
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Andrew Dilnot CBE

Harriett Baldwin MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

26 February 2013

Dear Ms Baldwin

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Thank you for your letter dated 31 January 2013 regarding statements made by the Leader of the Opposition about the number of young unemployed people in the UK compared with elsewhere in Europe, and in particular those in Spain, in an article in The Sun newspaper published on 31 January.

The Leader of the Opposition's statement that "only Spain has higher numbers of young unemployed than the UK" is consistent with the latest published data for total numbers of unemployed people, published on the Eurostat website.¹

However, in order to make comparisons of unemployment between countries, it is helpful to take the size of the labour force in those countries into account. Presentation of unemployment *rates* (i.e. as a percentage of the total number of people in the labour force) is the standard practice of the Office for National Statistics² and Eurostat³, and is consistent with an internationally agreed definition set down by the International Labour Organisation⁴ which is designed for the purposes of making meaningful international comparisons. The enclosed tables show unemployment figures for the EU27 countries for the most recent period where data is available for the United Kingdom.

Comparing unemployment rates between countries is not without some difficulties. The normal basis to derive unemployment rates is to use the percentage of the 'economically active' population and in the case of youth unemployment such a concept can sometimes be inconsistent between countries. That said, accepted statistical practice is that comparing unemployment rates between countries is preferable to comparing absolute numbers. The latter, of course, may be heavily affected by the relative sizes of the general population.

¹ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/euroindicators/labour_market/main_tables

² See recent ONS Labour Market statistical bulletin <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/february-2013/index.html>

³ See recent Eurostat news release http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-01022013-BP/EN/3-01022013-BP-EN.PDF

⁴ http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/standards-and-guidelines/resolutions-adopted-by-international-conferences-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_087481/lang--en/index.htm

I am copying this letter to the Leader of the Opposition and to the Minister of State for Employment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Dilnot". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a distinct 'D'.

Andrew Dilnot CBE

Youth unemployment totals (thousands) November 2012 (under 25's) (seasonally adjusted)	
Spain	959
United Kingdom	951
France	791
Italy *	610
Poland	433
Germany	364
Romania *	194
Greece	186
Portugal	175
Sweden	158
Netherlands	138
Hungary	87
Belgium	84
Slovakia	84
Czech Republic	79
Bulgaria	70
Ireland	67
Denmark	63
Finland	63
Austria	51
Latvia *	32
Lithuania	31
Slovenia	22
Estonia	13
Cyprus	12
Malta	5
Luxembourg	3

Source: Eurostat

* Data for September

Youth unemployment rates (%) November 2012 (under 25's) (seasonally adjusted)	
Greece	59.4
Spain	55.4
Portugal	38.7
Italy	36.8
Slovakia	35.7
Latvia *	31.7
Ireland	29.9
Cyprus	28.5
Poland	28.2
Hungary	27.9
Bulgaria	27.5
Slovenia	26.9
France	26.8
Sweden	24.7
Lithuania	23.8
Romania *	23.0
Czech Republic	21.2
United Kingdom	20.7
Belgium	19.7
Estonia	19.5
Finland	18.9
Luxembourg	18.6
Malta	16.3
Denmark	14.2
Netherlands	9.7
Austria	8.6
Germany	8.0

Source: Eurostat

* Data for September