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| **European Semester 2015/2016 country fiche on disability** |
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The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](http://disability-europe.net/) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network support the development of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People in the EU.

This country report has been prepared as input for the European Semester from a disability perspective.

*Note:*

*The statistics provided in October 2015 are based on the EU-SILC 2013. This is the most recent microdata available to researchers for analysis from Eurostat. This report may be updated as new data becomes available.*

 

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# Summary of the overall situation and challenges

The overall situation of people with disabilities considered in relation to the situation of people without disabilities in Denmark is pretty much the same as we see in the EU in general. People with disabilities are employed to a lesser extent in Denmark than people without disabilities, exactly as we see in other EU countries. Likewise, people with disabilities are educated to a lesser extent in Denmark than people without disabilities, and relatively more people with disabilities are poor than people without disabilities.

In the past twenty years many efforts have been made in order to improve conditions for people with disabilities. Thus, there has been an active employment policy both in the 90s and in the 00s, which among other things has created a steadily growing and significant number of flexi-jobs. New legislation has aimed to make it easier for people with disabilities to get an education. These actions do not seem to have changed the situation of people with disabilities significantly. Even if attitudes have changed in more positive direction, the proportion in employment relative to people without disability has remained fairly constant.

Reforms in school and education areas have just been launched with the aim that the children will learn more and students will complete their studies faster. It is too early to evaluate the reforms, but they will probably not have much impact on people with disability. A third reform has strengthened integration in public schools, mainly of children with behavioural problems. The background to this reform is that special education has become more widely used over the years. The reform has reversed this trend and from the school year 2014 much fewer children receive special education and many more are integrated into mainstream classes. There are preliminary press reports of both success and failure of this reform.

Poverty grew in the 00s, mainly because of cuts in social assistance. These cuts were abolished by the government that took office in 2011, and poverty has not been increasing as fast for some years. The new government that has taken office in 2015 has however made new cuts in social assistance under the name of “a modern cash support ceiling”, which, however, may turn out to get the same consequences for people with disabilities, if not compensated by offsetting benefits to the group.

The social assistance reform of the former government meant lower benefit for the less than 30 year olds. The disability pension reform in 2013 made it nearly impossible to get a disability pension for persons under 40, replacing pension with interdisciplinary rehabilitation teams. Even if the aim of these reforms is to get more people into jobs, an effect may be to increase the number of poor people with disabilities. The reform in unemployment benefit which is expected shortly may, however, provide more security to the group who are in employment.

The picture, which is pretty much the same as a year ago, raises the need for a more thorough analysis of the economic conditions for the group of people with disabilities, as all research suggests that it is not so easy to solve the problems alone with more training and employment.

# Assessment of the situation of disabled people with respect to the Europe 2020 headline targets

## Strategic targets

Table 1: Europe 2020 and agreed national targets for the general population

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Europe 2020 targets | National targets**[[1]](#footnote-1)** |
| Employment | 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed | 80% |
| Education | Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10% | <10% |
| At least 40% of 30-34–year-olds completing third level education | >40% |
| Fighting poverty and social exclusion | At least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion | 22,000 (persons living in households with low work intensity) |

Relevant disability targets from national strategies or sources:

The latest Disability Policy Action Plan is still the government’s Disability Policy Action Plan 2013 (Handicappolitisk handlingsplan 2013).[[2]](#footnote-2) So, the most recent disability targets from national strategies or sources still are the targets set up in this plan, which were also mentioned last year.

In the area of employment, the government’s Disability Policy Action Plan 2013 (Handicappolitisk handlingsplan 2013) mentions three initiatives which involve goals: The most concrete is a goal of establishing 13,500 new flexi jobs in the years to 2016. A number of these jobs shall be for people with much reduced work ability, and therefore experiments with flexi jobs bonus to companies that employ a person in flexi jobs in 10 hours or less per week have been launched. The other initiatives concern municipal rehabilitation teams to ensure better coordination of municipal efforts, and a pool to try methods that can help people with reading and writing difficulties in employment.

In the area of education, the government’s Disability Policy Action Plan 2013 (Handicappolitisk handlingsplan 2013) mentions a number of tests that will be developed, which in turn will make it possible to set targets. It is a screening tool for language understanding, a dyslexia test across educational programs, and a test of numeracy difficulties. Furthermore, the possibility of setting up special classes in high school for students with Asperger's syndrome is made permanent.

The National Reform Programme[[3]](#footnote-3) describes the implementation of EU’s growth strategy (Europe 2020). The goals that are set are goals of competitiveness, sound household finances, economic activity and employment. Some of the goals are, however, relevant also for disability policy.

The National Reform Programme states among other things the following goals: “The fundamental objective of the reform of the disability pension and flexi-jobs scheme is for as many people as possible to work and support themselves” (p. 17). And, “The objective of the cash benefit reform is that young persons under 30 years without any professional training or education, who receive public income support, should enter education as quickly as possible” (p. 19). And, “The main objective of the reform of the sickness benefit scheme is that persons who are on sick leave should return to the labour market quicker by means of an earlier, and more business-oriented, effort, and hereby avoiding prolonged absence and unemployment” (p. 22).

### A note on the use of EU data

Unless specified, the summary statistics presented in this report are drawn from 2013 EU-SILC micro data.[[4]](#footnote-4) The EU-SILC sample includes people living in private households and does not include people living in institutions. The proxy used to identify people with disabilities (impairments) is whether ‘for at least the past 6 months’ the respondent reports that they have been ‘limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do’.[[5]](#footnote-5) Responses to this question vary between countries and national data sources are added for comparison, where available.

Table 2 shows the Prevalence of self-reported 'activity limitation' in Denmark and EU. It is well known that studies in Scandinavia find more disabled people than in the rest of Europe. The number of limited is larger, but the number of strongly limited smaller. The number of limited age 16-64 is larger, but the number of limited 65+ is very much smaller. All of these differences may primarily have cultural background. In Denmark the concept of disability is used broadly, but elderly people are keen about stressing that their abilities are intact.

Table 2: Self-reported ‘activity limitations’ as a proxy for impairment/disability (EU-SILC 2013)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Note that Danish estimates of impairment prevalence are slightly above the EU average overall, but well below the average for older people, which may affect estimations of equality gaps and particularly for the age group 65+

In subsequent tables, these data are used as a proxy to estimate ‘disability’ equality in the main target areas for EU2020 – employment, education and poverty risk.[[6]](#footnote-6) The tables are presented by disaggregating the estimated proportion of people who report and do not report limitations for each indicator (e.g. among those who are employed, unemployed, at risk of poverty, etc.).

**Alternative data on self-reported disability:**

The survey SHILD[[7]](#footnote-7) conducted 2012-2013 contains self-reported disability for the age group 16-64 years. The questions in SHILD are: Do you suffer from a long-term physical health problem or disability? And: Do you suffer from one or more mental disorders? The survey approached people with intellectual disabilities and people in institutions in the same way as others. In reality, however, only few of the persons with intellectual disabilities are able to answer a lengthy questionnaire.

SHILD finds disability for the age group 16-64 years 26 per cent with a physical disability and 9 per cent with a mental health problem, in total 30 per cent with a disability. For women disability in the age group 16-64 years the numbers are 27 per cent with a physical disability, 11 per cent with a mental health problem, in total 33 per cent with a disability. For men in the age group 16-64 years the numbers are 24 per cent with a physical disability, 7 per cent with a mental health problem, in total 28 per cent with a disability. SHILD will be repeated in 2026-2017.

## Employment data

**Table 3: Most recent employment data, aged 20-64**

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 4: Employment rate data, by age group

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 5: Trends in employment by gender and disability (aged 20-64)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015 (and preceding UDBs)

The table above shows a comparison of national employment trends for disabled and non-disabled women and men, and compares this with the EU2020 headline indicator for the EU as a whole.

Alternative data on disability and employment provided by the national expert:

Some of the data in table 3 can be checked against the results from the Danish work force surveys.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Figure 4.1 from the mentioned report shows the employment rate for persons, who in the 2002 survey reported disability, according to the IDA registration system, and figure 4.2 shows it according to the DREAM registration system. These analyses build on a representative sample of 10,470 persons of 16-64 years, of whom 1994 reported a disability in 2002.



Percentage employed: green: persons with disability, grey: persons without disability, for respondents of 16-46 years in the 2002 survey. Assessed with IDA register



Percentage employed: green: persons with disability, grey: persons without disability, for respondents of 16-46 years in the 2002 survey. Assessed with DREAM register.

### Unemployment

National administrative rules and definitions of ‘unemployment’ vary, and these may affect the way in which disabled people are categorised in different countries. The following tables compare national data with the EU2020 headline indicator for the EU.

Table 6: Most recent unemployment data, aged 20-64

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 7: Unemployment rate data, by age group

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 8: Trends in unemployment by gender and disability (aged 20-64)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015 (and preceding UDBs)

*Fluctuations in the gendered trends of unemployment for people with impairments at national level should be treated with some caution.*

Alternative data on disability and unemployment from national sources:

The Danish work force surveys[[9]](#footnote-9) do not report data on unemployment. The analyses, which have been conducted since 2006, illustrate in detail the employment of people with disabilities. They measure how many people with minor and major disability would be interested in a job if there was one. So, they cover the supply of the labour force.

The reason why the concept of unemployment is not used, is probably that it is not considered to be an appropriate term to describe the employment situation of people with disabilities in Denmark, as a disability in most cases will entail that the person loses the right to unemployment benefit. To our knowledge, there are no other alternative data sources.

### Economic activity

Table 9: Most recent economic activty data, aged 20-64

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 10: Activity rate data, by age group

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 11: Trends in activity rates by gender and disability (aged 20-64)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015 (and preceding UDBs)

Alternative data on disability and economic activity provided by the national expert:

As already mentioned, the Danish work force surveys[[10]](#footnote-10) assess how many people with minor and major disability would be interested in a job if there was one. So, economic activity for persons with and without disabilities may be assessed by adding the information on employment to the information on persons who are interested in a job. This will represent an upper limit for the real number, as we do not know if persons who say they are interested in a job, in fact are actively searching for it.

The report states in table 5.21 that among persons with disability who do not have a job, 29.6 % want a job. The corresponding number for persons without disability is 49.3 %. The numbers include persons who have actively sought a job.

## Education data

EU statistical comparisons are more limited concerning the education of young disabled women and men in the EU2020 target age groups. Data is available from EU-SILC (annually) as well as the Eurostat Labour Force Survey ad-hoc disability module (for 2011), but with low reliability for several countries on the key measures.[[11]](#footnote-11) Using a wider age range can improve reliability but estimations by gender remain indicative. EU trends are evident but administrative data may offer more reliable alternatives to identify national trends, where available.

### Early school leavers

The EU-SILC sample for the target age group (aged 18-24) includes the following number of people reporting activity ‘limitation’ (as a proxy for impairment/disability).

Table 12: EU-SILC sample size in the target age group 18-24 versus 18-29

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Age 18-24 | Age 18-29 |
|  | No activity ‘limitation’ | Activity ‘limitation’ | No activity ‘limitation’ | Activity ‘limitation’ |
| EU sample | 34,413 | 2,728 | 56,461 | 4,916 |
| National sample | 341 | 65 | 476 | 91 |

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 13: Early school leavers aged 18-24 (indicative based on above sample size)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Alternative data on disability and early school leavers provided by the national expert:

The survey SHILD[[12]](#footnote-12) conducted in 2012-2013 contains self-reported disability for the age group 16-64 years. The questions in SHILD are: Do you suffer from a long-term physical health problem or disability? And: Do you suffer from one or more mental disorders?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Disabled young people (18-24) | Non-disabled (18-24) | Disabled young people (18-29) | Non-disabled (18-29) |
| SHILD | 12.10 % | 5.50 % | 11.80 % | 4.80 % |

*These data from SHILD are in process, and expected to be published 2015-2016.*

### Tertiary education

The EU-SILC sample for the target age group (aged 30-34) includes the following number of people reporting activity ‘limitation’ (a proxy for impairment/disability) although the number of missing observations is larger than the number of observations for activity limitation.

Table 14: EU-SILC sample size for the target age group 30-34 versus 30-39

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Age 30-34 | Age 30-39 |
|  | No activity ‘limitation’ | Activity ‘limitation’ | No activity ‘limitation’ | Activity ‘limitation’ |
| EU sample | 23,851 | 2,866 | 50,496 | 6,732 |
| National sample | 192 | 51 | 470 | 111 |

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 15: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (indicative based on above sample)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

The survey sample is not sufficient to provide robust trend data disaggregated by gender in the narrow EU2020 target age group. In only 11 out of 28 Member States are there more than 50 observations in the sample for both women and for men aged 30-34 who also declare impairment/limitation.

The following table is indicative at the EU level but gender trends at the national level should be treated with caution. In all Member States except Austria the achievement of tertiary education was higher for women than for men in both groups.

Table 16: Trends in tertiary education by disability (aged 30-34)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015 (and preceding UDBs)

*Fluctuations in the trend for people with impairments at national level should be treated with some caution.*

Alternative data on disability and tertiary education provided by the national expert:

From the survey SHILD[[13]](#footnote-13) conducted 2012-2013:

Completion of tertiary education:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Disabled young people (18-24) | Non-disabled (18-24) | Disabled young people (18-29) | Non-disabled (18-29) |
| SHILD | 46.10 % | 57.80 % | 46.90 % | 57.30 % |

*These data from SHILD are in process, and expected to be published 2015-2016.*

## Poverty and social exclusion data

EU SILC data provides indicators of the key risks for people with disabilities. In addition to household risks of low work intensity, there are risks of low income (after social transfers), and material deprivation. These three measures are combined in the overall estimate of risk. The risks for older people do not include work intensity (Eurostat refers to the age group 0-59 for this measure). The survey does not distinguish ‘activity limitation’ (the proxy for impairment/disability) for children under the age of 16. Relevant data provided by the national expert is added where available.

Table 17: People living in household poverty and exclusion by disability and risk (aged 16-59)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 18: People living in household poverty and exclusion by disability and gender (aged 16+)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 19: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 20: Trends in household risk of poverty and exclusion by disability and age (EU-SILC 2013)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015 (and previous UDB)

Note the observation on reported prevalence in the 65+ age group in Table 1

Alternative data on disability and risk of poverty or social exclusion provided by the national expert:

From the survey SHILD[[14]](#footnote-14) conducted 2012-2013. The figure shows personal income, not household income.

Mean personal monthly income (before all taxes) related to age for people with and without disability according to SHILD. Median monthly income is 25,000 DKK, and 60 % of median monthly income is 15,000 DKK. (The amount paid out to the citizen may be 50-60 % of the amount before taxes).

# Description of the situation and trends in relation to each target area

## Employment

Table 3 shows that non-disabled men have nearly the same employment rate in Denmark as in the EU, whereas non-disabled women have a higher employment rate in Denmark than in EU. A similar pattern is found for disabled men and women. In the group with severe disability, the employment rate is lower in Denmark than in the EU. In the groups with moderate or no disability, employment rates are slightly higher in Denmark.

The Danish variation with age in table 4 for persons with disability is nearly as in the EU, except that the Danish rate is slightly higher for the age group 35-44 and slightly lower for 45-54. For people without disabilities the Danish employment rates are higher for all groups over 35, and especially over 55.

Table 5 shows that the 5-year trend in employment rates for disabled men in Denmark is nearly parallel to the corresponding trend for non-disabled men, and that the 5-year trend in employment rates for disabled women in Denmark is nearly parallel to the corresponding trend for non-disabled women. This development pattern has been found in the workforce surveys since 2002.

The alternative data from figure 4.1 and 4.2 from the latest workforce survey[[15]](#footnote-15) show a slightly wider gap in employment between the groups after 2008. The differences look rather clear and have a good explanation. The report concludes however that they are not significant.

As table 6 shows, unemployment rates are smaller in Denmark compared to EU in all groups.

Table 7 shows unemployment rates by age groups. Both for EU and for Denmark, unemployment rates for disabled persons lie consistently over the unemployment rates for non-disabled persons in every age group. Non-disabled people have lower unemployment rates in Denmark for all age groups, although the difference for the 45-54 age groups is small. For disabled people of 25-44 years the unemployment rate is about the same in Denmark as in EU, whereas it is lower for the younger and especially for the older groups.

Table 8 shows national trends in unemployment rates. The rates for women and men in Denmark are fairly the same. They are greater for men and women with disability than for men and women without, and all of the Danish rates are increasing in the period with the same slope as the EU average for all.

Table 9 shows that economic activity rates for disabled women are slightly higher and that economic activity rates for disabled men are somewhat higher in Denmark compared to EU. For non-disabled, we see a similar picture.

Table 10, activity rates by age group, shows exactly the same pattern as the corresponding table in last year’s report. The activity rates for disabled people are nearly the same in Denmark and EU, the Danish are only a little lower for the 45-54 group. For non-disabled the activity rates are lower up to 34 years, and higher from 35 years, compared to EU.

Table 11 follows the national trends in economic activity rates. They are slightly growing in the period for EU average for all, but the Danish activity rates seem to be slightly decreasing for all four groups. Generally, they are higher for men than for women, and higher for non-disabled than for disabled. For 2013, however, disabled men and women have the same activity rate in Denmark.

The employment of people with disabilities in relation to the employment of people without disabilities has been studied systematically every few years in Denmark since 2002[[16]](#footnote-16). The studies have shown that the employment of people with disabilities is lower than the employment of people without disabilities. A development that is determined by economic conditions can be seen in both employment rates, but they go together, and the relationship between them remains constant. There is a little more variation in the numbers of people with disabilities because they are smaller, but no systematic trend in the relationship between the two rates.

## Education

Table 13 shows that Denmark has fewer early school leavers with disabilities compared to the EU, if we consider the group of 18-29 year olds. If we take the smaller group 18-24, the picture for non-disabled people is the same, but there is a considerably higher number of early school leavers among the disabled, compared to the EU.

The alternative SHILD data do not show the same pattern. The percentage differences for disabled – non-disabled are 18.4 and 11.5 for the EU-SILK data (computed as 24.6-6.2 respectively 19.1-7.6), whereas the corresponding percentage differences for the SHILD data are 6.6 and 7.0, that is, much more similar. So it is probable that the unusual pattern for disabled young people 18-24 has its explanation in the small number of Danish respondents in EU-SILK. Table 12 shows 65 as the number of national respondents 18-24 years old with an activity limitation. In comparison SHILD has 405 persons in this group.

Table 15 shows that Denmark has more people with tertiary education than for the EU, both among people with disabilities and among people without. The corresponding SHILD data show a larger number of persons with tertiary education, which may be due to the larger group of persons with disabilities in SHILD (30 %).

The EU-SILK surveys as well as the SHILD data suggest that people with disabilities in Denmark are relatively well educated compared to the situation in the EU. There are fewer early school leavers among people with disabilities in Denmark, while the share of early school leavers among non-disabled people is roughly the same as in the EU in general. There are more people with tertiary education in Denmark than in the rest of the EU, both among people with disabilities and among people without disabilities.

Table 16 shows that there has been the same upwards trends in tertiary education rates for disabled and non-disabled, and for Denmark and EU, except for the group of disabled in Denmark, where the situation has been more constant. There is however still a larger number of disabled people with tertiary education in Denmark than in the EU.

## Poverty and social inclusion

Table 17 shows that in Denmark poverty risk is less for disabled people, but is larger in households with low work intensity, especially when also disabled, compared to the EU. For the groups that are materially deprived, the poverty risk is considerably lower in Denmark compared to the EU. Table 18 shows that the poverty risk is larger for people with severe disability in Denmark compared to EU, but that it is smaller for people with moderate or no disability in Denmark compared to the EU. In addition table 18 shows that poverty risk is smaller in Denmark compared to the EU for men as well as for women.

Table 19 shows that the poverty risk is lower in Denmark, both for persons of 16-64 years, for persons 65+, and for both for disabled and non-disabled. The difference is largest for disabled persons 65+. Table 20 shows that the trend in poverty risk has been increasing in the EU. The corresponding trend for people without disabilities has been increasing in Denmark as well for persons 16-64 years old, where it is considerably larger for disabled than for non-disabled people. For persons 65+, the trend in Denmark has been slightly decreasing without much difference between the levels for people with and without disabilities.

The EU-SILK figures on poverty show that the number of poor people in general is lower in Denmark than it is in the EU as a whole. This pattern is also found for most subgroups the population can be divided into. However, there is very little difference in the poverty risk between Denmark and the EU for non-disabled people with low work intensity, and poverty risk is more common for disabled people with low work intensity (table 17). This pattern was also found in last year’s report. The risk of poverty is considerably higher for people with severe disability in Denmark compared to the EU in general (table 18).

The number of poor is growing in the EU in recent years (table 20), and it has also been so in Denmark, but for the elderly 65+ the development goes in the opposite direction, with fewer in risk of poverty, both among elderly with and without disabilities.

# Assessment of policies in place to meet the relevant headline targets

## National Reform Programme Denmark

The National Reform Programme Denmark 2015 (NRPD15) mentions in its chapter 3 p. 16 the reform of the Disability Pension and Flexi-job scheme, p. 19 the reform of the Cash Benefit system, p. 21 the reform of the Sickness Benefit scheme, p. 22 the employment reform, p. 24 the report of the second Carsten Koch Expert Group, p. 25 a reform of public primary and lower secondary education, and p. 27 agreement on better vocational education and training (VET) programmes and a strengthened education guarantee

The objective of the reform of the disability pension (“førtidspension”, sometimes literally translated into anticipatory pension) and Flexi-job (“fleksjob”) scheme has been to strengthen self-support.[[17]](#footnote-17) Entry into the disability pension scheme has declined to half the earlier level, whereas a larger number of persons enter the new interdisciplinary rehabilitation programme (“ressourceforløb”).[[18]](#footnote-18) It is the hope that these persons in the longer run will come into employment. The new mini flexi-jobs offer possibilities for participation in work life for persons who can only work a few hours a week. Around 10,000 such mini flexi-jobs have been created.

The objective of the reform of the Cash Benefit system was to encourage young people to enter education or jobs instead of remaining in the Cash Benefit scheme. The more vulnerable youths and adults should receive a holistic service including job training and mentoring. Figure 3.5 in the NRPD15 shows an effect of this reform as a larger part of the young cash benefit recipients are continuing in employment or education.

The Sickness Benefit scheme’s second phase includes a new model for visitating and monitoring persons with sickness benefit, including the sick person’s own doctor early in the process.

The second Carsten Koch Expert Group[[19]](#footnote-19) makes recommendations about the effort for persons receiving cash benefits, who often have other problems in addition to unemployment, often disability or mental health problems. The work of the expert group is a direct extension of the three above mentioned reforms. The report recommends a more business oriented focus in rehabilitation of these groups, where vulnerable citizens are helped into training in the work place (often called supported employment).

The former government had announced an evaluation of the Cash Benefit Reform, but this evaluation was not ready before the election this summer. So we do not have much by way of evaluation of these reforms, and it is too early to say anything about their effects. There are obvious negative consequences for people with disabilities, such as much higher demands for obtaining a disability pension, but there may also be positive consequences such as more possibilities for employment.

## Employment

For some decades, the government has been pursuing a policy aiming to employ more people with disabilities. Thus, the number of flexi jobs has been augmented significantly since 2000. The policy has also aimed to inform enterprises about the support schemes available, and to get them to function more smoothly.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The impact of these efforts has been that more companies and employees are aware of the schemes, and the attitude to hiring people with disabilities has become more open both for companies and for employees[[21]](#footnote-21). But we have no corresponding development in the employment rate. If has anything, developments have been in the opposite direction: a widening of the employment gap for disabled people.

Thus the effect has been greater discussion about the employment of disabled people, a change of attitudes in the direction of becoming more accepting, and a tendency for people with disabilities to enter into special schemes of employment such as flexi jobs, but not that a larger number of disabled people have come into employment.

## Education

The situation with regard to education for the disabled may change in the coming years as a result of reforms in the primary educational field. One of these reforms, “helhedsskolen” or “Den nye folkeskole”[[22]](#footnote-22) from 2014, covers inter alia the introduction of all-day schools and improvement in the teaching of mathematics, English and Danish. The establishment of study cafes in schools so that the children of non- academic parents get more chances to keep up with school subjects is also part of the reform. This reform is likely to affect the level of education as a whole.

The reform in the primary schools from 2012 deals with the increasing inclusion of pupils with special needs in mainstream classes[[23]](#footnote-23). Over the past decade there has been a steady increase in the number of children who are referred into special need classes in Denmark, and a large proportion of the education budget has been spent on special needs education. The reform try to turn around this development. From the school year 2014, a large number of school children who previously attended special needs classes have been integrated into regular classes. The press, among other things the teacher association's magazine, has discussed both positive and negative experiences with the process.[[24]](#footnote-24) A quite new evaluation from November 2015 concludes however that the vast majority of students are happy with the teaching and doing well with their peers. They find themselves taking an active part in the school community, both academically and socially, and most also experience that both they and their class thrives.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Finally, the reform of study grants (SU)[[26]](#footnote-26) aims to make study time more effective and to shorter. It does not directly address people with disabilities and the existing scheme of disability-SU. But it is possible that a general abbreviation of education time for the majority will mean that more students with minor disabilities will apply for disability-SU for the purpose of getting an extended study time.

## Poverty and social inclusion

The number of poor people in Denmark has doubled from 2002 to 2012.[[27]](#footnote-27) The growth has however been slow from 2011 to 2012. Half of the poor are single persons, primarily men. One fourth is children. The number of poor children has nearly doubled too, but decreased a little 2011-2012. Immigrants from non-western countries account for a third of the poor, but only 6.5 per cent of the population in 2012. The analyses use a relative poverty concept like the EU.[[28]](#footnote-28) With an absolute poverty limit the number of poor people would remain constant for the period.

The main reasons for the growth in poverty for the period 2002-2011 has been the ceiling of social assistance (kontanthjælpsloft), the requirement of work for both partners in a couple to get social assistance (300 (450)-timers reglen) and reduced social assistance for immigrants (starthjælp) which was in force until 2011. These laws all reduced social assistance (kontanthjælp) for large groups of people, many of whom were immigrants.

The new government has an intention of reintroducing most of these features of social policy, although they say it will be in a “modernised” form.

Despite these legislative changes in 2011, the number of poor people has probably not gone down. In 2011 unemployment benefit was shortened from 4 to 2 years, which had effect from 2012 but the unemployment rate did not fall as expected. Therefore, many people lost protection. The government has patched this through a number of individual measures, so that most of the group have received some benefit, albeit less than before.

Because of these problems, an Unemployment Benefit Commission has been established. It has just completed its work, and negotiations of a new structure for unemployment benefit are expected to start soon.

A reform of social assistance (kontanthjælpsreform)[[29]](#footnote-29) in force 1.1 2014 has replaced social assistance for persons under 30 who do not have a vocational education with an education benefit (uddannelsesydelse), which is at the level of study support (SU) and considerably lower than social assistance. The aim is to get more young people educated and in jobs, but it will no doubt also create more poor.

The reform of disability pension from 2013 had the same aim. The disability pension reform made it almost impossible for persons under 40 years to get a disability pension. Instead there is now a more intensive effort on education and rehabilitation where the benefit paid is lower.

It is not clear what the two reforms will mean for people with disabilities. Both reforms have aimed that fewer people should be recipients of aid and more should go into jobs. If successful, this will be fine. If it fails, the reforms will lead to a greater number of people with disabilities living with a very low level of benefit. It will mean relatively more people with disabilities among the poor. An analysis by SFI (Danish National Centre for Social Research) indicates that a disability pension benefits the health and quality of life of the recipient,[[30]](#footnote-30) and a survey of disability pensioners shows that they have a high degree of satisfaction.[[31]](#footnote-31) In the last issue of the Danish Medical Doctors Journal (Ugeskrift for Læger) two occupational health physicians characterized the reform as detrimental for health.[[32]](#footnote-32)

## Synergies between developments in the different areas

The overall line in Danish policy under the former government has been to increase the work force in the hope of a coming economic recovery. Since this recovery has been slow to come, the policy has not yet had the desired effects. The new government has announced that reforms to increase the labour supply are not enough; they want to stress increasing competitive strength instead.

The Danish reforms currently are all linked to the concept of the competition state. The purpose is to make the Danish economy more competitive and thus produce greater value so that there are more funds for social purposes. However, it is not certain that this policy can be implemented without leading to greater inequality. It has been the trend in recent years. There is a risk that greater inequality will hit people with disabilities disproportionately.

Very little is known of the policies’ combined effect for people with disabilities and analyses of the development are really needed.

# Review of the European Semester from a disability perspective

## Progress on disability-specific Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs)

There are no disability-specific CSRs for Denmark and disability is not mentioned in the 2015 Council Recommendation.

## Progress on other CSRs from a disability perspective

The country-specific recommendations this year are:

1. Avoid deviating from the medium-term budgetary objective in 2016.

2. Enhance productivity, in particular in the services sectors oriented towards the domestic market, including retail and construction. Ease the restrictions on retail establishments and take further measures to remove remaining barriers posed by authorisation and certification schemes in the construction sector.

These recommendations have no immediate implications for disability policies.

## Assessment of disability issues in the Country Report (CR)

The country report mentions (p.14) that the reform of the Disability Pension and Flexi-job scheme has created 5000 new flexi-jobs and 8000 mini flexi-jobs, and notes that the positive impact of the new rehabilitation teams is now being reported, without however concretising this impact.

The reform, however, has been criticized. For example, two medical doctors from occupational medicine clinics have described the reform as harmful to health in an article in the Journal of Doctors. They write, among other things, that they see persons with severe disease that the municipality place in a rehabilitation process where they estimate the pressure on the individual to cope with the demands to damage the person's life and health.[[33]](#footnote-33)

On the other hand, a new evaluation of the reform of the disability pension claims that it is a success. Interviews with citizens show predominantly satisfaction with the new form of rehabilitation. They see it as something other than the traditional employment-oriented efforts. It should be mentioned, however, that the case workers have found the citizens who have been interviewed.[[34]](#footnote-34)

The country report also mentions the reform of the Cash Benefit system and gives some numbers from 2014, stating that it remains to be seen if the expectations are met, and to what extent the people are able to find stable and sustainable employment rather than repeatedly falling back on the social assistance system.

# Assessment of the structural funds ESF 2014-2020 in relation to disability challenges

The projects funded by ESF are seen from the website[[35]](#footnote-35). Of the ten projects that are mentioned, one was concerned with people with ADHD and four with young people with difficulties of education or employment. None of these projects are running any more.

A project with promotion of employment for people with ADHD in the Randers area is working to ensure that persons with ADHD can be retained on the labour market or undergo training with an approach customised to each individual’s situation. The project run 2008-2014 and was implemented by the Social and Workforce Administration in the municipality of Randers with support from the National Labour Market Board and the European Social Fund.

New skills, new perspectives in Zealand in 2011-2014 aimed to develop new forms of partnership between educational institutions and employment agencies to improve the job prospects of unskilled job seekers over 30.

Finding a sense of purpose…and belonging (2010-2014) aimed to improve the educational attainment of young people who are struggling to find work.

The Hold Fast project (2009-2013) played a role in encouraging young Danes to stay on at school and get the qualifications they need for a good job.

The "Hold On Tight Caravan" project (2009-2013) supported all elements of the education and training process to increase the number of young people from minorities with qualifications in response to the high school and vocational education drop-out rates of young people from ethnic minority background.

The ESIF Partnership agreement for Denmark[[36]](#footnote-36) mentions (p. 9) that people with disabilities have a significantly lower employment rate than people without disabilities.

The ESIF Partnership agreement estimates overall (p. 77 and p. 82) that the formal requirements for the cross-cutting principles: equality between men and women, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and sustainable development are met. As a result of the public consultation, the Danish Business Authority under the gender and disability focus particularly on projects targeting non-discrimination and equal opportunities, including accessibility.

It is emphasized on p. 115 that those concerns are ensured by the Council for Socially Disadvantaged and Danish disability organizations have been consulted.

On p.116 reads that if it should prove particularly relevant, the regional growth forums may initiate projects for specific target groups, including, for example, women, youth, the disabled, people with other ethnic background than Danish, etc.

It is stated on p. 117 that no candidate will based on sex, race or ethnic origin, religion, belief, disability, age or sexual orientation be prevented from applying for and receiving support under ESI Funds. And that the Business Authority’s website comply with the applicable Danish rules on accessibility for disabled.

And finally, the pages 130-174 show in tabular form how Danish law lives up to the thematic objectives and general conditions, such as non-discrimination by sex, disability etc.

# Recommendations

We still very much need to get a clearer picture of the development of poverty in Denmark, as well as of the consequences of poverty for people with disabilities.

These years a number of reforms are made with a double aim: at the one hand inclusion, integration, on the other hand reducing costs. In this regard it is important for politicians and authorities to give the impression that these reforms do not lead to worse conditions for people with disabilities.

In that context, evaluations often are made by institutions that are close to or dependent on the authorities or political forces that are responsible for the reforms.

Against this background it is recommended that support be given to research and evaluation which is completely independent of the authorities and political forces.

1. <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets_en.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Handicappolitisk handlingsplan kort fortalt, p 11, p 8. Visited 17.10.2014 on: <http://sm.dk/filer/arbejdsomrader/handicap/handicappolitisk-handlingsplan-2013-kortfortalt.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/nrp2015_denmark_en.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The SILC survey questions are contained in the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM) [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\_explained/index.php/Glossary:Minimum\_European\_Health\_Module\_(MEHM)](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary%3AMinimum_European_Health_Module_%28MEHM%29). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The methodology is further explained in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Damgaard, M, T Steffensen & S. Bengtsson: Hverdagsliv og levevilkår for mennesker med funktionsnedsættelser. (Living conditons for people with disabilities). København: SFI report 13:26. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Høgelund, J. & Larsen, M.R.: Handicap og beskæftigelse. Udviklingen mellem 2002-2014. (Disability and employment. The development 2002-2014). Copenhagen: SFI report 15:06. <http://www.sfi.dk/rapportoplysninger-4681.aspx?Action=1&NewsId=4598&PID=9267>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Høgelund, J. & Larsen, M.R.: Handicap og beskæftigelse. Udviklingen mellem 2002-2014. (Disability and employment. The development 2002-2014). Copenhagen: SFI report 15:06. <http://www.sfi.dk/rapportoplysninger-4681.aspx?Action=1&NewsId=4598&PID=9267>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Høgelund, J. & Larsen, M.R.: Handicap og beskæftigelse. Udviklingen mellem 2002-2014. (Disability and employment. The development 2002-2014). Copenhagen: SFI report 15:06. <http://www.sfi.dk/rapportoplysninger-4681.aspx?Action=1&NewsId=4598&PID=9267>. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For the LFS AHM data see, Early school leavers <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_de010&lang=en> and tertiary educational attainment <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_de020&lang=en>. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Damgaard, M, T Steffensen & S. Bengtsson: Hverdagsliv og levevilkår for mennesker med funktionsnedsættelser. (Living conditons for people with disabilities). København: SFI report 13:26. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Damgaard, M, T Steffensen & S. Bengtsson: Hverdagsliv og levevilkår for mennesker med funktionsnedsættelser. (Living conditons for people with disabilities). København: SFI report 13:26. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Damgaard, M, T Steffensen & S. Bengtsson: Hverdagsliv og levevilkår for mennesker med funktionsnedsættelser. (Living conditons for people with disabilities). København: SFI report 13:26. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Høgelund, J. & Larsen, M.R.: Handicap og beskæftigelse. Udviklingen mellem 2002-2014. (Disability and employment. The development 2002-2014). Copenhagen: SFI report 15:06. <http://www.sfi.dk/rapportoplysninger-4681.aspx?Action=1&NewsId=4598&PID=9267>. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Many of the results are summarized in the last survey in the series, Høgelund, J. & Larsen, M.R.: Handicap og beskæftigelse. Udviklingen mellem 2002-2014. (Disability and employment. The development 2002-2014). Copenhagen: SFI report 15:06. <http://www.sfi.dk/rapportoplysninger-4681.aspx?Action=1&NewsId=4598&PID=9267>. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. <http://bm.dk/da/Beskaeftigelsesomraadet/Flere%20i%20arbejde/Ressourceforloeb/Hvad%20er%20ressourceforloeb.aspx>. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. <https://ast.dk/publikationer/tendenser-for-fortidspensioner-2015-1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. <http://bm.dk/da/Aktuelt/Pressemeddelelser/Arkiv/2015/03/Regeringen%20har%20modtaget%20Kochudvalgets%20anbefalinger.aspx>. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. <http://www.cabiweb.dk/lovstof/fleksjob-fra-2013/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Kilde: Thomsen, Holt, Jensen, Thuesen (2011): Virksomhedens sociale engagement. Årbog 2011. SFI rapport 11:43. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. <https://www.uvm.dk/~/media/UVM/Filer/Folkeskolereformhjemmeside/2014/Juni/140611%20miniguide%20reform.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. <http://www.dch.dk/content/inklusion-i-folkeskolen-0>. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. <https://www.folkeskolen.dk/emneord/undervisning/inklusion/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. <http://www.sfi.dk/resultater-4726.aspx?Action=1&NewsId=4432&PID=9422> and <http://www.sfi.dk/s%C3%B8geresultat-4067.aspx?Action=1&NewsId=5857&PID=9285>. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. <http://nyheder.ku.dk/fremdriftsreform/fakta/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. According to an analysis from the think-tank Kraka: Analyse Kraka 27. Marts 2014. <http://www.kraka.org/sites/default/files/public/antallet_af_fattige_i_danmark_steg_svagt_i_2012.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. There was used a concept of poverty established by the former left government, where a person counted as poor if the household income was less than 50 % of the median for the last three years. This concept gives a considerably lower number of poor people than the EU concept. The new right government has however abolished this concept, arguing that poverty is not a question of income. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. <http://bm.dk/da/Beskaeftigelsesomraadet/Flere%20i%20arbejde/Kontanthjaelpsreform.aspx>. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Bengtsson, S. et al. (2014): Hvilken forskel gør en tildeling af førtidspension? (What difference does an award of disability pension make?) København: SFI report 14:14, [www.sfi.dk/resum%C3%A9\_hvilken\_forskel\_g%C3%B8r\_en\_tilkendelse\_af\_f%C3%B8rtidspension-12917.aspx](http://www.sfi.dk/resum%C3%A9_hvilken_forskel_g%C3%B8r_en_tilkendelse_af_f%C3%B8rtidspension-12917.aspx). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Nørup I (2014): Arbejde og sygdom – og om at være en del af fællesskabet (Work and illness - and to be part of the community). Aalborg. <http://vbn.aau.dk/files/207555674/Iben_N_rup_EPUB.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Petersen, R & Andersen, J.H. (2015): Helbredsskadelig fleksjob- og førtidspensionsreform (Health detrimental reform of flexijobs and disability pension. Ugeskrift for Læger 177/22, p. 2146-2147. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. <http://ugeskriftet.dk/debat/helbredsskadelig-fleksjob-og-foertidspensionsreform>. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. <http://www.sfi.dk/resultater-4726.aspx?Action=1&NewsId=5870&PID=9422>. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&keywords=&theme=0&country=376&list=1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. <http://ec.europa.eu/contracts_grants/pa/partnership-agreement-denmark_da.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)