

QUALITY OF LIFE IN EUROPE – LIFE EXPECTANCY AND HEALTH

Sanda CONSTANTIN¹

Abstract: *The paper presents indicators regarding the quality of life with a focus on life expectancy. The evolution of life expectancy has been analysed in relation to healthy life duration and, last but not least, to people's perceptions regarding their health status. Surprisingly, countries including Romania, which have a life expectancy below the European Union average, have a share of people who consider their health to be good or very good that is well above the European average. This aspect may be due to the lack of prevention, of awareness programs for the population regarding health education so that certain health problems can be prevented or detected at early stages.*

Key words: *quality of life, self-perceived health, life expectancy, healthy life years.*

1. Introduction

According to EUROSTAT's online publication Quality of life indicators, "Quality of life is a broad concept that encompasses a number of different dimensions (by which we understand the elements or factors making up a complete entity that can be measured through a set of sub dimensions with an associated number of indicators for each).

It encompasses both objective factors (e.g. command of material resources, health, work status, living conditions and many others) and the subjective perception one has of them.

The latter depends significantly on citizens' priorities and needs. Measuring quality of life for different populations and countries in a comparable manner is a complex task, and a scoreboard of indicators covering a number of relevant dimensions is needed for this purpose".

From the multitude of indicators related to the quality of life, the present paper aims to analyse life expectancy, healthy life years and, self-perceived health and social interactions with family and friends.

According to EUROSTAT, "Social interactions is the second sub-dimension, and activities with others (frequency of social contacts and satisfaction with personal

¹ Transilvania University of Brașov, sanda.constantin@unitbv.ro, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5258-0164>

relationships) and for others (volunteering in informal contexts), the potential to receive social support (help from others) and social cohesion (trust in others) are included in the framework under this topic".

2. Methodology

The present research used official EUROSTAT information from databases, Year Book 2024, Quality of life indicators (Eurostat's online publication), Population and social conditions, a statistical publication. Statistical methods were used for data analysis and for achieving data comparability.

3. Results

The first indicator analysed was life expectancy. Figure 1 presents the indicator in the European Union between 2019 and 2024.

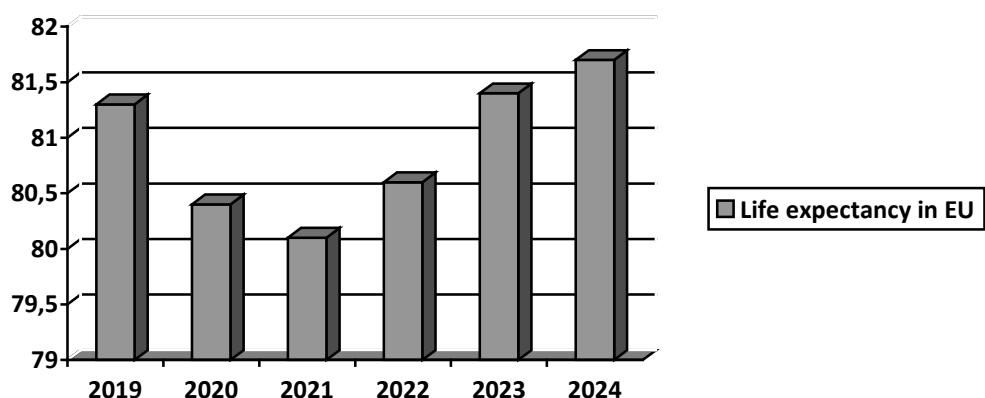


Fig. 1. EU: Life expectancy in the European Union – years

Data source:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_scp11\\$dv_2745/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_rp](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_scp11$dv_2745/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_rp)

As it can be observed, life expectancy in the European Union recorded a decrease in the period 2020 and 2021 from 81.3 years in 2019 to 80.1 years in 2020, most likely due to the COVID pandemic.

In the following years, there was a continuous increase, reaching 81.7 years in 2024.

The countries with the highest life expectancy in 2024 were: Spain, 84 years, Italy and Sweden, 84.1 years, Luxembourg, 83.5 years, Cyprus and Malta with 83.3 years.

The countries with the lowest life expectancy in 2024 were Bulgaria at 75.9 years, Lithuania at 77.6 years, Latvia at 76.7 years, and Romania at 76.6 years.

Figure 2 shows the evolution of life expectancy in Romania during the same period 2019-2024.

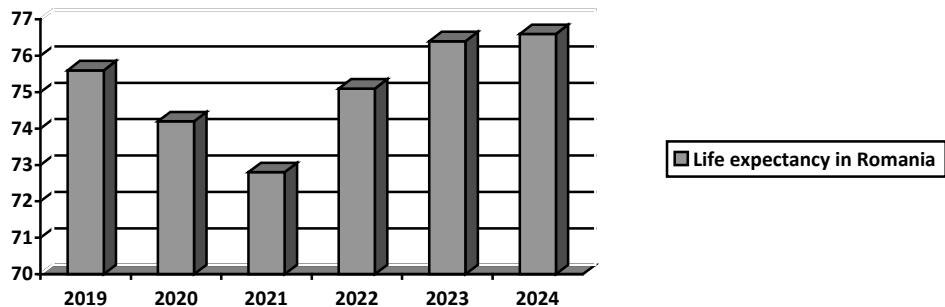


Fig. 2. EU: Life expectancy in Romania – years

Data source:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_scp11\\$dv_2745/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_rp](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_scp11$dv_2745/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_rp)

A trend similar to that of the European Union can be observed, with a decrease in life expectancy in 2020 and 2021 and an increase in the following years. However, a lower level can still be seen regarding the expected number of years, from 72.8 years in 2021 to 76.6 in 2024.

Compared to the European Union average, life expectancy in Romania is lower on average by 5.7 years.

Regarding the years of healthy life in the European Union over the same period 2019-2024, the evolution is shown in Figure 3.

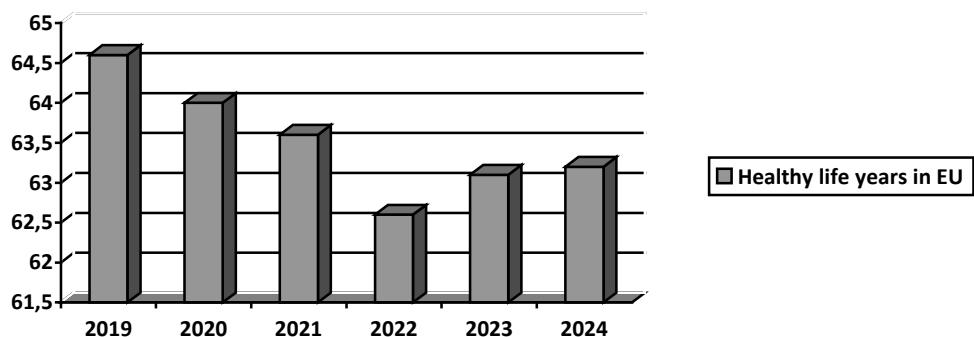


Fig. 3. EU: Healthy life years in the European Union

Data source:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_pw03\\$dv_2762/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_sc](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_pw03$dv_2762/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_sc)

As it can be observed, the indicator has recorded a constant decline, from 64.6 years

in 2019 to 62.6 years in 2022, followed by a slight increase in the last two years analysed, reaching 63.2 years in 2024.

The countries with the highest life expectancy were: Malta, 71.4 years, Italy, 69.1 years, Bulgaria, 68.6 years, Greece and Slovenia with 66.6 years.

The countries with the lowest number of healthy life years were: Latvia, 52.7 years, Denmark, 56.3 years, Slovakia, 57.5 years, and Finland, 57.1 years.

In Romania, the evolution of the indicator 'number of healthy life years' during the same period analysed, 2019-2024, is presented in Figure 4.

A decrease in the number of healthy years is also observed in the first two years analysed, from 60.2 years in 2019 to 57.8 years in 2021, followed by a slight increase over the next three years, up to 59.3 years in 2024.

It can also be noted that the number of healthy life years is lower in Romania compared to the European Union average, on average by 4.7 years.

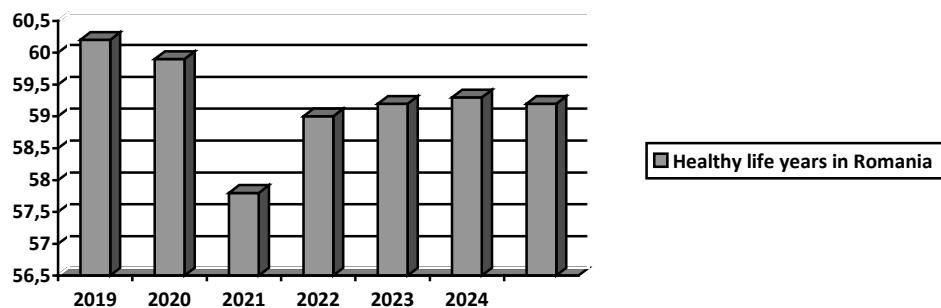


Fig. 4. EU: *Healthy life years in Romania*

Data source:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_pw03\\$dv_2762/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_sc](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_pw03$dv_2762/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_sc)

The next indicator analysed refers to self-perceived health both in the European Union and in Romania. The results obtained in the European Union regarding self-perceived health in European Union are presented in Table 1.

Regarding self-perceived health at the European Union level, it is observed that the percentage of people who consider their health to be good or very good fluctuates very little during the analysed period 2018-2024.

Thus, the percentage of these people ranges between 20.5% in the years 2019 and 2023, with a maximum of 23.6% in 2020. In 2024, the percentage was 21.6%.

The countries with the highest percentage of people who consider their health to be poor or very poor were Latvia, 15.1%, Lithuania 12.1%, Croatia 12.2%, Portugal 12% and Slovakia 11.9%.

The countries with the lowest percentage of people who consider their health to be poor or very poor were: Malta 3.8%, Ireland 4.7%, Romania 5.4%, Italy 5.8% and Netherland 5.8%.

Self-perceived health in Europe

Table 1

Years	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Self-perceived health [%]							
Very good or good	68.6	68.6	68.8	69	67.8	67.9	68.5
Fair	22.9	22.8	22.4	22.2	23.5	23.3	23
Bad or very bad	8.5	8.5	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.8	8.5

Data source:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_mlexpec\\$dv_292/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_hlt.qol_hlt_st](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_mlexpec$dv_292/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_hlt.qol_hlt_st)

The countries with the highest percentage of people who consider their health to be good and very good were: Ireland 80.1%, Malta 79.1%, Romania 75.5%, Greece 78.3% and Italy 75.5%.

The countries with the lowest percentage of people who consider their health to be good and very good were: Latvia 49.2%, Lithuania 48.9%, Portugal 53.6% and Estonia 57.7%

Also, the percentage of people who considered their health to be poor or very poor ranged between 8.5% and 8.8%.

The results obtained in Romania regarding self-perceived health in European Union are presented in Table 2

Self-perceived health in Romania

Table 2

Years	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Self-perceived health [%]							
Very good or good	70.6	71.2	73	72.8	73.3	72.1	75.5
Fair	22.3	21.6	19.7	19.8	19.9	21.2	19.1
Bad or very bad	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4	6.7	6.8	5.4

Data source:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_mlexpec\\$dv_292/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_hlt.qol_hlt_st](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_mlexpec$dv_292/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_hlt.qol_hlt_st)

In Romania, the percentage of those who consider their health status to be good or very good is above the European average, ranging from 26.4% in 2018 to 32.7% in 2022. In 2024, the percentage is 31.7%.

Also, the percentage of people who considered their health to be poor or very poor ranged between 5.4% in 2024 and 7.4% in 2021.

4. Conclusions

It can be observed that, although life expectancy is increasing both at the level of the European Union and in Romania, there was a decrease during the pandemic period of 2020 and 2021. This aspect is due not only to deaths resulting from coronavirus infections but also to the restrictions that led to limited access to certain medical services.

Also, an interesting indicator, self-perceived health, shows that, although life expectancy in Romania is far below the European average, the proportion of people who consider their health level to be good and very good is higher than that of the European Union.

This aspect, combined with the lower life expectancy, can be explained by the lack of prevention and the lack of health education, factors that lead to regular medical check-ups aimed at the early detection of certain health problems.

References

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_scp11\\$dv_2745/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_rp](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_scp11$dv_2745/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_rp) accessed at 14.07.2025

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_pw03\\$dv_2762/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_sc](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_pw03$dv_2762/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_lei.qol_lei_soc.qol_soc_sc) accessed at 16.08.2025

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_mlexpec\\$dv_292/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_hlt.qol_hlt_st](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_mlexpec$dv_292/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_hlt.qol_hlt_st) accessed at 20.09.2025

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_hlye\\$dv_287/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_hlt.qol_hlt_st](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_hlye$dv_287/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_hlt.qol_hlt_st) accessed at 20.09.2025

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_silc_02\\$dv_381/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_hlt.qol_hlt_st](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_silc_02$dv_381/default/table?lang=en&category=qol.qol_hlt.qol_hlt_st) accessed at 16.08.2025

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Quality_of_life_indicators_-_measuring_quality_of_life accessed at 17.08.2025