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# European Semester 2021-2022 country fiche on disability equality

With comparative data Annex provided by EDE

## Greece

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European Disability Expertise (EDE) provides independent scientific support to the Commission's policy Unit responsible for disability issues. It aims to mainstream disability equality in EU policy processes, including implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This country report has been prepared as input for the European Semester in 2022.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to the Semester process, see <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/how-european-semester-works/>.



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## **1 Executive summary and recommendations**

### **1.1 Key points and main challenges for Greece in 2022**

#### **Disability and the labour market**

The employment rate of persons with disabilities has tended to decrease, despite gradual increase in the overall employment rate in recent years, which seems to be linked with persisting high levels of long-term unemployment. Persons with disabilities do not benefit equally from Active Labour Market Policies, including vocational training. Job seeking support is limited in capacity and effectiveness. The Resilience and Recovery Plan foresees disability reforms however links with ALMPs are not clear at this stage. Investment in new work placements does not focus on disability related challenges, although there are opportunities for disability inclusion, for instance in making workplaces accessible, strengthening job seeking support, and promoting female participation in the labour market. Investment in more innovative approaches for addressing equality gaps in employment, such as strengthening social enterprises/economy, is missing.

#### **Disability, social policies and healthcare**

The disability poverty gap is greater for persons with disabilities of working age, while the in-work poverty rate is also considerable (13 %). The situation is compounded by additional living costs due to disability, which may constitute 20 % up to 44 % of disposable income. The cost of health and long-term care services is significant regardless of type of impairment, while a limited number of households use state service provision to meet support needs. The disproportionate effect is also evidenced by a considerable disability equality gap in self-reported unmet needs for medical examination. Investment plans focus on ensuring coverage of social protection provisions and access to a range of community-based health and social support, which is promising, understanding those are still at an early stage of development.

#### **Disability, education and skills**

The majority of pupils with disabilities (88 %) attend mainstream education, supported mainly in inclusion classes by specialised staff, or solely by mainstream class teachers. There is a growing trend for provision of parallel support, although this remains limited in terms of coverage. The number of pupils in special education, mainly children with intellectual disability, autism and multiple impairments, has increased in the recent years. Main challenges to inclusive education relate to accessibility, use of assistive technology and digital tools, staff competences as well as capacity of staff and support services, which is affected by limited state investment. Disability is solely addressed in investments for digital transformation of education.

#### **Investment priorities for inclusion and accessibility**

Interventions such as digital skills training, funding for accessibility, and personal assistance are aimed to enhance social inclusion horizontally. Deinstitutionalisation forms a key reform in child protection, while health service provision at home is also envisaged. Investment in digital educational tools is anticipated to contribute to progress towards inclusive education. Mechanisms such as the Disability Action Plan, the ex-ante conditionality in ESIF actions, and the establishment of the National Accessibility Authority, are expected to promote disability inclusion and compliance with accessibility requirements across interventions.

## 1.2 Recommendations for Greece

These recommendations are based on the evidence and analysis presented in the following chapters of our report.

**Recommendation:** Ensure disability inclusion in ALMPs: link with investment for accessibility, ensure appropriate job seeking support on local level, invest in social enterprises. The relevance of measures for increasing female labour participation for women with disabilities must also be assessed.

**Rationale:** Persons with disabilities are more likely to be excluded from employment long-term, but also from vocational training programmes. Job seeking support is limited in capacity and effectiveness. The situation of women with disabilities, in the context of persisting low female employment, is not considered in investment and reform plans.

**Recommendation:** Review of disincentives to employment (passive labour policies) must consider the possibility of retaining disability benefits as key means to cover additional living costs due to disability.

**Rationale:** Additional living costs due to disability may comprise 20 % up to 44 % of disposable income. Disability benefits provision must be reframed under the principle of Equality and Non-Discrimination (CRPD), especially in the cases of loss when entering employment.

**Recommendation:** Enact foster care legislation (Law 4538/2018) putting in place a range of support programmes and alternative care structures to enable transition from institutions to living and being included in the community.

**Rationale:** Deinstitutionalisation of children with disabilities, including closure of institutional settings, requires building first a strong child protection framework as well as a sustainable network of community-based support services.

**Recommendation:** Issue detailed guidance regarding the implementation of personal assistance, defining eligibility and assessment procedures, safeguards for transparency, and ensuring support is available to users. The sustainability of this programme must also be considered at this stage.

**Rationale:** Personal assistance is a key driver for independent living and needs to be carefully integrated in the existing social protection system in order to serve the principles of dignity, choice and control for users.

**Recommendation:** Invest in continuous professional development of educational staff in inclusive education. Digital skills training of teachers must include thematic areas linked with the use of accessible digital content and tools, as well as assistive technologies.

**Rationale:** Around 40 % of pupils with disabilities are solely supported by mainstream class teachers. Use of ICT in education is very low despite increasing availability of accessible content and tools, suggesting limited awareness and knowledge by staff.



## 2 Mainstreaming disability equality in the Semester documents

Country Reports and Country Specific Recommendation of direct relevance to disability policy were not published in this exceptional policy cycle. For a commentary on the last published documents please see our country fiche for the previous Semester 2020-21.

### 2.1 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Greece (RRP)

The following key points highlight where the situation of disabled people or disability policies was considered in these plans. We address the most relevant of these and other issues arising from the RRP/NRP in the next chapters.

- Investment in new work placements and improved job seeking support (Active Labour Market Policies) do not directly address disability related obstacles to employment.<sup>2</sup>
- Programmes targeting the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labour market, including vocational training, do not explicitly include persons with disabilities.<sup>3</sup>
- Opportunity to address disincentives to employment<sup>4</sup> from a disability perspective, i.e. retaining benefits that support households with additional living costs due to disability.
- Digital skills training for persons with disabilities.<sup>5</sup>
- Enhanced accessibility of the built environment for physical and sensory disabilities, and piloting of personal assistance for adults with disabilities, intended to support social inclusion horizontally.<sup>6</sup>
- Enhanced access to social protection provisions, through streamlined digital information systems.<sup>7</sup>
- De-institutionalisation of children and youth with disabilities, forms a key action in child protection reforms.<sup>8</sup>
- Increased coverage with quality mental health support services for patients with dementia and Alzheimer, autism as well as children and youth with mental health issues. Creation of a system of health services provision at home for children, youth and adults with chronic illness/disabilities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) *Recovery and Resilience Plan* pp. 94-96: Description of reforms and investment under Component 3.1 Increase in workplaces and promoting participation in the labour market.

<sup>3</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) pp.106-108: Description of reforms and investment under Component 3.4 Increased access to effective social policies without social exclusions.

<sup>4</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) p. 95 Reform of passive labour policies and transition from unemployment to employment.

<sup>5</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) p. 106 Investment for social inclusion.

<sup>6</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) p. 107 Included under Reform: Support for persons with disabilities.

<sup>7</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) p. 107 Investment: Digital transformation of Social Support system.

<sup>8</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) p. 106. Total budget allocated for reforms in child protection: EUR 184 million.

<sup>9</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) pp. 103-104 allocated budget for mental health reform: EUR 55 million; health services at home: EUR 12 million.

- Disability inclusion in primary and secondary education is considered in investments for digital transformation of education.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2 Semester links to CRPD and national disability action plans

Relevant recommendations and issues arising from participation in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are highlighted in each chapter.

It is also important that Semester plans align with national disability strategy too. In Greece, this refers to the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.<sup>11</sup> In 2019, the UN Committee recommended that Greece 'Develop a comprehensive, coherent and long-term national strategy and action plan for the implementation of the Convention, with clear timelines, benchmarks and budget allocations'. The government launched its Action Plan this at the end of 2020, following public consultation.

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<sup>10</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) pp. 97-100: Description of reforms and investment under Component 3.2 Strengthening education and lifelong learning and modernization of vocational education and training.

<sup>11</sup> The [National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) provides a framework for action for the period 2020-2023, but also provides the basis for longer-term planning. The Action Plan outlines specific objectives, responsible authorities and timeline for implementation, however there is no mention of specific funding streams/information about allocated budget across thematic targets.

### 3 Disability and the labour market - analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies

In 2019, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Greece:

[Article 27 UN CRPD](#) addresses Work and Employment.

'39. The Committee recommends that the State party take effective measures to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities, particularly women with disabilities, in the open labour market, with a view to achieving target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals. It also recommends that the State party ensure the provision of specific measures and individualized support in the workplace; promote among employers the right of persons with disabilities to employment on an equal basis with others; and mainstream the disability dimension in all employment policies, measures and programmes, including in the policy design of the Greek Manpower Employment Organization.'

The next State Party report is due in 2026.

#### 3.1 Summary of the labour market situation of persons with disabilities

Data from EU-SILC indicate an employment rate for persons with disabilities in Greece of 32.6 % in 2019, compared to 62.8 % for other persons against a national employment target of 70 % and approximately -18.7 points below the EU27 average. This results in an estimated disability employment gap of approximately 30 percentage points (EU27 average gap 24.2, see Tables 2-4) or an employment chances ratio of 0.5.

The same data indicate unemployment rates of 31.1 % and 19.5 %, respectively in 2019 (see Tables 5-7) and the economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Greece was 47.4 %, compared to 78.0 % for other persons (see Tables 8-10). These indications are broken down by gender and age in the respective tables in annex.

Analysis of EU-SILC data from 2016 to 2019 for Greece shows a trend for the employment rate of disabled people to decrease (overall by -2.1 % for moderate disability, and -2.9 % for severe disability), even as the labour market situation is improving, albeit slowly (5.2 % increase), for the non-disabled population.<sup>12</sup>

Due to the impact of COVID-19, the situation in employment is not expected to change.<sup>13</sup> OECD (2020) had further noted that 'while unemployment is decreasing, the share of the long-term unemployed has increased, especially among those with less education and skills' and this is particularly relevant from a disability perspective.<sup>14</sup> According to national administrative data, there were 26 884 individuals with disabilities registered as unemployed in May 2020, 84 % of whom are long-term

<sup>12</sup> Disability Observatory of the National Co-federation of Disabled Persons (NCDP) (2020) *Annual Disability Report 2020* p. 92.

<sup>13</sup> European Commission (2021) Staff Working Document Analysis of the recovery and resilience plan of Greece Brussels, 17.6.2021 SWD (2021) 155 final p. 9 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0155&rid=5>.

<sup>14</sup> OECD (2020) *Regional Policy for Greece Post-2020*, OECD Territorial Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 192 <https://doi.org/10.1787/cedf09a5-en>.

unemployed, with an average of 5.5 years in unemployment.<sup>15</sup> In addition, only 2.3 % of this group had participated in vocational training programmes, typically designed and implemented as part of active labour market policies (ALMPs).<sup>16</sup> These registered persons represent a smaller group than the proportion of persons who report unemployment and disability in the EU-SILC data.

Furthermore, job seeking support is not reaching everyone and is not particularly effective in matching job seekers to vacancies: ‘The Greek public employment service (OAED) engaged with about one-quarter of unemployed and 4 % of newly employed found a job via the employment service’ (Bulman and Pisu, 2018).<sup>17</sup> From a disability perspective, finding employment additionally requires accessible working environments, however evidence suggests that only a minority of employers comply with obligations related to reasonable accommodation, as 85 % of persons with disabilities in employment (National Statistical Service 2018) responded that their workplace had not provided or funded reasonable adjustments.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.2 Analysis of labour market policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Greece and the Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (no National Reform Programme was published in 2021).

Last available data confirms the continued relevance of key challenges reported before<sup>19</sup>, that is low investment in and limited coverage and/or effectiveness of ALMPs, as well as limited individualised job seeking support, for persons with disabilities. These issues are also discussed in the Commission Staff Working Document (2021) analysing the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Greece, emphasising further ‘the lack of monitoring and evaluation and quality assurance in upskilling programmes’.<sup>20</sup> The section assesses employment related investment and reform plans, firstly those explicitly related to disability and then mainstream ALMPs, against those challenges.

#### *Disability related reforms promoting employment*

OECD (2020) suggests that ‘retraining and skill improvement’ are necessary to address the ‘mismatch of the supply and demand of skills on the labour market’, which is prominent currently, as well as to enhance the ‘re-employment probabilities of the long-term unemployed’.<sup>21</sup> In that respect, access to digital skills training for persons with disabilities foreseen in the Recovery and Resilience plan, in line with the Strategy

<sup>15</sup> Disability Observatory NCDP (2020) p. 94.

<sup>16</sup> Disability Observatory NCDP (2020) p. 94.

<sup>17</sup> OECD (2020) *Regional Policy for Greece Post-2020*, OECD Territorial Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/cedf09a5-en> p. 197 reference Bulman, T. and M. Pisu (2018), “Generating employment, raising incomes and addressing poverty in Greece”, *OECD Economics Department Working Papers*, No. 1505, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8eec4ced-en>.

<sup>18</sup> Disability Observatory NCDP (2020) p. 100 based on National Statistical Data (EU SILC additional disability module 2019).

<sup>19</sup> European Disability Expertise (2021) European Semester 2020-2021 country fiche on disability- Greece <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23931&langId=en>.

<sup>20</sup> European Commission (2021) p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> OECD (2020) p. 197.

for Digital Transformation<sup>22</sup> and the Action Plan for persons with disabilities, is important for enhancing access to employment ‘when 90 % of jobs require at least basic digital skills’<sup>23</sup> and considering evidence of low use of the internet by persons with disabilities in the country:

‘Just over half of people with moderate or severe disabilities in Greece have access to the internet, in contrast with the large majority of non-disabled population (88.1 %), with affordability mentioned as a main reason in a minority of cases only, indicating that lack of skills and/or accessible solutions may be more important factors shaping access to the internet for persons with disabilities [51].’<sup>24</sup>

In addition, the RRP allocates EUR 104 million to promote social inclusion, independent living and employment of persons with disabilities, by legislating and funding personal assistance for the first time (please see Chapter 4) as well as making funding available for adaptation of both private houses and workplaces.<sup>25</sup> These schemes are argued to implicitly lead to better employment outcomes for persons with disabilities.<sup>26</sup> However, it is not clear how these measures will be linked in practice to ALMPs i.e. they lack a common framework for implementation and monitoring, while it is not clear why focus on accessibility is exclusively on physical and sensory impairments at this stage.

#### *Active Labour Market Policies*

There is still need for monitoring disability inclusion in lifelong vocational training programmes across occupational sectors in order to address the need for upskilling, which is also linked with low levels of educational attainment for persons with disabilities (please see also Chapter 5).

Disability inclusion in ALMPs is however inadequately addressed in the RRP. Firstly, investments in inclusion of ‘vulnerable’ social groups in the labour market is discussed (and funded) separately from mainstream active labour policies, including creation of new jobs. Secondly, the social groups targeted are homeless people, beneficiaries of Guaranteed Minimum Income and refugees.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, disability related barriers to employment are not explicitly addressed in the RRP.

It is similarly important that disabled people are not left behind in efforts to strengthen job seeking support on local level, indicatively by improving the accessibility of 118 local OAED offices, as the RRP notes that there is some budget allocated for

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<sup>22</sup> Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Digital Governance (December 2020) Bible for Digital Transformation 2020-2025 <http://www.opengov.gr/digitalandbrief/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2020/12/digitalstrategy.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> European Commission (2021) p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> (Please see also for more detailed discussion) European Disability Expertise (2021) Country Report: Exploring the action of EU countries to harness the potential and address challenges of digitalisation and digital transformation to advance the rights of persons with disabilities p. 15 referencing: Disability Observatory of the National Co-federation of Disabled People (2021) National Disability Report 2020 p. 45 <https://paratiritirioanapirias.gr/el/news/publications/63/e8nikh-ek8esh-gia-thn-anaphria-etoys-2020>.

<sup>25</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) p.107 Support to Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>26</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) p. 47 Section on Equal Opportunities for All/ Persons with disabilities.

<sup>27</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) p. 106 Investment for social inclusion.

renovation.<sup>28</sup> The Working Group established in OAED with participation from the National Co-federation of Disabled Persons (NCDP) is anticipated to support disability mainstreaming across OAED policies and programmes, as foreseen in the Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

There are also other respects in which employment related reforms miss the opportunity to include disability:

#### *Social economy/ Social enterprises*

The OECD (2020) recommends investment in social enterprises as a means to promote inclusive growth in Greece, suggesting that this sector ‘can play a role in identifying local needs and responding to social and economic challenges on the ground, also for groups that are “hard to reach” through other measures’, including by directly employing individuals from disadvantaged social groups.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, the National Disability Action Plan suggests measures focusing on raising awareness and improving the legal framework concerning social entrepreneurship.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, it also proposes the possibility of retaining the minimum guaranteed income for members and employees in social enterprises.

#### *Disincentives to employment*

As the RRP reviews passive labour policies and disincentives to employment, it must ensure continuity (and harmonisation) of disability benefits when entering employment, a recommendation already put forward by the National Ombudsman to the Ministry of Employment, in line with the UNCRPD General Comment on Equality and Non-Discrimination.<sup>31</sup> The additional living costs due to disability are key to consider in this line of argument (please see Chapter 4).

#### *Disability inclusion in female labour participation measures*

The relevance of measures for increasing female labour participation for women with disabilities must be assessed. In the RRP, but also in previous National Reform Plans/ Operational Programmes, those have almost exclusively involved increased coverage of childhood care services.<sup>32</sup> Persisting low female employment rates may suggest that this measure alone is not adequate in general, while obstacles at the intersect of gender norms and disability are not being considered. It is worth noting that ‘Women with disabilities’ form a standalone target in the National Disability Action plan which foresees mainstreaming disability in gender related policies and programmes, research and situation analysis on national level, to inform a comprehensive updated strategy for gender equality (Target 9).

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<sup>28</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) p. 96.

<sup>29</sup> OECD (2020) p. 28, see also detailed discussion in pp. 206-209; OECD also suggests facilitation of self-employment as relevant in the Greek context, in that it may ‘smoothen the effects of limited mobility’, as people are tied to family/ immediate connections, which although informal provide ‘exceptionally strong network of social protection’ (p. 200). In the author’s view this is relevant to explore for persons with disabilities.

<sup>30</sup> Hellenic Republic Minister of Interior (acting as National Coordination Mechanism for the implementation of UN CRPD (Law 4488/2017, Art. 69) (2020) National Disability Action Plan p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> National Ombudsman (2020) Equal Treatment Special Report 2020 pp. 64-65

<https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=equality.el.reports.825108>.

<sup>32</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) p. 30.

#### **4 Disability, social policies and healthcare – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies**

In 2019, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Greece:

[Article 28 UN CRPD](#) addresses Adequate standard of living and social protection.

‘41. The Committee recommends that the State party revise the relevant legal provisions and practices on welfare allowances, benefits, pensions and tax exemptions for persons with disabilities, harmonizing the existing rules and repealing discriminatory rules and practices, including in the disability certification system. The Committee also recommends that the State party ensure the effective implementation of the existing social protection framework, and progressively develop further measures to ensure an adequate standard of living for persons with disabilities.’

[Article 19 UN CRPD](#) addresses Living independently in the community.

‘29. The Committee recommends that, in line with its general comment No. 5 (2017) on living independently and being included in the community, the State party:

- (a) Adopt a comprehensive national strategy with clear time-bound measures and sufficient funds for effective deinstitutionalization at all levels;
- (b) Ensure the active involvement of persons with disabilities through their representative organizations in the development of independent living strategies and schemes that provide accessible community-based services, especially at the local level.’

[Article 25 UN CRPD](#) addresses Health.

‘37. The Committee recommends that, taking into account targets 3.7 and 3.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the State party:

- (a) Put in place a stable, continuous, long-term strategy containing effective and harmonized measures to guarantee persons with disabilities access to health services;
- (b) Effectively monitor the implementation of the provision of health services by health service providers to persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others. The Committee also recommends that the State party render health facilities, equipment and instruments accessible, particularly to ensure that women and girls with disabilities have access to sexual and reproductive health services in urban and rural areas.’

The next State Party report is due in 2026.

##### **4.1 Summary of the social situation of persons with disabilities**

Data from EU-SILC 2019 indicate the poverty risk rate for working age persons with disabilities in Greece was 25.2 % in 2019, compared to 18.2 % for other persons of similar age - an estimated disability poverty gap of approximately 7 percentage points (see Table 14). For people aged over 65, the disability poverty gap was 4.5 points (13.9 % for older persons with disabilities and 9.4 % for other persons of similar age). The tables in annex also indicate the respective rates of risk of poverty or social exclusion and break these down by gender as well age.

For persons with disabilities of working age in Greece (age 16-64) the risk of poverty before social transfers was 61.0 % and 25.2 % after transfers. The in-work poverty rate for persons with disabilities aged under 60 was 13.0 %.

Of interest to health policy are the data on self-reported unmet needs for medical examination (too expensive or too far to travel or waiting list). Disability equality gaps are evident here too and, on this basis, the rate for disabled persons in Greece was 20.8 %, compared to 4.4 % for other persons, which is much above the EU27 average of 1.7 % in 2019.

For persons with disabilities the risk of poverty is compounded by additional living costs due to disability, while for those of working age employment alone may not offer sufficient protection, since 'many of the new jobs are part-time or temporary and pay the minimum wage'.<sup>33</sup> A recent study by the Disability Observatory of NCDP (2020) aimed to assess the direct costs associated with disability on household level. Based on a Survey Expenditure Approach, a key finding was that 75 % of respondents regardless of the type and severity of disability reported spending up to EUR 5 000 annually (approximately EUR 415 monthly) for costs related to disability.<sup>34</sup> People with physical/mobility impairments (>80 %) noted the highest average cost at EUR 6 244 annually, followed by mental disability (>80 %) at 5 810, chronic illness (>80 %) at 5 530, sensory disability (>80 %) at 4 946 and intellectual disability (>80 %) at 4 710.<sup>35</sup> As percentage of disposable income, a key finding is that, on average, additional disability related expenses constitute 20 % up to 44 % of disposable income.<sup>36</sup> Single households not receiving a pension are almost at double risk of poverty, whilst gender differences were noted across, women being in a comparatively disadvantaged position.

It is further interesting to note that outpatient health treatment forms a significant cost across categories of disability, while persons with physical, sensory, and mental disability, as well as chronic illness, spend significantly more on personal assistance services.<sup>37</sup> However, only 28 % of households used state services either as main or complementary support provision for persons with disabilities, long-term health problem or elderly people, while family members provided support in 80 % of cases.<sup>38</sup> There is further evidence that the cost for health and long-term care support services burden households. The Commission Staff Working Document (2021) notes that investment in the health sector 'is significantly below the EU average'<sup>39</sup> and presents further data on the capacity of long-term care provision:

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<sup>33</sup> OECD (2020) p. 192.

<sup>34</sup> European Centre for Constitutional Law (2020) *Study for the Additional Living Costs due to disability* National Co-federation of Disabled People, Athens 2020 pp. 63-64. Primary research involving 601 completed questionnaires representative as to categories of disability. Noting that 81 % of respondents were over 50 years old. Youngest age group included in the survey (20-34) represented only 2.3 % of the sample. Findings should be treated with caution as there is great deviation from mean values – net (average) cost is only indicative.

<sup>35</sup> European Centre for Constitutional Law (2020) pp. 61- 63.

<sup>36</sup> European Centre for Constitutional Law (2020) pp. 95-96 Standard of living approach: EU-SILC 2018 data processed. Three variables tested: Goods such as TV, washing machine etc. are available; satisfaction with economic situation; level of difficulty in meeting regular needs (judged by researchers as most accurate for measuring additional living costs, see footnote 23 p. 129; this yielded a range between 25 % to 38 % of disposable income).

<sup>37</sup> European Centre for Constitutional Law (2020) p. 152.

<sup>38</sup> Disability Observatory, NCDP (2020) p. 60 processing National Statistical Service Data (EU-SILC 2019).

<sup>39</sup> European Commission (2021) p. 13.



'While the share of people aged 65+ who face serious difficulties in personal care and/or household activities is considerably higher than the EU-27 average (22.6 against 18.1 in 2014, the latest available year), public spending on long-term care is very low (less than 2 % of total healthcare spending). Greece has the lowest number of long-term care workers per 100 individuals aged 65 and over among the OECD countries.'<sup>40</sup>

Finally, recent statistical analysis of European Health Interview Survey (Wave 2, 2014) for Greece showed that 'unemployment, low educational level, and low income were positively associated with unmet health care needs for people with disabilities', where persons with disabilities in the first income quintile were at double risk of having unmet health care needs, compared to disabled people who are in the fourth and fifth quintiles.<sup>41</sup> Although there has been some recovery in recent years it can be assumed these factors remain relevant in 2021.

## 4.2 Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Greece and the Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Reform and investment plans in this sector aim to increase access to health and social support services for persons with disabilities in the community, in line with the relevant Country Specific Recommendation (2020).<sup>42</sup> Given the early stages of related policy development, analysis may only and to a certain extent provide basis for understanding the scale of effort required until those reforms work and have positive impact on social inclusion for persons with disabilities.

### *Digital transformation of social support*

Investment in digital transformation of the social support system, allocated a budget of EUR 12 million under the RRP, is perhaps most prominent in terms of maturity of planning as well as consistency with sector specific strategies and the Action Plan for the rights of persons with disabilities. Streamlined social protection information systems may serve to enhance 'access to complementary social services and activation support' linked with GMI, 'which are still not sufficiently developed to face the challenges ahead'.<sup>43</sup>

Details regarding relevant actions are provided in the National Digital Strategy focusing on Employment and Social Affairs:<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> European Commission (2021) pp. 13-14 reference Eurostat: *Severe difficulties in personal care activities or household activities by sex, age and type of activity where the severe difficulty is encountered (hlth\_ehis\_tadle)*. Last update: 08-02-2021.

<sup>41</sup> Elena S. Rotarou & Dikaios Sakellariou (2019) Access to health care in an age of austerity: disabled people's unmet needs in Greece, *Critical Public Health*, 29:1, 48-60, DOI: 10.1080/09581596.2017.1394575.

<sup>42</sup> European Commission (2020) [Country Specific Recommendation – Greece](#) CRS 20.

<sup>43</sup> European Commission (2021) p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> Repeated from our EDE Country report (2021) p. 6, which provides analysis of disability inclusion in digital strategies and sector-specific strategies focused on digitalisation and digital transformation.

Strategic priorities and actions planned in this sector (Employment and Social Affairs) directly affect persons with disabilities, touching upon digitalisation of disability assessment and certification procedures, access to welfare benefits and social protection services. Most actions are concerned with increasing efficiency, by reducing the need for repeated physical presence (e.g. application, re-assessment, notification, and appeal), which has also been viewed as excessive from the user perspective, resulting in long delays and disruption of disability provisions.<sup>45</sup>

The national strategy makes specific reference to the scale up of the pilot of electronic application and allocation of disability welfare benefits, managed by the Organisation of Welfare Benefits and Social Solidarity (OPEKA),<sup>46</sup> as well as digital transformation of the Disability Assessment and Certification Centres (KEPA), which additionally foresees interoperability among public agencies requiring access to case files, links to electronic prescription and disability benefits information systems, which are currently fragmented.<sup>47</sup>

A digital platform for social protection is similarly envisaged to provide seamless information and thus enhanced access to different social protection benefits as well as public and private support services, such as municipal social services, residential care, homeless shelters, etc.

Data collection and use of data for policymaking in the field of disability (Objective 7) is also envisaged to be served well by digital transformation, by 'mapping disability in the current information systems' (paragraph 7.4), although this is not elaborated any further in the National Disability Action Plan.<sup>48</sup>

### *Deinstitutionalisation and Independent Living*

The RRP seems to secure at least part of funding necessary for implementing the National Strategy and Action plan for Deinstitutionalisation, where this concerns children with disabilities.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, a range of alternative care measures, support programmes and educational schemes need to be available to enable transition from institutions to family and community-based care settings. However, to date, foster care legislation namely Law 4538/2018, has not yet been enacted.<sup>50</sup> EU funding (2014-2021) has been increasingly used for community-based services, however, there

<sup>45</sup> See for instance The Greek Ombudsman (2013) Special Report on KEPA (Centralized Certification Centre for Disability) <http://www.synigoros.gr/resources/docs/130404-special-report.pdf>; Please see also the ANED Disability assessment – country report (2018) for more detailed discussion of disability assessment procedures and related challenges.

<sup>46</sup> Law 4512/2018 (FEK A 105) Disability welfare benefits provision Pilot Article (17). The pilot was initially implemented in the region of Attika [http://opeka.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/pilotiko-pronomiakon-paroxon-atoma-me-anapiria-215\\_n4512-2018.pdf](http://opeka.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/pilotiko-pronomiakon-paroxon-atoma-me-anapiria-215_n4512-2018.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Digital Governance (2020) pp. 202; 212.

<sup>48</sup> Hellenic Republic Minister of Interior (acting as National Coordination Mechanism for the implementation of UN CRPD (Law 4488/2017, Art. 69) (2020) National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) (2021) *Action plan accompanying the DI strategy* Brussels, February 2021 <https://easpd.eu/project-detail/di-greece-technical-support-on-deinstitutionalisation-di-process-in-greece/> with funding from and in cooperation with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support.

<sup>50</sup> Disability Observatory, NCDP (2020) p. 60.

remains limited information about outcomes.<sup>51</sup> The Disability Action Plan has in parallel urged for the simplification of procedures to establish Supported Living Shelters, and the provision of incentives to Municipalities to set up such services.

Finally, personal assistance, included in reforms for persons with disabilities in the RRP, was introduced in social protection legislation in September 2021.<sup>52</sup> It is expected to be a small-scale pilot at this stage, while very little official information is provided about eligibility, procedures/ implementing body, terms and conditions, which makes it very difficult to assess coverage, intended outcomes as well as sustainability.

#### *Reforms in primary healthcare*

Investment in this field includes enhanced access to quality mental health support services for patients with dementia and Alzheimer, autism as well as children and youth with mental health issues. The RRP also foresees creation of a system of health services provision at home for children, youth and adults with chronic illness/disabilities<sup>53</sup>. Unfortunately, there lacks any other information about this plan, therefore it is not possible to ascertain what this reform will involve in terms of specific actions and measures.<sup>54</sup>

With regard to mental health, the Disability Action plan solely brings forward the issue of involuntary hospitalization in mental health hospitals, suggesting changes in legislation and monitoring of violations, within 2021. Indeed, the percentage of involuntary hospitalisations reaches 47 % of total admissions in mental health units in 2018.<sup>55</sup> There was recent modification of legislation opening up the possibility of involuntary hospitalisation in private psychiatric clinics, while it is questionable whether the safeguards in place are sufficient to ensure quality.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> European Disability Expertise (2021) European Semester 2020-2021 country fiche on disability-Greece Sections 4.2 and 6.1 <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23931&langId=en>.

<sup>52</sup> (Draft Law) Enhanced Social Protection: Regulations for prevention and response to child abuse, upgrading quality of service in early education, regulations for promoting foster care and adoption, personal assistance for persons with disabilities and other regulations, public consultation 20 August – 3 September 2021 <http://www.opengov.gr/minlab/?p=5396>. Worth noting that the respective Article 27 is 6-7 lines long with abstract information about what personal assistance is, what and who it is intended for.

<sup>53</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) pp.103-104 allocated budget for mental health reform: 55 million; health services at home: EUR 12 million.

<sup>54</sup> There is no mention of such planning in the National Disability Action Plan nor the Annual Disability Report 2020. Actions in the field of health rather include increased staffing of existing healthcare services, including rehabilitation.

<sup>55</sup> Disability Observatory, NCDP (2020) p. 30 quoting Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 30 July 2019 [List of issues in relation to the initial report of Greece Addendum](#).

<sup>56</sup> Ministerial Decision Terms and prerequisites for involuntary hospitalization in private psychiatric clinics Journal of Government 4704/B/23-10-2020 <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-ygeia/upourgike-apophase-g3a-b-gp-oik65047.html> Art.1 par.2 The private psychiatric clinic needs to have a valid license, be contracted with the National Organization of Public Health Service Provisions and must have complied with recommendations in the case they have received a negative report by the special committee for the rights of persons with mental health problems. Those reports are communicated to the local prosecutors.

## 5 Disability, education and skills – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies

In 2019, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Greece:

[Article 24 UN CRPD](#) addresses Education.

'5. Recalling its general comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education, and taking into account Sustainable Development Goal 4, especially targets 4.5 and 4.a, the Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts to guarantee inclusive education, and in particular that it:

- (a) Adopt and implement a coherent strategy on inclusive education in the mainstream educational system;
- (b) Ensure the accessibility of school and university environments, in line with the Convention, by promoting universal design, the provision of specific measures and individualized support, such as accessible and adapted materials, inclusive curricula, inclusive information and communication technologies for pupils and students with disabilities, and digital pedagogy;
- (c) Immediately ensure access to formal education for all refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant children with disabilities, and for Roma children with disabilities;
- (d) Allocate effective and sufficient financial and material resources and adequately and regularly trained personnel, including persons with disabilities, to effectively guarantee inclusive education;
- (e) Incorporate inclusive education training into higher education curricula for trainee teachers, and into training programmes for current teaching staff, with an adequate budget.'

The next State Party report is due in 2026.

### 5.1 Summary of the educational situation of persons with disabilities

The EU-SILC 2019 estimates concerning educational attainment should be treated with additional caution due to relatively wide confidence intervals, but they consistently indicate disability equality gaps (an average of 2-3 years provides a more stable indication). Table 16 indicates early school leaving rates disaggregated by disability status in Greece. Youth with disabilities (aged 18-24) tend to leave school significantly more than non-disabled peers of the same age groups (and this is reinforced by widening the sample size to age 18-29). Table 17 shows completion rate of tertiary education disaggregated by disability and age group. Persons with disabilities (age 30-34) are less likely to complete tertiary education than their peers (and this is reinforced in the wider age range 30-39).

#### *National Data: Pupils with disabilities in special and mainstream education*

Data by the School Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs shows that in the year 2019-2020, pupils with disabilities comprised 7 % of the total pupil population (101 683 out of 1 454 921), of whom 88 % attended mainstream education (this percentage is maintained across primary and secondary education levels, please see Table 26).<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Disability Observatory NCDP (2021) *10<sup>th</sup> Statistical Press Release 'Data for the education of pupils with disability and/or special educational needs* pp. 8-10 The authors note that data on the number of pupils with disabilities is based on: the number of approvals for disability related support provisions, plus pupils attending inclusion classes in mainstream schools and those attending special education.

Children with disabilities of school age are mainly in inclusion (separate) classes in mainstream schools (42.1 %) or supported solely by the main class teacher (41.2 %), while only 10 % receive parallel support in mainstream classes, although progress is noted since last school year (+53 %).<sup>58</sup>

Children with disabilities attending special education mostly have intellectual disabilities (35 %), autism (31 %) and multiple disabilities (12 %), while the total population in special education has grown from 2016/2017 to 2018/2019 (latest data by the National Statistical Service) by 18.4 %.<sup>59</sup> Within secondary special education, data shows that the majority of pupils with disabilities follow vocational education, including non-graded specialised vocational units (EEEEK in Greek); only 2.2 % attend lower high school and 1 % upper high school in special education, which implicitly affects access to higher education.<sup>60</sup>

### *Progress towards inclusive education*

A recent qualitative study aimed to explore current policies, practice and attitudes in primary and secondary education, assessing progress towards inclusive education for children with disabilities of school age.<sup>61</sup> The findings offer a nuanced picture of how the different groups involved perceive the situation: young participants with disabilities report satisfaction with their relationships with peers and teachers with few exceptions; pupils without disabilities also expressed at large that their peers with disabilities should attend mainstream schools, or that they should have a choice and appropriate support. Parents of children with disabilities were clearly in favour of inclusive education but in many instances reported having bad experiences with mainstream school staff; only a small number of teachers openly embrace inclusive education, and most raised concerns related to the type and severity of impairment, staff competences and so on; some teachers suggested that is impossible to include pupils with deafness or severe intellectual disability in mainstream classes. Similar reservations were raised in the policy makers' focus group, with some key actors expressing that focus on special education is rather a priority at the moment.<sup>62</sup>

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The data cannot be directly compared to last year statistical data by the Disability Observatory.

<https://www.paratiritirioanapirias.gr/el/results/publications/68/10o-deltio-toy-parathrhthrioy-ths-esmea-stoixeia-gia-thn-ekpaideysh-twn-ma8htwn-me-anaphria-hkai-eidik-es-ekpaideytikes-anagkes>.

<sup>58</sup> Disability Observatory NCDP (2021) 10<sup>th</sup> Statistical Press Release 'Data for the education of pupils with disability and/or special educational needs'

<https://www.paratiritirioanapirias.gr/el/results/publications/68/10o-deltio-toy-parathrhthrioy-ths-esmea-stoixeia-gia-thn-ekpaideysh-twn-ma8htwn-me-anaphria-hkai-eidik-es-ekpaideytikes-anagkes>.

<sup>59</sup> Disability Observatory NCDP (2021) p. 21.

<sup>60</sup> Disability Observatory NCDP (2021) p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> European Centre for Constitutional Law (2020) Study for the Transition from Special Education to Education without exclusions, National Co-federation for Disabled People Athens 2020

<https://paratiritirioanapirias.gr/el/news/publications/69/meleth-gia-th-metabash-apo-thn-eidikh-agwgh-kai-ekpaideysh-sthn-ekpaideysh-xwris-apokleismoys> The study included semi-structured interviews (and some focus groups) with educational staff, parents, pupils with and without disabilities, and policy makers.

<sup>62</sup> European Centre for Constitutional Law (2020) p. 132 quoting a representative from the Institute of Educational Policy (Ministry of Education).

Apart from school culture and attitudes, the findings also offer insight into support gaps and barriers for children with disabilities in education, mainly touching upon limited accessibility and staff competences in education, briefly mentioned as follows:

Limited accessibility of school environment: An internal assessment of accessibility of school buildings by the Ministry of Education in 2017 had showed that in a total of 14 000 units, slightly over 50 % did not have a wheelchair ramp installed and approximately 70 % did not have accessible toilets.<sup>63</sup> The Annual Disability Report (2020) mentions that progress has been made since with municipalities accessing funding for enhancing accessibility of school buildings under the programme Philodimos II in 2019.<sup>64</sup>

Lack of assistive technology/ digital content and tools (and/or knowledge about its use): available evidence suggests that use of ICT is at a very premature level overall,<sup>65</sup> remote learning during the COVID pandemic has in some cases necessitated use of existing platforms: some teachers supporting pupils with autism for instance said they had started using applications such as e-class, however reported lack of equipment of pupils at home e.g., tablet or computer.

Limited staff competences: teachers supporting pupils with disabilities in mainstream education have limited practical experience as well as knowledge of specific types of disability, while professional development is not sufficiently funded by the state, as reported. Very frequently, specialised staff (in inclusion classes) reported difficulties in cooperation with the main class teacher. There were also examples such as parallel support staff supporting deaf children not using sign language; pupils with intellectual disability were more hindered by lack of differentiated teaching methods, despite the fact that such educational material is available by the Institute of Educational Policy, reinforcing the assumption that staff are not aware or do not have competences or actively encouraged to use this material.<sup>66</sup>

It is worth noting that there is national data is not available about on access to tertiary education disaggregated by disability.

## 5.2 Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Greece and the Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Disability is arguably least addressed in reform and investment plans in the field of education, compared to the sectors of employment and social protection, considering also the range of challenges evidenced above, but also in similar reports in previous years, related primarily to limited stable state funding, limited capacity of schools,

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<sup>63</sup> Findings made available in the European Centre for Constitutional Law (2020) Study for the Transition from Special Education to Education without exclusions, National Co-federation for Disabled People Athens 2020 <https://paratiritirioanapirias.gr/el/news/publications/69/meleth-gia-th-metabash-apo-thn-eidikh-agwgh-kai-ekpaideysh-sthn-ekpaideysh-xwris-apokleismoys>.

<sup>64</sup> Disability Observatory, NCDP (2020) p. 83.

<sup>65</sup> The authors draw upon desk review findings as well as primary research data (European Centre for Constitutional Law, 2020).

<sup>66</sup> European Centre for Constitutional Law (2020) pp. 144-145.

support structures and staff to include pupils with disabilities. Investment in digital transformation of education is one important exception.

The RRP directly addresses the need for stepping up provision of digital and technical tools to support pupils with disabilities, as part of its investment in the digital transformation of education allocated a total of EUR 364 million.<sup>67</sup> Initial policy steps however do not concretely materialise intention to 'bridge the digital gap' between disabled and non-disabled pupils. In particular, disability inclusion/ accessibility is not explicitly addressed in the new Law 4692/2020 aiming to 'upgrading schooling' by including technology and science 'skills workshops' in primary and secondary education.<sup>68</sup> It is worth noting that the only reference made to disability in this piece of legislation is that placements of teaching staff in Inclusion Classes should only be made after all vacancies in Special Education are covered, which only highlights limited funding available for adequate staffing to support children with disabilities in both mainstream and special education.

Indeed, teachers, parents and policy makers involved in inclusive education frequently reported the issue of inadequately staffed inclusion classes, as well as late placements of parallel support teachers.<sup>69</sup> Linked to that, issues affecting quality of inclusive education were also identified too big class size; limited focus on social and emotional learning and use of differentiated teaching methods and evaluation, which were rather entirely dependent on the initiative of individual teachers; psychological support for children in schools was not stable (late placement, turnover of staff) In addition, the Annual Disability Report (2020) reports inadequate staffing of regional Educational Counselling and Support Centres (KESY), limited accessibility of infrastructure, and limited availability of psychometric tools, which overall "inhibit the provision of timely and comprehensive assessment and support to pupils with special educational needs".<sup>70</sup>

Finally, training of professionals on assistive technologies is a prerequisite for ensuring widespread use of digital content and tools. It is important that digital accessibility as well as specialised knowledge on assistive technology forms part of efforts to upgrade the digital skills of 165 000 primary and secondary education staff, as well as the digital school services for 1.5 million pupils but also promote a digital learning culture more broadly.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Hellenic Republic (2021) pp. 97-100: Description of reforms and investment under Component 3.2 Strengthening education and lifelong learning and modernization of vocational education and training.

<sup>68</sup> Law 4692/2020 Schools upgrading and other regulations, [https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2020/nomos\\_yp\\_arithm\\_46922020.pdf](https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2020/nomos_yp_arithm_46922020.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> European Centre for Constitutional Law (2020).

<sup>70</sup> Disability Observatory, NCDP (2020) p. 71.

<sup>71</sup> Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Digital Governance (2020) p. 166.

## 6 Investment priorities in relation to disability

### 6.1 Updates on use of existing EU funds (up to 2021)

Ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities is an explicit requirement for compliance with national and European regulations, along with gender equality and non-discrimination (ESIF 2014-2020), included in relevant calls for tenders outlined below.

Recent calls (2021) in the field of employment and vocational training target upskilling of the long-term unemployed<sup>72</sup> but also re-skilling of employees in a changing economy.<sup>73</sup> In addition, private businesses were invited to express interest to participate in a programme supporting employment of 5 000 unemployed individuals >30 years old in six regions in the country, focusing mainly on women.<sup>74</sup> According to the guidelines, there is room for eligible businesses to declare that ‘considering the nature of the action, accessibility for persons with disabilities is not obstructed or required’, or that the business ‘commits’ to undertake necessary adjustments according to national law.<sup>75</sup>

In the field of social protection, typically, programmes such as day centres for children and adults with disabilities, as well as supported Living Shelters, span across the funding period, with most projects approved before 2018.<sup>76</sup> It is interesting to note recent funding released for creating two ‘social hotspots’ in the municipality of Volos, focusing on youth and older people at risk of poverty, and aiming to enhance access to social provisions, employability schemes, non-formal education, and volunteer schemes.<sup>77</sup>

Finally, in education, funding was released for implementing the ‘Skills Workshops’ in mainstream upper secondary schools across the country in the new school year.<sup>78</sup> In parallel, funding was released for the placement of specialised staff providing psychosocial support to pupils from vulnerable social groups in schools.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> See Call for Tenders under the Regional Operational Programme of Western Greece (Total budget: EUR 4 million) expected to benefit 1 000 individuals.

<https://www.espa.gr/el/Pages/ProclamationsFS.aspx?item=5371>.

<sup>73</sup> See Call for Tenders under the Operational Programme Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Total budget: 32 120 000 expected to benefit 16 000 employees across all sectors of the economy <https://www.espa.gr/el/Pages/ProclamationsFS.aspx?item=5292>.

<sup>74</sup> See OAED (2021) Call for Interest Total budget EUR 32 000 000 (until end of 2022) <https://www.espa.gr/el/Pages/ProclamationsFS.aspx?item=5301>.

<sup>75</sup> OAED (2021) p. 52.

<sup>76</sup> European Disability Expertise (2021) European Semester 2020-2021 country fiche on disability-Greece Section 6.1 <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23931&langId=en>.

<sup>77</sup> See Call for Proposals Regional Operational Programme of Thessaly Total budget of EUR 276 000 <https://www.espa.gr/el/Pages/ProclamationsFS.aspx?item=5369>.

<sup>78</sup> See Call for Tenders under the Operational Programme for Human Resources, Education and Lifelong Learning Total budget: EUR 34 990 217. <https://www.espa.gr/el/Pages/ProclamationsFS.aspx?item=5360>

<sup>79</sup> Operational Programme for Human Resources, Education and Lifelong Learning Total budget: EUR 20 521 359 includes staffing of reception classes for asylum seekers and refugees <https://www.espa.gr/el/Pages/ProclamationsFS.aspx?item=5353>.



## 6.2 Priorities for future investment (after 2021)

As discussed in the previous sections, disability is addressed across the fields of employment, health and social protection, and education in the RRP. Interventions such as digital skills training, funding for accessibility, and personal assistance are aimed to enhance social inclusion horizontally. Deinstitutionalisation forms a key reform in child protection, while health service provision at home is also envisaged. Investment in digital educational tools is anticipated to contribute to progress towards inclusive education.

The conditionality for ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities in ESIF funded actions, as well as the Action Plan for the rights of persons with disabilities, have been the main tools for mainstreaming disability in related investments. A more recent development is the establishment of the National Accessibility Authority<sup>80</sup> with the active involvement of representative bodies of persons with disabilities, as well as technical experts and Government officials, which is tasked with monitoring compliance with EU and national regulatory frameworks for accessibility. This may include for instance ensuring that accessibility standards are fulfilled in relevant funded projects, but also in the provision of mainstream goods and services.

Digitalisation across sectors is particularly promising for enhancing accessibility of goods and services, including public services. 'Together, the measures supporting the digital transition objectives account for 23.3 % of the Greek plan's total allocation'<sup>81</sup> It is worth noting that electronic accessibility and digital inclusion form a distinct guiding principle in the national strategy for digitalisation and digital transformation, directly linked with selection and evaluation criteria for funding new projects, as well as informing a strand of horizontal interventions, with emphasis on web accessibility compliance of public services, digital skills training and disability related digital platforms.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Draft legislation voted on 23 February 2021 <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/18a4e643-1429-4e6b-a317-d7c6a29adabf/11578912.pdf>.

<sup>81</sup> European Commission Staff Working Document (2021) p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> European Disability Expertise (2021) Country Report: Exploring the action of EU countries to harness the potential and address challenges of digitalisation and digital transformation to advance the rights of persons with disabilities p. 15 referencing: Disability Observatory of the National Confederation of Disabled People (2021) National Disability Report 2020 p. 1. <https://paratiritirioanapirias.gr/el/news/publications/63/e8nikh-ek8esh-gia-thn-anaphria-etoys-2020>.

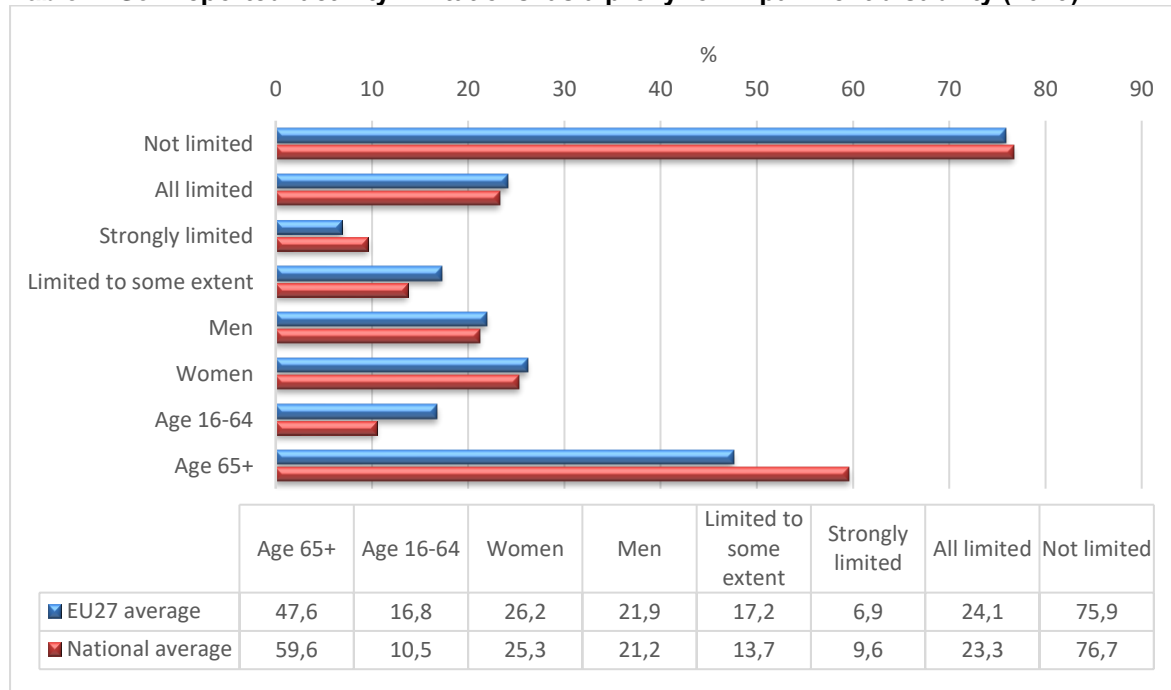
## 7 Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester

See also disability data published in the Eurostat database<sup>83</sup> and statistical reports.<sup>84</sup>

Unless specified, the summary statistics are drawn from the most recent EU-SILC data available to researchers from Eurostat. The EU-SILC sample includes people living in private households and does not include people living in institutions (congregative households). The sampling methods vary somewhat in each country.

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’.<sup>85</sup>

**Table 1: Self-reported ‘activity limitations’ as a proxy for impairment/disability (2019)**



Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1.

In subsequent tables, these data are used to indicate ‘disability’ equality gaps and trends relevant to the analytical chapters – for the labour market, social policies and healthcare, and education – by comparing outcomes for persons who report and do not report ‘activity limitations’.<sup>86</sup> National estimates for Greece are compared with EU27 mean averages for the most recent year.<sup>87</sup> More older people and fewer younger adults reported limitations in Greece than the EU average.

<sup>83</sup> Eurostat health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

<sup>84</sup> Eurostat (2019) *Disability Statistics* [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability_statistics).

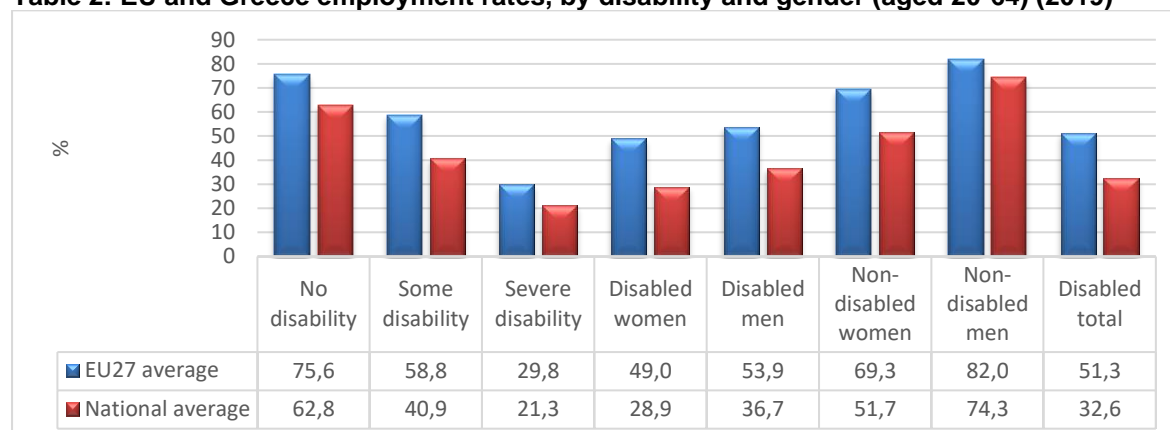
<sup>85</sup> The SILC survey questions are contained in the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM) [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum\\_European\\_Health\\_Module\\_\(MEHM\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_(MEHM)).

<sup>86</sup> This methodology was developed in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>.

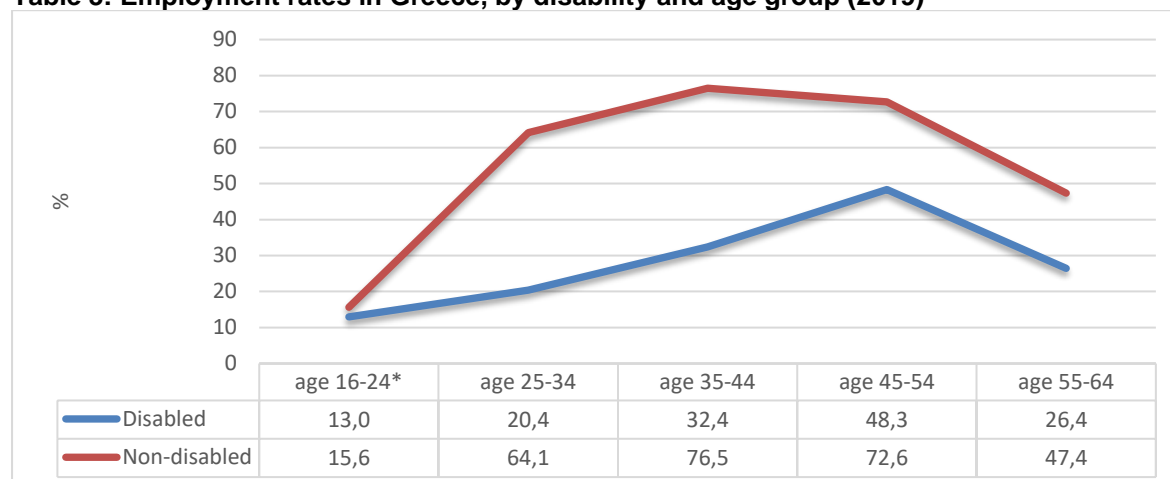
<sup>87</sup> The exit of the United Kingdom from the EU changes the EU average. Averages were also affected in 2015 by a discontinuity in the German disability data due to a definitional change.

## 7.1 Data relevant to disability and the labour market

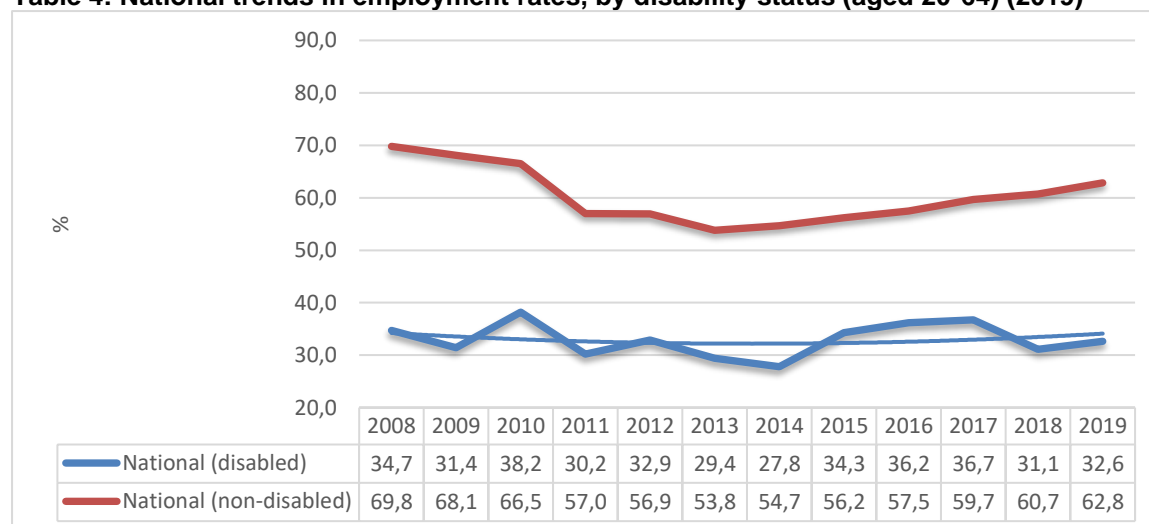
**Table 2: EU and Greece employment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)**



**Table 3: Employment rates in Greece, by disability and age group (2019)**



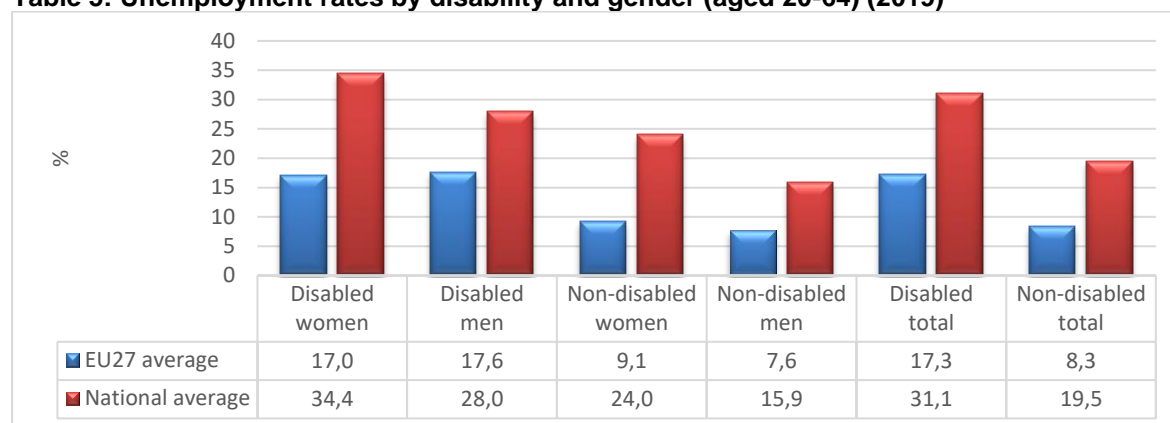
**Table 4: National trends in employment rates, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)**



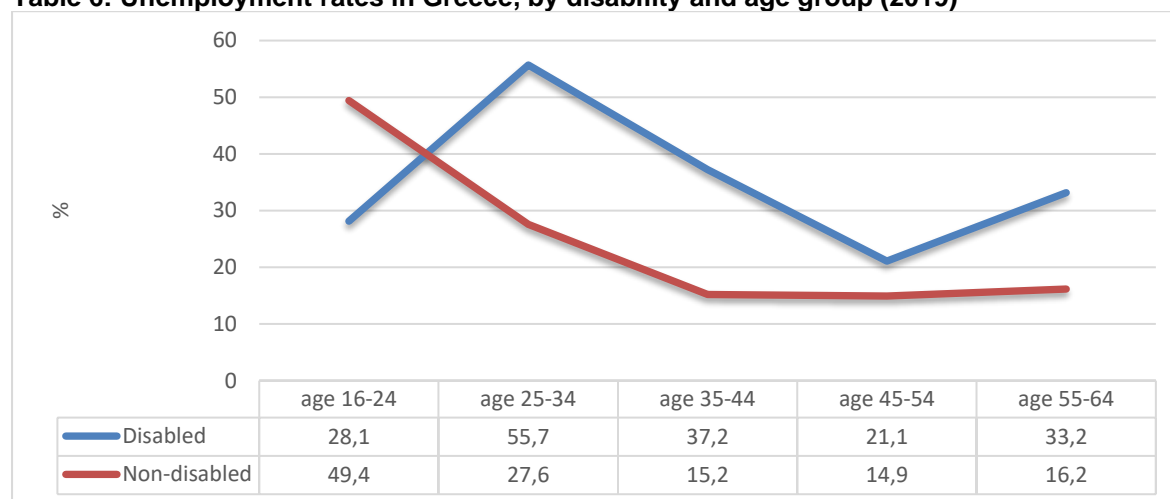
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

## 7.1.1 Unemployment

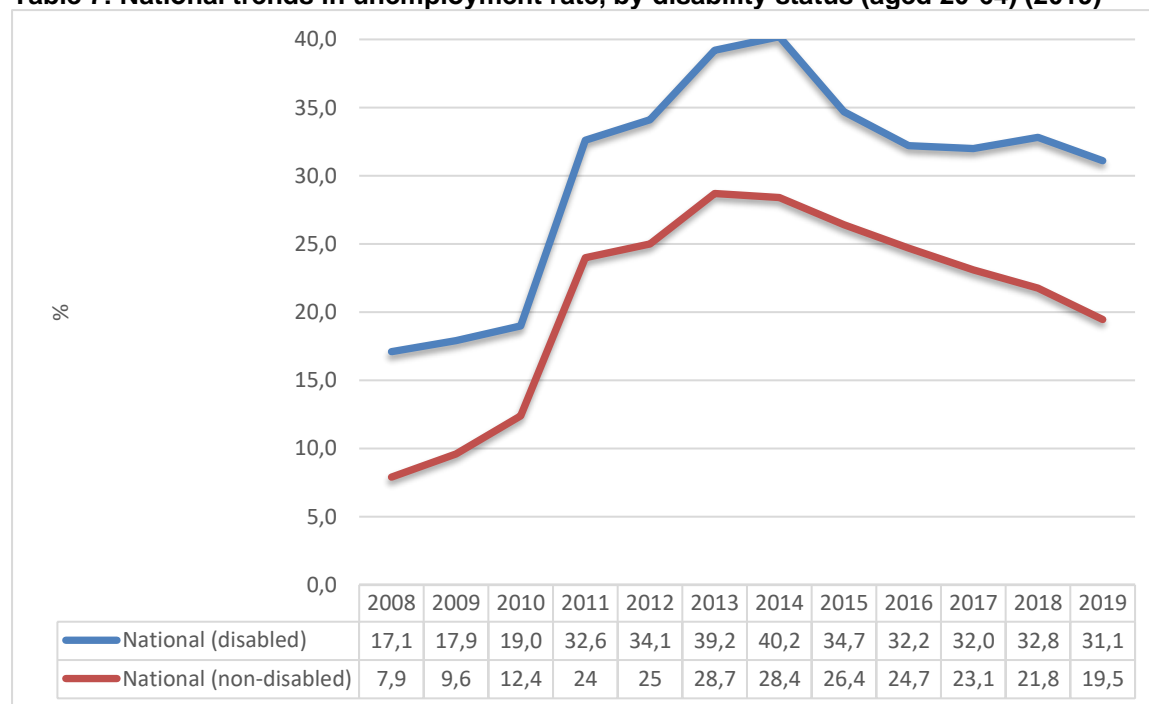
**Table 5: Unemployment rates by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)**



**Table 6: Unemployment rates in Greece, by disability and age group (2019)**



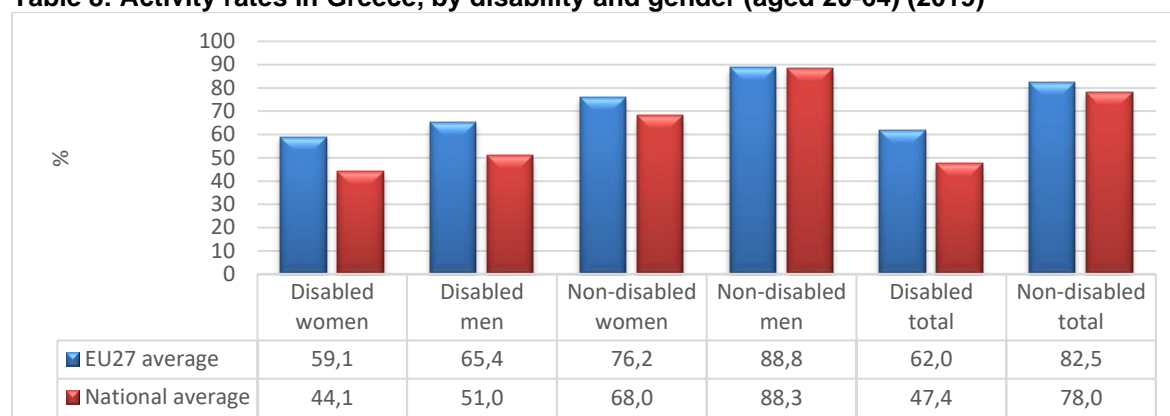
**Table 7: National trends in unemployment rate, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)**



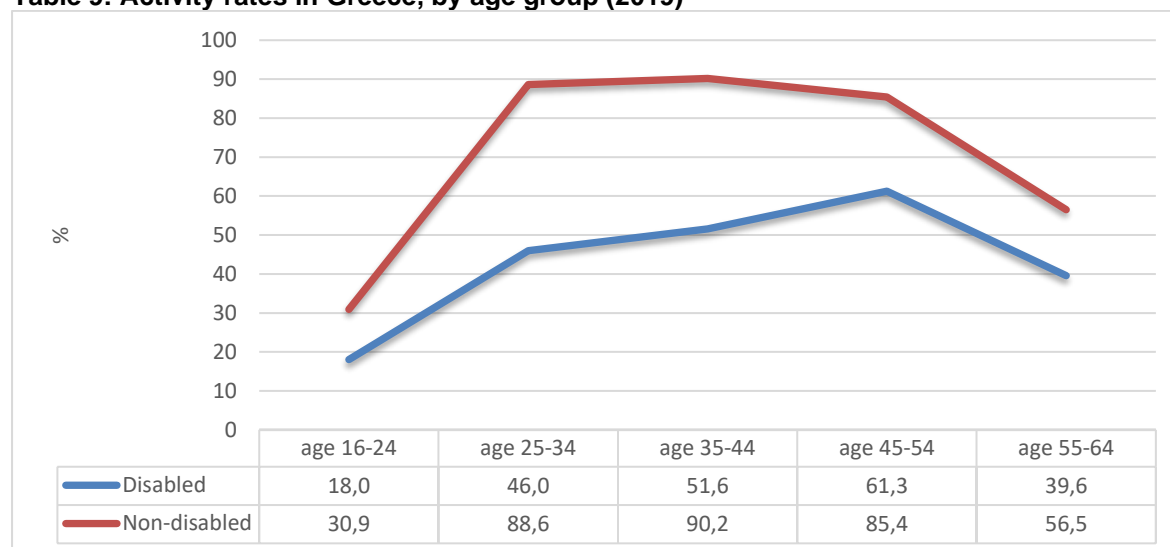
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

## 7.1.2 Economic activity

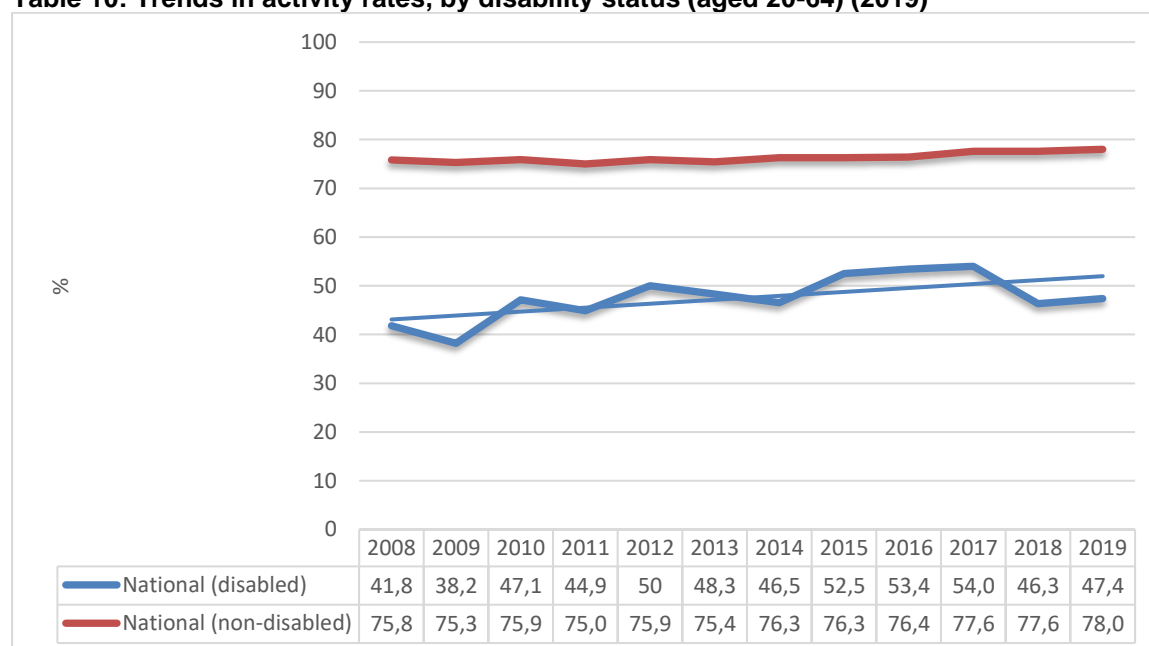
**Table 8: Activity rates in Greece, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)**



**Table 9: Activity rates in Greece, by age group (2019)**



**Table 10: Trends in activity rates, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)**



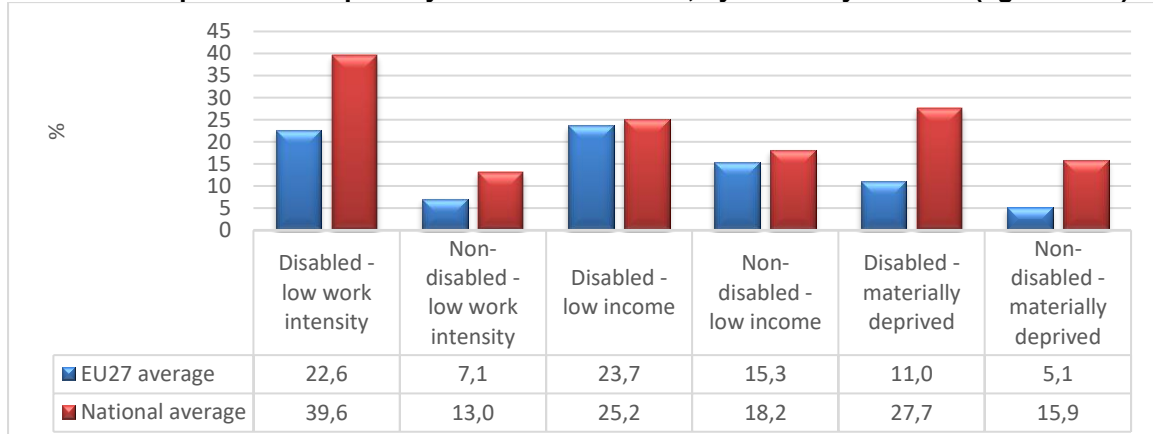
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

### 7.1.3 Alternative sources of labour market data in Greece

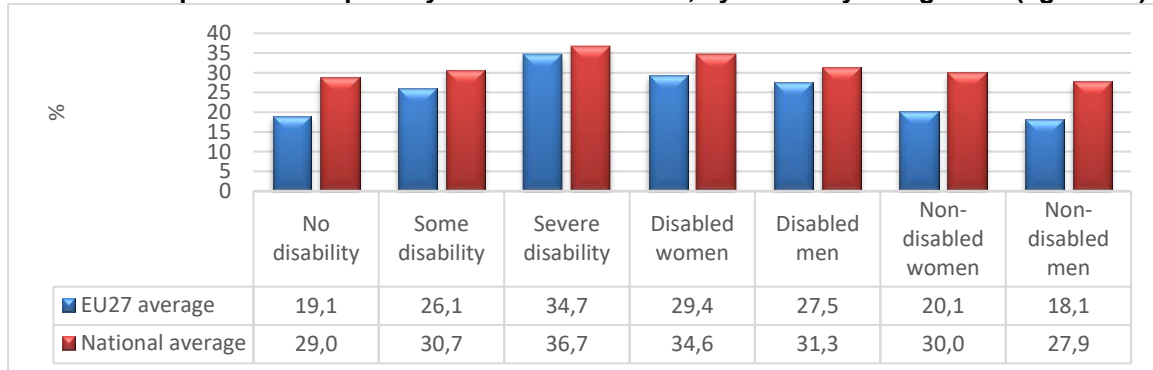
Disability data is not yet available from the core European Labour Force Survey but labour market indicators for Greece were disaggregated from ad modules conducted in 2001 and 2011. These can be found in the Eurostat disability database.<sup>88</sup>

## 7.2 EU data relevant to disability, social policies and healthcare (2019)

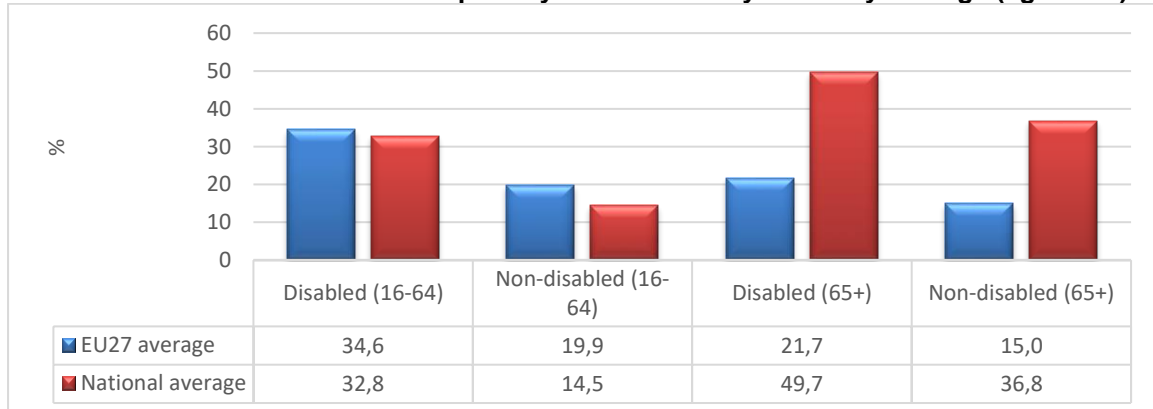
**Table 11: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and risk (aged 16-59)**



**Table 12: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and gender (aged 16+)**

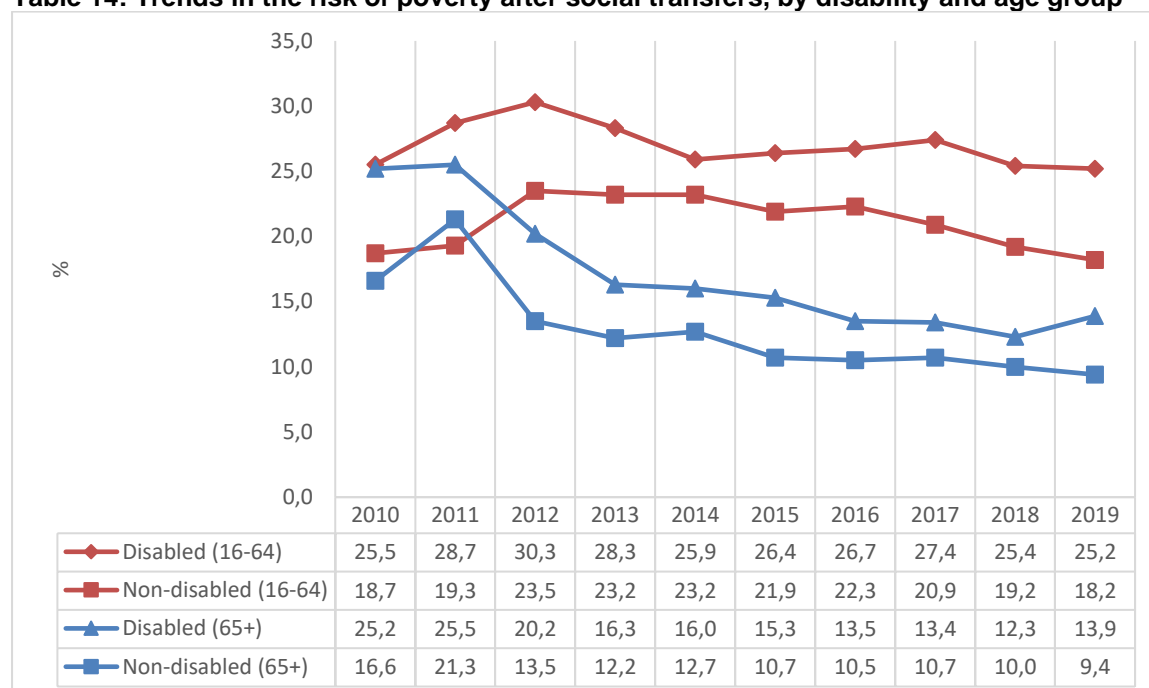


**Table 13: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)**



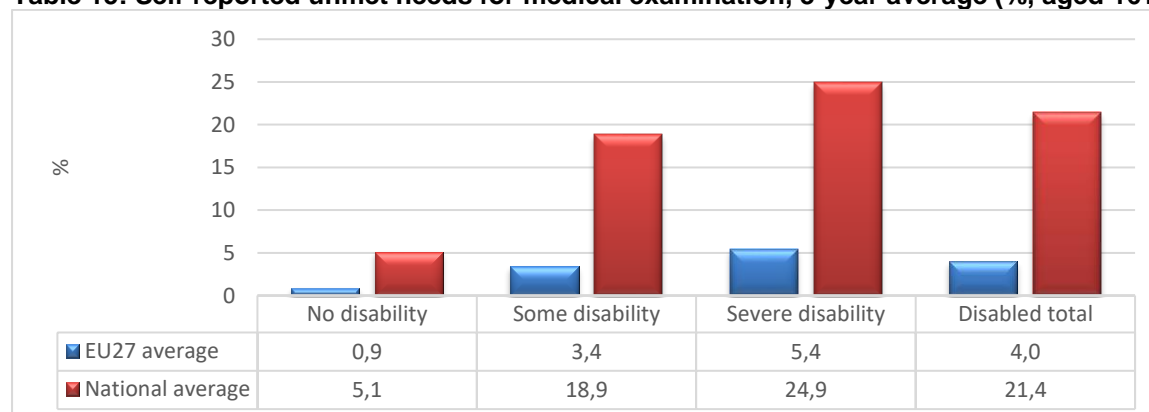
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and previous UDB).

<sup>88</sup> Eurostat Health Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

**Table 14: Trends in the risk of poverty after social transfers, by disability and age group**

Source: Eurostat Health Database [[hlth\\_dpe020](#)] - People at risk of poverty.

Note: this table shows national trends in financial poverty risk, rather than the general AROPE indicator (which is not as comparable between age groups due to the effect of paid employment); the survey does not distinguish 'activity limitation' for children under 16.

**Table 15: Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination, 3-year average (% , aged 16+)**

Source: Eurostat Health Database [[hlth\\_dh030](#)] – 'Too expensive or too far to travel or waiting list'.

Note: due to large variations an average of three years is indicated. EU mean averages are also skewed by high values in a minority of countries within disability groups but median averages for the total disability and no disability groups in 2019 are consistent with the 3-year mean values.

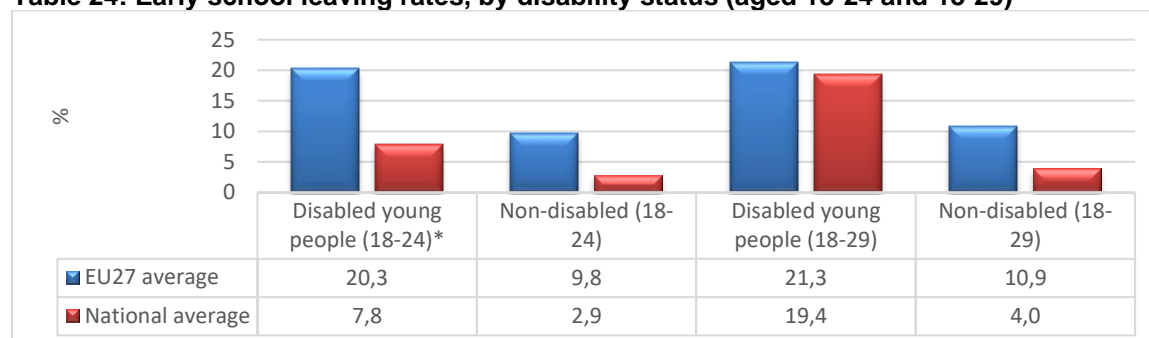
## 7.2.1 Alternative sources of poverty or health care data in Greece

The EU-SILC data provides a comprehensive and reliable source concerning poverty or social exclusion rates. In addition to the summary tables presented so far, the Eurostat disability database also contains breakdowns concerning disability and poverty before and after social transfers, as well as in-work-poverty.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Eurostat Health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

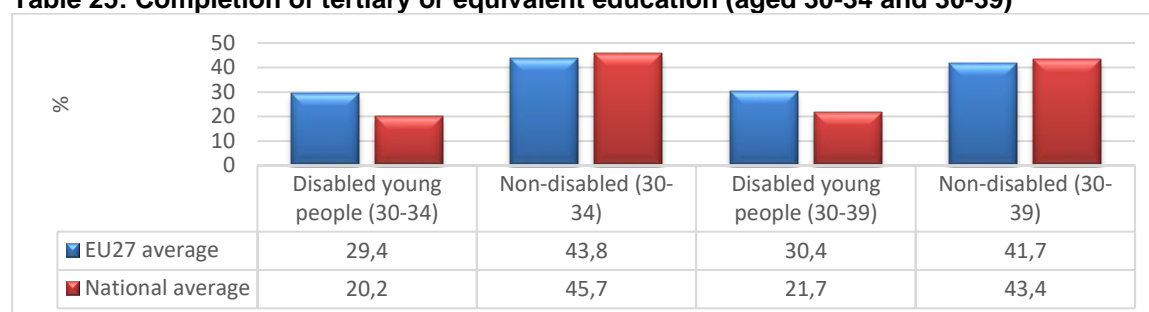
### 7.3 EU data relevant to disability and education

**Table 24: Early school leaving rates, by disability status (aged 18-24 and 18-29)<sup>90</sup>**



\*there were fewer than 50 observations in the narrow age band for the disability group.

**Table 25: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (aged 30-34 and 30-39)**



Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

Note: Confidence intervals for the disability group are large and reliability low (due to the small sample size in the target age group). An average of several years may be needed to establish trends or to compare breakdowns by gender.

#### 7.3.1 Alternative sources of education data in Greece

**Table 26: Pupils with disability and/or special educational needs/ with diagnosis (School year 2019-2020)**

Level of Education	Pupils with disability/special educational needs	%
Preschool education (mandatory)	5,570	5.5%
Primary education	45,362	44.6%
Lower and upper secondary education	50,751	49.9%
Total	101,683	100.0%

Source: Ministry of Education (30/7/2020)/ Processing: Disability Observatory of NCDP.

<sup>90</sup> There was a change from ISCED 1997 to ISCED 2011 qualification definitions in 2014 although some Member States continued to use the older definition after this time.



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