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Finland

Hisayo Katsui
Katja Valkama

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 2022.¹

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

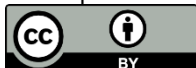
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Table of Contents

1	Executive summary and recommendations	4
1.1	Key points and main challenges for Finland in 2022	4
1.2	Recommendations for Finland.....	5
2	Mainstreaming disability equality in the Semester documents.....	6
2.1	Recovery and Resilience Plan for Finland (RRP).....	6
2.2	Semester links to CRPD and national disability action plans.....	7
3	Disability and the labour market - analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies.....	8
3.1	Summary of the labour market situation of persons with disabilities	8
3.2	Analysis of labour market policies relevant to the Semester	9
4	Disability, social policies and healthcare – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies.....	11
4.1	Summary of the social situation of persons with disabilities	11
4.2	Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester	11
5	Disability, education and skills – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies.....	13
5.1	Summary of the educational situation of persons with disabilities	13
5.2	Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester.....	13
6	Investment priorities in relation to disability.....	15
6.1	Updates on use of existing EU funds (up to 2021)	15
6.2	Priorities for future investment (after 2021)	17
7	Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester	19
7.1	Data relevant to disability and the labour market.....	20
7.1.1	Unemployment.....	21
7.1.2	Economic activity	22
7.1.3	Alternative sources of labour market data in Finland	23
7.2	EU data relevant to disability, social policies and healthcare (2019)	24
7.2.1	Alternative sources of poverty or health care data in Finland	25
7.3	EU data relevant to disability and education.....	26
7.3.1	Alternative sources of education data in Finland	26

1 Executive summary and recommendations

1.1 Key points and main challenges for Finland in 2022

Disability and the labour market

In Finland, persons with disabilities, especially persons with intellectual disabilities, are too often on work incapacity allowance and economically inactive. Recovery from the COVID-19 crisis might leave them even further behind if the general employment situation remains difficult. The recovery programme of the Government of Finland contains actions and investments for employment and for bridging the care and rehabilitation gap that affects people with disabilities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Disability, social policies and healthcare

The Finnish Parliament finally passed the SOTE (health and social services) reform in June 2021. Subsequently, new laws will be enacted between July 2021 and early 2023. The reform will be implemented from 2023 onwards. Along with this, two existing disability laws will be merged into one. Unlike the old two laws, the new disability law is expected to promote self-determination of persons with disabilities on the basis of their individual needs rather than their impairments. However, persons with disabilities in Finland fear that they will lose the disability services granted to them by their municipalities when the administrative structure changes and counties (so-called 'welfare areas') take over the responsibility.

Disability, education and skills

Inclusive education is not sufficiently understood as in the CRPD in Finland and replaced by integrated education without sufficient support for children with disabilities or teaching staff. Due to the lack of resources and capacity of teaching staff in Finland, teachers and others who problematise inclusive education have a strong voice.

In Finland, most training is open in the same way to persons with disabilities but many persons with intellectual disabilities are trained in specialised vocational schools and are consequently not employed in the open labour market but in rehabilitative work). Moreover, higher education is still not very accessible to, or inclusive for, students with disabilities. Although an increasing number of students with disabilities are enrolled in higher education, they often struggle with cultural barriers embedded in higher education.

Investment priorities for inclusion and accessibility

Digitalisation is key to many goals set by the present government in the Recovery and Resilience Plan. There is a great opportunity to make digitalised services accessible from the outset and digital gaps must be paid particular attention so as not to increase the inequalities in society.

Employment will be a priority after the COVID-19 pandemic. All measures should be inclusive also for persons with disabilities.

1.2 Recommendations for Finland

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

Recommendation: We recommend that Finland rolls out its pandemic recovery programme in a more disability-inclusive manner and with reference to CRPD.

Rationale: The recovery programme of the Government of Finland only refers to disability a few times. Careful attention should be paid so that all actions are inclusive. Persons with disabilities risk being left behind in the implementation of the planned activities for achieving sustainable growth.

Recommendation: We recommend that Finland pays more attention to the right to employment of persons with disabilities especially for those with intellectual disabilities. A number of structural barriers need to be removed for their employment in the open labour market.

Rationale: Employment is one of the least realised human rights of persons with disabilities in Finland. During and after the pandemic, employment rate decreased for the whole population, which is likely to reduce even more the employment of persons with disabilities.

Recommendation: The SOTE reform should aim to meet the individual needs of persons with disabilities and not be used as an austerity measure.

Rationale: The SOTE reform is finally in its last stage before implementation. Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities must be ensured in both the finalisation stage and the implementation process.

Recommendation: We recommend that Finland engages in more national campaigns to change the negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities in Finnish society among the general public.

Rationale: Negative attitudes are the bottleneck of Finnish society, and negatively affect employment, social and health services, deinstitutionalisation, for example.

Recommendation: Children and adults with disabilities must be ensured equal opportunities through inclusive education and reasonable accommodation.

Rationale: The education level of persons with disabilities is lower than that of the rest of the population, which further restricts their employment opportunities.

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 Finland (RRP)

The following key points highlight where the situation of persons with disabilities 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.

- We expect that the majority of actions presented in the Recovery and Resilience Plan will include disability without specifically addressing it. As we have repeatedly learned from history, persons with disabilities are at a great risk of being excluded from these planned activities, which increases rather than reduces their inequalities.
- People with disabilities are specifically identified in the actions in these two sections: 1) Raising the employment rate and skill levels will accelerate sustainable growth; 2) Access to health and social services will improve and their cost-effectiveness will be enhanced.
- Actions concerning Pillar 3 in Reform 5 (p. 184) are discussed to find ways to employ persons with partial work ability. The aim is to create a company that can function as a link to the actual labour market and offer long-term employment. The goal is that the person will find work in the labour market after this employment. Another goal is to employ persons with intellectual disabilities who are currently engaged in rehabilitative work.
- The fourth pillar states in its plan that the pandemic has hit especially vulnerable groups the hardest and that persons with disabilities have been singled out. (pp. 278, 286, 289)
- The plan encompasses recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and further improvement of the equal access and cost-effectiveness of social and health services through the forthcoming reform (SOTE reform). In conjunction with this, it mentions, 'particularly those in vulnerable positions and their needs are taken into account in the development (of health and social care services)'. (p. 16)
- As regards education and employment, the plan mentions that more focus should be placed on underrepresented groups of people in employment, to also increase their requirements by promoting accessibility to higher education. (p. 17)
- The incentive trap of social security hinders employment opportunities, the social security system is complicated, and the coordination of different services are recognised problems. (p. 21)
- Social inequality is recognised as a challenge in Finland. (p. 51)
- Accessibility in the context of digitalisation infrastructure is mentioned several times, (ex. pp.108, 124)
- One of the four pillars involves increasing employment and building people's capacity for sustainable growth. Digitalisation and support of those with partial work ability are some of the identified modalities to achieve this goal (pp.10-11,

154). The employment pillar mentions health and mental health as important components for increasing the work capacity of the working population. (p. 153)

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 Finland, this refers to the Second National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons 2020-2023.² The first National Action Plan on the UN CRPD was prepared for 2018–2019³ by the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (VANE), following consultation. A monitoring report⁴ on the first action plan was published in 2019 and assessed the set 82 long-term and short-term measures. About half of the first action plan was put into effect, and the other half partially carried out. One of the biggest impacts was awareness raised of the rights of persons with disabilities particularly in the activities of ministries.

Based on the first action plan, the monitoring report and public hearings, the second action plan was launched for the period 2020-2023 in close collaboration with Finnish organisations of persons with disabilities. The second Action Plan has 110 individual measures. Responsible duty-bearers (e.g. ministries) are indicated for each measure, and all of them are committed to the measures. One of the main objectives of the Action Plan is to further increase awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and to mainstream these rights in different administrative branches as well as more widely in society. The Action Plan is divided into 13 thematic areas such as participation, equality, awareness raising and information dissemination, accessibility and so forth. All these 13 thematic areas have indicators related to structures, processes, and results, in addition to goals.

² Ministry for Social Affairs and Health. (2021) Right to social inclusion and equality National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020–2023). Ministry for Social Affairs and Health Publication Series 2021:2. Available at https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162687/STM_2021_2_J.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

³ Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. (2018) Right to social inclusion and equality – The National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2018–2019. Ministry for Social Affairs and Health Publication Series 2018:2. Available at https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/160666/STM_2_18_WEB.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁴ Hoffrén, Tea & Rautanen-Muhli, Lea. (eds.) (2019) Seurantaraportti: YK:n vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien yleissopimuksen kansallinen toimintaohjelma (2018-2019) (Monitoring report: national action plan of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2018-2019)). Ministry for Social Affairs and Health Publication Series 2019:61. Available at https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161768/Rap_61_2019_YKn%20vammainen.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

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

The initial state report was submitted to the UN CRPD Committee in 2019 and has not been assessed to date. [Article 27 of the UN CRPD](#) addresses the rights to Work and Employment. The first action plan highlighted that the right to work is the least realised right in the Finnish context (p. 52).

In the Finnish Recovery and Resilience Plan,⁵ there is a discussion on the difficulties for some people to find employment. The overall aim is to identify people that the pandemic has hit hardest and to increase the employment rate amongst people who have partial ability to work (p. 153). Reform 5 (p. 184) aims to launch a new actor to intermediate labour market that would provide employment and services for persons with partial ability to work. The aim with this new actor is to create a new systematic, goal-oriented and business-based actor to the intermediate labour markets. One specific target is to employ people with intellectual disabilities so that they can leave unpaid rehabilitative work activities. The needed legislative changes should be in place by 2022. Other actions concerning unemployment are not highlighting specifically people with disabilities.

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 Finland of 56.9 % in 2019, compared to 77.8 % for other persons against a national employment target of 78 % and approximately 5.6 points above the EU27 average. This results in an estimated disability employment gap of approximately 21 percentage points (EU27 average gap 24.2, see Tables 2-4) or an employment chances ratio of 0.7.

The same data indicate unemployment rates of 18.0 % and 7.2 %, respectively in 2019 (see Tables 5-7) and the economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Finland was 69.4 %, compared to 83.8 % for other persons (see Tables 8-10). These indications are broken down by gender and age in the respective tables in annex.

As no general register is kept of persons with disabilities in Finland, no up-to-date data on the employment rate of persons with disabilities are available (although there is some administrative data concerning registered job seekers). This is the first statistical challenge in Finland. Another such challenge is the blurred line between 'employment' and 'unemployment'. The Social Welfare Act lays down provisions on promoting access to employment and rehabilitative work activities for people with disabilities. According to the initial state report (2019) of the Finnish Institute for Welfare and Health (THL), 1729 clients attended day activities based on the Act on Disability Services and Assistance (1987/380), and 9844 attended activities based on the Act on Special Care for People with Intellectual Disabilities (519/1977). Those who receive pensions and who are engaged in different kinds of employment activities within the framework of social protection services are too often left uncounted as those seeking

⁵ Sustainable Growth Programme for Finland Recovery and Resilience Plan. Publication of the Finnish Government 2021:52. [Suomen kestävän kasvun ohjelma. Elpymis- ja palautumissuunnitelma \(valtioneuvosto.fi\)](#).

work or unemployed. They are categorised as those in rehabilitative work in administrative statistics (Table 11). This creates a bias in statistics that undermines the number of persons with disabilities who want to work but are outside the open labour market. These are some of the reasons why Finnish statistics must be critically analysed.

3.2 Analysis of labour market policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Finland and the Second National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2020-2023.

Finland's initial state report that was submitted to the CRPD in 2019 summarises the existing statutory efforts in the employment sector. According to the report, a number of statutory activities promote the employment of persons with disabilities. These are free social services, based on the Social Welfare Act. In addition to the general law, special laws on disability services, namely the Act on Disability Services and Assistance (1987/380) and the Act on Special Care for People with Intellectual Disabilities (519/1977), secure specific services meant for persons with disabilities. Of the many kinds of disability services, personal assistants (PAs) and transportation services are highlighted as the most essential and often as preconditions for employment.⁶ In 2019, 26 990 persons used PAs,⁷ the largest user group of which were working-age people. Municipalities have to provide transportation services for study and work at least 18 times per month for other activities.

Municipalities also have other, different provisions, which are not very well known. For instance, adjustment support is stipulated by law and the municipality's employment department can pay a subsidy of up to EUR 4 000 per person to remove the barriers to work, that persons with disabilities face. Similarly, the employment department provides up to 20 hours per month for a maximum of 18 months to support persons with disabilities at EUR 20 per hour.⁸ Interpreter services are stipulated in the Act on Interpretation Services for Persons with Disabilities (33/2010) for persons with hearing impairments. There were 6 071 service users in 2019 (3 661 hearing impaired, 368 deaf-blind, and 2 042 with a speech disability).

Some disability services are not compulsory for municipalities but subject to their resource availability. Resource-bound disability services include rehabilitation

⁶ Kyröläinen, Anni. (2020) Vammaisten henkilöiden työllistymisen rakenteelliset esteet. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön julkasuja 2020:36. P.19. Helsinki. Available at: https://tem.fi/-/report-barriers-to-employment-of-persons-with-disabilities-to-be-removed?fbclid=IwAR20QuPCj4zqDKedFMBUrDGIamj1tPqAOJ_b0pQhKsgVzB52EKFVXGQLOPA.

⁷ THL. (2021) Vammaisten henkilöiden kokemuksia koronaepidemian ajalta – tuloksia henkilökohtaisen avun asiakaskyselystä. Available at: https://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/142612/URN_ISBN_978-952-343-657-2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁸ Kyröläinen, Anni. (2020) Vammaisten henkilöiden työllistymisen rakenteelliset esteet. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön julkasuja 2020:36. Helsinki.p.23. Available at: https://tem.fi/-/report-barriers-to-employment-of-persons-with-disabilities-to-be-removed?fbclid=IwAR20QuPCj4zqDKedFMBUrDGIamj1tPqAOJ_b0pQhKsgVzB52EKFVXGQLOPA.

supervision, adjustment training, daily assistive devices, compensation for special clothing, compensation for special diet, and compensation for a personal car. These are all statutory services that facilitate persons with disabilities' employment in the open labour market or engage them in employment activities. They are seemingly generous statutory support to promote employment.

Nevertheless, many structural barriers have been identified. The first of these are benefit-related incentive traps. The employment activities and day activities described above have been heavily criticised in the past for trapping persons with disabilities, especially persons with intellectual disabilities, into segregated social services far away from the open labour market.⁹

In Finland, companies that employ more than 30 people are obliged to take equality and non-discrimination actions. Although the employment of persons with disabilities is spoken about as important, it is not implemented in practice. Disability is the grounds for discrimination most frequently notified to the equality ombudsman.¹⁰

The Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014) defines accessibility, equality, and reasonable accommodation. Accessibility, including digital accessibility, needs to be further developed at work as well as in society at large. However, the latest report from the Ministry¹¹ on the structural barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities highlights the great need for raising employers' awareness of accessibility, equality, and reasonable accommodation.

⁹ Vesala, H. et al. (2015) Kehitysvammaisten Ihmisten Työllisyystilanne 2013-2014. Kehitysvammaliiton selvityksiä 9. Helsinki. Available at <https://www.kehitysvammaliitto.fi/wp-content/uploads/kehitysvammaliiton-selvityksia-9.pdf>.

¹⁰ Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu (2018): Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutetun Vuosikertomus 2018

¹¹ Kyröläinen, Anni. (2020) Vammaisten henkilöiden työllistymisen rakenteelliset esteet. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön julkaisu 2020:36. Helsinki. Available at: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162325>.

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

[Article 28 of the UN CRPD](#) addresses Adequate standard of living and social protection. [Article 19 of the UN CRPD](#) addresses Living independently in the community. [Article 25 of the UN CRPD](#) addresses Health.

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 Finland was 14.6 % in 2019, compared to 9.7 % for other persons of similar age - an estimated disability poverty gap of approximately 5 percentage points (see Table 12-15). For people aged over 65, the disability poverty gap was 5.4 points (17.1 % for older persons with disabilities and 11.7 % 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 Finland (age 16-64) the risk of poverty before social transfers was 42.0 % and 14.6 % after transfers. The in-work poverty rate for persons with disabilities aged under 60 was 3.6 %.

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 Finland was 9.0 %, compared to 2.3 % for other persons, which is above the EU27 average of 1.7 %.

Additional data concerning the number of recipients of disability benefits are maintained by Kela. The most recent figures (published June 2021) showed a slight reduction in recipients of disability allowances between 2019 and 2020, to 261 937, of which the large majority (210 324) were Care allowances for pensioners, compared to 37 466 persons under 16 and just 14 177 aged over 16. This amounted to a total expenditure of EUR 553 million in 2020. A total of 5 874 persons were entitled to interpreting services, of which the majority were hearing impaired (3 563).¹²

4.2 Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Finland and the Second National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons 2020-2023.

COVID-related situations including lock-down, poorer accessibility of social, health and disability services, and less socialisation hit persons with disabilities hard. According to a study of the Finnish Institute of Welfare and Health (THL),¹³ accessibility to

¹² Disability benefits provided by Kela: Social Insurance Institution of Finland https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/331629/Pocket_Statistics_2021.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y (p. 12).

¹³ THL. (2021) Vammaisten henkilöiden kokemuksia koronaepidemian ajalta – tuloksia henkilökohtaisen avun asiakaskyselystä. THL. Helsinki. Available at:

personal assistant services deteriorated. About half of the respondents experienced poorer mental health, and 40 % experienced deteriorated health conditions. Loneliness was particularly problematic when they could not meet friends and families.

In the Recovery and Resilience Plan, it is planned that as a part of the ongoing social and health care reform the implementation of the statutory care guarantee will be promoted and the deficit in care, rehabilitation and services in social and health care will be filled. The deficit in rehabilitation and services are especially apparent in the lives of people with severe disabilities (p. 278). This manifests in difficulties to manage studies, work or even in everyday life which lead to increased need for support. The pandemic has affected service provision with many lock downs and closing services. Investments are targeted to local authorities to plan actions according to local needs. The plan entails the local authorities to direct special attention to vulnerable people especially hit by the pandemic. People with disabilities are singled out as one of these groups (p. 286).

The second Action Plan of the UN CRPD (2020-2023), which was established before the pandemic, refers to the government programme¹⁴ and strongly addresses a human rights-based welfare policy that leaves no one behind. The participation of persons with disabilities through their representative organisations is a primary principle of the Plan. The following goals are included:

- to promote the lineal model, in which social security and employment can be combined without significantly losing benefits and allowances, in conjunction with the SOTE reform;
- to make available digitalised employment services;
- to increase employment in the open labour market;
- to promote personal budgeting based on self-determination and participation of persons with disabilities;
- to strengthen housing based on individual and diverse needs.

These are still relevant goals. However, the pandemic has led to different kinds of acute needs including mental health needs such as loneliness and anxiety. Such pandemic-specific needs have to be taken into account even if they are not part of the Action Plan.

https://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/142612/URN_ISBN_978-952-343-657-2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

¹⁴ Government of Finland. (2019) Inclusive and competent Finland – a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society. Available at <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/marin/government-programme>.

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

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

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 17 indicates early school leaving rates disaggregated by disability status in Finland. 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 18 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).

The Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government¹⁵ was published in April 2021. It is stated in the report that the educational system is not as equal as intended. The objectives to reach equality and equity are not fully realised and further actions are suggested in the report. The legislation enables different forms of support that could be provided. The report recommends that municipalities would utilise all the possibilities to support inclusion of persons with disabilities in all levels of education. It is for example suggested that timely support and low-threshold services sufficient to secure children's and young people's development, learning and well-being will be ensured by the renewed legislation. The authorities responsible for education should support an encouraging school culture, in which diversity is accepted.

5.2 Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Finland and the Second National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons 2020-2023.

In the Second National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2020-2023¹⁶ it is stated that reasonable accommodation is a term that needs clearer definition especially in employment and education sectors. The Finnish Government is committed to increase awareness and competences related to minority issues among the authorities. The Government will launch a partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act, making equality and non-discrimination plans at different levels of education obligatory, including the early childhood education and care. The actions also aim to prevent discrimination in recruitment and examining anonymous recruitments. All these measures play a role in the realisation of the equality of persons

¹⁵ Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government. Publications of the Finnish Government 2021: 24. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-622-8>.

¹⁶ Right to social inclusion and equality: National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020–2023). Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2021: 22. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-5422-9>.

with disabilities, and putting them successfully to practice will support the implementation of the UNCRPD in Finland.

A government proposal on extending compulsory education was brought to Parliament in autumn 2020 and the Act came into effect in 2021.¹⁷ The Act states that the compulsory education is extended to upper secondary education until the student turns 18. This extension of compulsory education applies equally to all students. A new act on preparatory education for programmes leading to a qualification was also introduced. The transition stage programmes between basic and upper secondary education, or voluntary additional basic education, preparatory education for general upper secondary education and preparatory education for vocational education and training, have been combined to form preparatory education leading to a qualification.

The Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government¹⁸ presents several concrete actions to enhance the inclusion of children with disabilities to early childhood education and elementary school. It is argued that the introduction of two-year preschool might support school entry of vulnerable groups. The quality objectives that will be drafted for early childhood education will make assessment easier. More attention will be directed to multi-professional actions to support the inclusiveness of the education. The increasing the age of compulsory schooling to 18 years will offer possibilities also for young people with disabilities to acquire needed competences to enter labour market or higher education.¹⁹ In higher education more opportunities have to be created by digitalisation and student support services. The access for needed support must be ensured also in higher education according to the legislation.

Several other developmental projects and programmes are targeted to enhance the right to education. For example, a development programme entitled Oikeus osata²⁰ ('Right to skills') focuses on the quality and equality of vocational education and training and aims to ensure that all students in vocational education and training acquire solid vocational competence and good basic skills for work, life and lifelong learning. The development programme was launched in 2020 and it will end in 2022. A network project on building competence in demanding special support based on evidence (TUVET)²¹ has produced research evidence and learning materials related to pedagogical solutions for demanding and special support to help develop the initial teacher education and competence development during teachers' careers.

¹⁷ Extension of compulsory education. <https://minedu.fi/en/extension-of-compulsory-education>.

¹⁸ Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government. Publications of the Finnish Government 2021: 24. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-622-8>.

¹⁹ Extension of compulsory education. <https://minedu.fi/en/extension-of-compulsory-education>.

²⁰ Preparing the Programme to Develop Quality and Equality in Vocational Education and Training <https://minedu.fi/oikeusosata>.

²¹ Tutkimusperustainen vaatimaan erityiseen tukeen liittyvän osaamisen vahvistaminen opettajankoulutuksessa ja täydennyskoulutuksessa (TUVET). <https://www.tuвет.fi/>.

6 Investment priorities in relation to disability

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

European social fund (ESF)

S22370 Supported Cooperative, start 1.4.2021 and end 30.6.2023. The purpose of the Supported Cooperative project is to create a new type of Supported Cooperative model that works in connection with public sector's rehabilitative work activities. The supported cooperative provides a pathway to supported entrepreneurship for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and other people who need support in learning. During the project, the existing cooperative models will be reformulated, and the developed new Supported Cooperative model will be piloted in connection with municipal work in Central Finland. The aim is to get Supported Cooperatives within the work activities of municipalities to diversify employment opportunities. The project also collaborates with other relevant actors (social work, schools, work centres, associations). The project promotes the role and inclusion of people with intellectual and development disabilities and others who need support in learning and understanding in working life. In addition, the aim is to diversify the earning potential of people with intellectual disabilities as the supported cooperative model develops, so that as many people as possible receive part of their livelihood as sales of products or services. EU and State funding granted: EUR 92 807, planned public funding (total): EUR 333 472.

S22389 The survival and coping of persons with disabilities and persons with migrant origin in times of crisis and emergencies – Creating a new future using experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic, start 1.2.2021 and end 31.3.2023. The object of this project is to support the survival and functional capacity of persons with disabilities and persons with migrant origin in times of crises and emergencies. Instructions, plans and operational models will be formed for use in municipalities and communities during states of emergency. Persons of migrant origin, persons with disabilities, informal caregivers, civil society organisations of persons with disabilities and persons of migrant origin, expert networks of the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, and service providers will join together to develop said instructions, plans and operational models. The aim is that in the future, during similar circumstances, the needs and rights of both persons of migrant origin and persons with disabilities will be observed and taken into account more carefully. Intersectional points of view will also be taken into account in this project, i.e. persons who are both of migrant origin and have disabilities. Developing instructions, plans and operational models requires knowledge about how the pandemic has affected persons with disabilities, persons of migrant origin and service organisers and providers. Data is gathered with population survey studies, surveys to municipalities and service units, client interviews, and focus group discussions. Data from said different sources is used to determine how the coronavirus pandemic has affected the two target groups of this project. EU and State funding granted: EUR 448 008, planned public funding (total): EUR 1 304.068.

S22413 Netta – supporting young people with special needs to get a job and educating enterprises to recruit people with special needs, start 1.5.2021 and end 30.4.2023. The aim of the project is to develop an action model and to strengthen skills and competences in working life to support people with special needs, especially when the

restrictions include lack in communication skills. The objective is also the create more opportunities to develop their carrier and work-related skills.

EU and State funding granted: EUR 127 640, planned public funding (total): EUR 159 550.

S22445 The 'Let's hire! Supported employment centre' started on 1.1.2021 and ends on 31.8.2023. The main goal of the project is to support the implementation of high-quality, effective job coaching in Pirkanmaa. This will lead to an increase in the employment of people with disabilities or other needs for support. A job coaching coordination centre called 'Lets hire! Supported employment centre', will be established. The Coordination Centre compiles and maintains a co-operation network consisting of the following parties operating in Pirkanmaa; job coaches (organisation, city, municipality, educational institution), employees of employment promotion services, social service employees, employers, job seekers, and future job coaches who work, for example, in the daytime activity centre as a mentor in municipalities that do not yet have a job coaching service. EU and State funding granted: EUR 65 873, planned public funding (total): EUR 172 499.

S22448 'Power' started 1.1.2021 and ends on 31.8.2023. The aim of the project is to support multicultural people who need support due to a mild intellectual disability or other special needs to find their own study and working life path. The project will reinforce their self-awareness, strengths, and social inclusion, while providing adequate, appropriate support. The project organises group and individual coaching. The results and outputs will be used to develop a coaching model for wider use. EU and State funding granted: EUR 67 370, planned public funding (total): EUR 194 750.

S22514 'Partially able to work as part of the open labour market' started on 2.8.2021 and ends on 30.6.2023. Its aim is to enhance the participation in labour markets of people with partial ability to work such as persons with disabilities in Rovaniemi, Lapland. EU and State funding granted: EUR 181 900, planned public funding (total): EUR 240 830.

S22423 'Supporting the job' started on 1.6.2021 and ends 31.12.2022. The project is an extension to the 'Job for real' project, and its aim is to support people who are retired due to disability or long-term unemployment because of poor work ability. The project adds elements of social rehabilitation to work coaching. It helps disabled and incapacitated people find they own resources and be active in the labour market. It also aims to harmonise paid employment and pensions. The model developed in the project will be integrated into existing structures. In addition, co-operation with public services will increase, especially via the municipal experiment. EU and State funding granted: EUR 91 197, planned public funding (total): EUR 236 554.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

A77475 'Disko – Better accessibility of digital services as a method to defeat corona' starts on 1.9.2021 and ends on 31.8.2023. This project focuses on increasing digital accessibility. Better accessibility and barrier-free use will improve the services of several user target groups and create significantly better new business opportunities for entrepreneurs. The project aims to increase the availability of digital services

through the Accessibility Directive of the EU even before the finalisation of the national legislation in Finland. The project consists of a large variety of actions, to increase the competence of SMEs in particular, taking into account the entire business chain from product development to the delivery of the service / product to the customer. EU and State funding granted: EUR 270 164, planned public funding (total): EUR 337 705.

Ended projects:

Neighbour – community living model (1.1.2018 - 30.4.2020) The purpose of Neighbour – community living model -Project is to strengthen welfare, social inclusion and participation skills of adult people with intellectual disabilities by searching solutions for independent living and preventing social exclusion. The aim of the project is to expand and develop the social housing property management model from supportive living guidance towards inclusive community-based Neighbourhood-community model. The material of the project is available in Finnish.²²

The projects funded by structural funds are evaluated. Evaluation reports²³ are available in Finnish, but they do not assess outcomes from perspective of persons with disabilities. The final report is available in English.²⁴

6.2 Priorities for future investment (after 2021)

Digitalisation is a strategy for many of the present Government's goals set for the future. This is a great opportunity to make digitalised services accessible from the onset, and to pay particular attention to digital gaps to avoid increasing the inequalities in society.

Employment will be a priority for the whole nation after the corona pandemic. All measures should also be inclusive of persons with disabilities. A lineal model for employment of persons with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual disabilities, is a priority so that allowance dependency and the incentive trap does not institutionally hinder them from working. Finland will use the RRF funding for creating a new actor to intermediate labour market that would provide employment and services for persons with partial ability to work. Special attention will be directed in offering equal possibilities to enter the labour market for people with intellectual disabilities.

Funds will also be invested to projects tackling the deficit in care and rehabilitation, especially for people with disabilities.

The reconciliation process for the Deaf and Sign community is clearly written in the current government programme of the Prime Minister, Sanna Marin. The Government of Finland has commissioned a study on human rights violation against this community and it will be completed by the end of 2021. After this, a reconciliation commission will

²² Project materials <https://www.lab.fi/fi/projekti/naapurit-yhteisollisyyden-ja-osallisuuden-mahdollistajat>.

²³ Rakennerahasto-ohjelman arviointi <https://www.rakennerahastot.fi/arviointi>.

²⁴ Final evaluation report of Structural Funds Programme <https://www.rakennerahastot.fi/web/en/evaluation>.

be established which will discuss past and present, systematic, institutional human rights violations and ways forward towards full inclusion of the Deaf and Sign community in Finnish society.

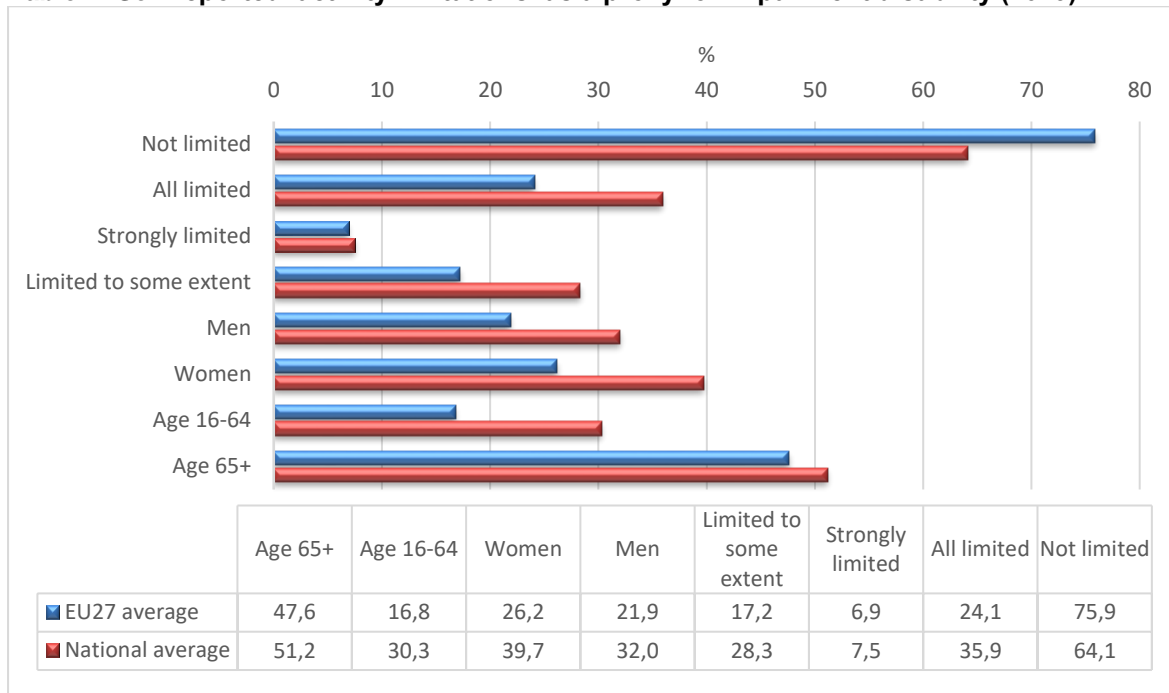
7 Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester

See also disability data published in the Eurostat database²⁵ and statistical reports.²⁶

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’.²⁷

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’.²⁸ National estimates for Finland are compared with

²⁵ Eurostat health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

²⁶ Eurostat (2019) *Disability Statistics* https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability_statistics.

²⁷ 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)).

²⁸ This methodology was developed in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>.

EU27 mean averages for the most recent year.²⁹ In general, a larger proportion of younger adults reported limitations in Finland than the EU average.

7.1 Data relevant to disability and the labour market

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

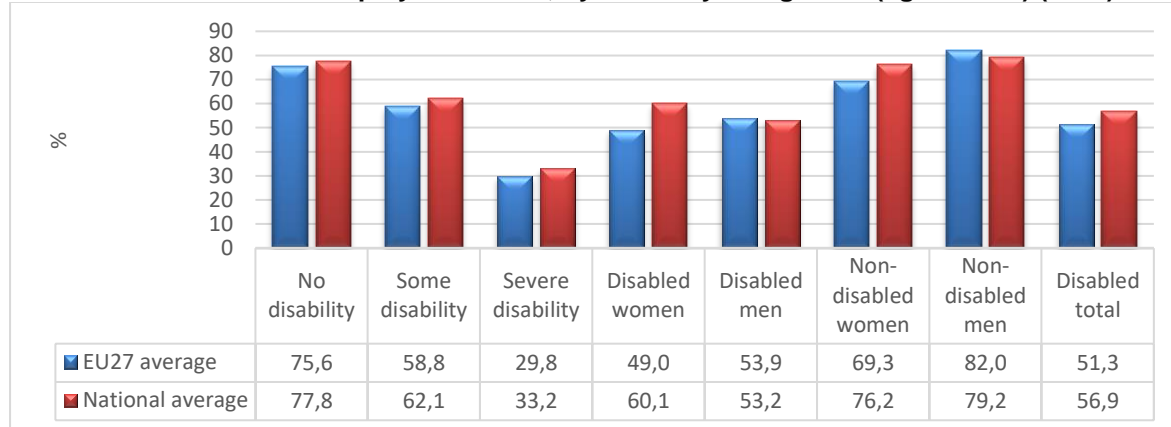


Table 3: Employment rates in Finland, by disability and age group (2019)

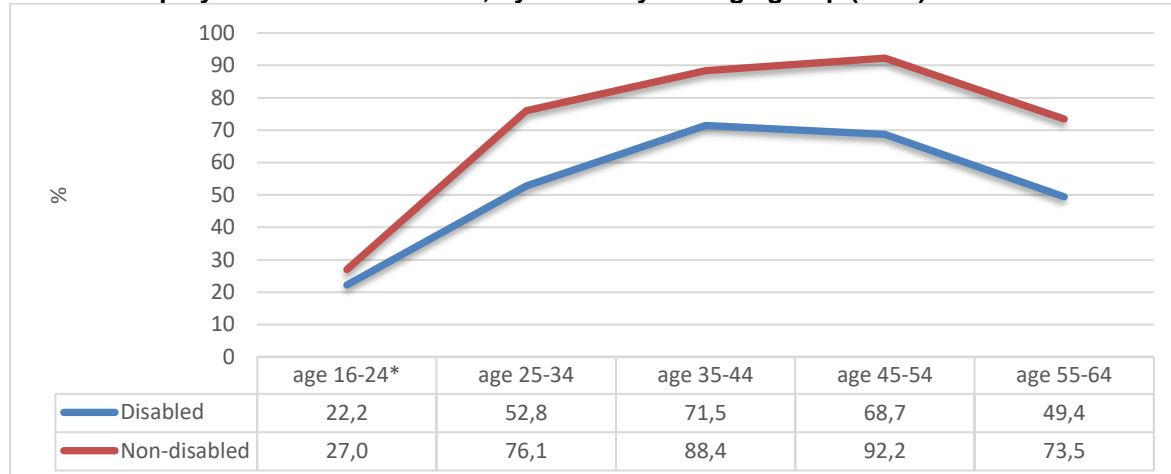


Table 4: National trends in employment rates, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)



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

²⁹ 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.

7.1.1 Unemployment

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

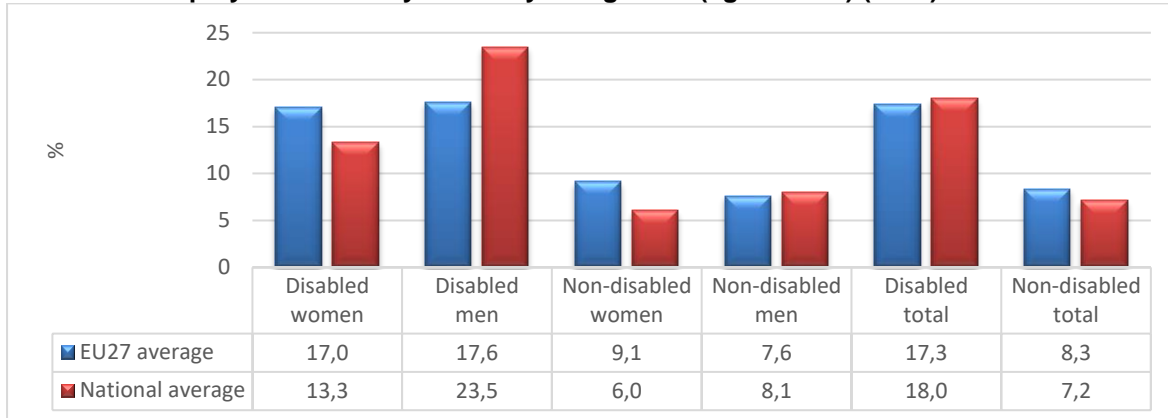


Table 6: Unemployment rates in Finland, by disability and age group (2019)

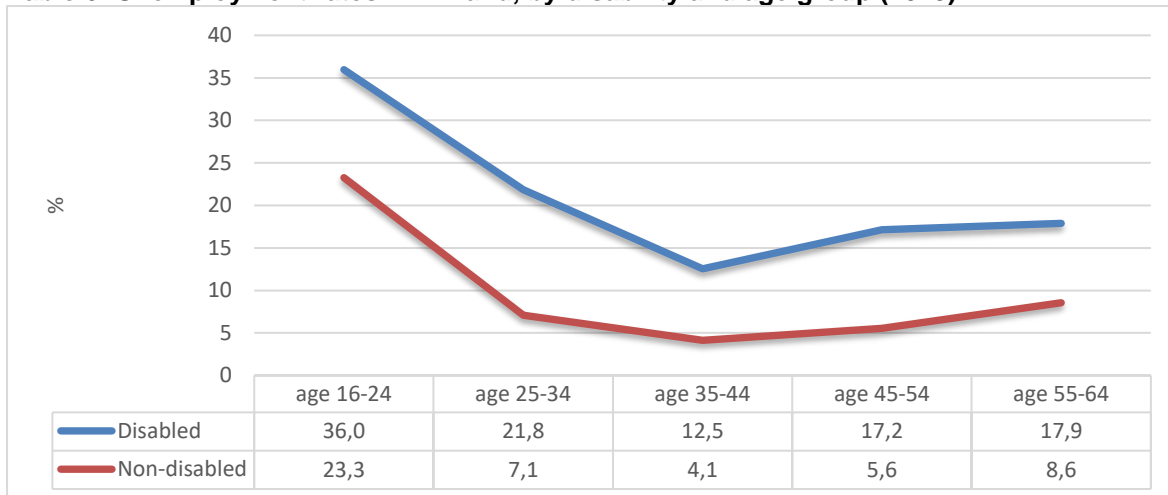
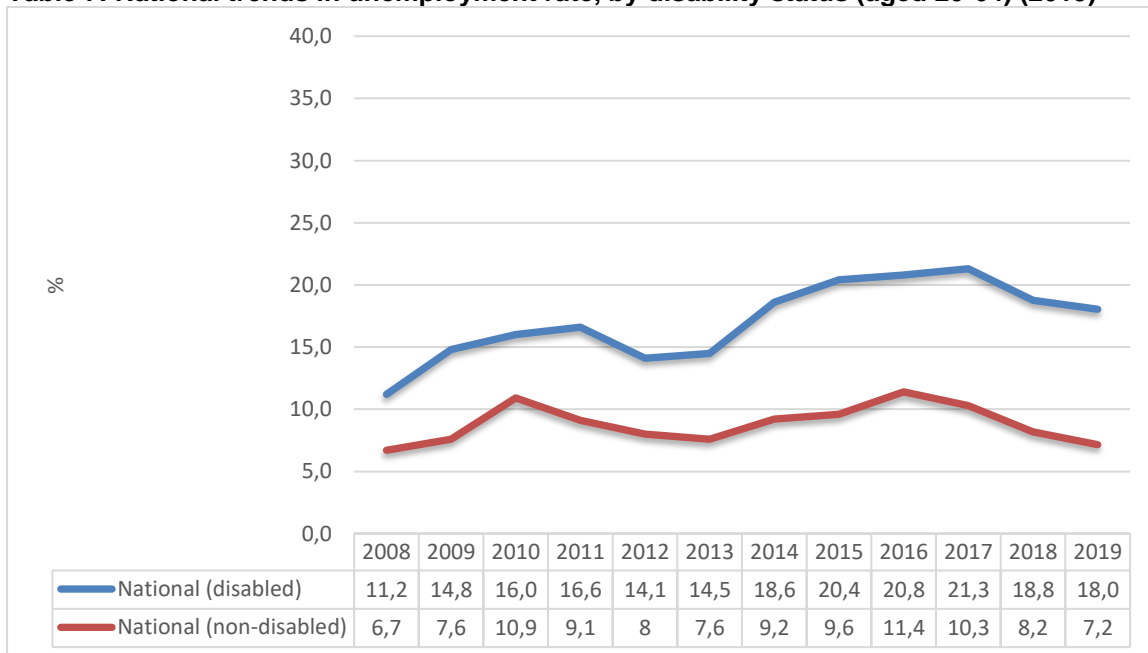


Table 7: National trends in unemployment rate, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)



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

7.1.2 Economic activity

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

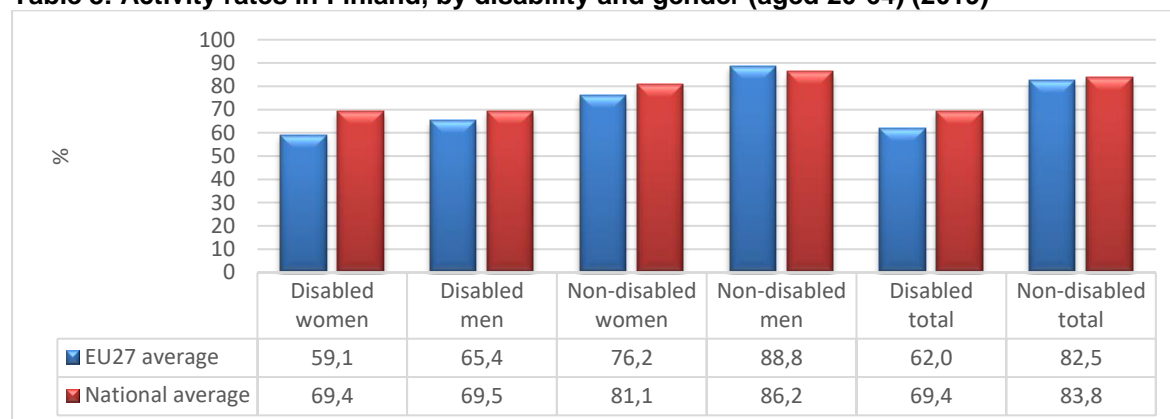


Table 9: Activity rates in Finland, by age group (2019)

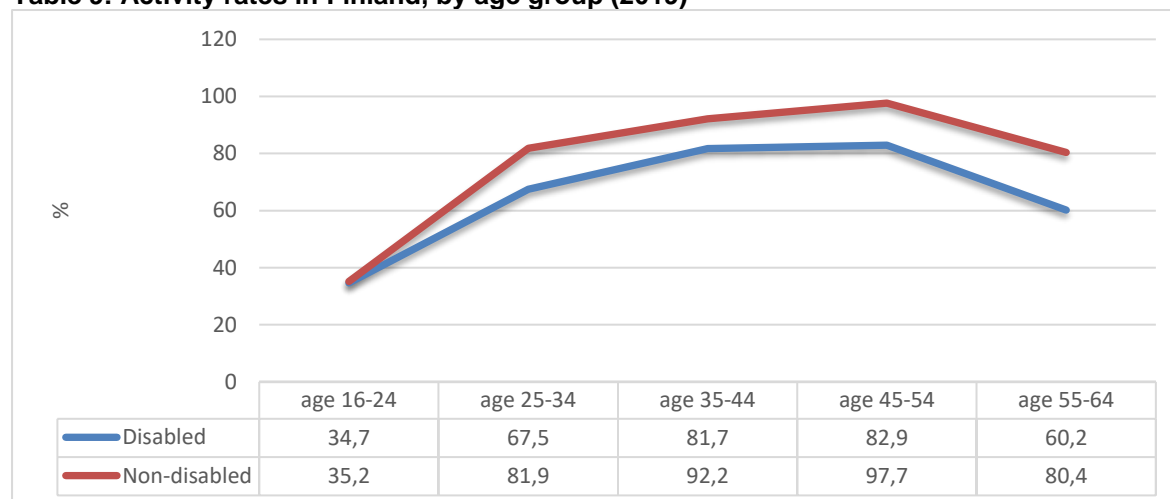
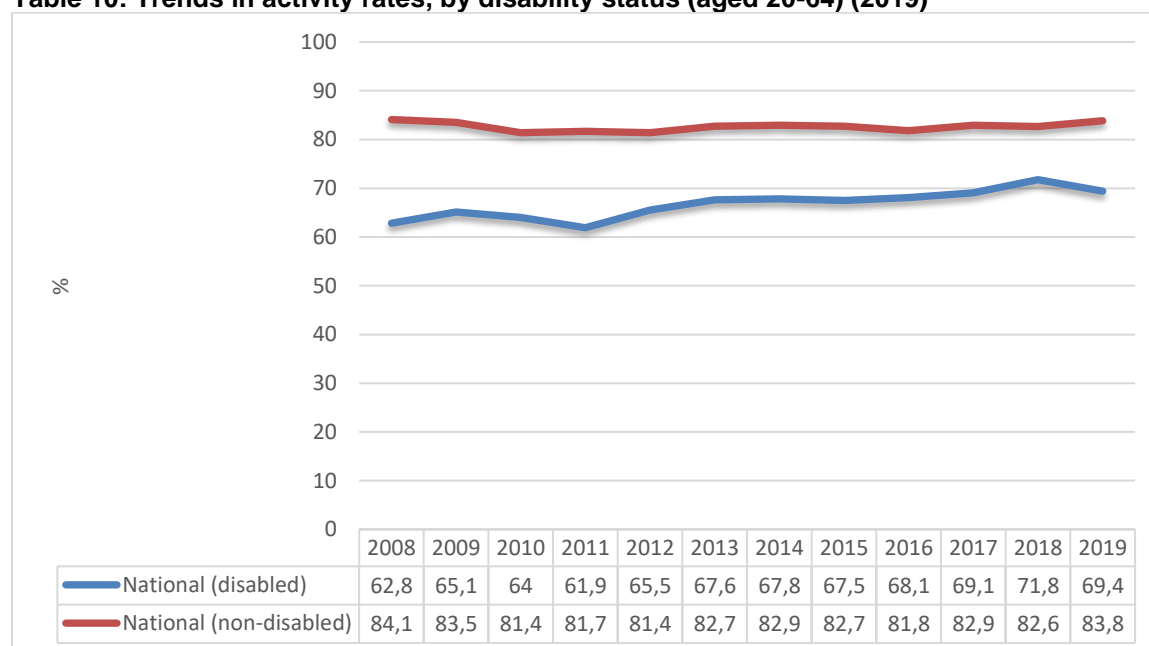


Table 10: Trends in activity rates, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)



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

7.1.3 Alternative sources of labour market data in Finland

Disability data is not yet available from the core European Labour Force Survey but historic labour market indicators for Finland were disaggregated from ad hoc modules conducted in 2001 and 2011. These can be found in the Eurostat disability database.³⁰

The Finnish Labour Survey is conducted by Statistics Finland and distinguishes people with partial work capacity (a different definition of disability) but this variable is not disaggregated in the published tables.³¹

Monthly administrative data is available from the Employment Service for the number of unemployed jobseekers, including 34 496 persons 'with disabilities and long-term illnesses' in July 2021.³² The following table was published for sub-groups within the inactive population, in 2019, which included 13 042 'disabled or chronically ill' persons and 9 466 persons in 'rehabilitative work'.

Table 11: Sub-groups of other inactive population by sex in 2019³³

Sub-groups of other inactive population	Men	Women	Men %	Women %	Total
Recipients of social assistance	18,467	15,773	53.9	46.1	34,240
Parents of children aged under three	2,508	30,097	7.7	92.3	32,605
Young people aged 18 to 24 without post-comprehensive school qualifications	7,525	5,998	55.6	44.4	13,523
Disabled or chronically ill	6,211	6,831	47.6	52.4	13,042
Persons in rehabilitative work	5,373	4,093	56.8	43.2	9,466
Persons living with capital income (> EUR 20,000 per year)	1,343	768	63.6	36.4	2,111

Source: Statistics Finland.

³⁰ Eurostat Health Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

³¹ Statistics Finland (2021) Labour force survey: Tables https://www.stat.fi/til/tyti/tau_en.html.

³² Statistics Finland (2021) 2021M07 Unemployed jobseekers with disabilities and long-term illnesses (number), https://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin_tym_tyonv_kk/statfin_tyonv_pxt_12r5.px/table/tableViewLayout1/.

³³ Statistics Finland, Table 1. Sub-groups of other inactive population by sex in 2019, https://www.stat.fi/til/tyokay/2019/01/tyokay_2019_01_2021-04-08_tau_001_en.html.

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

Table 12: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and risk (aged 16-59)

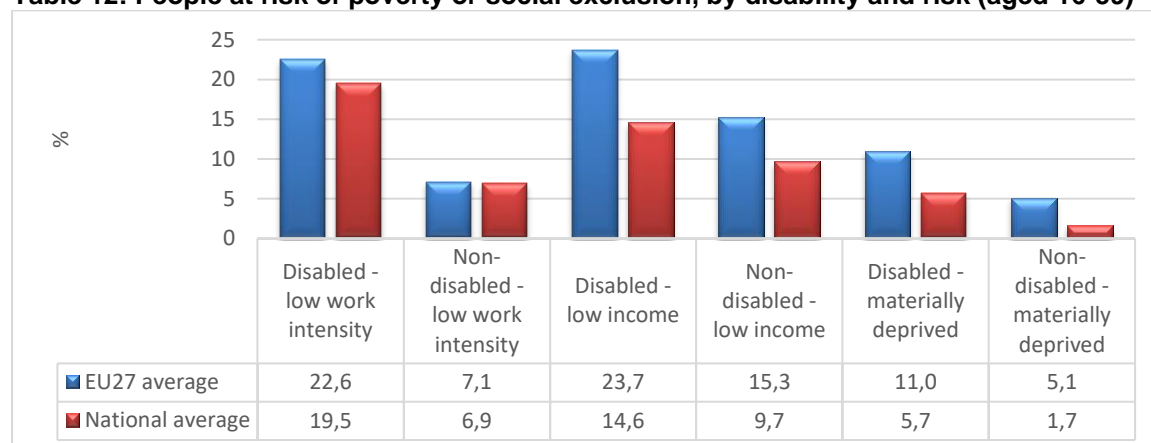


Table 13: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and gender (aged 16+)

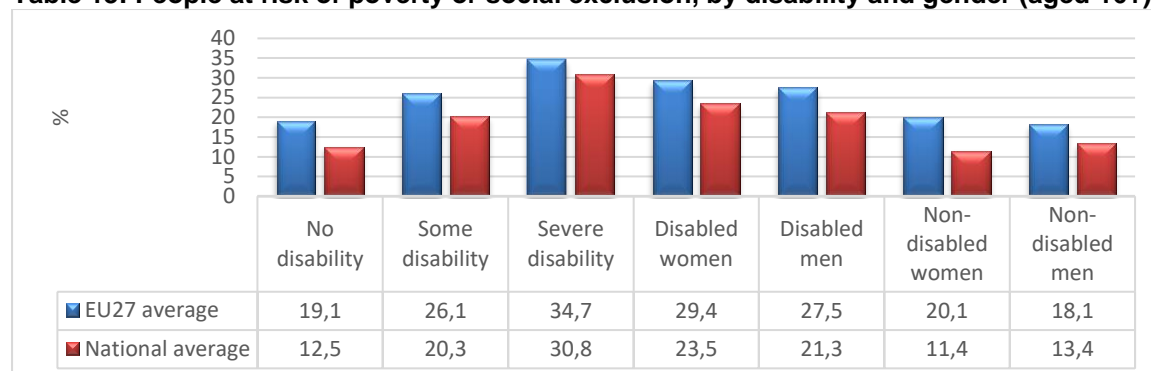
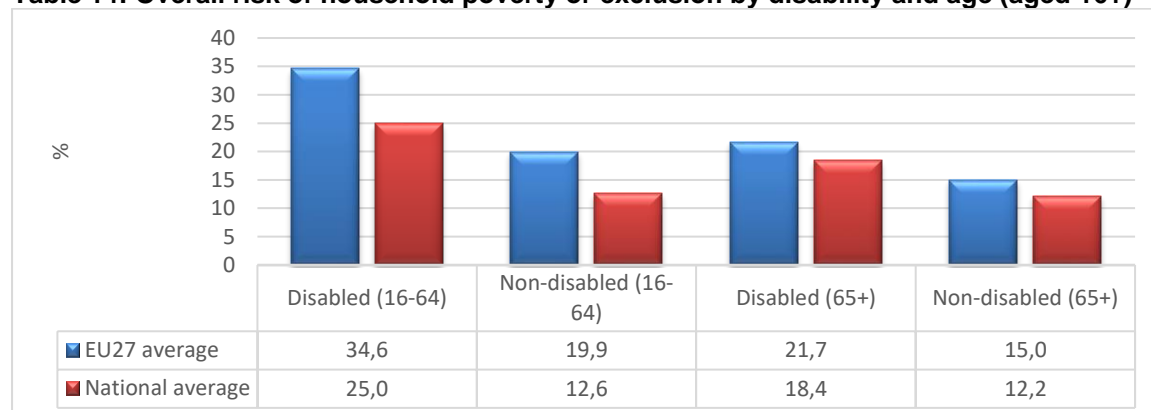
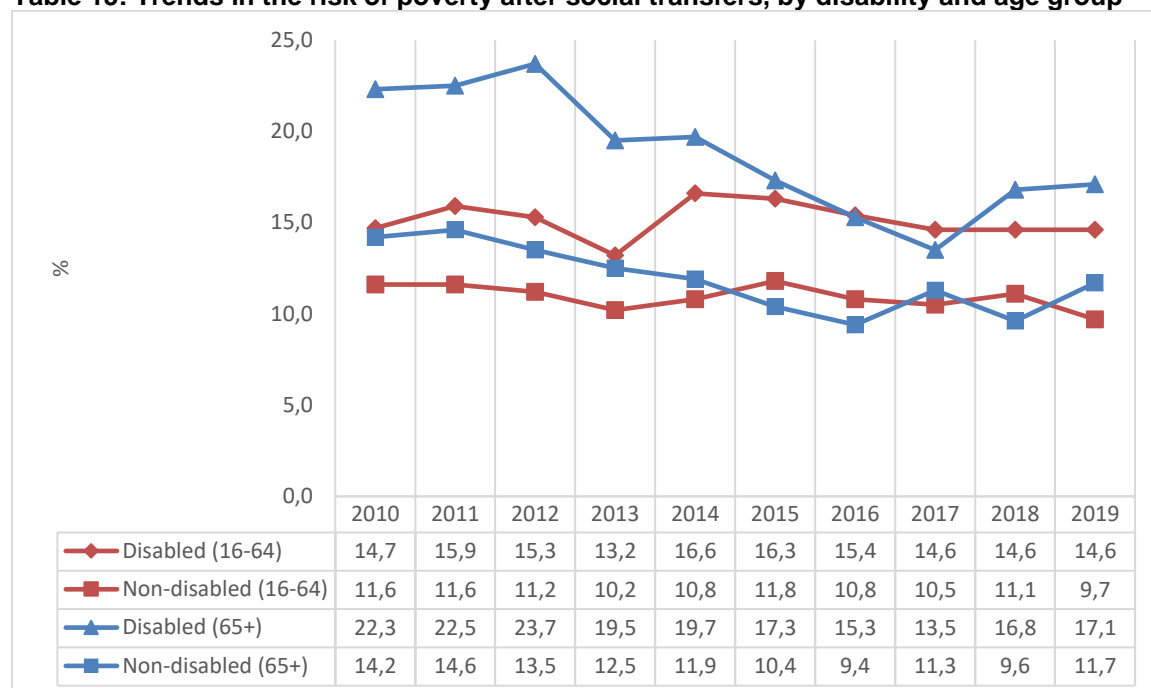


Table 14: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)

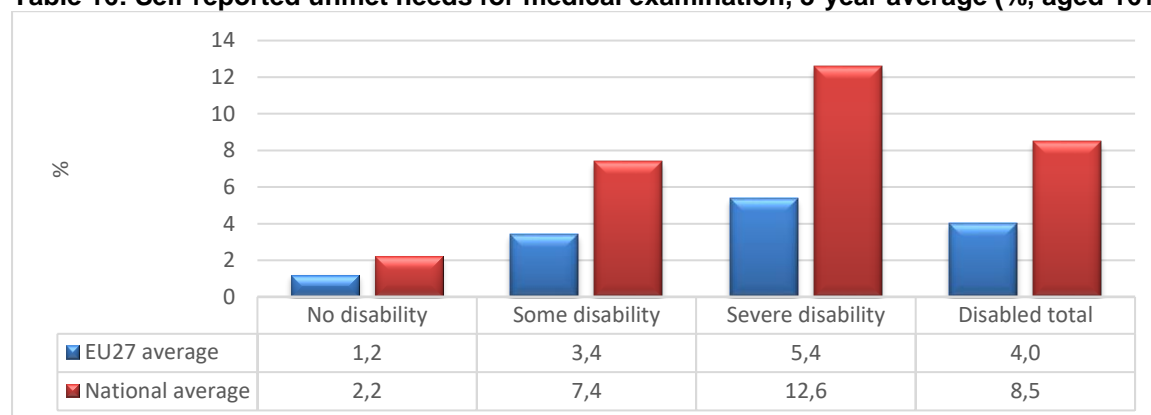


Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and previous UDB).

Table 15: 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 16: 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 Finland

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.³⁴

³⁴ Eurostat Health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

Administrative data is available on the number of persons receiving disability benefits and services from Kela and summarised in a disability chapter of the statistical pocketbook.³⁵

7.3 EU data relevant to disability and education

Table 17: Early school leaving rates, by disability status (aged 18-24 and 18-29)³⁶

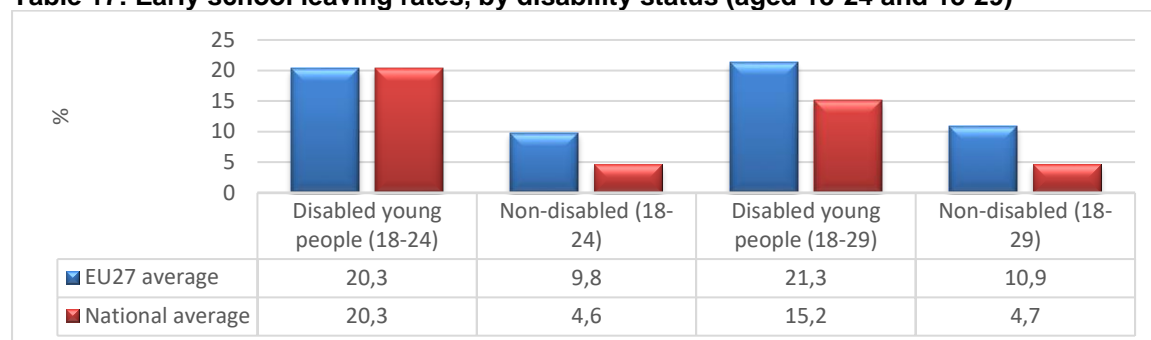
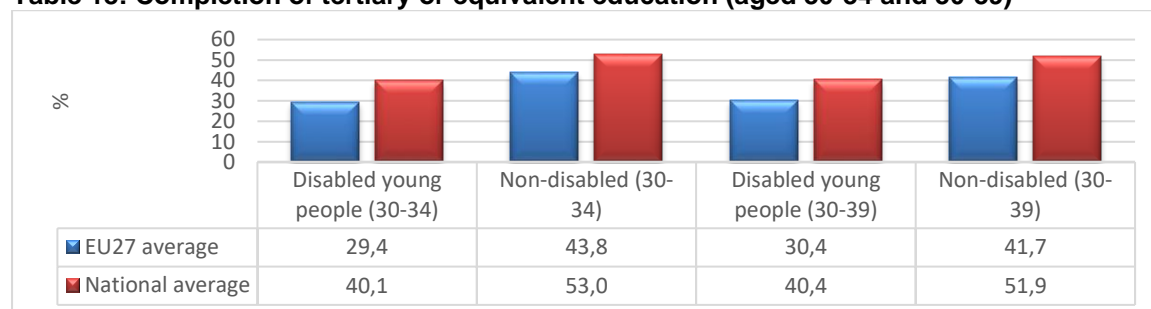


Table 18: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (aged 30-34 and 30-39)



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 Finland

Statistics Finland publishes statistics on discontinuation of education,³⁷ but it does not record pupils nor students according to disability.

³⁵ Disability benefits provided by Kela: Social Insurance Institution of Finland https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/331629/Pocket_Statistics_2021.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y.

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ Discontinuation of education. Statistics Finland. https://www.stat.fi/til/kkesk/index_en.html.

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