

Industrial relations
Statutory minimum wages 2018



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Country codes EU28

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

Introduction

The term ‘minimum wage’ refers to various legal restrictions of the lowest rate payable by employers to workers (Parsons, 2008), regulated by formal laws or statutes. This report provides information on statutory minimum wages generally applicable in a given country that are not limited to specific sectors, occupations or groups of employees.

The report aims to provide answers to the following questions:

- Which EU countries apply statutory minimum wages?
- How high are statutory minimum wages in 2018?
- Did statutory minimum wages increase in 2018?
- Are there special rates of statutory minimum wages?
- How were statutory minimum wages determined?
- Were there debates about the statutory minimum wage in 2017?
- What is the coverage of the statutory minimum wage?
- How does the statutory minimum wage compare to the average/median wage?

The statutory minimum wage is an intensely discussed topic at both national and at EU level.

The EU Commission’s *2017 Annual Review on labour market and wage developments in Europe* states that the statutory minimum wage is defined in order to ‘enhance equity and establish a balance in the bargaining position between employers and workers’ (European Commission, 2017a). Employers should prevent wages from being set below workers’ (marginal) productivity in cases when their bargaining power is weak.

However, minimum wage-setting can be seen as a double-edged sword and is often a controversial topic of debate. Mandatory minimum wage-setting is not harmful for employment if it closes the gap between actual wages and a worker’s productivity. It may even attract individuals to the job market who would otherwise remain inactive. But ‘if the minimum wage is too high, the positive effects on labour demand of higher labour incomes are offset by the negative effects on the employment of those with productivity below the minimum wage’ (European Commission, 2017a).

Interestingly, the findings of recent European studies differ with regard to the employment effect of minimum wage in different countries. For example, a study by Pícl and Richter (2014) found that people in the Czech Republic were more motivated to enter employment when the minimum wage was relatively higher than the subsistence minimum. At the same time, the level of

minimum wage did not have a statistically significant effect on the unemployment level in the environment marked by a relatively low ratio between minimum and average wages.

According to Nestić et al (2015), it is hard to assess accurately what influence the statutory minimum wage would have on employment in, for example, Croatia. But a significant increase could jeopardise employment possibilities in many industries and/or in the regions where these industries are more present. And although there are positive effects arising from an increase in the minimum wage, such as a decrease in the risk of poverty for groups such as low-skilled workers in vulnerable employment, the actual value of such an increase is minimal.

An article by Bossler and Greiner (2016) states that the low wage sector in Germany has not diminished following the introduction of the statutory minimum wage, nor did the anticipated negative impact on employment growth take place. However, the authors point out that without the minimum wage even more new positions could have been filled, mostly for mini jobs. Harasztosi et al (2015) analysed the effects of a significant Hungarian minimum wage increase that took place in 2001 and 2002, when the statutory minimum wage was increased from 30% to over 50% of the average wage. The consequences on employment appeared limited, because almost 96% of those who in 2000 were earning less than the newly introduced minimum wage kept their jobs, with their earnings growing by 21% (on average). The remaining 4% of low-wage-earners were dismissed. Šuminas (2015) found a mainly negative but small effect of the statutory minimum wage on employment in Lithuania. Similar results were found by Karpuškienė (2015), where the effect of the minimum wage was dependent on the ratio between the minimum wage and the average wage.

Minimum wage increases up to 40% of the average wage have positive effects on all economic sectors. Above this percentage, however, the positive effects are reversed, with a rate above 51% having a negative effect on employment.

According to a recent campaign by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) to increase minimum wages across all Member States, minimum wages play a particularly important role in raising wages overall. Increases are also assumed to promote economic growth, because lower paid workers show a greater propensity to spend the additional money they earn. ETUC’s campaign highlights the important role of wages in boosting internal demand, fostering social cohesion, reducing the gender pay gap and in-work poverty.

The findings of Socol and Marinas (2016) in Romania show that the increase of the minimum wage generated a small rise in the gross average wage. At the same time, the expansion of the share of the minimum wage in the average wage may hinder access to the labour market for some categories of employees (lower-skilled or inexperienced workers). The impact of the increase is felt to a greater extent by SMEs in sectors where at least 40% of the employees are paid the minimum wage. There was also a positive correlation between the minimum wage increase and poverty reduction.

An article published by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) refers to evidence from central and eastern Europe showing that minimum wages can be used to reduce inequality at very low to no costs to workers in employment and companies' profits (ETUI, 2016). Increases of the minimum wage can also lead to a more general wage increase, because a higher base-level wage provides incentives for employers to increase the wages of better paid workers to retain sufficient pay differentiation. Several other studies provide similar evidence.

A paper by Ferraro et al (2016) in Estonia identified substantial spill-over effects from the minimum wage to the lower percentiles of the wage distribution, which decline when approaching the median wage. While the spill-over was larger for women and older workers, the minimum wage has overall contributed to lower wage inequality in Estonia.

Research by Bellmann et al (2017) in Germany showed a positive impact of the introduction of a minimum wage on low-wage-earners, but a very limited impact on wages beyond the minimum wage threshold.

In 2017, a study by the University of Primorska in Slovenia evaluated the minimum wage increase in 2010 (Vodopivec, 2015). The report found that workers who earned less than the new level of minimum wage were affected the most, and that the increase contributed to the increase of the concentration of workers paid the minimum wage, particularly in market services. The analysis shows that the 2010 increase produced sizable spill-over effects in growth and a fall in wage inequality. Firms that were directly affected by the increase in the minimum wage increased productivity (particularly in small businesses and in manufacturing).

In the UK, the annual report of the Low Wage Commission (2017) found that the increase of the national living wage (NLW) had a substantial impact on firms' pay structures. This included the squeezing of pay differentials for supervisory staff, the merging of lower-pay grades and the introduction of age-related pay systems in order to make use of the lower national minimum wage (NMW) rates for younger workers, with the sector most affected being retail. Companies reported only limited employment adjustments, but some did report a reduction in hours worked.

In response to higher minimum wages, companies raised prices, reduced profits and/or sought productivity enhancements due to reorganising roles and responsibilities and providing extra training or upskilling employees.

Companies' efforts to increase productivity are highlighted in the ETUI article which points to the potential role that minimum wages can play in increasing aggregate productivity and promoting economic upgrading – thus influencing the distribution of productivity between labour and capital by increasing the wage share in income (ETUI, 2016). The article suggests that the minimum wage should be used as part of a developmental strategy to overcome the low-wage mode. However, to be truly effective in raising aggregate wage levels, it would need to be accompanied by a stronger role for collective bargaining.

One study from Latvia looked into companies' adjustment channels for minimum wage raises in eight central and eastern European countries (Latvijas Banka, 2017). The results suggest that the most popular adjustment channels are the following: cuts in non-labour costs, increases in product prices, and improvements in productivity. Cuts in employment are less popular and occur mostly through reduced hiring rather than direct layoffs. The study also provides evidence of potential spill-over to firms without minimum wage workers.

However the opposite was presented in a study from Romania, which showed a negative impact of the minimum wage on the hourly labour productivity and employment levels (INCMPS, 2016). In the long run, it also had a positive and statistically significant impact on informal work.

Overview of statutory minimum wages at national level

Which EU countries apply a statutory minimum wage?

In 2018, 22 out of the 28 EU Member States apply a generally binding statutory minimum wage. In Cyprus, a statutory minimum wage exists but is limited to specific occupations. In the remaining five EU Member States (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy and Sweden), while there is no statutory minimum wage, the minimum wage level is de facto set in sectoral collective agreements. It is important to note that the coverage of these agreements varies between countries and, as some employees are not covered, they may not be entitled to any minimum wage. According to an article on minimum wage systems and earnings inequalities, the combination of sectoral minima and high collective bargaining coverage can be regarded as the functional equivalent of a binding statutory minimum wage, at least for earnings inequalities (Garnero et al, 2015).

The focus of this report is on countries having a generally applicable statutory minimum wage.

Table 1: Countries with a generally applicable statutory minimum wage

Statutory minimum wage exists and is (almost) generally applicable	Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom
Statutory minimum wage exists but is applicable only in specific occupations	Cyprus
Non-statutory minimum wages are only established in collective agreements	Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Sweden

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

How high are statutory minimum wages in 2018?

There is a huge variation in the statutory minimum wage rates valid at 1 January 2018 across EU Member States. These can be divided into three groups:

Table 2: Ranking of national minimum wage rates

High-range countries with minimum wage rates of around €1,450 or more per month	Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands and the United Kingdom
Mid-range countries with minimum wage rates of between €650 and €900	Greece, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain
Low-range countries with minimum wage rates of around €500 or less	Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia

Table 3 shows the nominal rates in national currency as well as converted to euros and adjusted to the average monthly amount. The highest adjusted minimum wage was observed in Luxembourg and reached almost €2,000. Bulgaria had – at €260.8 – the lowest minimum wage rate, comprising about one-eighth of the Luxembourg level. The Bulgarian rate is relatively low – even compared to other low-range countries – and the second lowest rate (in Romania) is €407.3.

Table 3: Nominal levels of statutory minimum wage applicable in the EU Member States in 2018

Country	Effective since	Level of minimum wage in national currency	Period	Converted monthly minimum wage in EUR
High-range	Luxembourg	EUR 1998.59	Month	1998.6
	Ireland	EUR 9.55	Hour	1614.0
	Netherlands	EUR 1578	Month	1578.0
	Belgium	EUR 1562.59	Month	1562.6
	France	EUR 1498.47	Month	1498.5
	Germany	EUR 8.84	Hour	1497.8
	United Kingdom	GBP 7.83	Hour	1462.6
Mid-range	Spain	EUR 735.9	Month	858.6
	Slovenia	EUR 842.79	Month	842.8
	Malta	EUR 172.51	Week	747.5
	Greece	EUR 586.08	Month	683.8
	Portugal	EUR 580	Month	676.7
Low-range	Poland	PLN 2100	Month	502.6
	Estonia	EUR 500	Month	500.0
	Slovakia	EUR 480	Month	480.0
	Czech Republic	CZK 12200	Month	477.3
	Croatia	HRK 3438.8	Month	462.5
	Hungary	HUF 138000	Month	444.1
	Latvia	EUR 430	Month	430.0
	Romania	RON 1900	Month	407.3
	Lithuania	EUR 400	Month	400.0
	Bulgaria	BGN 510	Month	260.8

Note: The conversion to EUR has been carried out on the basis of the exchange rates on 1 January 2018. The conversion to the monthly amount was made using the data provided by Eurostat. In Greece, Portugal and Spain, the conversion takes into account 14 monthly payments per annum. In the UK, the figure refers to the National Living Wage valid per 1 April 2018. The converted monthly rate is an approximation calculated using last year's mean basic paid hours per week.

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Country-specific recommendations for France and Portugal in 2017 concerned the relatively high level and the coverage of the minimum wage in these two countries, given their potentially negative implications for employment – especially for low-skilled workers (European Commission, 2017c). At the same time, the Portuguese recommendations noted that minimum wage increases have contributed to reducing high levels of in-work poverty and may have positively impacted on the aggregate demand.

As pointed out in a paper by the European Commission (2017b), the cross-country differences in minimum wages contract if the minimum wage is expressed in purchasing power standards (PPS). The adjustment for price levels partly evens out the gaps between low-range, mid-range and high-range countries that were identified when minimum wages were ranked in euro terms. In 2017, the highest minimum wages in PPS was applicable in Luxembourg (€1,615.3). This was 'only' 3.3 times more than the Bulgarian minimum wage in PPS (€491.4).

Table 4: Statutory minimum wages in EU Member States in PPS in the second semester of 2017

Country	Minimum wage in PPS	
High-range	Luxembourg	1615.3
	Germany	1446.2
	Belgium	1431.6
	Netherlands*	1402.7
	France	1369.4
	Ireland	1254.3
	United Kingdom*	1209.8
Mid-range	Slovenia	986.1
	Spain	901.9
	Malta	899.7
	Greece	792.9
	Portugal	771.1
Low-range	Poland	866.6
	Hungary	687.3
	Slovakia	639.8
	Romania	625.4
	Czech Republic	621.3
	Estonia	618.5
	Croatia	612.4
	Lithuania	599.8
	Latvia	536.9
	Bulgaria	491.4

Note: PPS = purchasing power standards. Data in countries with * refer to the first semester of 2017. The countries are sorted according to the level of monthly minimum wage in PPS from the highest to the lowest in their category.

Source: Eurostat, variable *earn_mw_cur*, extracted on 23 January 2017

Remarkably, workers in one EU country may be entitled to more monthly minimum wage payments than workers in another. The table below summarises the annual entitlements of employees in EU Member States. The converted monthly minimum wage as shown in Table 3 takes into account the fact that workers in Greece, Spain and Portugal are entitled to 14 monthly wage payments.

Table 5: How many minimum wage payments is an employee entitled to per year?

Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (excluding statutory holiday pay), Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia	(generally) 12 minimum wage payments
Belgium	If workers receive a 13th month payment, the total amount of what the worker earns in a year is divided by 12 to see if the worker is at least paid the minimum wage.
Poland	Only employees hired in the public sector (excluding the armed forces, police and other uniformed services) are statutorily entitled to 13 wage payments. Private sector employees get 13 payments only if this is specified in the company's regulations.
Greece	Employees in the private sector in Greece are entitled to 14 monthly wage payments. Employees in the public sector are entitled to 12 monthly wage payments.
Portugal and Spain	Employees are entitled to 14 monthly wage payments per year. In Spain, there are two 'extraordinary' payments allocated: one in June and the other one in December
Germany, Ireland, Malta and United Kingdom	The minimum wage is set per hour or per week, not as a monthly rate.

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Did statutory minimum wages increase in 2018?

Of the 22 countries under review, 18 (19) countries experienced a growth in the statutory minimum wage between 1 January 2017 and 1 January 2018 in real (nominal) terms.

The growth rate in the nominal and real minimum wage level in the 12 months up to January 2018 was highest in the low-range countries. With a real increase of 50.4% (and nominal increase of 52%) between 1 January 2017 and 1 January 2018, Romania is clearly in the top position. The country's rate substantially outstripped Bulgaria's rate – which it once approximated – to attain the nominal levels of minimum wage in other low-range countries. Some analysts claim that this pace of growth has not been supported by a corresponding productivity growth and is harming the country's competitiveness. But it is important to mention that the increase from 1 January 2018 compensates employees for the transfer of payment of some contributions from employers to employees.

Table 6: Increase in the nominal and real level of statutory minimum wage between 1 January 2017 and 1 January 2018

Country	Nominal change	Real change	
High-range	Luxembourg	0.0%	-2.1%
	Ireland	3.2%	2.9%
	Netherlands	1.7%	0.4%
	Belgium	2.0%	-0.2%
	France	1.2%	0.1%
	Germany	0.0%	-1.7%
	United Kingdom	4.4%	1.7%
Mid-range	Spain	4.0%	1.9%
	Slovenia	4.7%	3.1%
	Malta	1.6%	0.3%
	Greece	0.0%	-1.1%
	Portugal	4.1%	2.5%
Low-range	Poland	5.0%	3.3%
	Estonia	6.4%	2.6%
	Slovakia	10.3%	8.8%
	Czech Republic	10.9%	8.3%
	Croatia	5.0%	3.6%
	Hungary	8.2%	5.7%
	Latvia	13.2%	10.0%
	Romania	52.0%	50.4%
	Lithuania	5.3%	1.5%
	Bulgaria	10.9%	9.6%

Note: The conversion to EUR has been carried out on the basis of the exchange rates on 1 January 2018. The conversion to the monthly amount was made using the data provided by Eurostat. In Greece, Portugal and Spain, the conversion takes into account 14 monthly payments per annum. In the UK, the figure refers to the National Living Wage valid per 1 April 2018. The converted monthly rate is an approximation calculated using last year's mean basic paid hours per week.

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

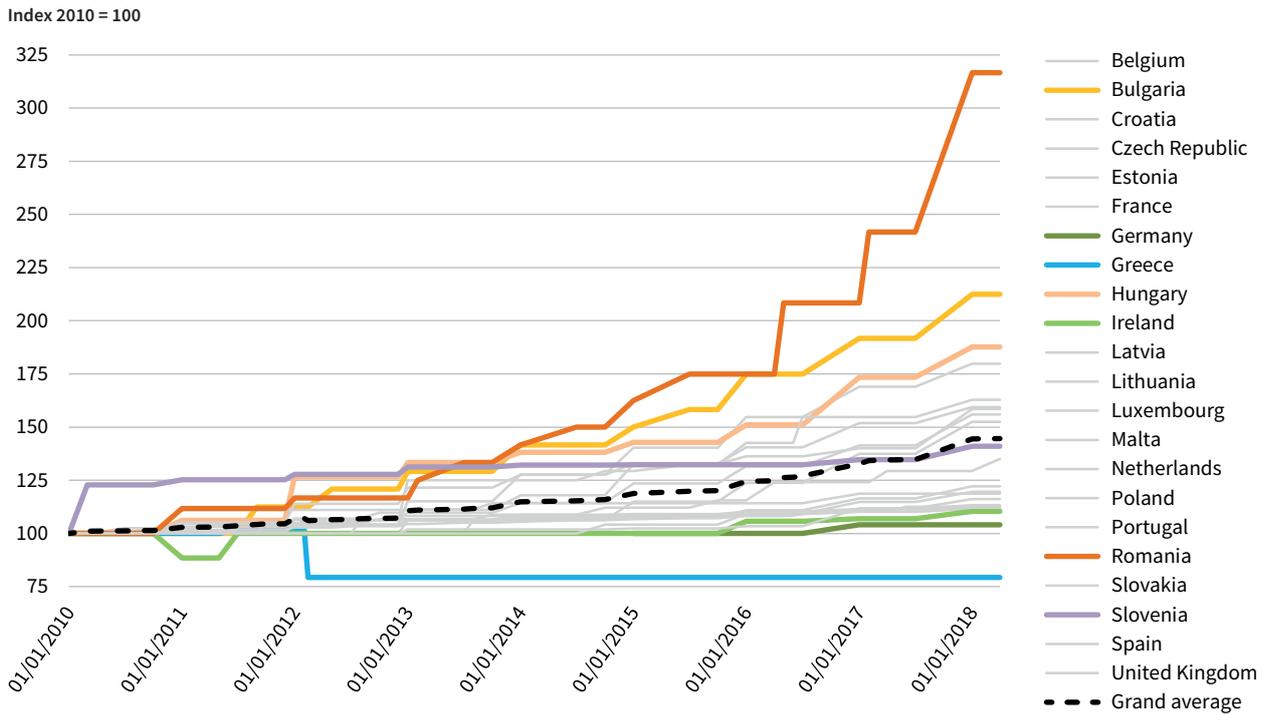
Four other low-range countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia and Slovakia) had a fast-paced growth in the real minimum wage rate exceeding 8% (10% in nominal terms). The pace of growth in all other low-range countries was at least 2.5% in real terms (5% in nominal terms). The only exception was Lithuania, where the relatively high growth of consumer prices devaluated the 5.3% nominal growth of minimum wage to a mere 1.5% in real terms.

The growth of the minimum wage of low-range countries was not matched by the majority of mid-range or high-range countries, where nominal minimum wages grew more cautiously. Slovenia, Ireland and Spain had the highest real increases in their groups of about 2% or more. In contrast, Belgium, Germany, Greece and Luxembourg saw the real value of the statutory minimum wage decrease. The real decrease was highest in Luxembourg (2.1%). In terms of the

nominal minimum wage rate, this did not change in Germany, Greece and Luxembourg. A decrease in the nominal statutory minimum wage was not observed in any EU country.

It is natural to wonder if these developments reflect longer term tendencies. Over the past eight years, the nominal level of statutory minimum wages have grown in all EU countries, with the exception of Greece, where it is now lower than in 2010 (by about 20%). Ireland was a country having the second slowest growth (even though Germany's index is lower due to the statutory minimum wage being introduced only in 2015). The highest growth was recorded in Romania (217%), Bulgaria (113%) and Hungary (88%). In Slovenia, the minimum wage has in fact stagnated in recent years, after having experienced fast growth in the beginning of the decade. Cumulatively over the past eight years, it did not even attain the grand average of all the EU countries with a statutory minimum wage.

Figure 1: Statutory minimum wage development since 2010 in EU Member States (nominal)



Note: In the UK, the figures given for 2010–2015 refer to the full adult rate of the National Minimum Wage (then applicable to workers aged 21 and above). From April 2016, the figure refers to the National Living Wage, applicable to workers aged 25 and above. The EU average is calculated as a non-weighted arithmetical average of national coefficients.

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

When accounting for the development of consumer prices, Romania’s minimum wage growth still holds the top position as it almost tripled over the past eight years. Considerable growth in the real minimum wage of around 40% or more took place in all the low-range countries, with the exception of Croatia (12.3%). None of the mid- or high-range countries experienced this high real minimum wage growth. The highest real rate growth in these groups was recorded in Slovenia (31%), the UK (12%) and Portugal (9%). Greece was the only country which experienced a drop in the real statutory minimum wage in 2018 as compared to 2010 (by almost a quarter, 22.2%).

While the growth rates of the minimum wage may seem relatively high in low-range countries, one may ask how long would it take until their minimum wage catches up with the levels of high-range countries. If the growth rate of nominal statutory minimum wages is extrapolated from the period 2010–2017 and applied to the converted monthly minimum wage rate (see above), it would not be until the mid-2040s that at least half of the current low-range countries match the minimum wage levels applicable in the current high-range countries. This means that the current differences in statutory minimum wage across the EU Member States might not disappear in the short run. Significantly, this scenario did not take into account economic or political cycles, changes in productivity or exchange rates. Furthermore, the growth rates observed in some countries (for example, Romania) are not likely to continue.

Table 7: Change in the statutory minimum wage in nominal and real terms between 1 January 2010 and 1 January 2018

Country	Nominal change	Real change	
High-range	United Kingdom	29.3%	11.8%
	Luxembourg	18.8%	6.3%
	Ireland	10.4%	6.1%
	France	11.5%	3.4%
	Netherlands	12.1%	1.8%
	Belgium	12.6%	-1.7%
	Germany	4.0%	-5.1%
Mid-range	Slovenia	41.1%	30.6%
	Portugal	19.6%	9.1%
	Spain	16.2%	7.5%
	Malta	13.3%	1.8%
	Greece	-20.8%	-22.2%
Low-range	Romania	216.7%	177.8%
	Bulgaria	112.5%	105.7%
	Hungary	87.8%	63.3%
	Estonia	79.9%	51.4%
	Poland	59.5%	45.8%
	Lithuania	62.9%	44.2%
	Latvia	58.4%	43.0%
	Slovakia	56.0%	41.8%
	Czech Republic	52.5%	37.0%
	Croatia	22.2%	12.3%

Note: The conversion to EUR has been carried out on the basis of the exchange rates on 1 January 2018. The conversion to the monthly amount was made using the data provided by Eurostat. In Greece, Portugal and Spain, the conversion takes into account 14 monthly payments per annum. In the UK, the figure refers to the National Living Wage valid per 1 April 2018. The converted monthly rate is an approximation calculated using last year's mean basic paid hours per week.

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Countries with specific rates of minimum wages

A number of Member States reported different rates of minimum wage for specific groups. Minimum wages are adjusted for young workers in France, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands and the UK, and for workers in ongoing education, training or apprenticeships in Belgium, France, Ireland, and the UK.

Different minimum wage levels can apply according to the length of work experience or the period from the beginning of employment, as in France, Ireland and Malta. France also has specific rates for disabled persons, while in Hungary rates apply for specific occupations. In Luxembourg, a special rate applies to qualified people, while in Hungary there is a special rate for workers in jobs that require certain qualifications.

The following section provides a more detailed overview by country.

In **Belgium**, a minimum wage for young employees has been abolished. There are, however, specific minimum wages for working students and those in a system of alternate learning (part student/part employee) who receive a percentage increase based upon the minimum wage. This percentage increases according to the number of years they have been in employment or their year in school/college. As there is no general minimum wage for students, wage levels are determined by the social partners for each sector. If no minimum wage is specified for the sector, the statutory minimum wage applies.

In **France**, a reduced rate of minimum wage covers specific groups of young workers with certain criteria:

- Less than six months of experience in the sector: 80% of the statutory minimum wage for workers aged 15 and 16 years, and 90% for those aged 17 years.
- Under 16 years of age working during summer holidays: 80% of the statutory minimum wage.
- Professionalisation contract: 55%–100% of the statutory minimum wage, depending on age and previous qualifications.
- Apprentices: 25%–78% of the minimum wage for interprofessional growth (SMIC) depending on age, seniority and the applicable sectoral agreement (Table 8).
- Other exceptions: trainees who may not be paid if they work less than two months per year (otherwise the minimum wage is €3.70 per hour based on 15% of the social security ceiling), and disabled workers employed in specific centres for the inclusion of disabled workers (where they are paid between 55% and 110% of the statutory minimum wage).

In **Germany**, the specific rates of national minimum wage have been abolished since 1 January 2018, the only exceptions being seasonal workers and foreign workers on seasonal contracts for whom employers may subtract board and lodging costs from the minimum wage.

Table 8: Minimum wage rates for young apprentices in France (%)

Year of apprenticeship contract	Minimum wage per age group as a percentage of the statutory minimum wage		
	Aged 15 to 17 years	Aged 18 to 20 years	Aged over 21 years
First year	25%	41%	53%
Second year	37%	49%	61%
Third year	53%	65%	78%

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Table 9: Proportion of minimum wage for young workers in the Netherlands (2017–2019)

Age	Proportion of adult minimum wage rate applicable		
	Before 1 July 2017	After 1 July 2017	After 1 July 2019
23 years and over	100%	100%	100%
22 years	85%	100%	100%
21 years	72.5%	85%	100%
20 years	61.5%	70%	80%
19 years	52.5%	55%	60%
18 years	45.5%	47.5%	50%
17 years	39.5%	39.5%	39.5%
16 years	34.5%	34.5%	34.5%
15 years	30%	30%	30%

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

In **Greece**, a special rate of the statutory minimum wage (€510.95) is applicable for those under 25 years of age. This is 12.8% lower than the national minimum wage.

In **Hungary**, the minimum wage is legally binding for all workers in all sectors of the economy, with two exceptions:

- jobs requiring at least a secondary level of education have a guaranteed minimum wage of HUF 185,000 per month (€593.16 as at 13 February 2018), which is higher than the statutory minimum wage and 12% higher than 2017;
- workers employed in public works programmes get a wage that is determined separately and only by the government (Decree 463/2016). For 2018, the minimum wage is HUF 81,530 (€261.41), the same level as in 2017. If workers in public works programmes are employed in jobs that require secondary educational attainment, their gross monthly wage is HUF 106,555 (€341.65), also the same as in 2017.

In **Ireland**, from 1 January 2018, a special rate of minimum wage is applicable for young workers:

- employees under 18 years of age are entitled to 70% of the statutory minimum wage;
- employees in their first year of employment since turning 18 are entitled to 80% of the statutory minimum wage;
- employees in their second year of employment since the date of first employment and over the age of 19 years are entitled to 90% of the statutory minimum wage.

For young workers over the age of 18 on a training course or in study, undertaken in normal working hours, the minimum wage is calculated as follows:

- first trimester of training: 75% of statutory minimum wage rate;
- second trimester of training: 80% of statutory minimum wage rate;
- final trimester of training: 90% of statutory minimum wage rate.

Each trimester must be at least one month and no more than one year.

In **Luxembourg**, employees aged 15 and 16 years of age receive 75% of the statutory minimum wage rate, while those aged 17 years receive 80%. Qualified employees over 18 years receive 120% of the national minimum wage.

In **Malta**, the minimum wage for employees aged 16 years is 94% of the statutory rate, and for those aged 17 years it is 96%. Moreover, the rate is increased by 1.8% (3.5%) for those who have been employed by the same employer for one (two) years and who were paid the minimum wage.

In the **Netherlands**, there are specific rates of minimum wage for young employees (Table 9). In 2017, the minimum wage rates were raised for some categories of younger workers and the full minimum wage rate became applicable for employees aged 22 years (down from 23 years). Another change is scheduled for 2019.

Table 10: National Minimum Wage for workers under 25 years in the UK (as of 1 April 2017)

Category	Hourly minimum wage
Aged 21 to 24 years	GBP 7.05 (€7.92 as at 13 February 2018)
Aged 18 to 20 years	GBP 5.60 (€6.29)
Aged under 18 years but above compulsory school age	GBP 4.05 (€4.55)
Apprentices aged under 19, or over 19 but in first year of apprenticeship	GBP 3.50 (€3.93)

Note: *NMW rates are updated annually on 1 April to align with the NLW.*

Source: *Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

In the **United Kingdom**, the National Living Wage (NLW), introduced on 1 April 2016, applies to workers aged 25 years and over. The existing National Minimum Wage (NMW) system, made up of four age/experience-related rates, remains in place for workers under the age of 25 years (Table 10).

There is no specific statutory minimum wage in Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

Determining the statutory minimum wage

In the majority of EU Member States, the government sets the level of the minimum wage following consultation with the social partners.

Consultation normally takes place in a tripartite setting – the government, the unions and the employers. But in many countries, the social partners provide recommendations separately or jointly outside the tripartite body. In several new Member States (the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia), the social partners were unable to agree on the level of the minimum wage and this was therefore determined by the government. In other countries, such as Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands, the

growth of minimum wage was closely linked to an indexation mechanism.

Another way of determining minimum wage levels is with the involvement of independent expert committees. These committees have an important role in helping to determine minimum wages in France, Germany, Ireland, Malta and the UK.

The following section will discuss the determination of the minimum wage rates in 2017. The parties involved in determining the minimum wage for each of the Member States is shown in Figure 2. (In Germany, Greece and Luxembourg, nominal rates did not change so these countries will not be discussed in detail.)

Figure 2: Determining the statutory minimum wage in 2017

	Country	Government	Expert committee	Tripartite	Outside of tripartite or expert committee		
					Social partners jointly	Only trade unions	Only employers' organisations
High	Belgium	R + I			R + I		
	France	R + U	I				
	Germany	R	V				
	Ireland	R	R				
	Luxembourg	I + R					
	Netherlands	I					
	United Kingdom	R					
Mid	Greece	U					
	Malta	R	I				
	Portugal	R + U					
	Slovenia	R + U					
	Spain	R		V			
Low	Bulgaria	R + U				V	V
	Croatia	R					
	Czech Republic	R + U					
	Estonia	R			V		
	Hungary	R		V		V	V
	Latvia	R		V			
	Lithuania	R		V			
	Poland	R + U					
	Romania	R + U					
	Slovakia	R + U					

	Was not involved at all in this respective year		Provided a non-binding recommendation	R	Decided the final level taking into account recommendations of other players or mechanisms (e.g. indexation)
	Brought the final level into effect		The involvement of this actor was unusual	U	Decided the final level unilaterally
	Was consulted about the level	I	Applied indexation mechanism to determine minimum wage level	V	Reached consensus on the level of the minimum wage

Source: See Table 2b in Annex 2

Consultation of the social partners

In the majority of observed countries, the minimum wage was set by the government following the consultation of the social partners. The form of consultation differs between countries and often includes a tripartite body or another forum in which the social partners can negotiate. In Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Spain, the social partners were able to agree on the minimum wage and the government followed the recommended level.

In Bulgaria, determination of the minimum wage for 2018 was not straightforward. In January 2017, the employer organisations Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (AIKB), Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA), Bulgarian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), and the Confederation of Employers and Industrialists (KRIB) criticised the government's decision to increase the minimum wage. They believe the decision was made in violation of the defined legal procedure, as social partners were not consulted in the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation (NCTC). In May 2017, the Supreme Administrative Court repealed the decree, which increased the minimum wage from BGN 420 (€214.74 as at 13 February 2018) to BGN 460 (€235.20) per month. Consequently, the Council of Ministers adopted a new decree increasing the monthly statutory minimum wage to BGN 460. Employers are still against the proposed increase, arguing that it does not align with the continued growth of the poverty line, low labour productivity growth and average wage growth. They are against the government setting the minimum wage without consulting the social partners. Also in 2017, they did not support the increase of the minimum wage. This increase was supported by the trade unions and the government due to the planned increase in minimum insurance thresholds and the lack of a transparent mechanism for defining the statutory minimum wage. The minimum wage is projected to increase to BGN 600 (€306) in 2020, as part of the government's medium-term budget plans.

In Croatia, the determination of the minimum wage was relatively easy, with social partners consulted through tripartite meetings. While the trade unions requested a higher level of the minimum wage (around 50% of the average wage), the Croatian Employers' Association was against such an increase. Parliament accepted the government's proposal for amending the law on minimum wage.

In Estonia, the process of determining the minimum wage was complicated by contradictory expectations and demands between the Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL) and the Estonian Employers' Confederation (ETTK). ETTK wanted to skip the 2018 increase as new income tax reforms planned to increase net wages by up to €64 per month, specifically targeting

those earning lower wages. They also argued that an increase in the minimum wage would artificially increase wage levels without actual growth in productivity, suggesting more alternative sustainable and long-term solutions, such as linking increases to economic indicators. However, the trade unions disagreed and requested that the minimum wage be increased to €535 in 2018, proportionate to increases in the national average wage. They also suggested long-term goals such as increasing the minimum wage level to 50% of the national average wage over the next five to ten years (currently at around 40%). The government encouraged employers to agree on the increase for 2018 as regular increases in the minimum wage has led to a fall in levels of undeclared work, social inequality and emigration. After negotiations lasting four months, the social partners finally agreed to raise the minimum wage to €500 in October 2017. Following the recommendation of the social partners, the government put the minimum wage into effect.

In Hungary, the minimum wage increase for 2017–2018 was discussed within the Permanent Consultative Forum of the Competitive Sector and the Government.

Trade unions announced their common standpoint that the net amount of the minimum wage should reach the subsistence level in 2018. In November 2016, the government proposed a bi-annual agreement suggesting a minimum wage increase of 15% in 2017 and 8% in 2018. Discussions within the forum, however, were more concerned about the fiscal conditions and guarantees, rather than the proposed, surprisingly high minimal wage increase. To gain the support of the social partners, the government committed to decrease income taxes, national contributions and corporate tax to 9%.

In Latvia, the procedure for setting the minimum wage for 2018 started in May 2017, when the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers adopted guidelines that prescribed an increase in the minimum wage from €380 to €430 per month from 1 January. These guidelines were discussed in the tripartite council in June where the proposed increase was agreed and also that the increase should be fixed until 2021. In August 2017, the government adopted the amendments to the existing regulation.

In Lithuania, determining the minimum wage level for 2018 was relatively straightforward. Initially, trade unions proposed that the minimum wage for 2018 should be increased from €380 to €500 per month. However, employers were convinced that such an increase would be too drastic and would bring the minimum wage very close to the average wage. By consensus, the minimum wage was increased to €400 and, in accordance with the Lithuanian Labour Code, the level was set by the government upon the recommendation of the Tripartite Council of the Republic of Lithuania (LRTT).

In Spain, the increase in the minimum wage level was agreed between the government and social partners – the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and the General Union of Workers (UGT) for the trade unions, and the Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organizations (CEOE) and the Spanish Confederation of Small and Medium-Sized (CEPYME) for the employers' organisations – after a meeting held in December 2017. The agreement, requested by the unions, was for the minimum wage to be increased to €850 up to 2020. However, not all employers' representatives were in favour of the increase. The increase is linked to two conditions: the Spanish GDP should increase by more than 2.5% each year; and the number of registered unemployed should decrease by more than 450,000 people each year.

In other countries (the Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia), the social partners were consulted but because they did not reach an agreement, the minimum wage level was set unilaterally by the government.

In the Czech Republic, determining the level of the minimum wage was a difficult process during 2017 because both social partners and trade unions were unable to reach a compromise regarding the level of minimum wage. The final decision was made by the government (as in previous years) which set the minimum wage in August 2017 to CZK 12,200 (€480.54 as at 13 February 2018) per month.

In Poland, the minimum wage level was also set by the government due to the parties failing to reach an agreement within the Social Dialogue Council. While trade unions suggested the minimum wage should increase to PLN 2,220 (€532.60 as at 13 February 2018) per month, employers proposed an increase of PLN 2,050 (€489.85).

In Portugal, the government presented to the social partners at the Standing Committee for Social Concertation a proposal to increase the minimum wage for 2018 to €580 per month. While the UGT was ready to accept this increase, the General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers (CGTP) asked for €600. Although the employers' organisations did not disagree with the government's proposal, they did demand specific conditions before signing a tripartite agreement. After the government deemed the demands unacceptable, the agreement was not signed. However, in December 2017, the Council of Ministers approved the increase of the minimum wage to €580.

In Romania, the government's minimum wage proposal was consulted with the social partners in the National Tripartite Council and the Economic and Social Council, which opposed the government's proposal. After several revisions of the proposal, the government finally announced a minimum wage level of RON 1900 (€407.63 at 13 February 2018) per month. This level was

commonly agreed with social partners and a committee of independent experts and it takes into account the transfer of contributions paid currently by the employer to the employees, which will increase from 16.5% to 35%.

In Slovakia, as with previous years, social partners were unable to agree on the level of minimum wage, so the rate was determined by the government. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family submitted its proposal to increase the minimum wage to €480 to the tripartite consultations at the Economic and Social Council in September 2017. Trade unions associated with the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic (KOZ SR) demanded an increase in the level of minimum wage to €492. The Federation of Employers' Associations (EIGE), however, was against any increase, while the National Union of Employers (NUE) was not against increasing the minimum wage, but raised issues over the negative impacts a higher minimum wage could have on employment and the 'entrepreneurship' of companies. The Association of Cities and Municipalities of Slovakia had no objections regarding the higher minimum wage. Finally, the tripartite committee recommended adopting the government's proposal.

In Slovenia, at a sitting of the Economic and Social Council in January 2018, Anja Kopač Mrak, Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, proposed a 4.7% increase in minimum wage (€843) to the social partners. Both the unions and employers' organisations were unhappy with the proposal, for different reasons. However, Minister Kopač Mrak has stood by her proposal.

Automatic indexation

In Belgium, the Netherlands and Malta (predominately), indexation mechanisms have been used to determine the level of the minimum wage for 2018.

In Belgium, automatic indexation – which resulted in the latest increases to determine the level of the minimum wage for 2017–2018 – is used for part of the bipartite agreement. The minimum wage plays only an indirect role in the Belgian system of wage formation, since almost all employees are covered by a sectoral (minimum) system of wage-setting.

In the Netherlands, the increase in the minimum wage is calculated as 50% of the change in contract wages as expected by the Dutch Central Planning Agency (CPB). A correction is usually applied if the change in contract wages differs from the expectation.

In Malta, the minimum wage is set by government law. The annual increase is based on the cost of living adjustment (COLA), following a set formula and taking into account the retail price index (RPI). Following a campaign in 2016 for decent wages (*Kampanja Paga*

Minima Diċenti) by community services organisation Caritas Malta and other NGOs, along with claims that the minimum wage is below subsistence level, Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat made an exceptional decision to contact the social partners in order to agree on a minimum wage increase. In 2017, the government, the opposition and the social partners also reached an agreement to increase the minimum wage for low earners who have been employed for more than one year (or two years with the same employer).

Recommendations of expert groups

Independent expert groups recommended the minimum wage levels in France, Ireland and the UK. Even though the minimum wage did not change on 1 January 2018 in Germany, it is worth mentioning the current level of the minimum wage as it was also determined by an expert group.

In France, non-binding advice from a group of experts (consisting of economists appointed by the government) was sent for consultation to the National Collective Bargaining Commission (consisting of social partner representatives at national level). According to the group of experts' advice, the increase in the minimum wage was limited to that resulting automatically from the legal mechanism. The government decide to follow the recommendation.

In Ireland, the Low Pay Commission recommended in June 2017 that the minimum wage should increase to €9.55 per hour (from €9.25). However, there was no consensus on this increase within the Commission, as members with employer backgrounds were opposed to such a sizeable increase. In July 2017, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar announced that the recommended increase would take effect from January 2018 and the statutory National Minimum Wage Order was approved in October 2017.

In the UK, the independent Low Pay Commission (LPC) launched consultations in April 2017 for the minimum wage rates to apply from April 2018. The consultation, involving the social partners and other interested parties, ran until July. In September, the government asked the LPC to make recommendations with the following objectives: the NMW rate should help as many low-paid workers as possible without damaging their employment prospects, and the NLW rate should reach 60% of median earnings by 2020, subject to sustained economic growth. In October, the LPC issued its recommendations, which were fully accepted by the government in November 2017.

Changes in how the minimum wage is determined

The year 2017 marked a change in minimum wage determination practices in a number of European countries including Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta (see above), Portugal, Romania and Spain. In Bulgaria and Romania, these changes were linked to the country-specific recommendations (European Commission, 2017c). In Spain, the social partners were increasingly involved in minimum wage level determination while in Portugal the minimum wage was determined without the tripartite agreement.

The 2017 European Semester country-specific recommendations urged Bulgaria and Romania to 'overcome the absence of established guidelines for updating the minimum wage, insofar as this can adversely affect the predictability of minimum-wage developments' (European Commission, 2017c).

In Bulgaria, there have been ongoing discussions about the mechanism for setting the minimum wage. The European Commission's country-specific recommendation for the establishment of a mechanism for the settlement of the minimal wage was followed by the social partners and at present a tripartite working group presided by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Biser Petkov, is currently defining the rules for implementation. Because of disagreements on the mechanism between employers and trade unions, the work of this group is still not finalised.

In Romania, the Labour Code stipulates that the minimum wage will be established by the government after consulting the trade unions and employers' associations. Following the European Commission's country-specific recommendations, the social partners and a group of experts have been to some extent involved in setting up a transparent mechanism for minimum wage-setting, presenting their recommendations to the Romanian government.

In Portugal, for the last three years, the process of determining the minimum wage has been preceded by tripartite concertation, during which employers were offered compensation measures, if necessary, in order to reach a tripartite agreement. The minimum wage increase for 2018, however, was not preceded by a tripartite agreement.

In Spain, the minimum wage had previously been agreed solely by the government. This has been a source of dissatisfaction for the social partners, and in particular trade unions, with social dialogue at a standstill in 2017 due to the inability to agree on the expected Pact on Salaries for 2017, which formed part of the Agreement for Employment and Social Dialogue 2015–2017. In contrast, the minimum wage for 2018 was a result of a tripartite agreement promoted by the

government in order to reactivate social dialogue in general.

In Hungary, the procedure for setting the annual minimum wage has not formally changed for a number of years. However, in 2016, for the first time, the minimum wage agreement covered two years (2017–2018). This was directly linked to cuts in tax wedges and – in contrast to 2016 – was based on a full tripartite consensus.

Finally, in Malta, the government and the social partners agreed (outside of the indexation mechanism) on a higher minimum wage for those who have worked for a long time with the same employer.

No changes in the practice of determining the statutory minimum wage in 2017 were reported from Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. Greece, however, is a special case.

In Greece, up to 2010, the national minimum wage was determined through national collective bargaining. In 2012, the national minimum wage was reduced by 22% (and 32% for people under 25 years) under the agreement between the then Greek government and the bailout institutions. From 2013, the rate would be set by the government after consultation with the social partners (following Law 4177/2913). Interestingly, the position of the social partners regarding the process for determining the minimum wage differs. The General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) and the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants (GSEVEE) – representing workers – and the Hellenic Confederation of Commerce and Entrepreneurship (ESEE) – representing employers – are asking for the competence to determine the minimum wage to be returned to the social partners, with extension to all employees. However, the employers' organisation the Hellenic Federation of

Enterprises (SEV) argues that it should be set by the government in cooperation with the social partners and independent experts.

With regard to future changes, an agreement between the government and the social partners in Malta provides for the setting up of a Low Wage Commission in order to establish a mechanism to determine whether the minimum wage will need reviewing.

In the Czech Republic, a report published in 2016 on different methods for setting the minimum wage was prepared by the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic (SP, 2016). Subsequently, the tripartite body has discussed whether the minimum wage should be determined by indexation or linked to the average wage and to date there has been little progress in discussions on the future relationship between the minimum and the average (or median) wages. It was decided that this issue would be dealt with by the new government following legislative elections in October 2017.

After the Estonian employers' representatives emphasised the need to link the minimum wage to actual economic indicators, the social partners agreed that from 2019–2022 the minimum wage increase will be annually calculated based on economic indicators (labour productivity and economic growth). At the same time, the minimum wage level should stay at the level of 40% of the average gross monthly wage.

Regulations to bring the minimum wage into effect

In almost all Member States, the minimum wage is brought into effect by the government by a legal framework. In Belgium, for example, this is done in cooperation with the social partners by means of a collective agreement. Table 11 provides an overview of country-specific regulations that brought minimum wages into effect for 2018.

Table 11: National regulations bringing into effect the statutory minimum wage for 2018

Country	Regulation
Belgium	Collective agreement No. 43 of the National Labour Council (<i>Collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst n°43 van de Nationale Arbeidsraad</i>)
Bulgaria	Decree No. 316 of 20 December 2017 (<i>ПОСТАНОВЛЕНИЕ № 316 ОТ 20 ДЕКЕМВРИ 2017 Г</i>)
Croatia	Decree NN 122/2017 on the amount of the minimum wage (<i>Uredba o visini minimalne place</i>)
Czech Republic	Government Order No. 567/2006 Coll. of 6 December 2006 on the statutory minimum wage, amended by Government Order No. 286/2017 Coll. (<i>Nářízení vlády č. 567/2006 Sb. ze dne 6. prosince 2006 o minimální mzdě, ve znění nařízení vlády č. 286/2017 Sb</i>)
Estonia	Government Regulation RT I, 22.12.2015, 51 on the establishment of the minimum wage (<i>Vabariigi Valitsuse määrus 'Töötasu alammäära kehtestamine'</i>)
France	Decree No. 2017-1718 of 20 December 2017 on the minimum wage increase (<i>Décret n° 2017-1719 du 20 décembre 2017 portant relèvement du salaire minimum de croissance.</i>)
Germany	Minimum Wage Act (<i>Mindestlohngesetz, MiLoG</i>)
Greece	Act of Cabinet No. 6/2012 (28/2/2012). Law No. 4093/2012, Article 1, Paragraph. IA.11 §3 (12/11/2012).

Country	Regulation
Hungary	Government Decree No. 430/2016 (XII. 15.) Korm. on the Mandatory Minimum Wage and on the Guaranteed Wage Minimum (<i>A kormány 430/2016 (XII. 15.) rendelete a kötelező legkisebb munkabér, és a garantált bérminimum megállapításáról</i>)
Ireland	The minimum wage increase, with effect from January 1st 2018, was implemented through a Statutory Instrument (S.I. 440 of 2017) (National Minimum Wage Order 2017)
Latvia	Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 656 on calculation of the amount of the minimum monthly wage within the normal working time and minimum hourly rate. Adopted on 24 November 2015. Last amendment on 29 August 2017, valid from 1 January 2018.
Lithuania	Resolution No. 814 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the minimum wage of 11 October 2017 (<i>Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės nutarimas 'Dėl minimaliojo darbo užmokesčio' Nr. 814</i>)
Luxembourg	Law of 15 December 2016 on the modification of the article L.222-9 of the Labour Code (<i>Loi du 15 décembre 2016 portant modification de l'article L. 222-9 du Code du Travail</i>)
Malta	National Minimum Wage National Standard Order (Subsidiary legislation 452.71)
Netherlands	Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of 9 October 2017 concerning adaptation of the statutory minimum wage (<i>Regeling van de Minister van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid van 9 oktober 2017, nr.2017-0000159683, tot aanpassing wettelijk minimumloon per 1 januari 2018</i>)
Poland	Regulation of the Prime Minister of 12 September 2017 on minimum wage and minimum hourly wage in 2018 (<i>Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 12 września 2017 r. w sprawie wysokości minimalnego wynagrodzenia za pracę oraz wysokości minimalnej stawki godzinowej w 2018 r</i>)
Portugal	Decree-Law No. 156/2017 (<i>Decreto-Lei n.º 156/2017 de 28 de Dezembro</i>)
Romania	Governmental Decision No. 846/2017 on establishing the minimum basic gross wage guaranteed (<i>Hotărârea nr. 846/2017 pentru stabilirea salariului de bază minim brut pe țară garantat în plată</i>)
Slovakia	Government Decree No. 278/2017 Coll., determining the level of minimum wage for 2018 (<i>Nariadenie vlády č. 278/2017 Z. z., ktorým sa ustanovuje suma minimálnej mzdy na rok 2018</i>)
Slovenia	The statutory minimum wage for 2018 is published in Official Gazette No.5/2018
Spain	The statutory minimum wage for 2018 was approved via Royal Decree Act 1077/2017 of 29 December after the agreement reached between government, trade unions and employers' representatives
United Kingdom	At the time of writing (24 January 2018), regulations to implement the April 2018 increases to the NLW and NMW have not yet been made

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Debates about 2017 minimum wage levels

A number of countries held discussions about minimum wages involving the social partners, governments and experts. One topic that emerged in several countries in 2017 was the differences in minimum wages across regions, economic sectors or groups of employees. While eight EU countries reported discussions on this topic, discussions have only progressed to implementation in one country – Malta – where a special minimum wage was applied for employees working at the same employer for a certain period of time.

Differences in specific minimum wages

In Belgium, the government proposed to decrease the minimum wage for employees younger than 21 years of age in order to boost their appeal on the labour market. The proposal was, however, withdrawn in January 2017 because of incomplete technical details. In June, social partners requested that the proposal be removed completely because it would increase the complexity of employment significantly. The government responded by saying the measure would only affect the gross salary of employees and that the net salary would remain unaltered. No decision has been made so far.

In France, according to a team of experts, the minimum wage is too high and a reform is needed to restore the competitiveness of the economy. The experts put forward several options. First, minimum wage rates could be differentiated between regions to reflect local price levels, and second, an age-adapted minimum wage could be justified by the differences in qualifications and experience between young people and older employees. The experts highlight, however, that such reforms may not be accepted by all citizens. Therefore, the main suggestion is to partially end the mechanism of automatic increase of the minimum wage.

In Hungary, the Union of Hungarian Public Servants and Public Service Workers (MKKSZ) proposed the introduction of a special rate of minimum wages for recent graduates. They argued that, according to current pay scales, public employees with academic doctoral degrees earn as much as skilled workers. The government was not opposed to this measure and declared itself willing to enter into negotiations with the National Interest Reconciliation Council.

In Lithuania, a statutory innovation related to the setting of minimum wage was discussed. Labour Code No. XII-2603 (in effect since July 2017) allows for the payment of the minimum wage only for unskilled labour. Unskilled labour is defined as 'labour which does not require any special qualifications or professional skills'. Employers suggested differentiating minimum wages across sectors, regions and age groups, in order to better reflect the variation in the ability to pay minimum wages between municipalities and economic sectors.

In Malta, trade unions have called for an increase in the minimum wage, while employers oppose the idea. After discussions with the Council for Economic and Social Development, an agreement was reached in April 2017 stipulating increases for minimum wage-earners after the first and second year of employment for the same employer. The agreement also introduced temporary supplements to indexation increases for 2018 and 2019.

In Romania, during debates about minimum wage for 2018, the government proposed the introduction of two minimum wages – one for the public and one for the private sector. This was rejected by employers and trade unions. At the same time, the government's plan from June 2017 to introduce a minimum wage of RON 2,300 (€493.39) for employees with higher education did not materialise.

In Slovakia, there were minor discussions concerning the impact of the minimum wage on employment and the need for different rates for different regions. However, a research study issued by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (2017) argues that regional minimum wages are not suitable for Slovakia.

This is a trend running counter to what was observed in other EU countries, as documented in Eurofound's report *Developments in working life in Europe* (Eurofound, 2017). A number of countries stressed that pay gaps or pay inequalities have arisen as a consequence of the application of different minimum wage rates due to the focus on applying lower rates of minimum wage to promote youth employment in the aftermath of the financial crisis. The Netherlands and Poland have sought to reduce pay inequality by moving towards a minimum wage for young people, while the introduction of the NLW in the UK in 2016 effectively created a new higher NMW rate for workers aged 25 years and over. In 2017, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) called for the NLW to be applied from the age of 21 years. The TUC also want to narrow the gap between the minimum wage rates applicable for adults and younger workers.

High minimum wage increases

Despite ongoing discussions about considerable increases of minimum wage rates in Croatia, Germany and Luxembourg, no proposals have materialised.

In Croatia, trade unions are pushing for the statutory minimum wage to be raised to 50% of the average wage. However, the Croatian Employers' Association (CEA) believe that such a rate would endanger labour-intensive sectors and would increase unemployment levels among precarious groups. Despite this, some government opposition politicians proposed a significant increase of the minimum wage rate to €666.

In Germany, the minimum wage level has been debated for a number of years. The latest parliamentary debate took place in December 2017, when the Left Party requested that the minimum wage be increased to €12 per hour, arguing that the current rate does not cover the cost of living in urban areas and that those workers on the minimum wage are (in addition) having to claim taxable unemployment benefit to make ends meet. The government argued that the national minimum wage is an instrument against wage dumping (*lohndumping*) – when a low-wage country exports goods to a high-wage country – hurting society and labour standards, and that the level is determined by the social partners.

In Luxembourg, in anticipation of legislative elections in October 2018, discussions have started about the necessity to increase the minimum wage in order to protect low-paid workers from the risk of poverty. The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Luxembourg (OGBL) asked for a 10% increase of the minimum wage and this received the support of the Minister of Labour, Nicolas Schmit. However, Prime Minister Xavier Bettel ruled out any increase before October 2018. The Chamber of Commerce explained that such a rise would weaken the country's economic competitiveness and that the minimum wage is currently over the poverty rate (€1,600) as it provides a net income of €1,700.

In Greece, the minimum wage and its increase has been an ongoing topic of public debate since its reduction in 2012. Besides lacking consensus on how the minimum wages should be determined, the social partners disagree over the level of the minimum wage, with the GSEE calling for its immediate return to 2010 levels – from its current rate of €586 to the index-linked rate of €751. ESEE and GSEVEE proposed raising the minimum wage to €751 euro already from 2015 or 2016, but over a two or three-year schedule. Employers' organisation SEV, on the other hand, proposes that the minimum wage be set at a level that does not exceed the country's GDP or undermine the competitiveness of the economy.

Non-compliance

Non-compliance with the minimum wage was an issue in Germany and the Netherlands. In Germany, the lack of inspectorates to monitor compliance has been a topic of debate and the government has agreed to provide 600 people to work in the area of minimum wage inspection. However, no start date has been agreed.

In the Netherlands, the discussion centred around abuse of the interpretation of minimum wage rules. In cases where employers have arranged housing facilities (for example, for migrant workers in construction or agricultural sectors or temporary agency work), some employers deducted such costs from the wages to justify payment below the minimum wage. According to a law introduced in 2017, payment below the minimum wage is only possible with the signed consent of the employee: the amount of reduction (such as for rent and service costs) must be specified and this should be to a maximum of 25% of the minimum wage.

Country-specific issues

In Austria, in January 2017, the government asked the social partners to negotiate the implementation of a cross-sectoral monthly minimum wage of €1,500 and to present a solution by mid-2017. If there was no social partner agreement by the specified date, the government threatened to implement statutory regulations instead. The social partners were in agreement with this and the rate would be implemented by 2020 via sectoral collective agreements. This agreement not only prevented statutory implementation by the government, it ensured that minimum wage discussions would be part of the remit of the social partners.

In Cyprus, which does not have a statutory minimum wage, the Council of Ministers fixed the minimum wage to a number of occupations: €870 per month (rising to €924 after six months) for shop assistants, nursing assistants, office clerks, hairdressers and nursery assistants; €767 for skilled worker in the agriculture sector; and €424 for asylum seekers working in the agriculture sector (with food and accommodation provided). The introduction of a statutory minimum wage was discussed within the framework of the campaign for presidential elections in January 2018. Re-elected President Nicos Anastasiades declared his intention to introduce a national statutory minimum wage, applicable for all sectors of the economy, if the state of 'full employment' is reached.

In Italy, the introduction of a statutory minimum wage came about through the Jobs Act (Act no. 183/2014). Between 2014 and 2017, social partners, opposing the idea, asked for clarifications. There have been a number of informal meetings and academic conferences where social partners and the government addressed the issue. In 2017, there were no legislative developments on statutory minimum wage but the Democratic Party and Five Stars Movement proposed the introduction of a statutory minimum wage in their electoral programmes. Social partners took part in informal meetings with the government, political parties, and public institutions in order to voice their disagreement.

In Slovenia, the Left Party (Levica) launched a debate proposing that the minimum wage should become the lowest basic wage, implying that all work-related allowances (such as level of seniority, business

performance and shift work) should be exempt from income level and paid separately. The allowances (especially for older workers) can account for up to 15% or 20% of a person's final salary. The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (ZSSSS) agreed with the proposal which was sent to the Association of Employers of Slovenia (ZDS) for the creation of a new salary model.

Countries having no discussions on minimum wages

There were no significant discussions relating to statutory minimum wages reported from Ireland, Latvia and Poland, and no discussions about the introduction of statutory minimum wages in Denmark, Finland and Sweden.

Coverage of statutory minimum wages

The relative importance of the minimum wage varies across countries. If the level of minimum wage is relatively high, compared to the average wage, one can expect that a higher proportion of employees will be receiving the minimum wage.

There is an interesting positive relationship between the proportion of minimum wage-earners and the growth of nominal minimum wages in the period 2010–2018. The four countries with the highest growth of the minimum wage – exceeding the threshold of 10% since 2010 –

namely Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary and Romania, report high proportions of employees receiving the minimum wage. Other countries with high proportions of minimum wage-earners are Latvia and Portugal. On the other hand, relatively small proportion of minimum wage-earners – up to about 5% – can be found in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia. Remarkably, in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the nominal minimum wages has grown by more than 50% since 2010. Table 12 shows the coverage per country of the statutory minimum wage.

Table 12: Coverage of statutory minimum wage per country

Country	
Belgium	Experts estimate that about 3% of employees receive the minimum wage.
Bulgaria	The calculations of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Bulgaria CITUB indicate that 17.7% (around 403,000) employees receive the minimum wage.
Croatia	It is reported that between 3%–13% of all employees receive the minimum wage.
Czech Republic	According to the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO), about 3.6% (around 132,000) of employees in 2016 received the minimum wage.
Estonia	Between 19%–25% (subject to time of year) of workers receive the minimum wage (or less).
France	In January 2017, 10.6% (around 1.65 million) of private sector employees (excluding apprenticeships, trainees and temporary workers) received the minimum wage. The rate is higher for part-time employees (24.2%) compared with full-time employees (7.5%), and companies with fewer than 500 employees (31.3%) compared with companies with more than 500 employees (4.5%). About 55.2% of employees affected by the minimum wage are women.
Germany	The Federal Statistical Office found that in 2014 (before the introduction of the statutory minimum wage) around 4 million workers were paid less than €8.50 per hour. In April 2015, around 1.9 million workers (out of 36 million nationally) were paid the minimum wage. However, around 1 million jobs were still paid less, probably due to transition periods for collective agreements and for postal service workers.
Greece	There are no available data on the specific number of employees receiving the minimum wage. According to data from the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity on actual wages (October 2017), 33.7% of people earn up to €600 per month, of which one-third are workers with monthly earnings of €501–€600, and two-thirds are part-time workers, shift workers or workers on short-time contracts. The corresponding figure for 2016 was just below this, at 32.8%.
Hungary	Based on the governmental wage and earnings statistics for 2015, about 14% (around 600,000) workers received the guaranteed minimum wage.
Ireland	It is estimated that about 10% (around 155,000) of employees in Ireland were on the minimum wage in Q2–Q4 of 2016. This estimation is confirmed by the results of the Quarterly National Household Survey: people receiving the minimum wage (or less) were more likely to be female, non-nationals, aged 15–24 years, work part time, have lower levels of educational attainment and be employed in the service industries.
Latvia	According to the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, in March 2017 about 18% (around 162,700 employees) received the minimum wage of €380 per month or less. However, this is not an accurate figure, as it includes part-time workers.
Lithuania	According to Statistics Lithuania, in October 2016 about 20.2% (around 223,200) of employees (including individual enterprises) received €380 per month or less. It is important to note that more than half (57.7%) were working part time.
Luxembourg	In March 2016, 12.3% (38,028) of full-time private sector employees received the minimum wage and 12.4% (45,204) of employees received up to 2% more than the minimum wage. The Chamber of Employees cautions that the figures provided are too high as they include employees who are paid ‘approximately’ the minimum wage.
Malta	In 2015, 3.4% (3,241) of full-time employees earned the minimum wage or less.

Country	
Netherlands	About 6.6% (around 517,000) of employees received minimum wage in 2016. The percentage is higher among young employees aged up to 25 years, with 18% receiving the minimum wage.
Poland	According to the Central Statistical Office, about 10% (around 1.36 million) employees on permanent employment contracts received the minimum wage in 2015.
Portugal	A report published by the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security in December 2017 estimates that around 23% of full-time workers receive the minimum wage. It is estimated that in 2018, around 800,000 workers will be paid the minimum wage.
Romania	In February 2017, around 40% (around 2.1 million) employees received the minimum wage, of which approximately 300,000 were working in the public sector. According to a study by the National Scientific Research Institute for Labour and Social Protection, the number of employees receiving the minimum wage has tripled since 2011, following successive increases of the minimum wage (INCSMPS, 2016).
Slovakia	It is reported that between 5%–6% (around 119,000) of employees will be affected by the higher minimum wage in 2018. This includes around 49,000 people working for companies and 70,000 working for self-employed/tradesmen.
Slovenia	According to the Spanish Statistical Office, in 2015, 12.62% (around 1.85 million) of all salaried workers (both full-time and part-time) earned less than the minimum wage. Among those working full time in 2014, 0.91% (around 130,000) received less than the minimum wage. Data published by the Spanish Tax Agency for 2016 show that the total annual earnings of around 6 million salaried employees were less than the annual total of minimum wage-earners. This number possibly overestimates the number of minimum wage-earners as it does not take into account the total time that workers worked in the given year.
Spain	In 2016, 5.4% of all legally employed workers were minimum wage-earners.
United Kingdom	In April 2017, about 6.4% (around 1.56 million) of workers aged 25 years and over were paid the NLW. In the age category of 21–24 years, around 6.1% (around 119,000) were paid the NMW.

Source: See Table 2c in Annex 2

Comparing the minimum wage to average/median wages

It could be misleading, in certain contexts, to compare absolute levels of minimum wages. For this reason, this report also presents the relative level – where the minimum wages are measured in relation to the national median or average wage. In several EU countries, the discussions in 2017 centred around whether the minimum wage should be pegged to average/median wages.

In the Czech Republic, pegging of the minimum wage to the average wage was one of the options discussed in the tripartite body in the first half of the year. The issue was, however, postponed and might be dealt with by the new government following the October 2018 elections.

In Estonia, trade union confederation EAKL proposed that the minimum wage level should reach 50% of the average wage during the next five to ten years. Employers' Confederation ETKL, however, proposed to peg the minimum wage level to productivity and economic indicators.

In Lithuania, the criteria for setting the minimum wage have been a much debated issue. Both political representatives and social partners typically offer to peg it to the average wage. The Tripartite Council of the Republic of Lithuania agrees that the ratio between minimum and average wages should not exceed 50% to avoid a reduction in the country's competitiveness. The Council should annually analyse the country's economic situation – from 2018 onward – in order to adjust the minimum wage according to certain criteria. The target ratio between the minimum and average wage needs also to be agreed, and is expected to be between 45% and 50%.

The relation between minimum and average/median wages also served as a basis for discussions about the level of the minimum wage.

In Portugal, where wage distribution is biased towards lower wages, further increases in the minimum wage may rapidly increase the proportion of workers covered. As shown in Table 12, almost one-quarter of full-time workers received the minimum wage. In the ensuing public debate, trade unions highlighted the importance of the minimum wage increase to combat in-work poverty, while employers raised their concerns regarding possible pressure on companies' wages.

In Slovakia, the relationship between the minimum and average wage has been improving during the past 10 years, increasing from 39.7% in 2009 to 48.6% in 2018. However, trade union confederation KOZ SR argues that the development of minimum wages was still lagging

behind that of the development of average wages in Slovakia.

In Spain in 2017, trade unions demanded that the government increase the minimum wage to 60% of the average salary (14 monthly payments of €800), as mentioned in the European Social Charter. To meet the unions' demands, the government and social partners agreed to increase the minimum salary to 14 monthly payments of €850 by 2020. However, the Institute of Economic Studies warned that having increased the minimum wage in January 2017, any further increase is likely to increase structural unemployment in the medium term.

A paper by ETUI (2016) highlighted that the minimum wage needs to be set on a country-by-country basis due to country-specific contextual factors. There seems to be room for significant minimum wage increases in many countries with very low minimum wage levels. These countries have a lower share of labour-intensive tradeable sectors that may be vulnerable to employment losses. A rapid increase of minimum wages to 45% of average wages should be absorbed without significant employment costs. This would have immediate positive effects on income distribution.

In the United Kingdom, when the NLW was introduced in 2016, the government set a target for its rate to reach 60% of median earnings in 2020, subject to 'sustained economic growth'. The Low Pay Commission's view is that the rate should rise gradually and that the hourly rate recommended and accepted for 2018 reflects this approach. The new Conservative Party government said that after 2020 the NLW will rise according to the rate of median earnings.

In France and Romania, concerns were raised about the level of minimum wages compared to that of average wages. A French group of experts (2017) highlighted that the level of the French minimum wage is high compared to its foreign counterparts, both in absolute and relative terms (in relation to the average/median wage) and reform is needed in order to restore the competitiveness of the French economy. The Romanian Government justified the increase of the minimum wage for 2018 by the necessity to improve the ratio between the minimum and average wage so that it approaches 50%. However, some analysts believe that increase in the ratio from 27% in 2008 to over 44% in 2017 was too fast and unsustainable for the economy as it was not supported by the corresponding growth of productivity, harming the country's competitiveness (Wall Street Romania (2017), Socol and Marinas (2016) and INCSMPS (2016)).

In other countries, the relative level of the statutory minimum wage did not lead to any major discussion. Bulgarian trade unions, for example, claimed that the statutory minimum wage should be at least 50% of the average wage. In Belgium, a brief discussion about the low level of minimum wage was sparked by a study from the ETUC (HLN Economie, 2017 and ETUC, 2017). In Slovenia, the ratio between the minimum and

average wage is among the highest in the EU, and public debates focus on how the minimum wage should follow the 'rebound effect' in recent years of the country's GDP growth. No significant discussions on this issue have been reported from Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands or Poland. Table 13 highlights comparisons between the minimum wage and average/median wages for all Member States.

Table 13: Comparisons between the minimum wage and average/median wages per country

Country	
Belgium	In 2016, the minimum wage was (approximately) equal to or less than 50% of the median national salary.
Bulgaria	In November 2016, the minimum wage of BGN 420 (€214.74) was around 39.5% of the average wage of BGN 1,064 (€544.02).
Croatia	The minimum wage for 2018 is HRK 3,442.25 (€462.74 as at 13 February 2018) – around 43% of the average wage between January and September 2017.
Czech Republic	The minimum wage for 2018 is around 42.4% of the average wage and 48.4% of the median wage for the period of Q1 to Q3 of 2017. The government's ČSSD and ANO parties continued to implement its plan to set the minimum wage at a level of 40% of the average wage.
Estonia	In the third quarter of 2017, the minimum wage in Estonia accounted for 39.1% of the average monthly wage and 51.7% of the median wage – an increase from 35.3% and 47% respectively in 2014.
France	The minimum wage represented 50% of the average wage and 62% of the median wage in 2016.
Germany	In 2015, the minimum wage accounted for 57% of the mean gross wage and 49% of the average collectively agreed wage. However, according to OECD figures, in 2016 the German minimum wage was 46.7% of the median and 41.6% of the mean wage for full-time workers.
Greece	In 2016, the minimum wage represented 33% of the average wage and 48% of the median wage.
Hungary	In 2016, the minimum wage represented 39% of the average wage and 51% of the median wage.
Ireland	For 2018, the Low Pay Commission recommended that the minimum wage be 56.6% of the estimated median average wage.
Latvia	In the third quarter of 2017, the minimum wage was 41% of the average wage.
Malta	The minimum wage in 2017 was about 50% of the average wage.
Netherlands	In the first half of 2016, the average minimum wage for a 36-hour week was 44.4% of the average wage.
Poland	In 2016, the minimum wage represented 43% of the average wage and 54% of the median wage.
Portugal	In 2016, the minimum wage represented 42% of the average wage and 58% of the median wage.
Romania	In 2017, the minimum wage represented 44.5% of the average wage. After an increase from 1 January 2018, it is projected to reach 45.7% of the average wage.
Slovakia	In 2018, the minimum wage is projected to represent 48.58% of the expected average wage.
Slovenia	The minimum wage was around 50.2% of the average wage in the first 10 months of 2017, compared to 49.9% in 2016.
Spain	The minimum wage for 2016 was around 40.7% of the average wage and 47.9% of the median wage, up from 40% and 47.4% respectively in 2015.
United Kingdom	In October 2017, the NLW represented 56.8% of the median wage of workers aged 25 years and over, while the NMW applicable for workers aged 21–24 years constituted 77.4% of the median wage for April 2017.

Note: No data available for Lithuania and Luxembourg.

Source: See Table 2d in Annex 2

Conclusions

Of the 28 EU Member States, 22 have almost a generally applicable statutory minimum wage in 2018. However, there is a large variation in the range of levels, from about €260 in Bulgaria to about €2,000 in Luxembourg.

Over the course of 2017, statutory minimum wages increased in 17 countries in real terms and in 18 in nominal terms. Since 2010, the highest increases of minimum wages were recorded (in both nominal and real terms) in Bulgaria and Romania. However, both Bulgaria and Romania (and some other low-rate level countries) have a long way to go to catch up with minimum wage levels in western European countries.

Minimum wage levels for 2018 have been set – in the majority of countries – with the involvement of social partners. This is a reversal of trends from the beginning

of the decade when minimum wage-setting was marked by strong intervention of governments. In recent years, expert groups have been involved in minimum wage-setting in a growing number of countries, including Germany, Ireland and Malta and their possible involvement has been discussed in Bulgaria and Romania.

Recent national discussions about the minimum wage in many countries saw proposals to differentiate the statutory minimum wage across regions, economic sectors and groups of employees. However, this materialised only in Malta. On the other hand, in some EU countries (Netherlands, Poland and the UK) the opposite trends were observed.

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All web links accessed on 21 March 2018

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Annexes

Annex 1: List of national contributors (from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents)

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Annex 2: Sources of information

Table 2a: Sources of information on minimum wage level change

Belgium	http://www.besox.be/spilindex-overschreden-mei-2017/
Bulgaria	Council of Ministers, Decree No. 316 of 20 December 2017 to set a new amount of the minimum wage for the country
Croatia	Odluka o minimalnoj plaći - Official Gazette (OG 122/17)
Czech Republic	MoLSA (2017): Government Order No. 567/2006 Coll., from 6 December 2006, on statutory minimum wage, amended by Government Order No. 286/2017 Coll.
Estonia	Government Regulation on the establishment of the minimum wage
France	Decree No. 2017-1719 of 20 December 2017 raising the minimum wage for growth Service-Public.fr
Germany	Minimum Wage Act
Greece	Act of Cabinet No 6/2012 (28/2/2012) 'Regulation of issues for the application of paragraph 6 of article 1 of law 4046/2012' Law No 4093/2012, article 1, paragraph. IA.11 §3 (12/11/2012), 'Adoption of the Medium-Term Financial Framework 2013-2016 - Emergency Implementation Measures of Law 4046/2012 and the Medium-term Financial Strategy Framework 2013-2016'.
Hungary	Response to the 18.12.2015 No. 139430/2016. (XII. 15.) Government Decree on the mandatory minimum wage (minimum wage) and the guaranteed wage minimum
Ireland	S.I. No. 440/2017 - National Minimum Wage Order 2017 Low Pay Commission 2017 report
Latvia	Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 656 On calculation of the amount of the minimum monthly wage within the normal working time and minimum hourly rate amended on 29 August 2017
Lithuania	Resolution No. 814 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the minimum wage of 11 October 2017
Luxembourg	Law of 15 December 2016 on the modification of the article L.222-9 of the Labour Code
Malta	Government of Malta (2002), Employment and Industrial Relations Act
Netherlands	Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of 15 May 2017, 2017-0000078933, to adjust the statutory minimum wage as of 1 July 2017
Poland	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy Act of 12 December 1997 on Additional annual salary for employees of the budgetary sphere, in Journal of Laws (Dziennik Ustaw)
Portugal	Decree-Law No. 156/2017 of 28 December 2017
Romania	Government Decision No. 846/2017 for establishing the minimum basic gross salary guaranteed by the country
Slovakia	Act No. 311/2001 Coll. on the Labour Code Government Decree No. 278/2017 Coll., which determines the level of minimum wage for 2018
Slovenia	Official Gazette No.5/2018
Spain	Royal Decree Act in the BOE Spanish Official Bulletin
United Kingdom	The National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Regulations 2017

Table 2b: Sources of information on wage-setting

Belgium	Minimum wage http://www.werk.belgie.be/defaultTab.aspx?id=39004
Bulgaria	Living and working in Bulgaria https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/country/bulgaria
Croatia	Croatian Parliament (2017) Proposal of the Law on amending the Law on Minimum Wage with final text of the Law http://www.sabor.hr/prijedlog-zakona-o-izmjeni-zakona-o-minimalnoj-pla
Czech Republic	Government of the Czech Republic (2018) Minutes from the Plenary sessions of the Tripartite https://www.tripartita.cz/zaznamy-z-jednani/ Minutes from the Plenary sessions of the Tripartite http://www.odbory.info/obsah/33/tripartita

Estonia	Estonian Employers Confederation: Tulevast aastast on alampalk Eestis 500 eurot kuus, 26.10.2017 https://www.employers.ee/uudised/tulevast-aastast-on-alampalk-eestis-500-eurot-kuus/ The Ministry of Social Affairs: 2018. aastal tõuseb töötasu alammäär 500-le eurole, 04.12.2017
France	Press release of the Ministry of Labour of 15 December 2017 http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/actualites/presse/communiqués-de-presse/article/le-smic-augmentera-de-1-24-au-1er-janvier-2018-376474
Germany	Law regulating a general minimum wage http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/milog/index.html
Hungary	Union newsletter https://szakszervezetek.hu/vkf/7791-ngm-folytatodtak-a-minimalber-targyalasok-a-kormany-nagyaranyu-realber-emelkedest-szeretne-jovore-es-2018-ban
Ireland	Low Pay Commission http://www.lowpaycommission.ie Citizens Information on minimum rates of pay http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment_rights_and_conditions/pay_and_employment/pay_inc_min_wage.html
Latvia	Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 656 On calculation of the amount of the minimum monthly wage within the normal working time and minimum hourly rate amended on 25.10.2016. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/278067-noteikumi-par-minimalas-menesa-darba-algas-apmeru-normala-darba-laika-ietvaros-un-minimalas-stundas-tarifa-likmes-aprekinasanu
Lithuania	Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania No. XII-2603 https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/f6d686707e7011e6b969d7ae07280e89/PuJjRmfzLF
Malta	Government of Malta (2016): Wage Increase National Standard Order (Subsidiary Legislation 452.65) http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=11199&l=1 Government of Malta (2017): National Minimum Wage National Standard Order (Subsidiary legislation 452.71) http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=11205
Netherlands	Overheid.nl (2017): Dutch government announcement https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stcrt-2017-28138.html
Poland	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy https://www.mpips.gov.pl/aktualnosci-wszystkie/prawo-pracy/art,9589,od-nowego-roku-podwyzka-placy-minimalnej.html Social Dialogue http://www.dialog.gov.pl/
Portugal	Jornal Público 21 Dezembro 2017
Romania	Statement by the National Council for Romanian SMEs (CNIPMMR) http://www.ces.ro/newlib/PDF/proiecte/HG-salariul-minim-brut-2017.pdf CNIPMMR newsletter http://cniptmmr.ro/2017/03/01/pozitia-cnipmmr-referitoare-la-salariul-minim-garantat-in-plata/
Slovakia	Explanatory Memorandum to the draft Government Regulation No. 278/2017 Coll., laying down the amount of the minimum wage for 2018 www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/Index/Mater-Dokum-212605 Draft report on Draft Government Regulation No. 278/2017 Coll., laying down the amount of the minimum wage for 2018 www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/Index/Mater-Dokum-212601
Slovenia	Minimum Wage Act (Official Gazette No.13/2010).
Spain	CEOE and CCOO websites
United Kingdom	Low Pay Commission https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/low-pay-commission

Table 2c: Sources of information on coverage

Belgium	Kampelmann, S., Garnero, A. and F. Rycx, F. (2013), <i>Minimum wages in Europe: Does the diversity of systems lead to a diversity of outcomes?</i> , ETUI, Brussels. Available at https://www.etui.org/content/download/11381/96227/file/13+R+128+Minimum+wages+Web+version.pdf
Bulgaria	DarikNews (2017) Над 400 000 българи работят за минимална заплата, изчисли КНСБ, available at https://dariknews.bg/novini/bylgariia/nad-400-000-bylgari-rabotiat-za-minimalna-zaplata-izchisli-knsb-2064857
Croatia	Nestić, D., Babić, Z. and Blažević, S. (2015) <i>Učinci minimalne plaća na zapošljavanje, proizvodnost i životni standard radnika u Hrvatskoj</i> , the Institute of Economics, Zagreb.
Czech Republic	BORGIS, a.s., 'Average wage increased in the third quarter 2017 to CZK 29,050 (€1,144.96)', available at https://www.novinky.cz/ekonomika/456746-prumerna-mzda-ve-tretim-ctvrtleti-vzrostla-na-29-050-korun.html
Estonia	Estonian Tax and Customs Board (EMTA) https://www.emta.ee/et/kontaktid-ja-ametist/maksulaekumine-statistika/tegevusalade-statistika/koik-tegevusalad-kokku
France	Rapport du groupe d'experts, <i>Salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance</i> , 1 décembre 2017 http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport_smic_definitif_-_04_12_2017.pdf DARES (2017), <i>La revalorisation du Smic au 1er janvier 2017. 55,2 % de femmes parmi les 1,65 million de salariés concernés</i> , Dares Résultats n°77, December 2017
Germany	Statistisches Bundesamt (2017), <i>Verdienstenerhebung 2015 - Abschlussbericht einer Erhebung über die Wirkung des gesetzlichen Mindestlohns auf die Verdienste und Arbeitszeiten der abhängig Beschäftigten</i> , Ausgabe 2017 https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/VerdiensteArbeitskosten/Mindestloehne/Verdienstenerhebung/Mindestlohn5611112
Greece	Ministry of Labour (2017), Special issue of ERGANI system http://www.ypakp.gr/uploads/docs/10917.pdf
Hungary	Wages and salaries statistics (2016) https://nfsz.munka.hu/Lapok/full_afsz_kozos_statiztika/full_afsz_egyeni_berek_es_keresetek_statiztikaja/afsz_sta_t_idosorok.aspx
Ireland	Central Statistics Office (CSO) Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) data on national minimum wage (Q2 to Q4 2016) http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/q-nmw/qnhs-nationalminimumwageseriesq42016/
Latvia	Annotation for amendments to Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 656 on calculation of the amount of the minimum monthly wage within the normal working time and minimum hourly rate. http://tap.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40432137
Lithuania	Lithuanian Statistics Department (2017), Number of employees by earnings https://osp.stat.gov.lt/en/informaciniai-pranesimai?articleId=4982240
Luxembourg	Draft bill 7085 Projet de loi portant modification de l'article L. 222-9 du Code du travail http://www.chd.lu/wps/PA_RoleDesAffaires/FTSByteServingServletImpl?path=/export/exped/sexpdata/Mag/166/620/166159.pdf Chamber of Employees (2013), <i>Econews 4/2013</i> , 7 October 2013, available at https://www.csl.lu/bibliotheque/newsletters/4a0cf2378f.pdf
Malta	The data was acquired from private correspondence with the National Statistics Office (NSO). The data is not on the NSO website.
Netherlands	Data from National Agency Statistics Netherlands (CBS) https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2015/50/een-op-de-zes-jongeren-verdient-minimumloon Employment and minimum wage: Employee characteristics SBI2008 http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=81406NED&D1=0-1&D2=0,3-5&D3=0,2,5-9,12-18,23-25,27-28&D4=I&HD=151201-0825&HDR=G3,T,G1&STB=G2
Poland	Data on the number of minimum wage employees are not available on the GUS website. It is based on press articles including, 'Z płacą minimalną rosną inne świadczenia' https://www.pb.pl/z-placa-minimalna-rosna-inne-swiadczenia-902145
Portugal	Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security – Guaranteed minimum monthly remuneration http://www.gep.msess.gov.pt/estudos/pdf/rmmg_7_relatorio_trimestral_05_12_2017.pdf
Romania	Study of the National Scientific Research Institute for Labor and Social Protection https://www.profit.ro/stiri/numarul-angajatilor-cu-salariul-minim-s-a-triplat-in-ultimii-6-ani-dupa-majorarile-succesive-aprobate-de-guverne-16063736

Slovakia	Aká bude minimálna mzda v roku 2018? http://karierainfo.zoznam.sk/cl/1000142/1656995/Aka-bude-minimalna-mzda-v-roku-2018--O-tychto-sumach-sa-rokuje Návrh nariadenia vlády Slovenskej republiky, ktorým sa ustanovuje suma minimálnej mzdy na rok 2018. Príloha 'Sociálne vplyvy' (Enclosure 'Social impacts'). http://hsr.rokovania.sk/167742017%E2%80%93m_opva/
Slovenia	Slovenia AJPES (Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services)
Spain	Annual Survey on Salary Structure, conducted by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE) http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica_C&cid=1254736177025&menu=resultados&secc=1254736061996&idp=1254735976596 Statistics on the labour market from the Spanish Tax Agency http://www.agenciatributaria.es/AEAT/Contenidos_Comunes/La_Agencia_Tributaria/Estadisticas/Publicaciones/sites/mercado/2016/jrubikc696967c0781a5fedf26509b6403762005214b8.html
United Kingdom	Low Pay Commission Report 2017 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/661195/Low_Pay_Commission_2017_report.pdf

Table 2d: Sources of information on the relationship between statutory minimum and average wages

Belgium	ETUC research and pay rise campaign https://www.etuc.org/press/minimum-wages-10-eu-countries-far-below-low-wage-threshold#.WIEGjTf_phE Kampelmann S., Garnero, A. and F. Rycx, F. (2013), <i>Minimum wages in Europe: Does the diversity of systems lead to a diversity of outcomes?</i> , ETUI, Brussels. Available at https://www.etui.org/content/download/11381/96227/file/13+R+128+Minimum+wages+Web+version.pdf
Bulgaria	National Statistical Institute http://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3928/%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%BE
Croatia	Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2017), <i>Average monthly net and gross earnings of persons in paid employment for September 2017</i> , First Release 9.1.1/9. Zagreb, November 30, 2017. Available at https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2017/09-01-01_09_2017.htm
Czech Republic	BORGIS, a.s., 'Average wage increased in the third quarter 2017 to CZK 29,050 (€1,144.96)', available at https://www.novinky.cz/ekonomika/456746-prumerna-mzda-ve-tretim-ctvrtleti-vzrostla-na-29-050-korun.html Kalkulacka (2017), <i>Jaká bude minimální mzda v ČR od 1. 1. 2018?</i> Available at http://kalkulacka.org/jaka-bude-minimalni-mzda-v-cr-od-1-1-2018/
Estonia	Statistics Estonia, average gross wage https://www.stat.ee/stat-keskmise-brutokuupalk Estonian Tax and Customs Board, median payment https://www.emta.ee/et/kontaktid-ja-ametist/maksulaekumine-statistika/mediaanvaljamakse
France	Rapport du groupe d'experts, 'Salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance', 1 décembre 2017 http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport_smic_definitif_-_04_12_2017.pdf
Germany	Bruttel, O., Baumann, A. and Himmelreicher, R. (2017), 'Der gesetzliche Mindestlohn in Deutschland - Struktur, Verbreitung und Auswirkungen auf die Beschäftigten', WSI Mitteilungen, No. 7, pp. 473–48. OECD: http://stats.oecd.org/
Greece	OECD Statistics, Minimum relative to average wages of full-time workers, available at https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIN2AVE
Hungary	OECD Statistics, Minimum relative to average wages of full-time workers, available at https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIN2AVE
Ireland	Low Pay Commission (2017), Low Pay Commission recommendations for the national minimum wage http://www.lowpaycommission.ie/publications/national%20minimum%20wage%202017/recommendations%20of%20the%20low%20pay%20commission%20for%20the%20national%20minimum%20wage,%202017.pdf
Latvia	Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia http://data.csb.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/Sociala/Sociala__isterm__dsamaksa/DS0020c_euro.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?xid=cdbc978c-22b0-416a-aacc-aa650d3e2ce0

Malta	Government of Malta (2016), National minimum wage national standard order http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=11205 National Statistics Office (2017), Labour force survey: Q4/2016 https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C2/Labour_Market_Statistics/Documents/2017/News2017_052.pdf
Netherlands	Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of 9 October 2017 concerning adaptation of the statutory minimum wage https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stcrt-2017-58642.html
Poland	OECD Statistics, Minimum relative to average wages of full-time workers, available at https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIN2AVE
Portugal	OECD iLibrary, Minimum wages relative to median wages http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/data/earnings/minimum-wages-relative-to-median-wages_data-00313-en
Romania	Salariul minim ca instrument de politici publice – pro sau contra? http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bukarest/13271.pdf Cresterea salariului minim de la 1 ianuarie 2018 va aduce Romania intr-o situatie paradoxala http://www.ziare.com/economie/analiza-economica/cresterea-salariului-minim-de-la-1-ianuarie-2018-va-duce-romania-intr-o-situatie-paradoxala-1488936 Bugetul asigurarilor sociale de stat pe 2018, programat cu un excedent de peste 191 milioane de lei http://www.economica.net/bugetul-asigurarilor-sociale-de-stat-pe-2018-programat-cu-un-excedent-de-pest-191-milioane-de-lei-fondurile-pentru-pensii-sunt-la-6-7prc-din-pib_146940.html#ixzz572IsHFFe
Slovakia	Návrh nariadenia vlády Slovenskej republiky, ktorým sa ustanovuje suma minimálnej mzdy na rok 2018. Príloha č.2 Prehľad o vývoji 'hrubej' minimálnej mzdy a priemernej nominálnej mzdy (Enclosure No. 2 An overview of the 'gross' minimum wage and averag wage). http://hsr.rokovania.sk/167742017%E2%80%93m_opva/
Slovenia	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Government of the Republic of Slovenia http://www.mddsz.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/delovna_razmerja_in_pravice_iz_dela/socialno_partnerstvo/minimal_na_placa/ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/en/News/Index/7098
Spain	EPA Survey (Spanish Labour Force Survey) conducted by the INE http://www.ine.es/prensa/epa_2016_d.pdf
United Kingdom	Low Pay Commission Report 2017 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/661195/Low_Pay_Commission_2017_report.pdf

The term ‘minimum wage’ refers to the various legal restrictions governing the lowest rate payable by employers to workers, regulated by formal laws or statutes. This report provides information on statutory minimum wages that are generally applicable in a country and not limited to specific sectors, occupations or groups of employees. While the scope of the report covers all 28 EU Member States, the main findings relate to the 22 countries that had a statutory minimum wage in place in 2018. In the majority of countries, the social partners have been involved in the setting of the minimum wage in 2018 – in marked contrast to the beginning of the decade when minimum wage-setting was characterised by strong government intervention. While the highest increases in the minimum wage were recorded (in nominal and real terms) in Bulgaria and Romania, both of these countries – as well as several others – have a long way to go to catch up with the minimum wage levels prevailing in western European countries.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies. Eurofound was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75, to contribute to the planning and design of better living and working conditions in Europe.