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During the first quarter of 2021, Government outlay towards Social Security Benefits rose by €9.7 million.

Government Expenditure on Social Security Benefits: January-March 2021

Social Security Benefits Expenditure

Between January and March 2021, spending on Social Security Benefits totalled €252.7 million, a 4.0 per cent rise from the previous year. An €11.1 million rise in Contributory expenditure largely explains the increase in spending, partially offset by a €1.5 million drop in Non-Contributory outlay (Table 1).

Government spending towards Contributory Benefits amounted to €205.4 million, 5.7 per cent higher than 2020. Pensions in respect of Retirement recorded the largest increase of €9.3 million, primarily the result of a rise in the number of Two-Thirds pensioners (1,581). Further increases were registered under Contributory Bonus (€1.3 million), Pensions in respect of Widowhood (€0.7 million) and Other Benefits (€0.2 million). In contrast, lower expenditure was reported under Pensions in respect of Invalidity (€0.2 million) and Benefits in respect of Industrial Injuries and Gratuities (€0.1 million) (Table 2).

By the end of the first quarter of 2021, €47.3 million went towards Non-Contributory Benefits, a 3.0 per cent drop in comparison to 2020. The largest decrease was reported under Old Age Pension (€1.7 million), with additional drops reported under Disability Pensions/Allowance (€0.8 million), Total Social Assistance (€0.4 million), Non-Contributory Bonus (€0.3 million), Total In-Work Benefit and Medical Assistance (both €0.1 million). Conversely, spending towards Child Allowance and Supplementary Allowance rose by €1.3 million and €0.7 million, respectively (Table 3).

Social Security Beneficiaries

In the first quarter of 2021, the largest number of Contributory beneficiaries was reported under the Two-Thirds Pension (51,804). Furthermore, the 1,581 increase in the number of Two-Thirds Pension beneficiaries was the highest registered among the Contributory Benefits. On the other hand, the biggest drop in recipients was witnessed under the Sickness Benefit (1,289) (Table 2).

Children's Allowance reported the highest share of Non-Contributory recipients, with 41,329 families in receipt of the benefit. The same benefit recorded the largest increase (999) in beneficiaries, while the highest drop in recipients was witnessed under Supplementary Allowance (612) (Table 3) ■

Statistics in this News Release should be interpreted in the context of the COVID-19 situation.

Table 1. Comparative Social Security Benefits by period and description

Description	Jan-Mar 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2021	Jan-Mar 2021 / Jan-Mar 2020	
				Change	% change
	€ 000				
Contributory Benefits	182,080	194,252	205,381	11,128	5.7
Non-Contributory Benefits	47,654	48,728	47,272	-1,456	-3.0
Total Social Security Benefits	229,733	242,980	252,652	9,672	4.0

Chart 1. Social Security Benefits Expenditure: January-March 2012-2021

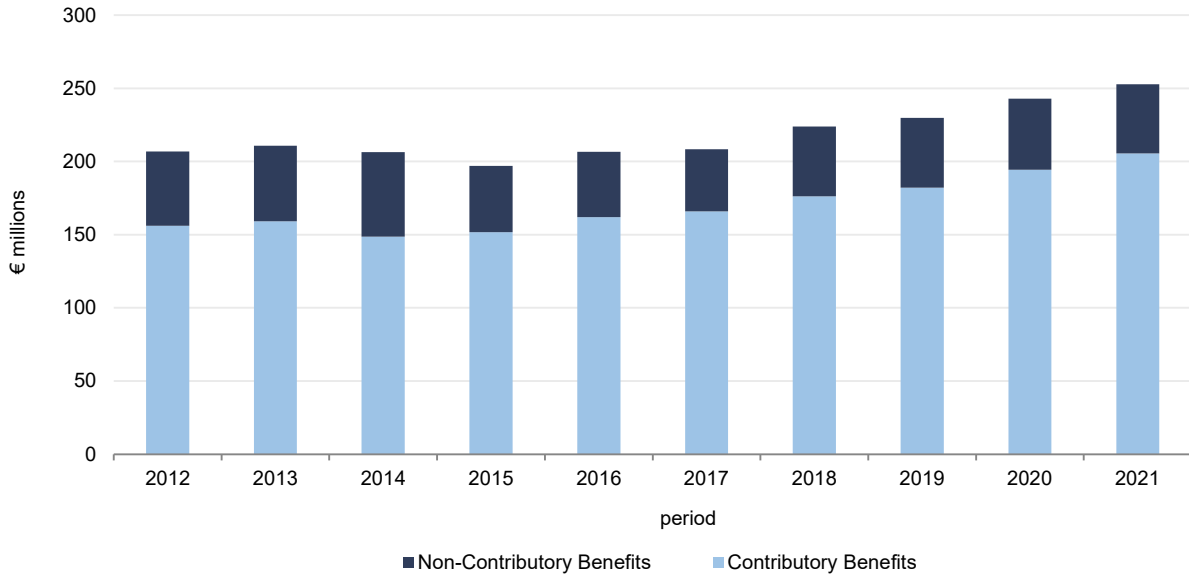


Chart 2. Social Security Benefits Expenditure by ESSPROS functions for January-March 2021

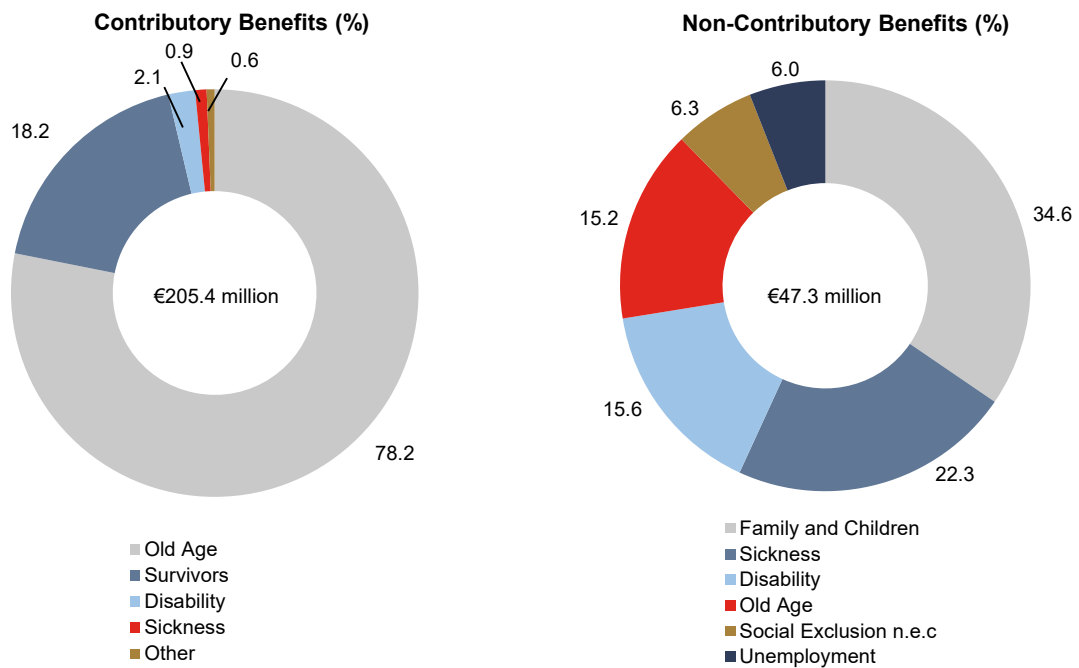


Table 2. Social Security Contributory Benefits by period and description

Description	Jan-Mar 2019		Jan-Mar 2020		Jan-Mar 2021	
	Beneficiaries	€ 000	Beneficiaries	€ 000	Beneficiaries	€ 000
Contributory Benefits	-	182,080	-	194,252	-	205,381
Pensions in respect of Retirement	-	126,405	-	135,613	-	144,916
Retirement Pension	5,791	7,074	5,083	6,920	5,543	8,601
National Minimum Pension	6,159	8,857	6,399	9,749	7,064	10,520
Increased Retirement Pension	635	1,385	598	1,365	1,062	2,275
Two-Thirds Pension	48,214	105,041	50,223	112,824	51,804	117,190
Increased National Minimum Pension	1,740	3,961	1,959	4,664	2,632	6,218
Decreased National Minimum Pension	56	87	54	92	69	111
Pensions in respect of Invalidity	-	5,026	-	4,737	-	4,507
Invalidity Pension	161	179	126	127	108	129
Increased Invalidity Pension	69	115	56	96	45	78
National Minimum Invalidity Pension	3,223	4,726	2,941	4,514	2,701	4,300
Decreased National Minimum Invalidity Pension ¹	3	6	2	c	2	c
Pensions in respect of Widowhood	-	32,668	-	34,252	-	34,925
Widows' Pension	200	387	193	316	148	229
Early Survivors' Pension	1,783	3,640	1,859	3,864	1,767	3,624
Survivors' Pension	8,182	17,216	8,775	19,177	9,662	20,929
National Minimum Widows' Pension	6,100	11,426	5,608	10,894	5,280	10,142
Benefits in respect of Industrial Injuries and Gratuities	-	440	-	425	-	326
Injury Benefit	514	354	543	347	402	252
Injury Pension	230	71	222	70	211	66
Injury Gratuity	5	15	3	7	4	8
Other Benefits	-	2,693	-	2,744	-	2,908
Unemployment Benefit ²	434	162	703	224	1,028	429
Special Unemployment Benefit	64	34	75	51	91	62
Maternity Benefit	953	853	861	746	794	694
Sickness Benefit	8,466	1,498	7,762	1,583	6,473	1,617
Orphans' Allowance	12	16	10	14	8	13
Marriage Grant	461	129	442	126	346	93
COVID-19 Benefits³	-	-	-	-	-	-
Additional Unemployment Benefit	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disability Benefit	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medical Benefit	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent Benefit	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bonus	-	14,848	-	16,482	-	17,799

^c confidential

¹For confidentiality reasons, 2020 and 2021 outlay for Decreased National Minimum Invalidity Pension has been included under National Minimum Invalidity Pension.

²The increase in unemployment benefit beneficiaries is related to the introduction of the COVID-19 Additional Unemployment Benefit, with payments first made in April 2020.

³Introduced to aid individuals working in the private sector who, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, became unemployed or unable to go to work due to medical or family reasons.

Table 3. Social Security Non-Contributory Benefits by period and description

Description	Jan-Mar 2019		Jan-Mar 2020		Jan-Mar 2021	
	Beneficiaries	€ 000	Beneficiaries	€ 000	Beneficiaries	€ 000
Non-Contributory Benefits	-	47,654	-	48,728	-	47,272
Child Allowance	-	9,889	-	9,775	-	11,054
Childrens Allowance	39,074	9,372	40,330	9,275	41,329	9,377
Foster Child Allowance	170	517	175	396	177	481
Child Benefit Bonus ¹	-	-	345	104	765	330
Children's Allowance Supplement ²	-	-	-	-	41,304	866
Old Age Pension	-	9,286	-	10,178	-	8,434
Age Pension	4,756	6,800	4,679	7,041	4,539	5,753
Increased Carers' Allowance	857	1,963	1,071	2,463	1,205	2,127
Assistance Visually Impaired	365	524	395	673	402	554
Disability Pensions/Allowance	-	7,116	-	7,961	-	7,162
Disability Child Allowance	1,437	518	1,618	589	1,644	585
Disability Assistance	140	173	164	197	212	297
Severe Disability Assistance	3,069	5,147	3,174	5,449	3,367	4,717
Increased Severe Disability Assistance	550	1,278	700	1,726	795	1,562
Total Social Assistance	-	12,184	-	11,126	-	10,774
Drug Addicts Allowance	23	9	26	13	37	13
Social Assistance	4,547	5,378	4,162	5,021	4,034	4,571
Carers' Allowance	183	199	247	298	316	746
Social Assistance for Single Parents	2,476	2,871	2,319	2,740	2,356	2,679
Unemployment Assistance	873	1,061	706	842	758	844
Social Assistance Board ³	1	c	1	c	1	c
Unemployment Assistance Taper	2,143	1,470	1,686	1,121	1,178	758
Subsidiary Unemployment Assistance	1,081	1,196	928	1,091	1,025	1,164
Medical Assistance	-	4,327	-	4,352	-	4,285
Sickness Assistance	11,574	4,307	11,355	4,332	11,189	4,264
Leprosy Assistance	23	13	21	12	18	11
Milk Grant	15	7	20	8	34	10
Supplementary Allowance	23,075	2,164	22,558	2,292	21,946	2,986
Total In-Work Benefit	-	1,079	-	1,346	-	1,216
In-Work Benefit	3,584	1,079	3,927	1,346	4,207	975
In-Work Supplement ⁴	-	-	-	-	995	241
Bonus	-	1,608	-	1,699	-	1,360

^c confidential

¹Introduced in 2020.

²Supplementary payment to Children's Allowance recipients, first payments made in January 2021.

³For confidentiality purposes, Social Assistance Board outlays have been included under Unemployment Assistance.

⁴One-time payment to In-Work Benefit beneficiaries.

Methodological Notes

1. Expenditure data provided in this news release is extracted from the administrative records of the Social Security Department, and is based on the Government's Consolidated Fund.
2. Beneficiaries data is obtained from the Department of Social Security's Unique Beneficiaries Report.
3. For every benefit, the corresponding beneficiaries reflect any person who has received the benefit at least once during the reference period. The number of beneficiaries may not be aggregated since persons obtaining two or more different benefits during the same period are listed once under each benefit. Furthermore, it should also be noted that the annual number of beneficiaries is not equal to the sum of the quarters since beneficiaries obtaining the same benefit in more than one quarter are only counted once.
4. The functions provided in chart 2 are in line with the European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS) Manual 2012 Edition (ISBN 978-92-79-24751-4). This methodology is mandatory for all EU Member States.
5. Expenditure data is not normally subject to revision, while beneficiaries data may be revised.
6. Figures may not add up exactly due to rounding.
7. More information relating to this news release may be accessed at:
Statistical Database: <https://statdb.nso.gov.mt/start>
Glossary: https://nso.gov.mt/en/nso/Sources_and_Methods/Unit_A2/Public_Finance/Pages/Government-Expenditure-on-Social-Security-Benefits.aspx
8. References to this news release are to be cited appropriately.
9. A detailed news release calendar is available on:
https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Release_Calendar/Pages/News-Release-Calendar.aspx