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## High awareness of poverty in EU

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Nine out of 10 Europeans want urgent action by their government to tackle poverty. A new Eurobarometer survey reveals the strength of concern over social exclusion as a widespread problem. But this varies from country to country.

People see the incidence of poverty the most in Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. The figure in the UK was somewhat below the 66 percent EU average. And only about a third of Swedes, Cypriots and Danes saw poverty as widespread in their countries. On average, 54 percent of Europeans believe that poverty makes it hard to maintain a network of friends. Swa Schyvens, who works with a Flemish association helping the poor, said: "Poverty is not only being hungry or homeless; it is also social exclusion, a lack of participation in society. You can't do anything and you don't know anything. Poverty spreads inside the person himself." The survey singles out high unemployment and inadequate wages as the main fears. But lack of education or skills was seen as a major contributor to poverty. Christine Kotarakos, an official with the European Task Force 2010 for combating poverty and social exclusion, said: "People's perceptions reflect what, more or less, is probably reality. When we talk about poverty risk, we're referring to a specific measurement of poverty founded on income. But poverty depends on a great many factors other than revenue." Social benefits and pensions not keeping up, and the cost of proper housing were also named as problems. Ten years ago, EU leaders pledged to 'make a decisive impact on poverty eradication' by 2010. It has been designated European Year Against Poverty.

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