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Portugal

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# European Semester 2021-2022 country fiche on disability equality

With comparative data Annex provided by EDE

## Portugal

Paula Campos Pinto  
María A. Acosta Jiménez  
Patrícia Neca  
Sofia Bento

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 Portugal in 2022**

Portugal introduced a new National Strategy for Inclusion of Persons with Disability as part of the NRP 2021 and the RRP. The introduction of this Strategy responds to the UNCRPD recommendation and EU Strategy, but it lacks specific targets: indicators are mainly documents (e.g. publication of reports, guides, new legislation).

In addition, the following points are highlighted:

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

The pandemic produced a backward step regarding employment and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market: at the end of 2020, the number of registered unemployed persons with disabilities in employment services increased 11.6 % in relation to December 2019 and continued to increase in the first quarter of 2021: by March 2021, this number increased another 8.1 % in relation to December 2020. Unemployment also grew for the general population: +30.2 % in December 2020 than in 2019, with youngsters being the most affected by the pandemic.

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

Persons with disabilities are at significantly higher risk of poverty than persons without disabilities. In 2019 the gap between persons with and without disabilities was almost the same than in 2016, with women with disabilities being the most affected group. Even after the introduction of the Social Inclusion Benefit in 2017, persons with disabilities continue to face a higher risk of poverty after social transfers, which indicates that the level of benefits is low while most households of persons with disabilities are highly dependent on social transfers as their only source of income.

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

In 2018 Portugal introduced Decree-Law 54/2018 to further inclusive education. By the school year 2017/2018, 99 % of students identified as having 'special education needs' already attended mainstream schools. Official statistics since the introduction of the new legislation are not available. Regarding tertiary education, in 2020/21 the number of students with disabilities increased 10.5 % and in 2019/20 the number of students with disabilities who have completed an academic qualification increased +55.7 % than in the previous academic year. Despite this strong growth, the percentage of students with disabilities who complete post-secondary education remains extremely low: in 2019 they were only 0.7 % of all students completing higher education in Portugal.

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

Through the RRP, Portugal defined three main areas of investment addressed to persons with disabilities. 1) The Mental Health Reform aiming to deinstitutionalise persons living in psychiatric hospitals and prevent institutionalisation of others; 2) The Provision and Equipment and the Social Responses Reform, which introduces a community-based services perspective; 3) and Physical and Digital accessibility, centred on interventions on the public spaces for circulation and mobility, and providing helpful information online for people with disabilities.

## 1.2 Recommendations for Portugal

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

**Recommendation:** Invest in the qualification of persons with disabilities, especially in terms of digital and technological skills.

*Rationale:* Digital and technological skills are more necessary than ever to address current labour market needs, particularly following the shifts in the labour market due to the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. increase in teleworking). However, this is an area where persons with disabilities in Portugal particularly lag, and one that is not sufficiently stressed in the RRP.

**Recommendation:** Expand and ensure the sustainability of the independent living scheme in Portugal, so that instead of a pilot project it becomes a permanent social policy measure covering a wider number of beneficiaries.

*Rationale:* The existing IL scheme is quite recent and only covers a residual number of persons. Without the support of personal assistants, persons with disabilities in Portugal are very dependent on family care which compounds their social exclusion.

**Recommendation:** Create an integrated system for monitoring the progress of the new Strategy for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities including making available data on the situation of students with disabilities from preschool to secondary school (e.g. number of students disaggregated by sex, resources allocated, school success and school dropout), employment/unemployment.

*Rationale:* Disability equality indicators are lacking in Portugal in crucial areas such as education, employment/unemployment and access to health. Updated data is crucial for monitoring the Strategy and following up the implementation of the UNCRPD in Portugal.

**Recommendation:** Define specific targets for fighting long-term unemployment among persons with disabilities and increase public funding to cover costs related to promoting accessibility, providing reasonable accommodations in the workplace and other employment supports as to increase inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market.

*Rationale:* Programmes addressed to fight Long-term unemployment in Portugal do not mention persons with disabilities as a specific target, although this group is very likely to remain unemployed for a long time. Thus, defining specific employment/unemployment targets for persons with disabilities and strengthen investment in programmes specifically directed to promote employment of this group, is needed for many reasons. First, the availability of such funds and supports is likely to reduce employers' resistance to hire persons with disabilities. Second, they will contribute to raise awareness of the real barriers that persons with disabilities face in the labour market, which often are not related to their abilities but to employers' attitudes. Finally, reducing long-term unemployment among persons with disabilities is likely to help reducing the poverty gap that currently exists between the population with and without disability in Portuguese society.

## 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 Portugal (RRP)

The following key points highlight where the situation of persons with disabilities or disability policies was considered in the plan (to be further detailed in the next chapters):

- Improving the social responses available to people with disabilities (indicated in the Recovery and Resilience Plan<sup>2</sup> as the main action towards persons with disabilities).
- Promoting the participation of persons with disabilities by boosting physical and digital accessibility.<sup>3</sup> This includes developing a Platform that compiles all the services and legislation available for persons with disabilities, as well as useful information updated in real time, such as georeferentiation of accessible buildings and parking for persons with reduced mobility and creating a channel of communication in Portuguese Sign Language in all public administration services.
- Considering measures to promote autonomy<sup>4</sup> of persons with disabilities and avoiding institutionalization as a social response for people with reduced mobility.
- Reforming the Mental Health Law<sup>5</sup> to implement new intervention strategies based on community responses, seeking deinstitutionalization, boosting local services for mental health care, and improving intersectoral responses for persons with dementia, their families and caregivers.
- Creating a new social housing<sup>6</sup> programme which responds, among others, to special needs of persons with disabilities and reduced mobility.

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

Relevant recommendations and issues arising from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are highlighted in each chapter. The National Strategy for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities 2021-2025 (published on 31 August 2021),<sup>7</sup> defines eight strategic pillars. Five of them are relevant here: i) Citizenship, equality and non-discrimination-; ii) promotion of an inclusive environment; iii) education and qualification; iv) labour market, employment and

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<sup>2</sup> Recovery and Resilience Plan. Final Version, 22 April 2021. Page 98.  
<https://www.portugal.gov.pt/download-ficheiros/ficheiro.aspx?v=%3d%3dBQAAAB%2bLCAAAAAAABAAzNDQzNgYA62SpeQUAAAA%3d>.

<sup>3</sup> Recovery and Resilience Plan. Final Version, 22 April 2021. Pages 99, and 101.

<sup>4</sup> Recovery and Resilience Plan. Final Version, 22 April 2021. Page 99.

<sup>5</sup> Recovery and Resilience Plan. Final Version, 22 April 2021. Page 81.

<sup>6</sup> Recovery and Resilience Plan. Final Version, 22 April 2021. Page 90.

<sup>7</sup> National Strategy for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities 2021-2025, available at <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/170514954>.



professional training; v) promotion of autonomy and independent living; vi) measures, services and social support; vii) culture, sport, tourism and leisure; viii) knowledge, research, innovation and development.

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

In 2016, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Portugal:

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

'52. The Committee recommends that the State party, in close consultation with organizations representing persons with disabilities, review its public- and private-sector labour legislation to bring it into line with the Convention and that it take measures to enforce the law and apply the stipulated penalties for non-compliance. The Committee also recommends that it do away with segregated working environments, that it review the legislation regulating the Occupational Activity Centres from a human rights perspective to bring them into line with the Convention and that it step up efforts to promote access to the regular labour market for persons with intellectual disabilities and autism. The State party should promote corporate social responsibility in connection with the employment of persons with disabilities. The Committee recommends that the State party consider the links between article 27 of the Convention and target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a view to achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.'

The next state party implementation report to the UN, combining the second, third and fourth reports, is due no later than November 2023.

#### **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 Portugal of 59.8 % in 2019, compared to 79.1 % for other persons against a national employment target of 75 % and approximately 8.5 points above the EU27 average. This results in an estimated disability gap of approximately 19 percentage points (EU27 average gap 24.2, see Tables 2-4) or an employment chances ratio of 0.8.

The same data indicate unemployment rates of 17.6 % and 9.6 %, respectively in 2019 (see Tables 5-7) and an economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Portugal of 72.5 %, compared to 87.5 % for other persons (see Tables 8-10). These indications are broken down by gender and age in the respective tables in annex.

Until 2019, Portugal has followed a positive path regarding the employment of persons with disabilities: employment and activity rates were above EU average, the unemployment rate was in line with EU average, registered unemployed persons with disabilities had been decreasing since 2017 (-0.9 % than in 2018), and, finally, public sector employees with disabilities had increased slightly (+1 % than in 2018). Data from the private sector regarding 2019 is not yet available. It should nevertheless be pointed out that, in general, persons with disabilities continued to fare lower than persons without disabilities in the labour market (See Table 10).

However, in 2020, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the employment situation of persons with disabilities took an unprecedented backward step: at the end of the year the number of registered unemployed persons with disabilities in employment services increased to 13 440 (+11.6 % than in December 2019), a figure which in absolute terms had never been reached before (since available data in 2011), exceeding the

maximum figure achieved in 2016 (13,183). Of these, 52.7 % were men, and 47.5 were women (see Table 12). The majority (88.5 %) were adults over 25 years old, were looking for a new job (84 %) and had been unemployed for more than 12 months (58.6 %), representing an increase of 12.1 %, 13 % and 21.7 %, respectively, compared with 2019 (see Table 13). Similarly, in 2020, the number of job placements of persons with disabilities through the Employment Services decreased 34.6 % compared to 2019 (1 031 vs.1 577). And just over the first trimester of 2021, the number of unemployed persons with disabilities rose to 14 510 unemployed persons with disabilities (+8.1 % compared to December 2020), probably due to the second Portugal's total lockdown (from mid-January to mid-March 2021) due to the pandemic crisis (Table 11).

Nevertheless, in 2020 the trend observed in the general population was even worse: +30.2 % (N=375 150) unemployed than in 2019, reaching at the end of 2020 levels close to those seen in 2017.

Although these numbers (N=375 150) do not represent the total unemployed persons with disabilities in Portugal (just those who voluntarily register at the Employment Services), the estimated national unemployment rate in December 2020 (National Statistics, Labour Force Survey,<sup>8</sup> 17-74 years) was similar: 6.8 % of the population, or around 347 000 unemployed persons.

In general, youngsters have been the most affected: in December 2020, the youth unemployment rate (15-24 years) raised sharply to 23.7 % (18.2 % in 2019) compared to the national average of 6.8 % (National Statistics, Labour Force Survey). Although 2020 data for young persons with disabilities is not yet available, figures from 2018 suggest a similar trend: the unemployment rates of young persons with disabilities (age 16-24) were the highest: 24.1 %, compared to 23.8 % for other youngsters. (update to 2019 data when available).

In contrast, data regarding registered unemployment suggests that youngsters are less likely to seek support to find a job through the official employment services: the large majority of registered unemployed with disabilities (88.5 %) and without disabilities (88 %), in December 2020, were adults (over 25 years).

In the public sector, in 2020, the number of employees with disabilities increased slightly (1 % compared to 2019): they amount now to 2.6 % (N=18 819; 67.3 % women and 32.7 % men; Table 14) of the total number of civil servants, still below the 5 % Quota established for the Public Sector.<sup>9</sup>

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

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Portugal and the National Strategy for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities 2021-2025.

<sup>8</sup> "Monthly Estimates of Employment and Unemployment". Available at [https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine\\_destaques&DESTAQUESdest\\_boui=466202619&DESTAQUESmodo=2](https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaques&DESTAQUESdest_boui=466202619&DESTAQUESmodo=2).

<sup>9</sup> Quota System for Public Administration. Available at <https://dre.pt/pesquisa/-/search/315563/details/maximized>.

In the RRP,<sup>10</sup> the only specific reference to employment policies targeting persons with disabilities is made in the context of the Disability Strategy, which aims, among others, to contribute to ‘the adjustment of the training, employment and qualification systems for people with disabilities’ (p. 33). However, the budget allocation for the implementation of this reform is not clear in the RRP.

Additionally, Component 6 of the RRP ‘Qualifications and Skills’, whose goal is to address ‘multiple challenges related with the relatively low education and qualifications levels’ (p. 69), does not make any specific reference to employment policies or support to persons with disabilities, being focused on youngsters and adults with low qualifications. Contrary to the calls made by the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030,<sup>11</sup> which puts emphasis on ‘Developing new skills for new jobs’ (p. 12), highlighting the importance of ‘closing skills gaps, notably digital skills gaps’ neither the RRP nor the National Disability Strategy, ‘set targets for the participation of adults with disabilities in learning with a view to increasing their participation’ (p. 13).

Strategic Axis 4 of the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities,<sup>12</sup> is dedicated to ‘Work, Employment and Professional Training’ (p. 27), including the following three main goals (and 24 specific measures/actions):

- To invigorate the support system for the professional inclusion of persons with disabilities (Total of 14 measures; e.g. 1.1.1 Conducting a study on the employment situation of persons with disabilities; 1.1.4. Developing and implementing a training plan targeting employment services staff; 1.2.1. Adapting employment services (IEFP, I.P.) and training centers facilities to ensure accessibility; 1.3.1. Redefining the role and attributions of Vocational Training Services aimed at persons with disabilities);
- To create context conditions that promote the employability of persons with disabilities (Total of 8 measures; e.g. 2.1.2. Developing a support guide to promote the enforcement of the Quota System in the private sector; 2.2.1. Developing awareness-raising actions; 2.2.2. Developing training for human resources staff);
- To develop entrepreneurship and self-employment among persons with disabilities (Total of 2 measures; e.g. 3.3.1 Creating an integrated program to support entrepreneurship or creation of self-employment of persons with disabilities and/or their families, including mentoring, coaching, training and technical support).

The 24 measures in the National Strategy are welcome, but not sufficient, as they lack quantitative targets. This document does not establish, as suggested by the EU Strategy, ‘targets for increasing the employment rate of persons with disabilities and reducing employment rate gaps between persons with and without disabilities’ (p.

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<sup>10</sup> Recovery and Resilience Plan for Portugal. Available at

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/com\\_321\\_1\\_annexe\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/com_321_1_annexe_en.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030. Available at

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes>.

<sup>12</sup> National Strategy for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities 2021-2025 (consultation version).

Available at <https://www.inr.pt/documents/11309/284924/ENIPD.pdf/5bce7969-0918-4013-b95d-2a5a35a870c5>.

15).<sup>13</sup> The proposed indicators are mainly documents (e.g. reports, guides, new legislation), number of training actions, or percentage of services made accessible.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis some measures have been adopted to mitigate its negative impact on the employment situation of persons with disabilities:

- ATIVAR.PT: a programme created in 2020<sup>14</sup> which promotes *internships* and *incentives*. Internships are a measure which aims to support the inclusion of young people in the labour market or the professional training of long-term unemployed people. Persons with disabilities are explicitly identified as beneficiaries of this measure (Article 3). The duration of the internship is 9 months for the general, *Incentives* consist of granting financial support to employers that hire people registered as unemployed in the employment services (IEFP). Persons with disabilities are explicitly identified as beneficiaries of this measure (Article 6). When hiring a person with disability, the amount of support is increased by 10 % (Article 11). However, it is not possible to monitor the results of these measures (ATIVAR.PT) since the monthly 'Report of Physical and Financial Execution' of the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP) – which provides data regarding these measures (e.g. budget allocated, beneficiaries of internships, beneficiaries of training actions, etc.) is not publicly available since April 2020.
- Decree-Law 79-A/2020<sup>15</sup> establishes that employees with disabilities can choose to work remotely, regardless of the employment relationship, whenever their tasks allow it and without the need for a written agreement between employer and employee. Employees who have children with disabilities (regardless their age), need a written agreement with the employee to work remotely, which follows the rules of the Labour Code.
- Additionally, through Ordinance 115<sup>16</sup> of 28 May 2021, a programme for internships in the public administration (*EstágiAP XXI*) was launched aiming to promote the first employment of young graduates until the age of 30, or until 35 years if they have a disability. According to data made available by the helpdesk team of the programme, 30 candidates with disabilities applied for the internship, or 6 % of all the positions available (N=500).

Following the CRPD Committee Recommendation, the old Occupational Activity Centres have been replaced (Ordinance 70/2021)<sup>17</sup> by 'Activity and Capacitation for Inclusion Centers' (Centro de Atividades e Capacitação para a Inclusão - CACI), targeting persons with disabilities, aged 18 years+. The new legal framework defines occupation 'as a process and a tool for empowerment, training and skills development of persons with disabilities, with a view to their autonomy', highlighting the importance

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<sup>13</sup> Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030. Available at <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes>.

<sup>14</sup> Ordinance 206/2020. Available at <https://data.dre.pt/eli/port/206/2020/08/27/p/dre>.

<sup>15</sup> Decree-Law 79-A/2020 establishes an exceptional and transitory regime of work reorganization to minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in the work context. Available at <https://dre.pt/web/guest/legislacao-consolidada/-/lc/162522976/202104290200/74161543/diploma/indice>.

<sup>16</sup> Ordinance 115/2021. Available at <https://dre.pt/home/-/dre/164234021/details/maximized>.

<sup>17</sup> Ordinance 70/2021. Available at <https://dre.pt/web/guest/home/-/dre/160316760/details/maximized>.

of transition to vocational training programmes (Article 4), and introducing the requirement of an 'Individual Inclusion Plan' (defining the life project with the participation of the person with disabilities, the family or legal representative) (Art. 4) No data is available on employment of persons with disabilities in the 'Sustainable Development Goals - Indicators for Portugal' produced by Statistics Portugal.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sustainable Development Goals | 2030 Agenda - Indicators for Portugal  
[https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine\\_publicacoes&PUBLICACOESpub\\_boui=280981585&PUBLICACOESmodo=2](https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_publicacoes&PUBLICACOESpub_boui=280981585&PUBLICACOESmodo=2).

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

In 2016, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Portugal:

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

'54. The Committee recommends that the State party, in cooperation with organizations representing persons with disabilities, take the following measures:

- (a) Urgently review austerity measures to prevent further negative and regressive effects on the standard of living and social protection of persons with disabilities by taking steps that enable them to be included in the community;
- (b) Provide support services for living independently and residential homes respectful of the rights of persons with disabilities, their wishes and preferences, in addition to providing cash subsidies to make it possible for unemployed persons with disabilities and without family support to have a decent standard of living;
- (c) Step up efforts, in line with the human rights approach of the Convention, to strengthen the right to a decent standard of living and the social protection of persons with disabilities who are living in poverty and extreme poverty, allocating funds sufficient for that purpose;
- (d) Consider the links between article 28 of the Convention and target 10.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals in order to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of their disability.'

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

'39. The Committee recommends that the State party, in close consultation with organizations representing persons with disabilities, adopt a national strategy for living independently, including increased investment to facilitate living independently in the community rather than in institutions, that it regulate personal assistance and that it increase the availability of sign language interpreters and fingerspelling systems in public services. It also urges the State party to establish support services in the community for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.'

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

'50. The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have unrestricted access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health care, by explicitly prohibiting discrimination on grounds of disability in its legislation, ensuring the universal accessibility of its programmes and services in both urban and rural areas and providing health professionals with adequate training. The primary prevention of disability should also be excluded from health programmes.'

##### **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 Portugal was 24.7 % in 2019, compared to 15.0 % for other persons of similar age - an estimated disability poverty gap of approximately 10 percentage points (see Table 19). For people aged over 65, the disability poverty gap was 7.3 points (20.0 % for older persons with disabilities and 12.7 % for other persons of similar age). Tables 16 and 17 in annex also indicate the respective rates of risk of poverty or social exclusion and break these down by gender as well age.

According to the data for 2019, persons with disabilities in Portugal are significantly at higher risk of poverty than persons without disabilities (Table 16). The analysis of poverty risks shows that, in Portugal, the low work intensity in households of persons with disabilities is 10 percentage points higher (14.3 %) than in those of persons without disabilities (4.5 %). However, both are still considerably lower than the EU average (22.8 % for households of persons with disabilities and 6.5 % for those of persons without disabilities). Risks related to low income were also higher in households of persons with disabilities in Portugal (22.4 %) than in those of persons without disabilities (14.6 %), yet the rates are very similar to those found in average at the EU level (21.1 % and 14.6 % respectively). Similarly, households of persons with disabilities are more materially deprived (8.7 % in Portugal and 8.8 % in Europe) than those of persons without disabilities (4.2 % in Portugal and 4.4 % in Europe).

Even so, households of persons with disabilities at risk of poverty or social exclusion have decreased since 2016,<sup>19</sup> when 31.9 % of households of persons with disabilities reported be at risk (+3.2pps than in 2019). Nonetheless, the percentage of persons with disabilities at risk of poverty or social exclusion has been significantly higher throughout the years than the percentage of persons without disabilities (in 2016: +10.5pps; in 2017: +8.9pps; in 2018, +8.6pps; and in 2019: +10.6pps). Although the percentages of people at risk of poverty are lower than in 2016, and have decreased every year, in 2019 the gap between persons with disabilities and without disabilities was almost the same than in 2016. On the other hand, and from a gender perspective, data shows that women are at higher risk of poverty, and women with disability are the most affected group. In Portugal, 28.9 % of women with disabilities face this risk, while men with disabilities are 0.6 percentage points below (28.3 %).

In Portugal, the overall risk of household poverty or exclusion for persons with disabilities 16-64 years old is higher (34.0 %) than for persons without disabilities in the same age range (18.7 %). Similarly, the risk of household poverty for people older than 65 is significantly higher among persons with disability (23.2 % against 14.4 % among persons without disabilities). Households of persons with disabilities in Portugal, in both age groups, are also above by a few points (+0.2pps for those 16-64 years old, and 0.8pps for those aged 65+) when compared to the EU average. On the contrary, among households without disabilities, the national average in both groups is lower than the European average by a few percentage points (Table 18).

For persons with disabilities of working age in Portugal (age 16-64) the risk of poverty before social transfers was 46.7 % and 24.7 % after transfers. The in-work poverty rate for persons with disabilities aged between 18 and 64 was 15.5 %.<sup>20</sup> Trends in the poverty risk after social transfers (see Table 19) illustrate well the financial situation from 2010 to 2019 in Portugal. In general, persons with disabilities have faced a higher risk of poverty after social transfers than the population without disabilities throughout this period (and especially from 2015 on), which is another indicator of the low level of

<sup>19</sup> EU-SILC UDB 2020 – version of July 2021 (and previous UDB). People by risks of poverty or social exclusion by activity limitation, sex and age. Online data code: HLTH\_DPE010. Available on:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/HLTH\\_DPE010\\_custom\\_1178149/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/HLTH_DPE010_custom_1178149/default/table?lang=en).

<sup>20</sup> In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate by level of limitation, sex and age Eurostat Health Database [hlth\_dpe050] <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>.



benefits that they receive and contributes to explain the overall risk of poverty they face (since many households of persons with disabilities are highly dependent on social benefits as their only source of income). Households of persons with disability aged 16 to 64 are the ones who face the highest risk (except in 2010 and 2011, when persons with disabilities older than 64 were 0.5 and 0.6 percentual points above). Nevertheless, from 2017 on the risk of poverty after social transfers is decreasing for households of persons with disabilities aged 16-64, coinciding with the introduction in 2017 of the new disability scheme - the Social Inclusion Benefit, although the trends showed an improvement for 2018, the percentage for 2019 was very similar to 2017. This benefit excludes persons who acquire their disabilities after 55 years old.

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 gaps are evident here too: the rate for persons with disabilities in Portugal was 3.6 %, compared to 0.8 % for persons without disabilities, although both rates fall below the EU27 average, which is 4.0 % and 0.9 % respectively. Those with severe disabilities are the most affected, though still at a little lower rate than that found for the EU27 (4.8 % and 5.4 % respectively) (Table 20).

In this regard, the Observatory of Human Rights and Disability conducted two studies to follow up the suspension of social and health care services during the pandemic.<sup>21</sup> The first study was carried out between April and May 2020, addressing the first stage of the pandemic and the first lockdown (March 2020). The second was conducted in October 2020 and addressed the period after the lockdown. In the first study, 33.2 % of the respondents who needed personal assistance reported that these services had been reduced or suspended, and their families had had to provide care without any external support. In the second inquiry, 55.6 % reported that their personal assistance services were never suspended, while 7.4 % reported that the services remained suspended, and 37 % that they had only resumed partially (18.5 %) or totally (18.5 %). Similarly, 50 % of the respondents reported that homecare support services were never suspended and 16.7 % reported that those services remained suspended. 25 % mentioned that these services resumed partially, and only 8,3 % resumed totally. In the first study, 40.1 % of respondents reported that social and healthcare services they attended had been suspended, including needed therapies (reported by 75.7 %), Occupational Activity Centres and other social care services (10.1 %).

According to the most recent report<sup>22</sup> of the Assistive Devices Attribution System- (SAPA), in 2019 the budget of this programme increased by 13.7 % and 8.7 % compared to 2018 and 2017, respectively (in 2018 the investment decreased by 4.4 % compared to 2017). Nonetheless, the number of beneficiaries was higher in 2017 (18 365) than in the other years (11 876 in 2018 and 13 055 in 2019).

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<sup>21</sup> Special dossier. Disability and COVID-19 in Portugal. Results of a study made with people with disabilities and caregivers. Available on: <http://oddh.iscsp.utl.pt/index.php/en/2013-04-24-13-36-12/publications-of-oddh-researchers/item/490-relatorio-oddh-2020>.

<sup>22</sup> Financial Report of the Assistive Products Attribution System 2019: <https://www.inr.pt/documents/11309/384880/Relat%C3%B3rio+de+Avalia%C3%A7%C3%A3o+F%C3%ADsica+e+Financeira+do+Financiamento+dos+Produtos+de+Apoio+2019/ae0031dd-c468-4089-b685-625b4bf942ba>.

## 4.2 Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester

The Recovery and Resilience Plan<sup>23</sup> for Portugal includes measures for people with disabilities in the social and health areas within three of its main components: A) National Health Service, B) Housing and C) Social Responses.

Specifically, within the first component National Health Service, the Plan refers the Mental Health Reform. This reform involves five pillars: i) deinstitutionalising patients residing in psychiatric hospitals or social sector institutions; ii) completing the national coverage of local mental health services in the areas of inpatient, outpatient, and community care; iii) expanding the national network of integrated continued care, with a focus on mental health; iv) reorganising the forensic psychiatric services; and, v) implementing regional health plans for dementia. As for Component B, Housing, the Plan promises to 'increase the social and affordable housing supply (including by addressing needs related to the lack of basic infrastructure and equipment, unhealthy and insecure places of residence, precariousness or lack of contractual ties, overcrowding or inadequacy of housing for the special needs of residents with disabilities or reduced mobility)'.

Finally, two main reforms have been announced within Component C, 'Social Responses':

- Facilities and social responses supply reform. This includes strengthening the social services addressed to persons with disabilities to promote their autonomy and independence, among other aims, to improve the available social services and facilities and the working force in regions where services have a low level of coverage. The Government has defined investment to this reform through the New generation of social facilities and responses. And
- The National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2025.<sup>24</sup> The Government has also defined investments for this reform: i) The Programme Accessibility 360°, addressed directly to improve accessibility conditions for persons with disabilities in public spaces, public buildings, and dwellings, throughout the territory; ii) Platform +Access, which seeks to nurture the inclusion of persons with disabilities by providing a set of digital information tools and services to make it easier to tend to their needs and facilitate their participation in society. The Strategy responds to the recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European strategic documents. It also has direct links to the Sustainable Development Goals, including: SDG 1 End poverty and all its forms everywhere; SDG 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; SDG 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries; and SDG 11 Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

<sup>23</sup> Recovery and Resilience Plan for Portugal [com\\_321\\_1\\_annexe\\_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/com_321_1_annexe_en.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2025. Final Version <https://www.inr.pt/documents/11309/284924/ENIPD.pdf/5bce7969-0918-4013-b95d-2a5a35a870c5>.

The National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, as published 31 August 2021, defines eight strategic axes in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Four of them are directly related to this section: 1) Citizenship, equality, and non-discrimination; 2) Promotion of an inclusive environment; 3) Promotion of autonomy and independent living; 4) Measures, services, and social support. These axis establish objectives oriented towards fighting discrimination; promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in equal conditions; guaranteeing accessibility to physical and digital environments, including public transportation; supporting families and persons with disabilities for autonomy and independent living; promoting independent living and autonomy by training institutions and communities; consolidating the Scheme for Supporting Independent Living (MAVI); and strengthening the social services network.

Other significant policies introduced during this period were:

The Social Benefit for Inclusion (PSI), introduced in 2017 as a measure to reduce poverty among persons with disability. In 2021, through Decree-Law 11/2021,<sup>25</sup> the government modified the benefit to include persons whose impairment results from an accident occurring in the scope of functions related to national protection. The decree-law also introduced the possibility of accumulating the PSI with the subsidy for the primary informal caregiver. According to the information collected by Social Security Institute<sup>26</sup> in July 2021, 114 688 persons were recipients of this social benefit, 15.52 % more than in 2019, and 4.11 % more than in 2020 by the same period (Table 21). By the same token, Ordinance 108 of 25 May 2021<sup>27</sup> defined the criteria for assessing children and young people with disabilities to get the disability supplement to child allowance. Although after the implementation of the third phase of the PSI in 2019, persons with disabilities under 18 years were also included as beneficiaries, gradually eliminating the disability supplement to the child allowance, Ordinance 108/2021 determines that children and youngsters with disabilities and their families can still receive the disability supplement, and establishes criteria deemed more appropriate to assess children's needs and the adequacy of the pedagogical and therapeutical supports they require, than the criteria used in the PSI scheme.

Through Ordinance 28/2021,<sup>28</sup> the government also extended the term of validity and the exceptional support measures to the social care sector until 30 June 2021. The programme was first introduced in July 2020 as an emergency response in the context of the pandemic through the Ordinance 178/2020 and was included within the Programme for Economic and Social Stabilisation in 2020.

Among other measures, the Ordinance announced that the government will add budget for the Programme 'Adaptar Social+' which provides personal protection equipment for older people and people with disabilities living in residential facilities. It

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<sup>25</sup> Decree-Law No. 11/2021 of 8 February  
<https://dre.pt/home/-/dre/156720777/details/maximized>.

<sup>26</sup> PSI monthly records 2017 to 2021. Updated in July 2021. [https://www.seg-social.pt/estatisticas-detalle/-/asset\\_publisher/GzVlhCL9jqf9/content/prestacao-social-para-a-inclu-10](https://www.seg-social.pt/estatisticas-detalle/-/asset_publisher/GzVlhCL9jqf9/content/prestacao-social-para-a-inclu-10).

<sup>27</sup> Ordinance 108 of 25 May 2021 available at <https://dre.pt/home/-/dre/163994098/details/maximized>.

<sup>28</sup> Ordinance 28 of 8 February 2021 available at <https://data.dre.pt/web/quest/pesquisa/-/search/156720778/details/maximized>.

also mentions that the government will strengthen the Integrated Long-term Care Network and residential facilities for older people and persons with disabilities.

In October 2020, the government published the requirements<sup>29</sup> for accessing the PARES programme (*Programa de alargamento da rede de equipamentos sociais*), a programme aimed to support the expansion of the network of social care facilities. The Order prioritised social responses for people with disabilities and older people, including residential facilities and Occupational Activity Centres, thus contradicting the CRPD Committee recommendation about promoting independent living. Nevertheless, the Order included more investment for independent living responses, such as autonomous residential facilities and homecare support services. These services could receive up to 5 % more than others.

Following the UN CRPD Committee Recommendation, and due to the mounting pressure of the disability movement and their allies, Portugal implemented a scheme for supporting independent living - *Modelo de Apoio à Vida Independente (MAVI)*, through Decree-Law No. 129/2017.<sup>30</sup> In 2019, the scheme was amended by Decree-Law 27/2109<sup>31</sup> which introduced changes in the eligibility criteria, by enabling people who live in residential facilities to apply to this support for their transition to life in community, for a period up to six months while still living in residential care. In December 2020, the Government announced through Ordinance 287/2020,<sup>32</sup> that in 2021 it will be possible to extend the number of hours and duration of projects by increasing the allocation to up to 25 % per project. According to the last report published by the National Institute of Rehabilitation, dated May 2021, 899 Individualised Plans (PAIP) were active in the country (441 corresponded to men and 458 to women). The number of PAIPs has increased by 26 % compared to the same period in 2020, as shown in Table 22. Although the number of PAIPs has increased, no other criteria for evaluating services has been defined. The information available only indicates the number of beneficiaries by gender and region. This number remains low in face of the universe of persons with disabilities in Portugal, and therefore, much more Euros should be allocated to this policy to promote independent living.

It is also important to mention the difficulties that informal caregivers have faced to apply to the benefit included within the Statute of the Informal Caregiver, first introduced in 2019 by Law 100/2019,<sup>33</sup> which came into force in 2020 through Order 64/2020.<sup>34</sup> In February 2021, the Government introduced changes to facilitate access to this benefit through Ordinance 37/2021.<sup>35</sup> This Ordinance establishes transitional measures for recognizing Informal Caregivers. Lately, the social sector and the press have reported that the Government only executed 8 % of the budget allocated for this project, but official data is not available.

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<sup>29</sup> Order No. 9952/2020 <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/145438892>.

<sup>30</sup> Decree-Law No. 129/2017 <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/108265124>.

<sup>31</sup> Decree-Law 27/2019 <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/119556793>.

<sup>32</sup> Ordinance 287/2020 <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/151323087>.

<sup>33</sup> Law 100/2019 <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/124500714>.

<sup>34</sup> Order 64/2020 <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/130070741>.

<sup>35</sup> Ordinance No. 37/2021 of 15 February <https://data.dre.pt/web/guest/pesquisa/-/search/157362797/details/maximized>.

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

In 2016, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Portugal:

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

‘45. The Committee recommends that the State party, in close consultation with organizations representing persons with disabilities, review its legislation on education to bring it into line with the Convention and take measures to provide additional resources and materials to facilitate access to and enjoyment of inclusive education of high quality for all students with disabilities, providing public schools with the resources they need to ensure the inclusion of all students with disabilities in ordinary classrooms.

46. The Committee recommends that the State party consider the relationship between article 24 of the Convention and targets 4.5 and 4.a of the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training, as well as to build and upgrade education facilities to make them disability-sensitive and safe.

48. The Committee recommends that the State party introduce in its legislation regulations on the access of students with disabilities to higher education and vocational training on an equal basis with other students, while providing reasonable accommodation and the required support services.’

### 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 23 indicates early school leaving rates disaggregated by disability status in Portugal. Youth with disabilities (aged 18-24) tend to leave school significantly more than peers without disabilities of the same age groups (and this is reinforced by widening the sample size to age 18-29). Table 24 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).

Unfortunately, since Decree-Law 54/2018 was introduced (in the school year 2018/2019<sup>36</sup>), furthering the path towards inclusive education, no official statistics have been made available on students with disabilities attending compulsory education. In 2016/17, however, just before this law was introduced, 99 % of the students identified in the country as having ‘special education needs’ were already attending mainstreamed schools.<sup>37</sup>

Regarding tertiary education, in 2020/21, the number of students with disabilities increased 10.5 % (from 2 311 in 2019/20 to 2 582 in 2020/21): 89.1 % (n = 2 301)

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<sup>36</sup> Decree-Law No. 54/2018 establishes the legal framework of inclusive education. Available at <https://dre.pt/home/-/dre/115652961/details/maximized>.

<sup>37</sup> See the ODDH Report on Disability Human Rights Indicators 2017, p.23, available at [http://oddh.iscsp.ulisboa.pt/index.php/pt/2013-04-24-18-50-23/publicacoes-dos-investigadores-oddh/item/download/349\\_6c0aeca8b6c16a078c4cf48b9fdda86f](http://oddh.iscsp.ulisboa.pt/index.php/pt/2013-04-24-18-50-23/publicacoes-dos-investigadores-oddh/item/download/349_6c0aeca8b6c16a078c4cf48b9fdda86f).

attended public institutions, and over 1/3 or 37.8 % (N=975) attended HEI located in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (see Table 25).

There was also an increase in the academic success rates in tertiary education for students with disabilities: +55.7 % completed an academic qualification (e.g. undergraduate degree, master and/or doctorate) (from 406 in the previous year to 632 and +108.6 % since data started to be collected in 2016/17 (N=303). Despite this strong growth, the percentage of students with disabilities who complete post-secondary education remains extremely low: in 2019/20 only 0.7 % (N=632) of the total number of students who have completed an academic qualification<sup>38</sup> (N= 85 799) had a disability.

The survey on Special Education Needs in High Education Institutions 2020/21<sup>39</sup> further reports a lack of accommodation and support in High Education Institutions (HEIs) for students with disabilities: in 2020/21, among the 104 HEIs that responded to the survey, 64.4 % indicated that they have specific regulations for these students (See Table 26). In relation to accessibility issues, 73 % reported that their facilities are fully accessible and 68 % responded that only their main facilities are accessible. Regarding accommodation, of the 175 student dorms managed by these HEIs, only 147 rooms (out of 9 381) are accessible (7 more than in 2019/2020).

## 5.2 Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester

In July 2018, new legislation on Inclusive Education (Decree-Law 54/2018) came into force, which applies to all levels of compulsory education from pre-school, through elementary and secondary schools of public and private ownership. The law promotes a pedagogical model based on the idea that all students have learning potential, as long as they receive adequate support, moving away from the notion that it is necessary to ‘categorize to intervene’. Based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning different measures are proposed: 1) universal measures, applying to all students; 2) selective measures — aiming to fill potential gaps in the implementation of universal measures; and 3) additional measures — developed to solve proven persistent problems not overcome by universal and selective measures. The law is in line with the CRPD, as suggested by the CRPD Committee.

Official statistics on students with disabilities in compulsory education are not available since the school years 2018/19, which precludes monitoring the implementation of the new legislation. Nevertheless, according to a survey<sup>40</sup> conducted by the Disability and Human Rights Observatory, in April/May 2020, 77.9 % (n=169) of the respondents assessed the distance learning modalities implemented in compulsory education during the pandemic lockdown as not adequate, and 69.3% (n=52) were not satisfied with higher education distance-learning modalities provided by the universities to students with disabilities. In the second survey conducted by the ODDH in October

<sup>38</sup> RAIDES 20 – Diplomados 2019/2020 – Available at <https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/EstatDiplomados/>.

<sup>39</sup> Available at [https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/428/%7B\\$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=998&fileName=DGEEC\\_DSEE\\_DEES\\_2021\\_NEE\\_Superior\\_2020\\_2.pdf](https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/428/%7B$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=998&fileName=DGEEC_DSEE_DEES_2021_NEE_Superior_2020_2.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> “Disability and COVID-19 in Portugal”. Available at <http://oddh.iscsp.utl.pt/index.php/pt/2013-04-24-18-50-23/publicacoes-dos-investigadores-oddh/item/483-relatorio-oddh-2020>.

2020 (when classes returned to face-to-face learning), levels of dissatisfaction were reduced, suggesting that dissatisfaction was mainly related to distance learning modalities made available during the first lockdown. Between mid-January 2021 and mid-March 2021, a second total lockdown was imposed on the country, forcing again the closure of schools; while there is no available data to monitor how online/distance learning was experienced by students with disabilities during this period, it is possible that they had faced increased difficulties again.

In spite of this, the RRP<sup>41</sup> does not mention specifically persons with disabilities when it addresses the topic of 'digital education reform' which 'aims to develop a new digital approach to education (...) and mitigate the risks of exclusion and disadvantage in the learning processes by reducing social and educational inequalities in access to the digital technologies' (p. 178). There is not either a direct mention to persons with disabilities in component 20 – 'Digital School', nor in other areas of the RRP related to qualifications or education. As we have mentioned in previous reports, the development of digital competencies among students with disabilities is urgent so that they can be adequately prepared for the new challenges that arise with distance and online learning and to mitigate inequalities in access to the labour market.

The National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities,<sup>42</sup> dedicates its 3rd Strategic Axis to 'Education and Qualification' (pp. 26-27), including there two main goals, and 16 specific measures/actions:

- 1) Strengthen the support learning mechanisms and consolidation of the current inclusive education system;
  - 1.1. Reformulate the early childhood intervention system/services;
  - 1.2. Deepen the Inclusive Education Model in access to quality education and training opportunities and the transition to after-school life;
- 2) Promote higher education qualification for persons with disabilities;
  - 2.1. Improve access and attendance of persons with disabilities to Higher Education;
  - 2.2. Improve physical accessibility conditions of HEI facilities.

Although all the measures are welcome, and generally in line with the UN Committee recommendations, once again they lack quantitative targets and more specific actions to address the existing gaps, such as the persistent problem of early school leaving. It is important to mention that data related to students with disabilities is not integrated into official reports such as the 'Education in Numbers Portugal 2021',<sup>43</sup> a report which presents data from 2005/06 to 2019/20 about students, teachers, and educational establishments, without any reference to the situation of students with disabilities. The exclusion of disability data from these compilation reports suggests a lack of centrality of disability issues from the education agenda and urgently needs to be fixed.

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<sup>41</sup> Resilience and Recovery Plan. Available at

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/com\\_321\\_1\\_annexe\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/com_321_1_annexe_en.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> National Strategy for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities 2021-2025 (consultation version).

Available at <https://www.inr.pt/documents/11309/284924/ENIPD.pdf/5bce7969-0918-4013-b95d-2a5a35a870c5>.

<sup>43</sup> Educação em Números – Portugal 2021. Available at

[https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/96/%7B\\$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=145&fileName=DGEEC\\_2021\\_EducacaoEmNumeros.pdf](https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/96/%7B$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=145&fileName=DGEEC_2021_EducacaoEmNumeros.pdf).

## 6 Investment priorities in relation to disability

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

Within the overall programme Portugal 2020, the Portuguese Government and the European Commission organised and defined the resources for social innovation and inclusion in the Operational Programme for Social Inclusion and Employment (POISE). POISE included four main operational areas: 1) Promoting sustainability and job quality; 2) Youth employment initiative; 3) Promoting social inclusion and fighting poverty and discrimination; 4) Technical support. The programme targeted persons with disabilities as a beneficiary group within the third operational area. According to its last annual executive report, presented in April 2021, in 2020, the Government launched seven calls for proposals regarding vulnerable populations at risk of exclusion, including persons with disabilities.

Projects for persons with disabilities were mainly focused on qualification and employment, financial and technical support for non-profit organizations, and the implementation of the independent living support scheme (MAVI). Other areas which mentioned fighting Long-term unemployment could also target persons with disabilities but did not specifically mention them. From 2015 to 2020, the Government received 6 701 proposals, of which 2 798 were approved. For developing 2 266 projects the Government allocated EUR 518 million from the European Social Fund. Throughout the implementation of this Operational Programme, 18 621 persons with disabilities participated in qualification projects.

The POISE 2020 report<sup>44</sup> mentioned the challenges faced due to the pandemic. It forced the Government to focus its efforts on emergency measures to respond to the crisis. The pandemic affected the development of in-person activities, producing negative effects on persons with disabilities. Although the Government and its allies found alternatives for services to assist beneficiaries, persons with disabilities reported that the suspension of services, as seen in section 4, affected their rehabilitation processes and social inclusion.

Within the National Reform Programme 2021,<sup>45</sup> the Government highlighted the need for strengthening the social responses addressed to persons with disabilities, by innovating and improving them. This effort to improve the network of social care services is coupled with investment for promoting and ensuring accessibility.

Therefore, the government annual budget for 2021 (approved through Law 75-B/2020<sup>46</sup> of 31 December 2020) contemplates expenditure for the expansion and upgrading of social facilities in the public network of the social and solidarity sector, which can also be financed through the RRP or other European Union funding instruments. It also includes measures for ensuring persons with disabilities have

<sup>44</sup> PO ISE-Annual report 2020 for citizens [https://poise.portugal2020.pt/documents/10180/117485/RAE+2020\\_PO+ISE\\_Resumo+para+os+Ciudad%C3%A3os\\_27042021.pdf/17b35da7-f57b-4373-ae1e-c863fd2a39d9](https://poise.portugal2020.pt/documents/10180/117485/RAE+2020_PO+ISE_Resumo+para+os+Ciudad%C3%A3os_27042021.pdf/17b35da7-f57b-4373-ae1e-c863fd2a39d9).

<sup>45</sup> National Reform Programme 2021. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/2021-european-semester-national-reform-programme-portugal\\_pt.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/2021-european-semester-national-reform-programme-portugal_pt.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> Law No. 75-B/2020 of 31 December <https://dre.pt/pesquisa/-/search/152639825/details/maximized>.



access to digital content. For promoting access to public services, the law also points out the creation of a Portuguese Sign Language interpreters pool in each district, under the supervision and coordination of the National Institute for Rehabilitation.

Another meaningful change was the creation of the so-called Activity and Training for Inclusion Centres-CACI, replacing the old Occupational Activities Centres, as discussed in section 3. This change is significant in terms of social inclusion and independent living since it introduces a new perspective which includes community-based services. The new approach seeks to provide tools for persons with disabilities to access community-based services and eliminates the idea of developing activities in a special institution in an isolated way.

Finally, the National Elections Commission (CNE) and the National Institute for Rehabilitation (INR), sent a notice for local authorities calling for the adoption of measures to ensure adequate conditions for accessibility and security for all voting citizens, especially those with reduced mobility. A Checklist of the Minimum Conditions for Accessibility to Polling Stations/Sections is part of the communication. Through this, the Government wants to ensure that the spaces where the Polling Stations/Sections will be installed have at least one access path for persons with reduced mobility that goes from the street through to the principal entrance/exit place, the Assembly table, and the polling chamber.

## **6.2 Priorities for future investment (after 2021)**

The Recovery and Resilience Plan has set up three components addressed to persons with disabilities. These have been included within its first pillar, called 'Resilience,' in which social investment is contemplated. Within the scope of the 'National Health System', the Government established the Mental Health Reform as an objective. It has allocated EUR 88 million, seeking to de-institutionalise persons with psychosocial disabilities and provide them with better services, namely by:

- creating residential facilities in the community for persons currently living in psychiatric hospitals or other residential facilities;
- building four inpatient units in general hospitals to eliminate acute admissions in psychiatric hospitals;
- creating 15 Integrated Responsibility Centres (CRI) for extra-hospital care;
- requalifying and improve existing facilities;
- setting in place 40 community care teams and improve the Integrated Long-Term Care Network for Mental Health, among other actions.

Furthermore, the Access to Housing Programme (included within the RRP housing component) defined a new approach that complements the previous one. Through an integrated perspective, the Programme will assess the precarious conditions of the structures and other variables, including the lack of infrastructures and essential services and inadequate housing for persons with reduced mobility. The Government announced the creation of the so-called Local Housing Strategies and allocated EUR 1 211 million to them, expecting to address at least 26 000 families by 2026.

Finally, the RRP component entitled 'Social Responses' included two significant reforms related to disability: The Reform of the Provision of Social Facilities and Services and the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2025. In this component, one of the areas aims to create a new generation of social services that provide better services for people with disabilities and other groups in line with their rights. It is mentioned that the current Homecare Services for older people and persons with disabilities currently do not address properly their needs. Predicted investment on this objective is set at EUR 417 million.

The same component aims for strengthening social care services in the islands of Madeira and Azores, especially residential facilities for older people (where many adults with disabilities also live). Although the programme contemplates the provision of 1 130 new beds, it mentions as a goal also improving Homecare Services as an alternative to institutionalisation for people who need assistance during the night. It does not mention specifically persons with disabilities, but it is likely they are also covered by this initiative. The Government allocated EUR 83 million to this objective.

Finally, in terms of accessibility, an area of most-needed investment, the RRP announces the Programme Acessibilidades 360º, which seeks to improve physical accessibility for persons with disabilities. The investment of EUR 45 million will cover interventions in the public space to improve mobility (200 000 m<sup>2</sup> of intervention), in public buildings that serve the public (1 500 buildings), and in 1 000 dwellings (specifically related to disability). Furthermore, EUR 3 million are allocated to Platform +Acesso, which will bring together a set of digital information and tools, implementing new helpful digital solutions to include persons with disabilities by making available resources, support measures and thematic legislation in force. The creation of a call centre in Portuguese Sign Language is part of this project.

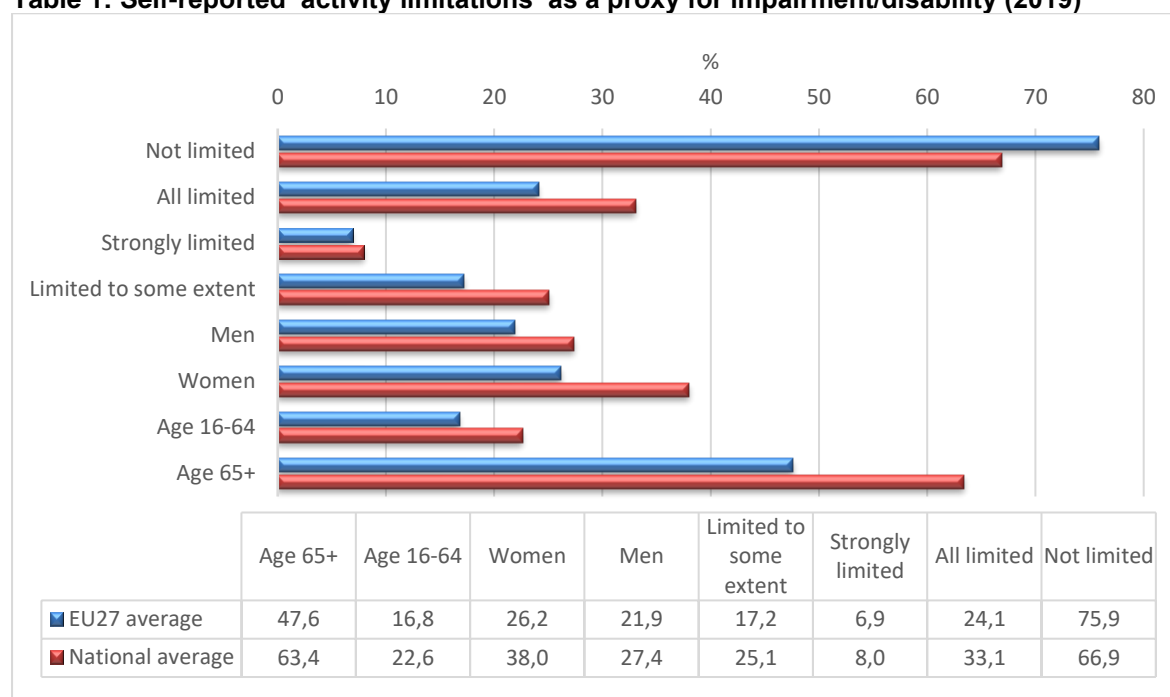
## 7 Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester

See also disability data published in the Eurostat database<sup>47</sup> and statistical reports.<sup>48</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>49</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>50</sup> National estimates for Portugal are compared with

<sup>47</sup> Eurostat health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

<sup>48</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).

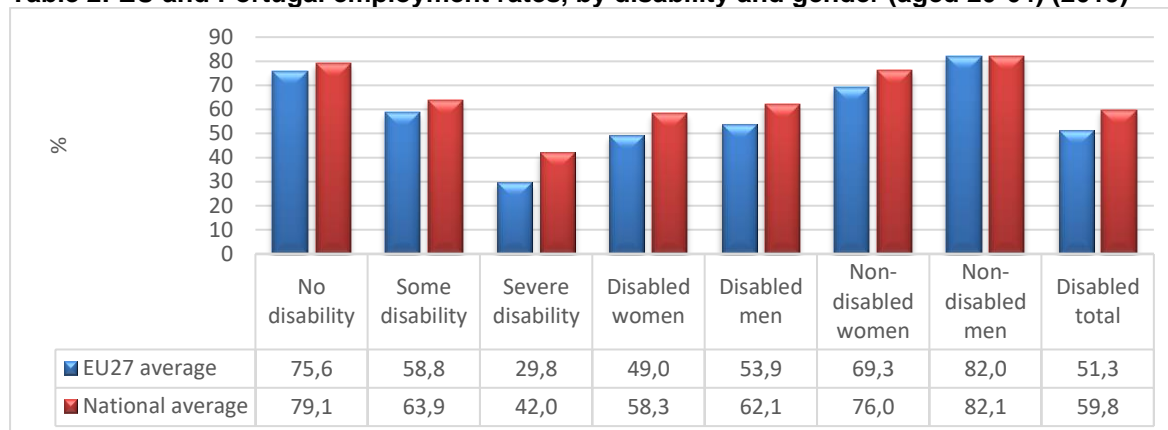
<sup>49</sup> The SILC survey questions are contained in the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM) [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum\\_European\\_Health\\_Module\\_\(MEHM\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_(MEHM)).

<sup>50</sup> This methodology was developed in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>.

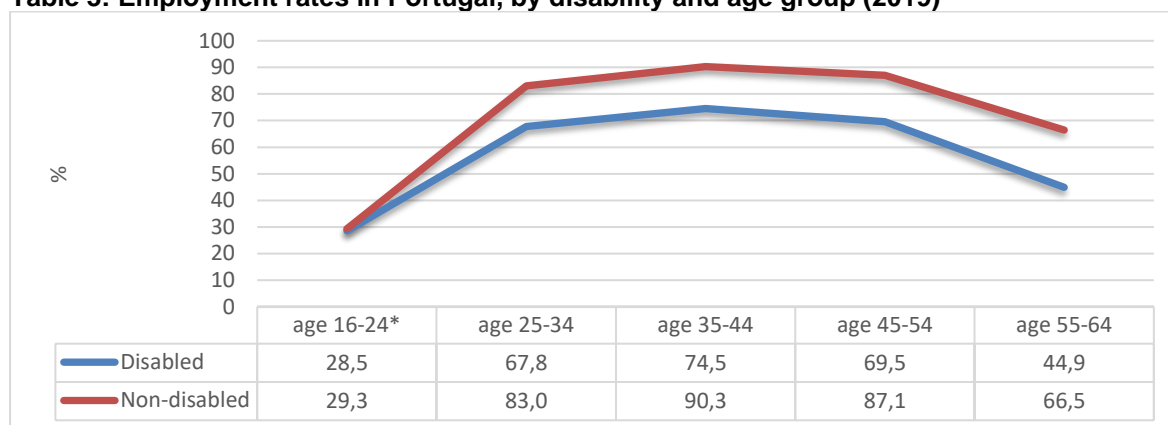
EU27 mean averages for the most recent year.<sup>51</sup> The proportion of persons reporting limitations in Portugal was higher than the EU average in each group.

## 7.1 Data relevant to disability and the labour market

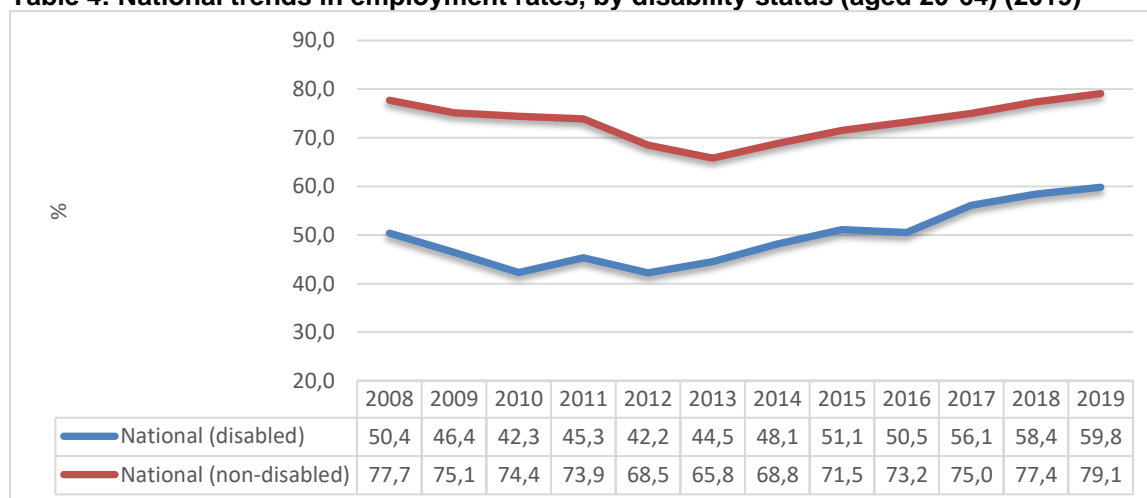
**Table 2: EU and Portugal employment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)**



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



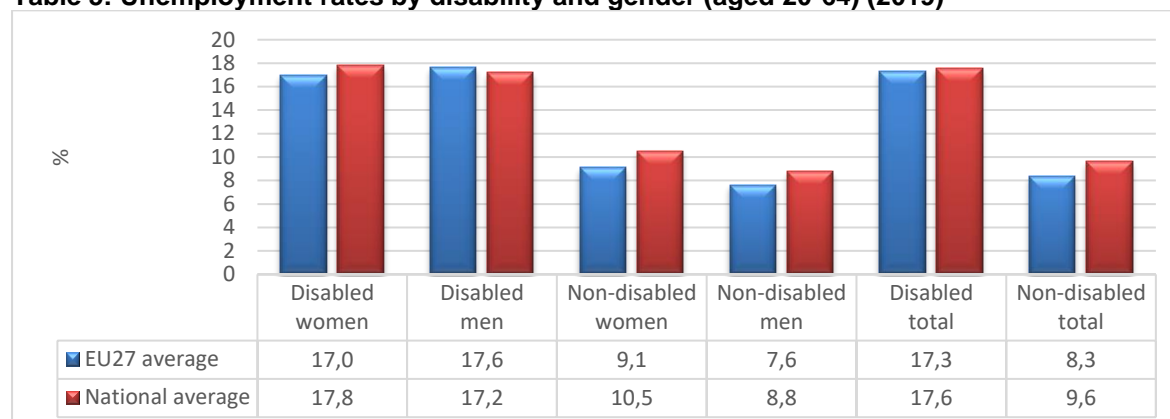
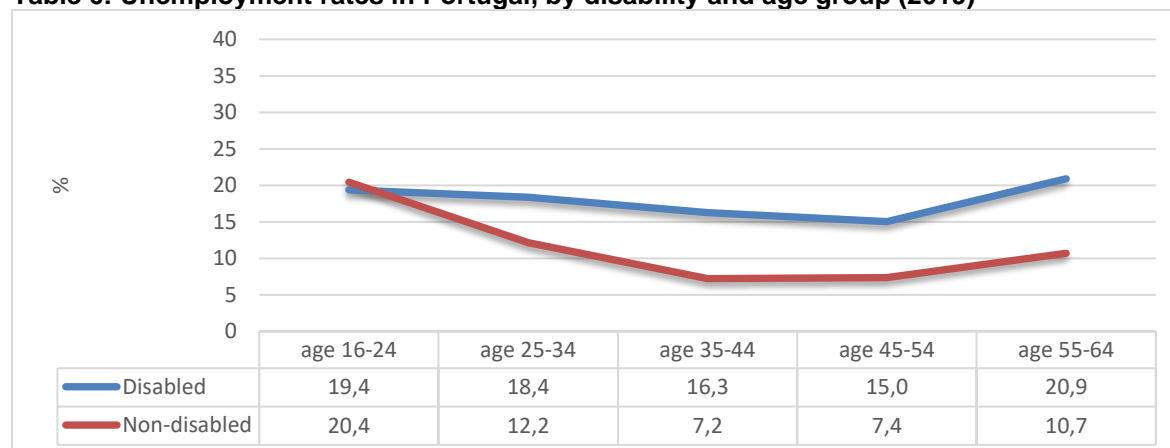
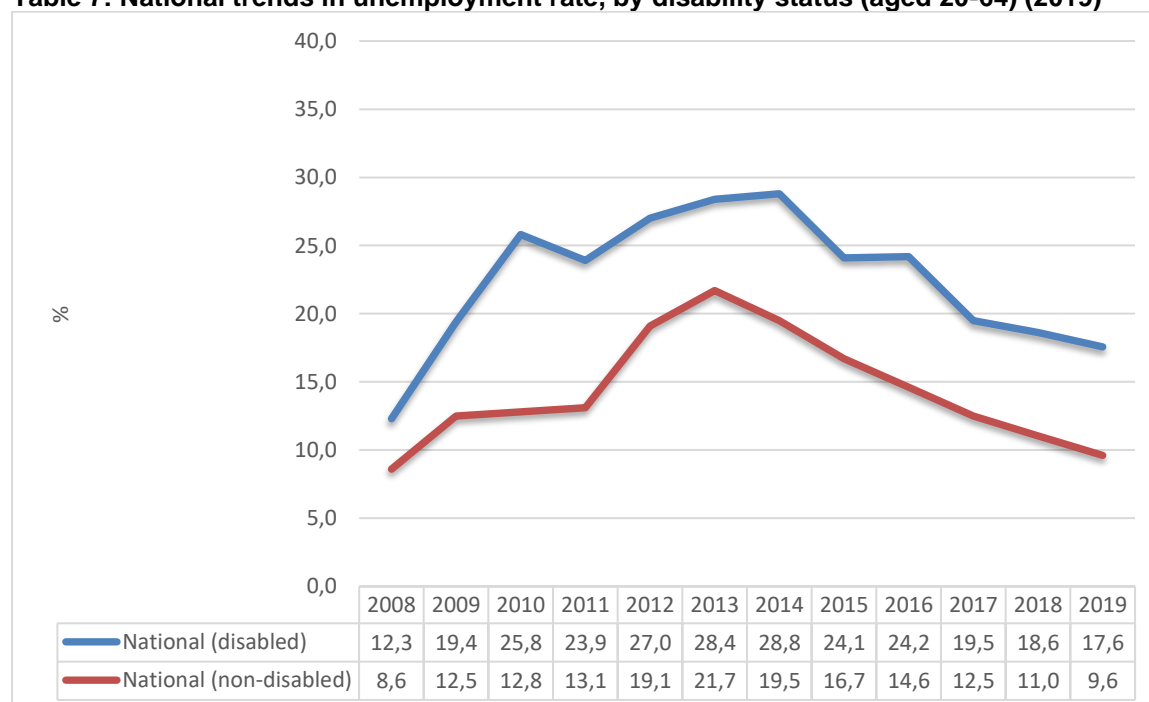
**Table 4: National trends in employment rates, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)**



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

<sup>51</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.

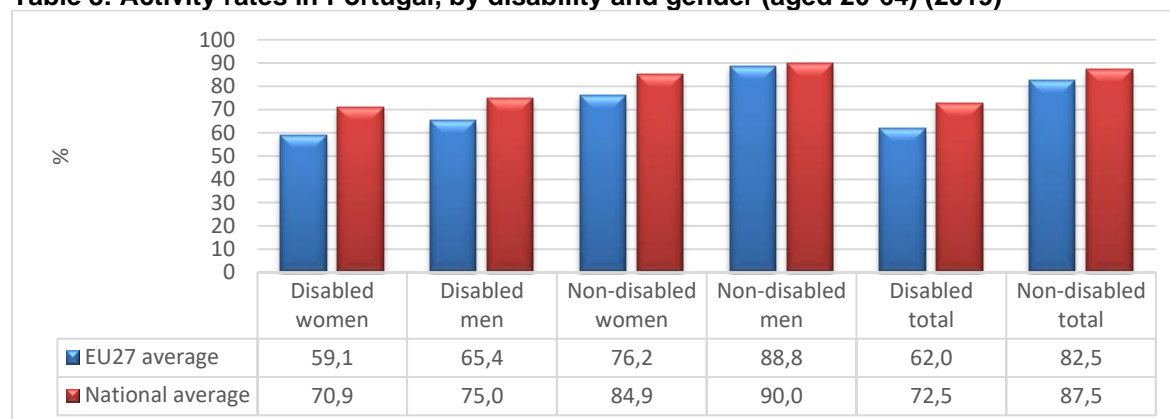
## 7.1.1 Unemployment

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

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

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


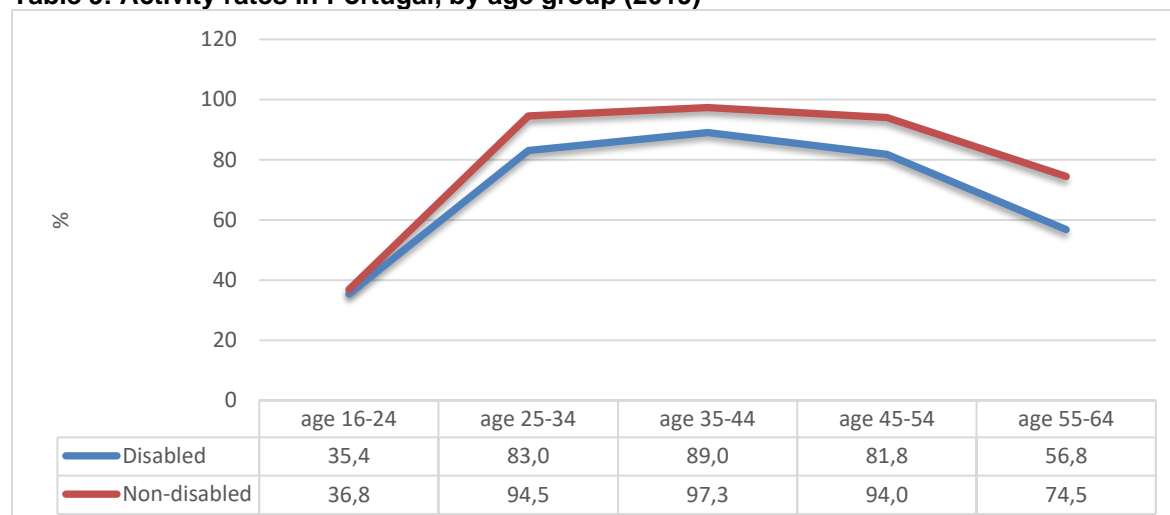
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

## 7.1.2 Economic activity

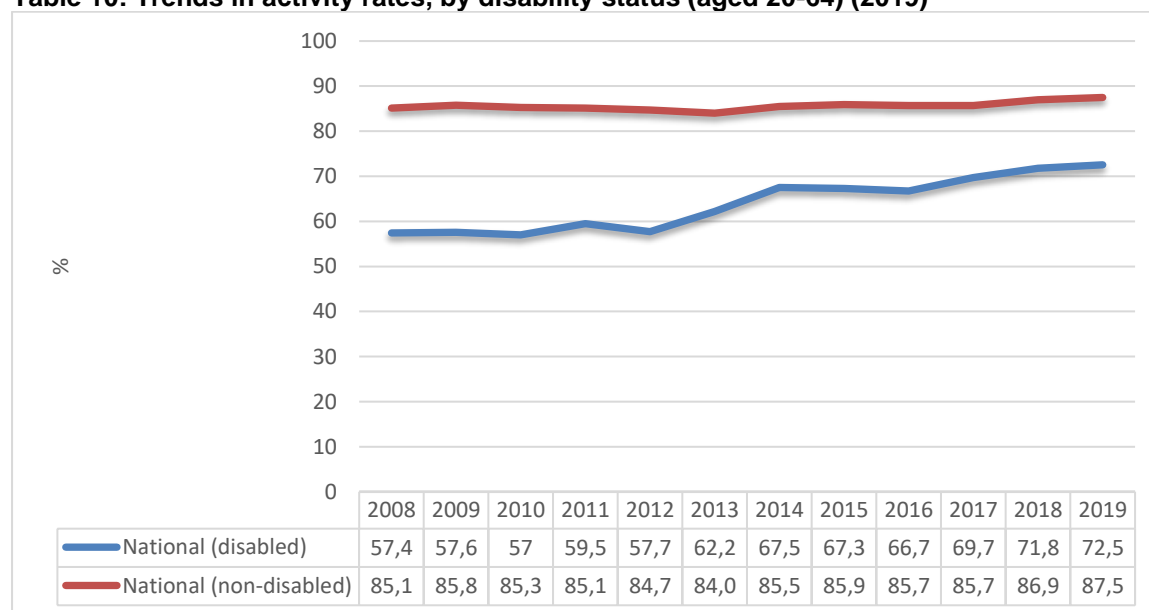
**Table 8: Activity rates in Portugal, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)**



**Table 9: Activity rates in Portugal, 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 Portugal

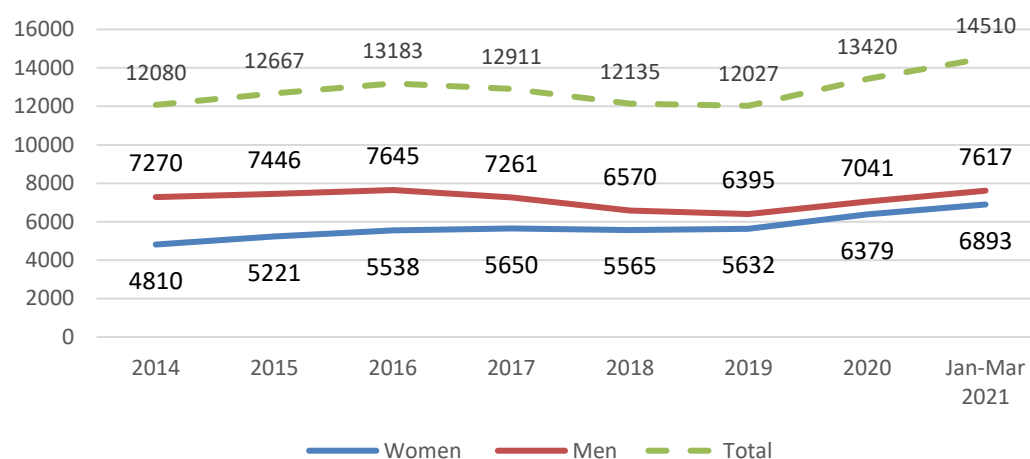
Disability data is not yet available from the core European Labour Force Survey but labour market indicators for Portugal were disaggregated from ad modules conducted in 2001 and 2011. These can be found in the Eurostat disability database.<sup>52</sup>

**Table 11: Evolution of the number of unemployed persons with disabilities registered with the employment services, 2014- 1<sup>st</sup> trim. 2021 (Continental Portugal)**

Years	Registered unemployed (total + Annual rate of change)	Registered unemployed persons with disabilities (total + Annual rate of change)	Job placement of persons with disabilities through employment services (total + Annual rate of change)
2014	564.312 (-13,8%)	12.080 (-3,6%)	881 (+40,5%)
2015	521.611 (-7,6%)	12.667 (+4,9%)	1.261 (+43,1%)
2016	452.652 (-13,2%)	13.183 (+4,1%)	1.363 (+8,1%)
2017	377.791 (-16,5%)	12.911 (-2,1%)	1.484 (+8,9%)
2018	315.093 (-16,6%)	12.135 (-6,0%)	1.564 (+5,4%)
2019	288.176 (-8,5%)	12.027 (-0,9%)	1.577 (+0,8%)
2020	<b>375.150 (+30,2%)</b>	<b>13.420 (+11,6%)</b>	<b>1.031 (-34,6%)</b>
March 2021	405.374	14.510	288

Source: IEFP, I.P. (Calculations made by the authors).

**Table 12: Evolution of the number of registered unemployed persons with disabilities with the employment services by gender, 2014- 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2021 (Continental Portugal)**



Source: IEFP, I.P.

<sup>52</sup> Eurostat Health Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

**Table 13: Number of unemployed persons with disabilities registered with the employment services, by type of unemployment and age group, 2015-1st quarter 2021 (Continental Portugal)**

Total of registered unemployed persons with disabilities/Years	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Mar 2021
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,667</b>	<b>13,183</b>	<b>12,911</b>	<b>12,135</b>	<b>12,027</b>	<b>13420</b>	<b>14510</b>
<b>Youth (&lt; 25)</b>	1,602	1,657	1,701	1,548	1,430	1540	1596
<b>Adults (25 +)</b>	11,065	11,526	11,210	10,587	10,597	11880	12914
<b>&lt; 12 Months</b>	5,209	5,123	5,115	5,264	5,563	5554	5691
<b>≥ 12 Months</b>	7,458	8,060	7,796	6,871	6,464	7866	8819
<b>Unemployed (In search for 1<sup>st</sup> job)</b>	2,074	2,243	2,381	2,269	2,050	2143	2235
<b>Unemployed (In search for new job)</b>	10,593	10,940	10,530	9,866	9,977	11277	12275
<b>&lt; 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Primary Education</b>	1,253	1,304	1,238	1,228	1,162	1327	1391
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Primary Education</b>	2,526	2,477	2,306	2,090	1,981	2137	2318
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle Primary Education</b>	2,520	2,555	2,430	2,190	2,137	2288	2534
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle Primary Education</b>	3,366	3,537	3,454	3,196	3,123	3592	3864
<b>Secondary Education</b>	2,316	2,557	2,701	2,731	2,881	3188	3474
<b>Higher Education</b>	686	753	782	700	743	888	929

Source: IEFP, I.P.

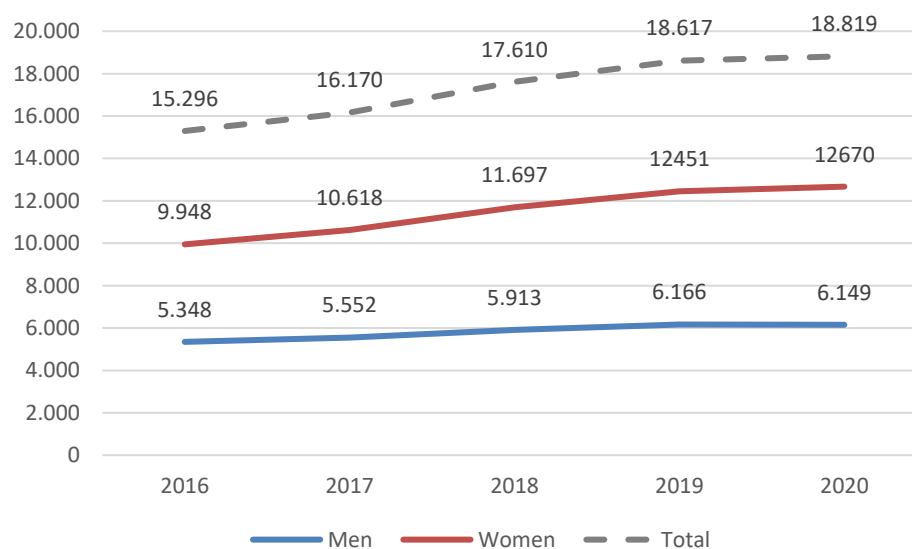
Note: Primary education – 1<sup>st</sup> cycle (Years 1, 2, 3 and 4); 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle (Years 5 and 6); 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle (Years 7, 8 and 9); Secondary (Years 10, 11 and 12). In search for 1<sup>st</sup> job – those who have never worked before. In search for new job – those who have already been employed before.



**Table 14: Evolution of the public-sector employees with disabilities, 2016-2020 (Portugal)**

Year	Public-sector employees (total)	Public-sector employees with disabilities	Proportion of employees with disabilities / Total number of employees (%)
2016	664 168	15 296	2,3 %
2017	669 321	16 170	2,4 %
2018	683 165	17 610	2,6 %
2019	699 031	18 627	2,7 %
2020	718 947	18 819	2,6 %
Annual rate of change (%)	2,8 %	1,0 %	-
Rate of change 2016/2020 (%)	8,2 %	23,0%	-

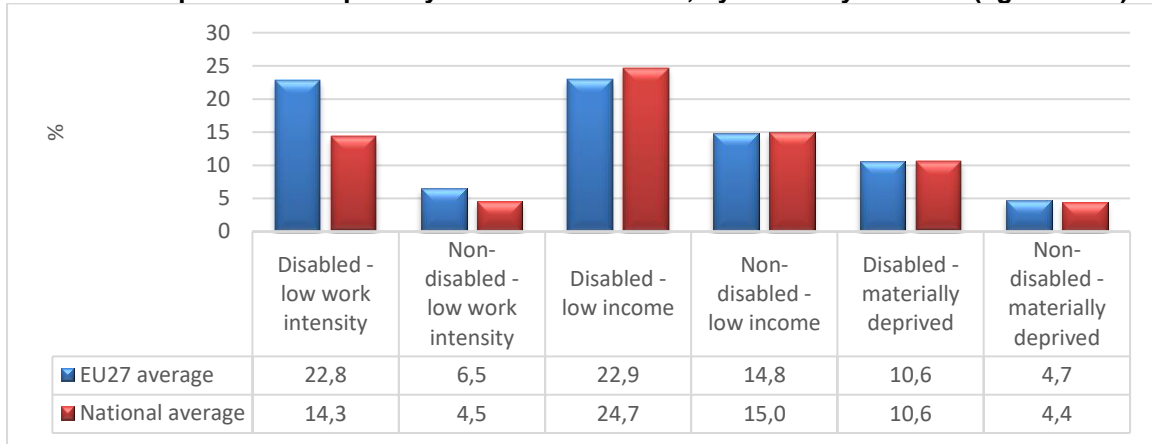
Source: DGAEP - SIOE (available data in 30-04-2021); Calculations made by the authors.

**Table 15: Evolution of the public-sector employees with disabilities by gender, Portugal (2016-2020)**

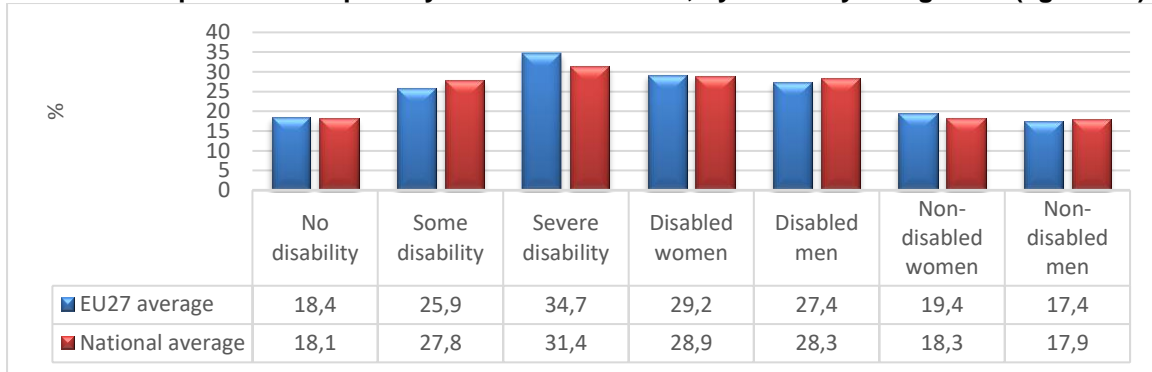
Source: DGAEP - SIOE (available data in 30-04-2021).

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

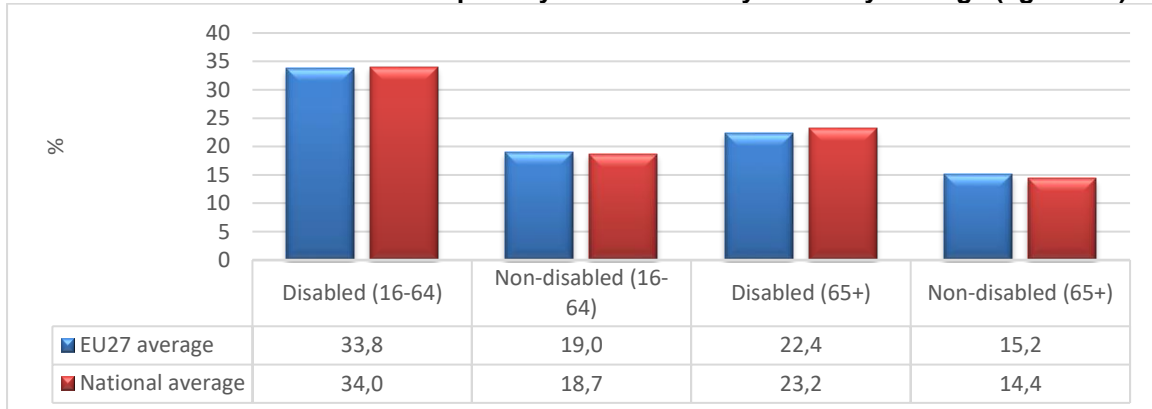
**Table 16: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and risk (aged 16-59)**



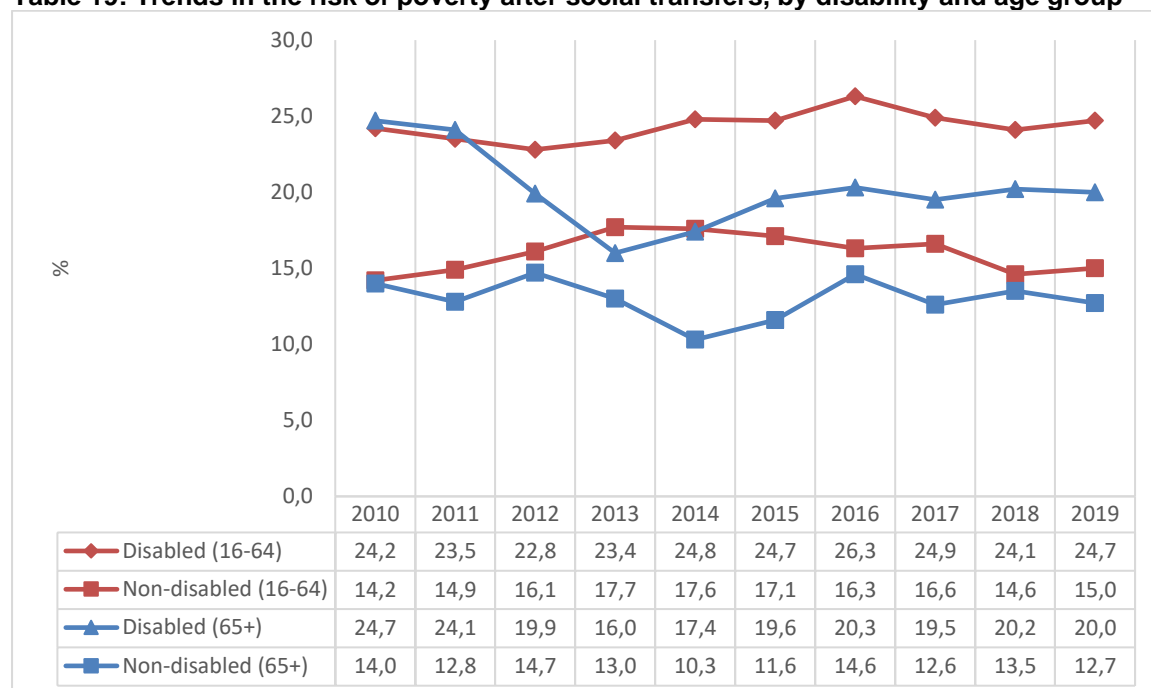
**Table 17: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and gender (aged 16+)**



**Table 18: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)**

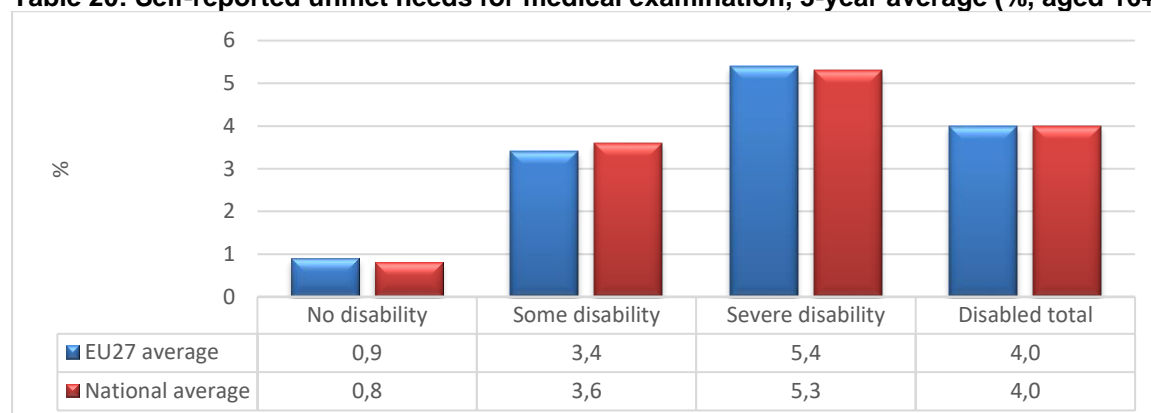


Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and previous UDB).

**Table 19: 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 20: 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.

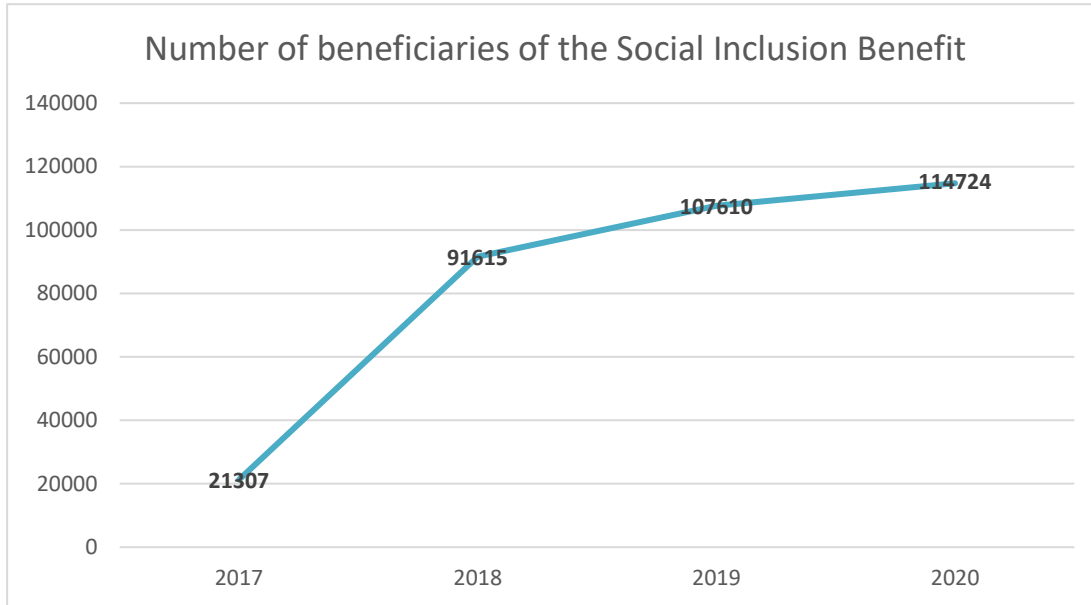
## 7.2.1 Alternative sources of poverty or health care data in Portugal

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>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Eurostat Health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

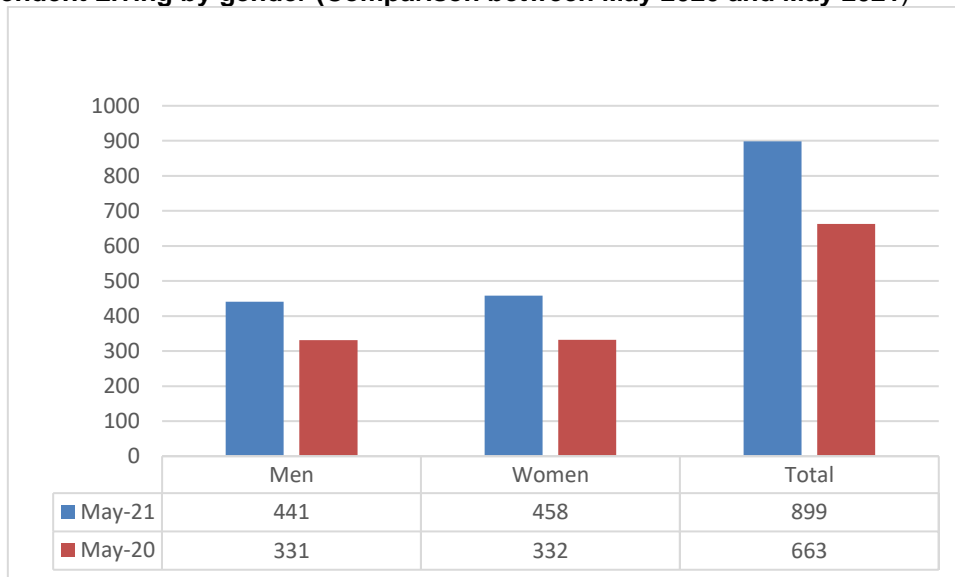
National surveys or studies may offer additional information.

**Table 21: Number of beneficiaries of the Social Inclusion Benefit 2017-2020**



Source: *Segurança Social, Statistics of programmes, Beneficiários Prestação Social para a Inclusão.*

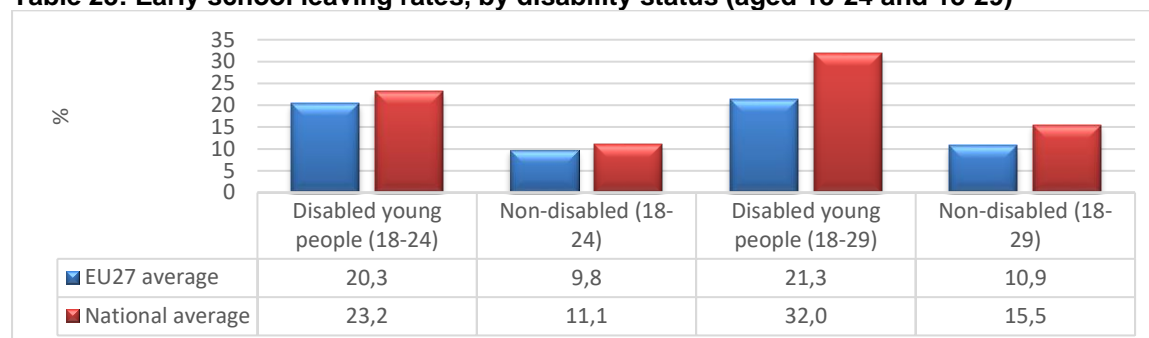
**Table 22: Active Individualised Plans (PAIP) included in the strategies of the National Scheme for Independent Living by gender (Comparison between May 2020 and May 2021)**



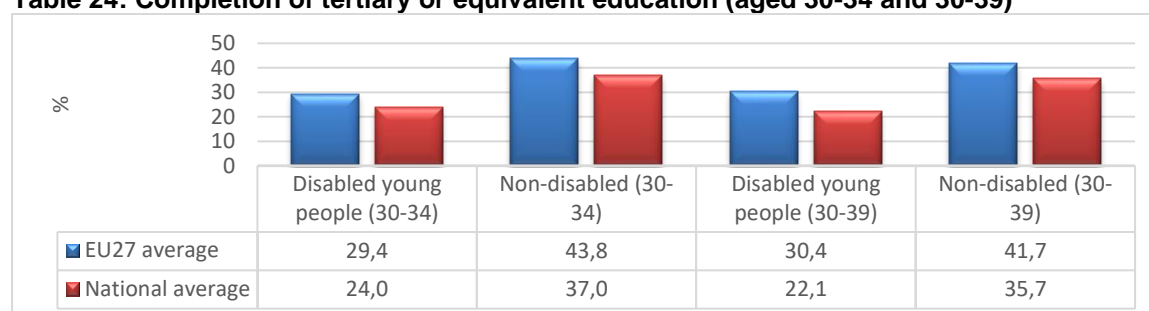
Source: *National Institute for Rehabilitation, Monthly report MAVI-May 2021.*

### 7.3 EU data relevant to disability and education

**Table 23: Early school leaving rates, by disability status (aged 18-24 and 18-29)<sup>54</sup>**



**Table 24: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (aged 30-34 and 30-39)**

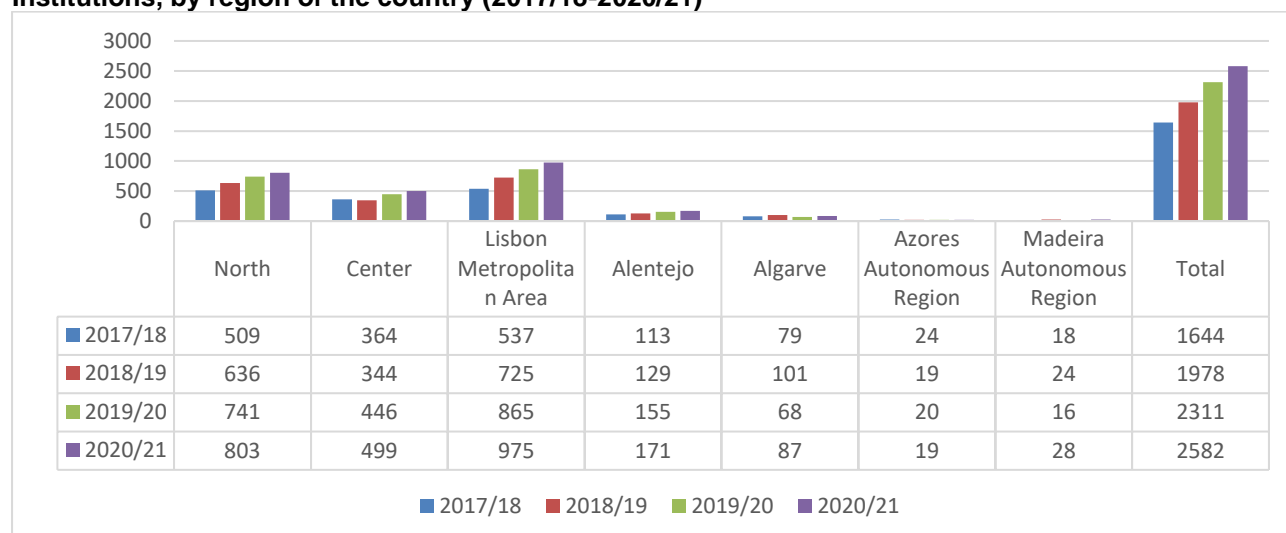


Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

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.

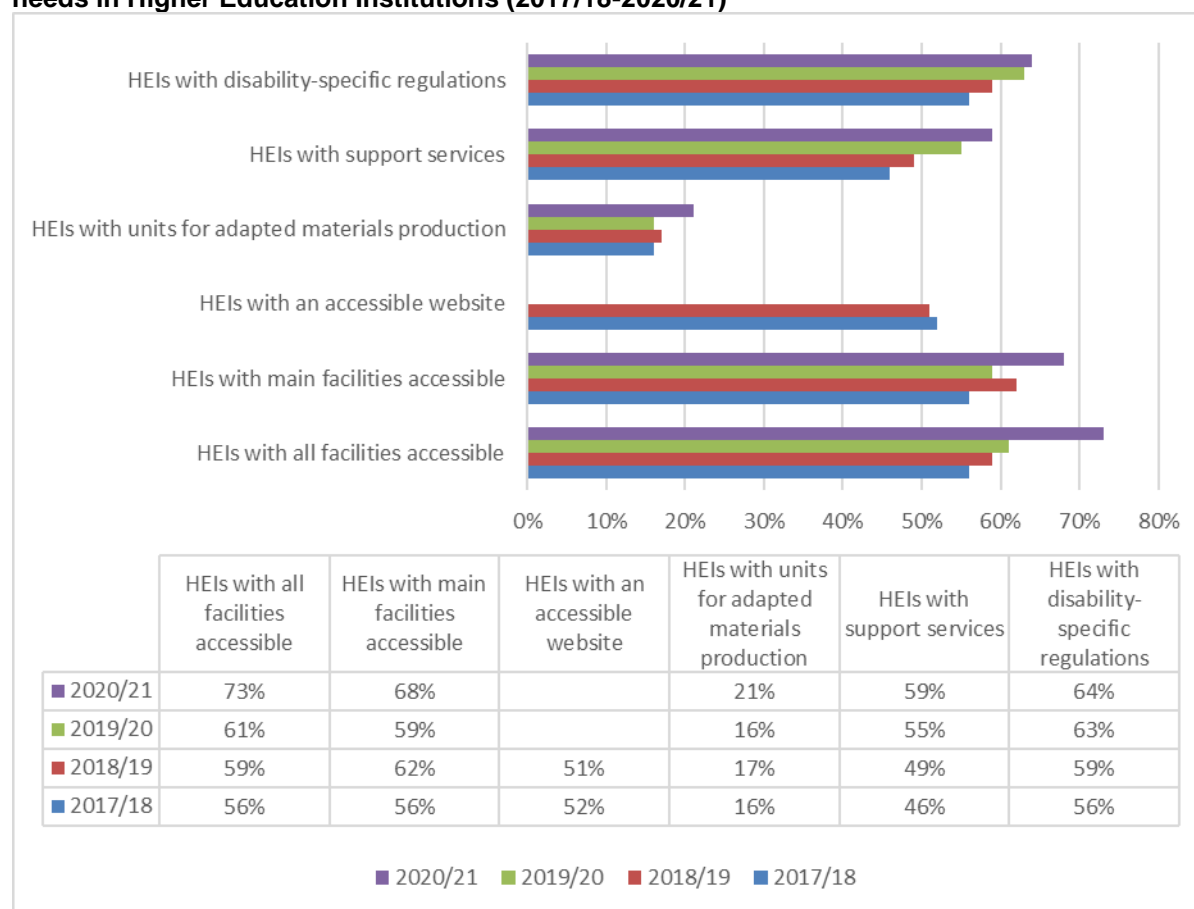
#### 7.3.1 Alternative sources of education data in Portugal

**Table 25: Number of students with special education needs enrolled in Higher Education Institutions, by region of the country (2017/18-2020/21)**



Source: DGEEC (2021). Directorate-General for Statistics of Education and Science. Survey on Special Education Needs in Higher Education Institutions [2017/18-2020/21]. Available at: <https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/428/>.

<sup>54</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.

**Table 26: Provision of accessibility and supports available for students with special education needs in Higher Education Institutions (2017/18-2020/21)**


Source: DGEEC (2021). Directorate-General for Statistics of Education and Science. Survey on Special Education Needs in Higher Education Institutions [2017/18-2020/21]. Available at: <https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/428/>.

Note: Data for provision of accessible website not available for 2019/20 and 2020/21.

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