

MEASURING QUALITY OF LIFE AS A PATHWAY TO WELLBEING

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance. The world is undergoing rapid and continuous transformation. In this dynamic context, people across the globe increasingly seek greater freedom, access to employment, adequate financial resources, and the assurance of peace and well-being for their families. These fundamental needs underscore the importance of enhancing the quality of life (QoL), which serves as a cornerstone of both individual fulfillment and societal progress. Quality of life encompasses a broad range of dimensions, including health, safety, income, housing affordability (e.g., house price-to-income ratio), cost of living, commuting time, pollution levels, and climate. It reflects not only material and environmental conditions but also the intangible, subjective experiences of individuals. In this sense, QoL captures both objective indicators—such as economic data and infrastructure—and subjective perceptions of satisfaction and well-being.

We raise **problematic** question: How are European countries doing in ensuring quality of life at the national level and in which areas is the greatest progress being made?

The purpose of the article is to assess changes in quality of life in European countries examining QoL as a pathway to well-being.

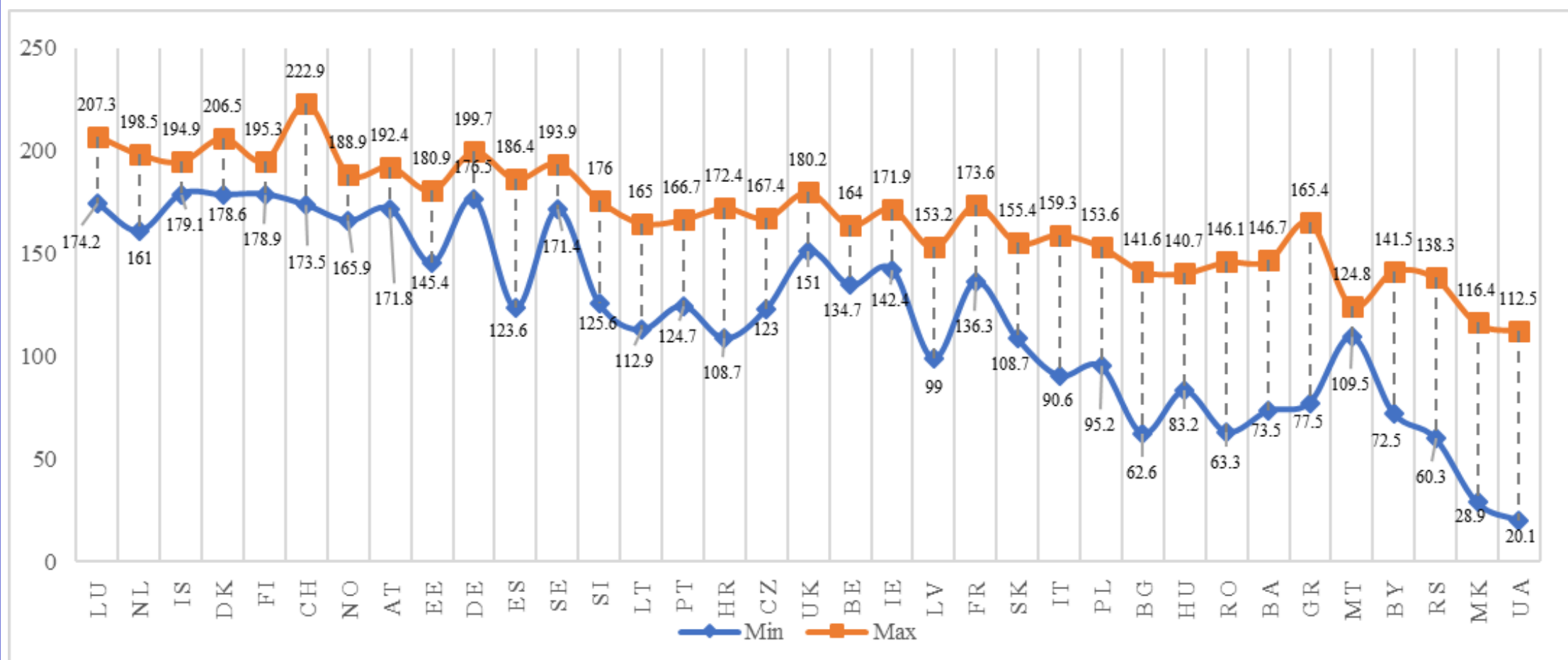
The research methodology. This study analyzes the "Quality of Life Index" data sourced from Numbeo, the world's largest database for cost of living information and a leading crowd-sourced global platform for quality of life data. Numbeo provides extensive statistics on various indicators, including housing affordability, perceived crime rates, healthcare quality, transportation efficiency, pollution levels, climate conditions, and other factors critical to assessing the quality of life. By leveraging Numbeo's comprehensive dataset, this study seeks to uncover insights into the diverse aspects that influence well-being and living standards across European countries (Numbeo, 2025).

The analysis spans a decade, covering data from 2014 to 2024. This temporal scope allows us to identify key trends, outliers, and significant changes in the quality of life across European countries. Our objectives include: Highlighting disparities in quality of life among European nations and identifying patterns of consistency, improvement, and decline.

For this analysis, all European countries participating in the calculation of the Quality of Life Index were considered, resulting in an initial dataset of 35 countries.

The study focuses on the overall Quality of Life Index and its eight contributing factors, which collectively determine the Quality of Life Index, include: *Purchasing Power Index (higher is better)*; *Pollution Index (lower is better)*; *House Price to Income Ratio (lower is better)*; *Cost of Living Index (lower is better)*; *Safety Index (higher is better)*; *Health Care Index (higher is better)*; *Traffic Commute Time Index (lower is better)*; *Climate Index (higher is better)*.

Research results



Quality of Life Index of European Countries (higher values indicate better quality of life)

Note: Minimum and maximum values during the ten-year period 2014-2024

At the lower end of the spectrum, countries such as Ukraine, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Belarus consistently rank at the bottom. Recent years show their scores remain below 120, highlighting persistent challenges in governance, economic development, and social stability. Ukraine (UA), however, demonstrates the most significant improvement over the decade, with its index increasing from a low of 20.1 to 112.5 (+92.4). Similarly, North Macedonia (MK) saw a rise of +87.5, and Greece (GR) recorded substantial growth of +87.9, progressing from 77.5 to 165.4.

On the other hand, some countries exhibit minimal improvement. Malta (MT) experienced the smallest growth (+15.3), increasing from 109.5 to 124.8. Similarly, Iceland (IS) and Finland (FI) showed modest changes of +15.8 and +16.4, respectively, though they maintained consistently high indices throughout the period.

Eastern and Southeastern European countries such as Bulgaria (BG) and Romania (RO) began with low minimum indices (62.6 and 63.3, respectively) but displayed significant progress, with improvements of +79 and +82.8. In contrast, high-ranking countries like Norway (NO) and Germany (DE) demonstrated moderate growth (+23 and +23.2), reflecting stability rather than rapid development.

Despite some disparities, consistent growth over the decade suggests successful policy implementations or recoveries from earlier challenges. Luxembourg's upward trajectory exemplifies this pattern, alongside other countries exhibiting steady improvements in infrastructure, social services, or economic frameworks. These trends highlight the importance of sustained reformative efforts.

Conversely, a few nations experienced declines in their quality-of-life index. For example, Switzerland (CH) saw its score decrease from 222.9 in 2014 to 186.7 in 2024. This decline may point to emerging challenges such as the rising cost of living, economic pressures, or societal factors impacting overall living conditions. Such reductions warrant further investigation into the causes, which could include policy shifts, economic downturns, or global crises.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis, based on the Numbeo Quality of Life Index, reveals an overall upward trend in quality of life across Europe over the past decade. The data highlights especially strong growth in less developed or transitional regions, suggesting a degree of convergence as these countries catch up with their more developed counterparts.

While countries with historically high quality of life—such as those in Northern and Western Europe—have largely maintained their standards, the progress made by emerging economies in Central and Eastern Europe is particularly noteworthy. This progress reflects broader socioeconomic reforms, increasing investment in public services, and improved infrastructure, as well as alignment with European Union norms and development goals.

However, despite these positive trends, disparities persist both within and between countries. Regional inequalities, urban-rural divides, and differing levels of investment in health, education, and environmental sustainability continue to shape uneven outcomes. Moreover, some countries show stagnation or even decline in certain QoL indicators, often tied to political instability, economic challenges, or environmental degradation.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between public policy, economic conditions, environmental factors, and individual well-being. In particular, they underscore the importance of sustainable and inclusive development strategies that not only raise living standards but also address systemic inequalities. For policymakers, the analysis reinforces the need to: Prioritize health, safety, and environmental quality alongside economic growth; Foster equitable access to essential services; Strengthen governance, transparency, and civic engagement; Design policies that reflect both objective needs and citizens' subjective experiences.

REFERENCES

Numbeo (2025) *Quality of Life Index*. Available at: https://www.numbeo.com/quality-of-life/rankings_by_country.jsp