



European
Commission

THE PERSONAL CARE BASKET

- ➔ The European Reference Budgets Network is a project financed by the European Commission that aims to develop cross-national, comparable reference budgets in all EU Member States. Reference budgets are baskets of goods and services considered necessary for an individual household to reach an acceptable standard of living within a given country, region or city. Preparing reference budgets with a common methodology can help EU Member States to design effective and adequate income support measures and to encourage mutual learning and the exchange of best practices. More information about the project as well as the complete final report can be found on the European Commission website: <http://europa.eu/!CC79TD>

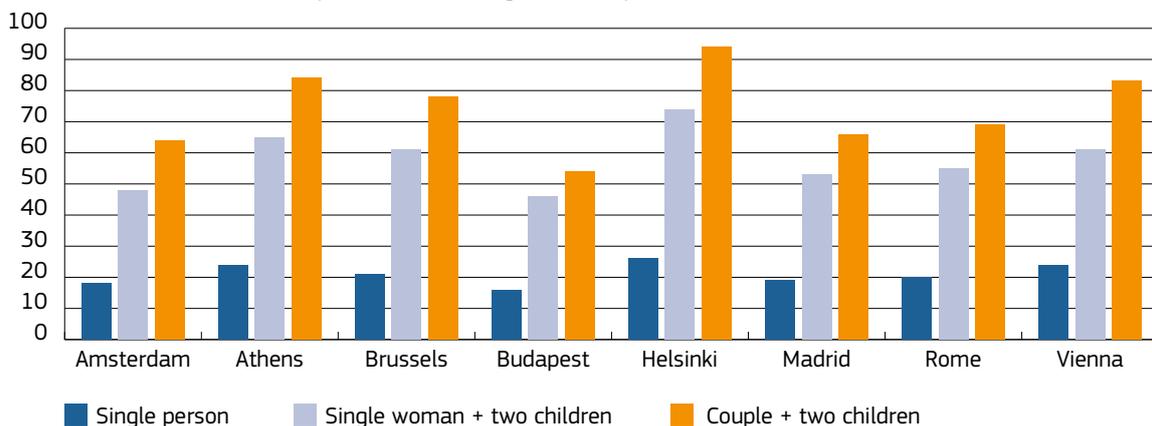
Personal hygiene was identified as an essential need to be fulfilled for an adequate participation in society. It serves two purposes: it contributes to maintaining good health by combatting infectious micro-organisms and meets psychological and social requirements, as it fosters self-value and respect from others.

The personal care basket indicates the monthly budget required by three reference households (consisting of children and people of

working age, in good health, without disabilities and living in the capital city) to afford adequate personal care. It includes goods and services that are essential to satisfactory daily hygiene and has been developed for a selected number of countries in accordance with national recommendations and cultural expectations. The results presented here reveal the personal care costs in eight reference cities: Amsterdam, Athens, Brussels, Budapest, Helsinki, Madrid, Rome and Vienna. The basket was priced in March-April 2015.

1. Key findings

The personal care budget, monthly amounts in euros, 2015



- Due to price differences, the budget for personal care varies across countries. The budgets in the most expensive city (Helsinki) are 1.6 to 2.2 times higher than the budgets in the least expensive city (Budapest). The average monthly costs of personal care are relatively modest compared to other baskets of essential goods and services (e.g. in relation to food or housing): EUR 17 for a single man, EUR 25 for a single woman, EUR 58 for a single woman with two children and EUR 74 for a couple with two children.
- In all cities, except Budapest, the highest share of the budget (on average 44%) is dedicated to hair care, especially to visits to the hairdresser. Cosmetics and perfumes account for the second largest share in family types including women. In contrast, for a single man, shaving represents the second largest share of the total budget. In all cities except Budapest and Athens, hair care, shaving, perfume and cosmetics account for about 2/3 to 3/4 of the total personal care basket.

2. Constructing the personal care basket

The standard approach for constructing a basket is to specify the nature, number and quality of the necessary items and then to price them. The construction of the personal care basket is based on the assumption that household members are in good health and have no particular allergies, sickness or disabilities. Several goods and services are essential for good daily hygiene and specific needs can be associated with different parts of the body: hand, mouth and body hygiene, intimate hygiene for women, shaving and hair care. Due to a lack of comparable data regarding social expectations, to a large extent the content of the personal care basket is a matter of convention. The basket has been established by taking the following factors into account:

➔ Hand and body hygiene

Dirty hands are responsible for the direct and indirect spread of a wide range of bacteria, and studies have revealed that good personal hygiene with soap can halve the risk of intestinal infections. Liquid, PH-neutral soap is preferred in order to avoid a risk of bacterial contamination related to water stagnation. The same soap can be used for all body parts. Furthermore, the basket also includes cotton towels or towels made of cotton and other synthetic materials. These can be frequently washed, which is important for preventing fungal infections. Deodorants and antiperspirants are not essential for body hygiene, but they can help with social acceptance as unpleasant smells are avoided.

➔ Hair care

The personal care budget includes items that are required for hair care. Shampoo is used to wash the scalp and beautify the hair. Moreover, keeping hair in shape is generally considered important from a psychological and social perspective. Therefore, combs, brushes, hair pins and ribbons as well as a regular visit to the hairdresser are included in the basket.

➔ Oral hygiene

Oral health is a determinant factor in the quality of life. Moreover, the overall burden and economic cost of traditional oral diseases in

the European Union is considerable. Only 41 % of adult Europeans claim to still have all their natural teeth, and oral diseases have become the fourth most expensive group of diseases to treat. Daily oral hygiene represents an adequate preventive measure. This requires equipment in the form of a tooth brush, toothpaste, floss and mouthwash.

➔ Intimate hygiene for women

Sanitary pads and tampons are commonly used as hygienic tools to absorb bodily secretion during menstruation. While sanitary napkins are cheaper, tampons are handy to carry and offer more freedom to undertake sports. Both are incorporated in the budget for girls aged 12 and older.

➔ Shaving

For every man and adolescent males aged 12 and older, products for shaving one's beard can be included in the personal care basket. Similarly, a shaver with removable blades for women and teenage girls can be provided in accordance with cultural expectations.

➔ Toilet and bathroom equipment

Toilet paper, a roll holder, rubbish bin and toilet are necessary toilet equipment, while a bathroom mat, shower curtain, towel rack and toiletry bag should be included in the personal care basket as part of the bathroom equipment.

➔ Cosmetic and perfume

The personal care basket can incorporate a budget for perfumes and cosmetics, depending on cultural expectations in the Member State. Although these might be regarded as a luxury, their use is sometimes considered as self-evident or desirable for certain social events or particular professional situations, e.g. jobs in the catering sector.