/adoption premiums and child's allowance (which were previously under HY054). Therefore, the number of recipients of the parental leave benefit is too high.

Table 4.6 Tax benefit instruments included but not simulated in EUROMOD -Annual amounts (in mil.)

	EUROMOD				External				Ratio			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Benefits</b>												
Education related allowances	181.9	181.9	181.9	181.9	221.9	225.9	240.6	N/A	0.82	0.81	0.76	N/A
Housing benefit	50.9	51.6	52.4	53.4	44.8	50.6	57.2	N/A	1.14	1.02	0.92	N/A
Unemployment benefits	6124.3	6245.2	6422.0	6551.7	6944.4	6498.7	6072.3	N/A	0.88	0.96	1.06	N/A
Old-age pensions	44714.9	46302.8	47477.8	47477.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Survivor pensions	754.5	781.3	801.1	801.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Old-age/survivor pension</i>	45469.4	47084.1	48278.9	48278.9	43714.1	45699.0	N/A	N/A	1.04	1.03	N/A	N/A
Sickness benefit	981.6	1001.3	1030.3	1050.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Disability benefit	5614.3	5726.4	5892.5	6010.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Early retirement pension	1573.8	1596.9	1622.5	1653.3	1403.4	1144.0	N/A	N/A	1.12	1.40	N/A	N/A
Parental leave benefit	2046.6	2087.5	2148.0	2190.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Sources: Unless otherwise specified: National Bank of Belgium (NBB) <https://www.nbb.be/doc/dq/n/dq3/histo/mndb1710.pdf>

Education related allowances: Vlaanderen <https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-overheid/werking-van-de-vlaamse-overheid/de-vlaamse-begroting-cijfers-2018> & Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles| <http://www.budget-finances.cfwb.be/index.php?id=16050>

Unemployment benefits: National Employment office (RVA)

Housing benefit: Wonen-Vlaanderen <https://www.wonenvlaanderen.be/informatie-over-wonen-vlaanderen/jaarverslag-wonen-vlaanderen> The external statistics about housing benefits are only about Flanders (*huursubsidie & huurpremie*).

Note: ‘Old-age/survivor pension’ is not simulated in EUROMOD. Due to the lack of external statistics about the separate components, we use this sum to make validation with external statistics possible.

At the moment, parental leave benefit is based on the SILC variable HY052. This variable includes since EU-SILC 2017 also birth/adoption premiums and child's allowance (which were previously under HY054). Therefore, the annual amounts of the parental leave benefit are too high.

Table 4.7 Tax benefit instruments simulated in EUROMOD -Number of recipients/ payers (in thousands)

	EUROMOD				2016	2016	SILC Ratio		External		Ratio			
	2016	2017	2018	2019			2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Benefits</b>														
Child benefit	1524.4	1524.4	1524.4	1531.1	0.0	N/A	1576.5	1581.7	N/A	N/A	0.97	0.96	N/A	N/A
Birth allowance	108.8	108.8	108.8	108.8	0.0	N/A	120.8	118.7	N/A	N/A	0.90	0.92	N/A	N/A
Income support	198.7	213.2	218.6	221.8	158.3	1.26	215.2	218.9	222.0	N/A	0.99	1.00	1.00	N/A
Birth leave benefit	80.7	80.7	80.7	80.7	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Taxes and Social Insurance contributions</b>														
Flemish care insurance contribution	4638.8	4638.8	4638.8	4638.8	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Personal income tax	6606.4	6671.3	6708.9	6774.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Investment income taxes	4691.4	4692.7	4692.7	4692.7	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Deduction of professional expenses	4731.6	4731.6	4731.6	4731.6	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Advanced levy on immovable property	5277.0	5277.0	5278.1	5278.9	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Employee social contributions	4261.6	4261.6	4261.6	4261.6	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Special social security contributions	2791.8	2810.7	2789.2	2816.8	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Employer social contributions	4261.6	4261.6	4261.6	4261.6	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Social insurance contributions paid on non-labour income	1320.8	1342.1	1401.3	1345.2	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Self-employed social contributions	590.7	590.7	590.7	590.7	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Sources: Child Benefit and birth allowance: FAMIFED <http://vlaanderen.famifed.be/nl/publications/513>. Income support: POD Maatschappelijke Integratie [https://www.mi-is.be/nl/studies-publicaties-statistieken?F%5B0%5D=im\\_field\\_study\\_type%3A285](https://www.mi-is.be/nl/studies-publicaties-statistieken?F%5B0%5D=im_field_study_type%3A285) Note: we used the sum of *leefloon* and *financiële hulp* (equivalent *leefloon*); for 2017 we used the value of *financiële hulp* of 2016. Personal income tax: STATBEL <https://statbel.fgov.be/nl/themas/huishoudens/fiscale-inkomens#figures>.

Table 4.8a Tax benefit instruments simulated in EUROMOD -Annual amounts (Mil.)

	EUROMOD				SILC				Ratio				External				Ratio			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Benefits</b>																				
Child benefit	6070.1	6120.2	6115.0	6386.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6345.0	6436.0	N/A	N/A	0.96	0.95	N/A	N/A
Birth allowance	117.2	118.2	118.2	55.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Income support	1319.4	1457.7	1524.2	1567.9	1528.9	1559.2	1573.3	1605.7	0.86	0.93	0.97	0.98	1159.6	1203.7	N/A	N/A	1.14	1.2	N/A	N/A
Birth leave benefit	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Taxes and Social Insurance contributions</b>																				
Flemish care insurance contribution	228.9	228.7	233.1	237.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Personal income tax	47904.5	49241.6	48647.5	48299.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	46216.8	45782.8	N/A	N/A	1.04	1.08	N/A	N/A
Investment income taxes	730.7	905.8	900.6	862.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3992.5	3758.6	N/A	N/A	0.18	0.24	N/A	N/A
Deduction of professional expenses	17024.6	17357.0	19807.5	20200.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A



Table 4.8b Tax benefit instruments simulated in EUROMOD -Annual amounts (Mil.)

	EUROMOD				SILC				Ratio				External				Ratio			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Taxes and Social Insurance contributions</b>																				
Advanced levy on immovable property	2357.3	2405.0	2615.2	2671.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3784.2	3848.0	N/A	N/A	0.61	0.62	N/A	N/A
Employee social contributions	19598.6	19963.3	20359.7	20914.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17175.4	17736.8	N/A	N/A	1.14	1.13	N/A	N/A
Special social security contributions	1332.0	1355.4	1354.1	1386.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1197.3	1205.7	N/A	N/A	1.11	1.12	N/A	N/A
Employer social contributions	47005.0	47879.7	43096.1	44270.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	35143.7	36001.1	N/A	N/A	1.34	1.33	N/A	N/A
Social insurance contributions paid on non-labour income	1438.2	1517.9	1612.6	1506.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1668.5	1741.8	N/A	N/A	0.86	0.87	N/A	N/A
Self-employed social contributions	3389.0	3377.6	3366.2	3454.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4071.3	4144.8	N/A	N/A	0.85	0.83	N/A	N/A

Sources: Unless otherwise specified: National Bank of Belgium (NBB) <https://www.nbb.be/doc/dq/n/dq3/histo/mndb1810.pdf>

Child Benefit: FAMIFED <http://vlaanderen.famifed.be/nl/publications/513>

Advanced levy on immovable property: OECD <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSetCode=REV>

Table 4.9 Distribution of equivalised disposable income

	EUROMOD				External				Ratio			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
D1	4.09	4.12	4.10	4.11	3.70	3.60	3.70	N/A	1.11	1.14	1.11	N/A
D2	6.18	6.19	6.16	6.16	5.40	5.50	5.50	N/A	1.14	1.13	1.12	N/A
D3	7.12	7.12	7.11	7.10	6.50	6.50	6.50	N/A	1.09	1.10	1.09	N/A
D4	8.15	8.15	8.16	8.13	7.50	7.60	7.70	N/A	1.09	1.07	1.06	N/A
D5	9.12	9.14	9.13	9.13	8.60	8.70	8.80	N/A	1.06	1.05	1.04	N/A
D6	10.03	10.04	10.05	10.03	9.80	9.90	9.9	N/A	1.02	1.01	1.02	N/A
D7	10.98	10.94	11.00	11.02	11.00	11.00	11.1	N/A	1.00	0.99	0.99	N/A
D8	12.12	12.11	12.12	12.15	12.50	12.30	12.3	N/A	0.97	0.98	0.99	N/A
D9	13.60	13.57	13.58	13.59	14.40	14.20	14.0	N/A	0.94	0.96	0.97	N/A
D10	18.62	18.62	18.59	18.57	20.70	20.70	20.5	N/A	0.90	0.90	0.91	N/A
Median	21776.08	22218.00	22898.16	23553.71	22295.00	22784.00	23744.00	N/A	0.98	0.98	0.96	N/A
Mean	22751.65	23228.93	23892.03	24620.29	24256.00	24408.00	25245.00	N/A	0.94	0.95	0.95	N/A
Gini	22.17	22.13	22.15	22.16	26.30	26.00	25.6	N/A	0.84	0.85	0.87	N/A
S80/S20	3.14	3.12	3.13	3.13	3.80	3.80	3.78	N/A	0.83	0.82	0.83	N/A

Sources: Distribution of income by deciles: Eurostat [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc\\_di01&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_di01&lang=en)

Median and median: Eurostat [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc\\_di03&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_di03&lang=en)

Gini: Eurostat [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc\\_di12](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_di12)

S80/S20: Eurostat [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc\\_di11&lang](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_di11&lang)

Table 4.10 Poverty rates by gender and age

	EUROMOD				External				Ratio			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>40% median HDI</b>												
Total	2.70	2.61	2.63	2.50	3.40	3.40	3.70	N/A	0.79	0.77	0.71	N/A
Males	2.26	2.22	2.21	2.18	3.50	3.30	3.70	N/A	0.65	0.67	0.60	N/A
Females	3.11	2.99	3.03	2.81	3.20	3.50	3.80	N/A	0.97	0.85	0.80	N/A
<b>50% median HDI</b>												
Total	5.99	5.94	6.23	6.07	8.60	8.30	9.00	N/A	0.70	0.72	0.69	N/A
Males	5.66	5.62	5.94	5.76	8.00	7.80	8.80	N/A	0.71	0.72	0.68	N/A
Females	6.30	6.25	6.50	6.36	9.20	8.80	9.20	N/A	0.68	0.71	0.71	N/A
<b>60% median HDI</b>												
Total	11.13	10.97	11.17	11.19	15.50	15.90	16.40	N/A	0.72	0.69	0.68	N/A
Males	10.57	10.40	10.55	10.66	14.40	14.90	15.60	N/A	0.73	0.70	0.68	N/A
Females	11.66	11.53	11.78	11.71	16.50	16.90	17.20	N/A	0.71	0.68	0.68	N/A
<b>70% median HDI</b>												
Total	20.73	20.66	20.94	21.19	24.60	25.40	25.40	N/A	0.84	0.81	0.82	N/A
Males	19.06	18.96	19.04	19.15	22.20	23.00	23.60	N/A	0.86	0.82	0.81	N/A
Females	22.35	22.31	22.78	23.15	26.80	27.60	27.30	N/A	0.83	0.81	0.83	N/A
<b>60% median HDI</b>												
0-15 years	13.02	13.06	13.25	12.87	17.20	17.90	20.20	N/A	0.76	0.73	0.66	N/A
16-24 years	15.05	15.08	15.37	14.46	21.20	22.10	20.40	N/A	0.71	0.68	0.75	N/A
25-49 years	10.57	10.49	10.61	10.43	13.50	14.00	14.20	N/A	0.78	0.75	0.75	N/A
50-64 years	10.73	10.64	10.72	10.83	14.30	13.90	14.10	N/A	0.75	0.77	0.76	N/A
65+ years	8.52	7.90	8.32	9.48	15.40	16.00	16.70	N/A	0.55	0.49	0.50	N/A

Source: Eurostat [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc\\_li02](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_li02)

Table 4.11 Minimum wage validation

	Baseline				Min Wage Incl.				Ratio			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
Equivalised disposable income	174170.2	177904.8	183004.9	188377.3	176637.1	180292.1	185476.7	192233.3	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.98
Employment income	157181.4	160106.3	163285.5	167736.5	157761.3	160660.9	163851.4	163851.4	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.02
Simulated taxes	50992.5	52552.4	52163.2	51834.2	52845.1	54430.4	54057.2	48195.1	0.96	0.97	0.96	1.08
Total employee social insurance contributions	19598.6	19963.3	20359.7	20914.7	19638.2	19999.0	20396.2	20396.2	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.03
Total social assistance	1319.4	1457.7	1524.2	1567.9	1140.9	1163.5	1167.6	1188.8	1.16	1.25	1.31	1.32

### APPENDIX 3: POLICY EFFECTS IN 2018-2019

Table A3.1 and Figure 1 show the effect of policy changes in 2018-2019 on the mean equivalised household disposable income by income component and income decile group, as a percentage of mean equivalised household disposable income in 2018. The effect is estimated as a difference between simulated household net income under the 2019 tax-benefit policies (deflating monetary parameters by the Eurostat's Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices, HICP) and net incomes simulated under 2018 policies.

On average, the policy changes between 2018 and 2019 resulted in a 0.88% increase in the mean disposable income of the population and had a positive impact throughout the income distribution. Overall, these changes are of a progressive character. The strong increase of the tax-free amount from €7,430 to €8,860, is the main driver for the positive changes in all deciles. The impact of direct taxes for the lowest decile is lower because the extra tax allowance for low taxable incomes has been removed (cf. Table 2.58). There is a reduction in public pensions in all deciles, most likely because we assumed that the increase in pensions will be the same as in 2018 due to the lack of data for 2019. The positive effect from changes in means-tested benefits is due to the fact that child benefits and social assistance were uprated in September 2018 because the main inflation index (in Dutch: the 'spilindex'), used to determine when all social benefits need to be increased, had reached its 2% threshold. Therefore, social benefits were automatically adjusted for inflation, by the same 2%. The impact of means-tested benefits is higher for the lowest deciles. This is mainly caused by the fact that the 2019 system contains the study allowances, which are awarded to households under certain income thresholds, and by the reform of the child benefits.

Table A3.1: Policy effects in 2018-2019, using the CPI-indexation (CPI = 1.0181), %

Decile	Original income	Public pensions	Means-tested benefits	Non means-tested benefits	Employee SIC	Self-employed SIC	Other SIC	Direct taxes	Disposable income
1	0.00	-0.29	1.62	-0.03	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.34	1.66
2	0.00	-0.62	0.66	-0.02	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.95	1.00
3	0.00	-0.80	0.48	-0.01	0.15	0.00	0.00	1.07	0.90
4	0.00	-0.67	0.14	-0.02	0.09	0.00	0.00	1.08	0.62
5	0.00	-0.51	0.09	-0.02	0.11	0.00	0.00	1.10	0.78
6	0.00	-0.43	0.14	-0.07	0.07	0.00	0.00	1.17	0.88
7	0.00	-0.30	0.07	-0.07	0.07	0.00	0.00	1.07	0.83
8	0.00	-0.33	0.09	-0.03	0.10	0.00	0.00	1.23	1.05
9	0.00	-0.27	0.07	-0.06	0.05	0.00	0.00	1.09	0.88
10	0.00	-0.17	0.02	-0.01	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.90	0.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-0.39</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>-0.03</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>0.88</b>

Notes: shown as a percentage change in mean equivalised household disposable income by income component and income decile group. Income decile groups are based on equivalised household disposable income in 2018, using the modified OECD equivalence scale. Each policy system has been applied to the same input data, deflating monetary parameters of 2019 policies by Eurostat's Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices (HICP).

Figure A1: Policy effects in 2018-2019, using the CPI-indexation (CPI = 1.0181), %

