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Finland

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

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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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1 Executive summary and recommendations

1.1 Key points and main challenges for Finland in 2022

Disability and the labour market

In 2022, Työkanava Oy was established as part of the programme² of Sanna Marin's Government, to facilitate and promote the employment opportunities of people with partial work capacity. This new system is expected to change the employment opportunities of persons with intellectual disabilities, who almost automatically start their pension at a very young age. The employment of persons with intellectual and multiple disabilities continues to be one of the most poorly realised disability rights.

Disability, social policies and healthcare

The social and healthcare reform (SOTE reform) as well as the new Disability Services Act will be enacted from the beginning of 2023. Moving disability services to the 21 new self-governing wellbeing service counties and Helsinki City promises freedom of choice. This reform also aims for budget cuts but this should not negatively impact the availability of and accessibility to services for persons with disabilities. The reform needs to be carefully monitored from the perspective of disability rights, so that other priorities do not undermine or compromise disability services that are essential for those who cannot live independently without them.

Disability, education and skills

Finnish compulsory education has been extended up to high school. Even though this law applies to all pupils, some pupils with disabilities have encountered limited educational opportunities in comparison to pupils without disabilities. The inequality between pupils with and without disabilities is already a widely recognised challenge, and the extension of compulsory education years should not widen this gap. Pupils with disabilities also need to have the same opportunities to attend high school and higher education, through necessary support and reasonable accommodation. Inclusion continues to be misunderstood as physical integration without essential support and many teachers continue neglect it.

Investment priorities for inclusion and accessibility

Most Government investments concerning people with disabilities are related to employment. Some are directly targeted towards persons with disabilities, while others concern everyone. If actions are broadly targeted, they do not serve individual needs. The Government has allocated EUR 10 million per year of the central government spending limits in the period 2022-2025³ to the new special-assignment company, Työlinja Oy. The work ability programme and the IPS – Invest and Coach development project will be extended. Other investments are directed towards the SOTE reform's inclusivity.

² Government of Finland (2019) *Inclusive and competent Finland – a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society*. Available at: <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/marin/government-programme>.

³ Finnish Government (2021) *Sustainable Growth Programme for Finland. Recovery and Resilience Plan*, Publications of the Finnish Government 2021:69. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-694-5>.

1.2 Recommendations for Finland

These recommendations are based on the evidence and analysis presented in the following sections of our report. Disability must systematically become a cross-cutting issue in all sectors.

Recommendation: Ensure inclusive and participatory monitoring and evaluation of the SOTE reforms.

Rationale: The forthcoming SOTE reform and the new Disability Services Act might prioritise other issues over disability rights in the post-COVID era. Persons with disabilities must be listened to and have meaningful roles. Their voices must be heard by the national advisory board on the rights of persons with disabilities (VANE) and efforts must be made to reach disability service users with different kinds of disabilities at the grassroots level.

Recommendation: Improve coordination between relevant actors in the employment of persons with disabilities, particularly that of persons with intellectual and multiple disabilities.

Rationale: Employment is one of the most poorly materialised disability rights in Finland. The so-called ‘linear model’ has not yet been achieved and as a result, many persons with disabilities are on a pension. Change cannot be easily secured by only one actor. For actual, sustainable positive change to materialise, coordination is required of the relevant actors and societal attitudes must change. Much more discussion, greater actor commitment and public campaigns are recommended.

Recommendation: Reform the subsidiary system for employers employing persons with disabilities to better support the employment opportunities of people with disabilities.

Rationale: The current support system has been evaluated as ineffective. Evidence must be collected and more information about the actual situation of persons with disabilities is needed.

Recommendation: Ensure that pupils with disabilities have equal educational opportunities for high school and higher education and receive the support they require and by means of reasonable accommodations.

Rationale: Inclusion is misunderstood as physical integration without the necessary support. Equal education opportunities are far from a reality in Finland and may even further deteriorate as compulsory education has been extended up to high school. Inclusive education needs to be conceptualised as a human rights issue for education stakeholders, including teachers, parents and pupils with disabilities.

2 Mainstreaming disability equality in the 2022 Semester documents

2.1 Country Report (CR) and Country Specific Recommendation (CSR)

The following key points highlight where a disability perspective was considered, or should be considered, in the CR/CSR. We address the most relevant of these areas in the next sections.

According to the Country Report,⁴ Finland aims to counteract the employment gaps that affect vulnerable groups. People with disabilities are not explicitly mentioned (only non-EU nationals are separately mentioned) but the report makes the relevant observation that:

‘Phasing out of the additional days of unemployment allowance for older people should start in 2023. In parallel, the eligibility for disability benefits for this particular age group may need to be adjusted.’

The CR also presents drastic changes in the labour market due to the ageing workforce and plans to enhance the employment of all people. The Finnish labour market performs well across most dimensions of the Social Scoreboard. The only critical point that remains unmet is the needs for medical care in the population aged over 16. These self-reported unmet needs for medical examination also concern persons with disabilities. This is apparent in the recently published Eurostat Health Database. In 2019, 8.5 % of persons with disabilities reported unmet needs for medical examination. In 2020, 11.3 % of persons with disabilities reported unmet needs for medical examination. These unmet needs reflect the staff shortages in health and social care. The ongoing health and social care reform greatly affects the development of health and social care in Finland.

Disability is not mentioned in the 2022 CSR but some of the general recommendations are of considerable relevance from a disability perspective, such as:

- targeted support to households most vulnerable to energy price hikes;
- support to people fleeing Ukraine;
- investment for the green and digital transition;
- implementation of RRP and previous CSRs;
- social security reform (efficiency of the system of social benefits);
- incentives to work;
- healthcare reforms.

The CSRs refer to the Finnish social security system that provides good coverage and effectively prevents poverty. However, this system is also characterised by high complexity and inherent inefficiencies. Combining work income and social benefits, and tackling long-term unemployment are especially problematic.⁵

⁴ EC (2022). *Finland 2022 Country Report*, https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/2022-european-semester-country-report-finland_en.pdf.

⁵ EC (2022). Recommendation for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on the 2022 National Reform Programme of Finland and delivering a Council opinion on the 2022 Stability Programme of Finland, [EUR-Lex - 52022DC0611 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/1231/oj).

2.2 National Reform Programme (NRP) and Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP)

The following key points highlight where the situation of people with disabilities or disability policies is relevant to the NRP/RRP. We analyse the most relevant of these in the next sections.

Finland's National Reform Programme mentions some concrete actions and 'Implementation of the UN CRPD' is identified as a main measure under 'Equal opportunities' (p. 84).⁶ Concerning the SOTE reform, stakeholder participation in, for example, the disability council, in the preparation of key reform projects will be enhanced in every wellbeing service county (p. 50). Employment opportunities to support the employment of the partially disabled will be further enhanced by a new programme and the Social Economy Strategy and Action Plan was being prepared (p. 55). The strategy was published in 2022⁷ and the activities of the Centre of Expertise for Social Enterprises was launched on 26 January 2022. The Centre provides guidance and advice to Finnish entrepreneurs and organisations that are involved in or starting up social enterprises, regardless of the type of company or sector. The Centre is responsible for developing national models for employing people with partial work capacity and others in a difficult labour market situation as part of social entrepreneurship and strengthening the networks of social enterprises that integrate people into the work. These activities are part of the Finnish Government's work ability programme and its employment measures package.⁸

Finland's Recovery and Resilience Plan⁹ contains four sections, three of which are either directly or indirectly targeted towards persons with disabilities. Digitalisation in Finland is planned to enable the inclusion of all citizens. Moreover, the aim of the SOTE reform is to make health and social care services more accessible. In the section on labour markets, actions and investments are directed towards renewing unemployment services. The work ability programme is designed to help unemployed persons with partial work ability to find employment, to prevent prolonged unemployment and disability, and to enable those in a disadvantaged labour market situation to participate in working life. Persons with disabilities are included in the target groups of these actions.

⁶ Ministry of Finance (2022) *Finland's National Reform Programme 2022. Economic prospects*, Publication of Ministry of Finance 2022:35. Available at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-367-239-0>.

⁷ Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2022) *Strategy for Social Enterprises*. Available at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-327-586-7>.

⁸ *Yhteiskunnallisten yritysten osaamiskeskus*. The Centre of Expertise for Social Enterprises. [Briefly in English – The Centre of Expertise for Social Enterprises \(yyo.fi\)](https://www.yyo.fi/).

⁹ Finnish Government (2021) *Sustainable Growth Programme for Finland. Recovery and Resilience Plan*, Publications of the Finnish Government 2021:69. Available at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-694-5>.

2.3 Semester links to CRPD and national disability action plans

It is important that Semester plans align with national disability strategy. In Finland, this refers to the National Program of Action of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2020-2023. A National Action Plan on the UN CRPD was prepared for 2018-2019 by the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (VANE), following consultation. This was updated in a second plan for the period 2020-2023, comprising 110 measures.¹⁰ This national action plan is mentioned in the 2022 NRP.¹¹

Relevant recommendations arising from participation in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are highlighted in the following sections. The UN CRPD Committee's review of the state report of Finland is not yet scheduled after the most recent submission by Finland in 2019.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Ministry of Finance (2022) *Finland's National Reform Programme 2022. Economic prospects*, Publication of Ministry of Finance 2022:35, p. 90. Available at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-367-239-0>.

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

Finland's initial CRPD implementation report was submitted in 2019¹² but dialogue with the UN CRPD Committee has not yet been scheduled.

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

3.1 Summary of the labour market situation of persons with disabilities

According to the Social Scoreboard indicator, cited in the Semester package, the disability employment gap in Finland is considered 'Better than average'.

Data from EU-SILC indicate an employment rate for persons with disabilities in Finland of 59.6 % in 2020, compared to 79.3 % for other persons. This results in an estimated disability employment gap of approximately 20 percentage points (estimated EU27 average gap 24.5, see Tables 2-4) or an employment chances ratio of 0.8. Statistics subsequently published on the Eurostat database indicate a disability employment gap of 19.9 percentage points in 2020, using a slightly different methodology, and rising to 22.1 points in 2021.¹³

The same data indicate unemployment rates of 15.7 % and 7.3 %, respectively in 2020 (see Tables 5-7) and the economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Finland was 70.8 %, compared to 85.5 % for other persons (see Tables 8-10). These indications are broken down by gender and age in the respective tables in the Annex.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on employment in 2020-2021, some caution is needed when interpreting trend data.

According to statistics¹⁴ collected by the Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired in 2020, 24.8 % of persons registered with visual disabilities aged between 15 and 64 are fully employed, 15.6 % are partially employed, 3.2 % are unemployed, 3.3 % are students and 50.0 % receive a pension. The statistics for the whole population are 72 %, both fully and partially employed combined, and 7 % unemployed.

A survey study conducted by the Finnish Disability Forum in 2018¹⁵ (not a representative study) found that about half of the respondents (48.3 %) were on a full

¹² Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2019) Initial report submitted by Finland under Article 35 of the Convention, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2fC%2fFIN%2f1.

¹³ Eurostat, Disability employment gap by level of activity limitation and sex (source EU-SILC), 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_dlm200/default/table.

¹⁴ Ojamo, M. and Tolkinen, L. (2020) *The Finnish Register of Visually Impaired annual statistics 2020*, Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired. Available at: https://cms.nkl.fi/sites/default/files/2021-09/Annual%20Statistics%202020_0.pdf?_ga=2.188602657.887950730.1660736470-26584301.1649660118.

¹⁵ Vesala, H. and Valtio, E. (2018) *Miten vammaisten ihmisten oikeudet toteutuvat Suomessa? Vammaisfoorumin vuonna 2018 toteuttaman kyselyn tulokset taulukkomuodossa*, Suomen

pension, 16.3 % on partial pension and only 6.8 % categorised themselves as unemployed.

When talking about independent living in an event held by the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities in August 2022, the current Minister of Economic Affairs and Employment, Tuula Haatainen, said that only 15 % of Finnish persons with disabilities are employed, which leaves 60 000 persons with disabilities with limited work capacity unemployed, despite their being willing to work. In a survey study conducted by the Finnish National Advisory Board on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,¹⁶ 123 respondents with disabilities (41 %) and 101 respondents without disabilities (34 %) answered that the right to employment was realised ‘poorly’ and ‘rather poorly’, respectively.

These alternative figures unfortunately indicate substantial discrepancies with the EU-SILC statistics, in which the gaps between persons with and without disabilities appear to be small. This is most likely because those who receive some kind of pension are not statistically or technically counted as unemployed, but may also reflect a more targeted sample in these surveys (e.g. focusing on those who are registered disabled or have more severe impairments, who might be more comparable with the subgroup of persons reporting severe limitations in SILC).

3.2 Analysis of labour market policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see the 2022 National Reform Programme, the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Finland and the National Program of Action of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2020-2023.¹⁷

As part of the programme of Sanna Marin’s Government, Finland adopted a similar employment channel system to that of the Swedish Samhall, called Työkanava Oy (Työkanava Ltd). It is a government-owned company that facilitates the employment of those with partial work capacity, including persons with intellectual disabilities, in collaboration with the existing local employment departments. The local employment department assigns a jobseeker to Työkanava Oy when a suitable job has been found. Työkanava Oy becomes the employer and trains and guides the employee.¹⁸ The Act on Työkanava entered into force in July 2022 and the company began functioning in September 2022. At this early stage, no evaluation data are yet available but the

vammaisfoorumi. Helsinki. Available at: <https://vammaisfoorumi.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/VFKyselyn-perusraportti2019.pdf>.

¹⁶ Hoffren, T. (2018) *Kysely oikeuksien toteutumisesta vammaisten henkilöiden arjessa. Raportti keskeisistä kyselytuloksista*, Vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien neuvottelukunta, Helsinki. Available at: <https://vane.to/documents/2308875/2395516/Raportti+kyselyn+tuloksista.pdf/e6bd3b12-1554-43b4-8f6a-38a21143e419>.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2022) *Työkanava Ltd*. Available at: <https://tem.fi/en/a-special-assignment-company-to-employ-people-with-partial-work-ability> (visited on 17 August 2022).

implementation should be carefully monitored in 2023 for its suitability and effectiveness in meeting the identified challenges.

A working group under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has aimed to establish the so-called ‘linear model’ to enable those who already receive work incapacity allowance to start working. The model was suggested by Anni Kyröläinen in her report in 2020 on the structural barriers to employment of persons with disabilities.¹⁹ Persons with disabilities who receive work incapacity allowance are currently afraid of losing the allowance if they engage in part-time or full-time employment. Kyröläinen suggested that, according to the linear model, work incapacity allowance is still paid when a person first starts part-time work and is then gradually reduced as this person works longer hours. The total amount of money does not decrease at any point and the person does not lose their entitlement to the allowance right away. This model was included in Finland’s Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021.²⁰ It aimed to improve employment incentives for people on partial disability pension and to abolish inactivity traps.

The Government’s proposal for the linear model was supposed to be submitted to Parliament in the autumn of 2022 and the new acts should have entered into force on 1 January 2024. However, the working group’s statement was watered down in the spring of 2022 by the Government’s assessment of its possible impact,²¹ according to which this change would not sufficiently lead to the employment of persons with disabilities. The Government explained that the working group members were unable to reach consensus, especially on the employment opportunities of those with partial work capacity.²²

A programme for boosting employment through public procurement was launched in August 2020. The objective of this national project and local pilots is to consolidate the operating model of employment through procurement in municipalities in 2023.²³

Finland aims to raise its employment rate and skills levels to boost sustainable growth. The measures include the expansion of the work ability programme and the IPS – Invest and Coach development project – and mental health and work ability as prerequisites for employment and productivity. The Government is launching several working-life-related programmes, such as WORK2030, the Work Ability Programme, the Research and Development Programme on Work, Health and Work Ability, and

¹⁹ Kyröläinen, A. (2020). *Vammaisten henkilöiden työllistymisen rakenteelliset esteet*, Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön julkaisuja. Työelämä 2020: 36. Available at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-327-546-1>.

²⁰ Finnish Government (2021) *Sustainable Growth Programme for Finland. Recovery and Resilience Plan*, Publications of the Finnish Government 2021:69. Available at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-694-5>.

²¹ Mäki, A. (2022) *Unelma riskittömästä siirtymisestä työkyvyttömyyseläkkeeltä työhön kariutui SOSTE*. Available at: https://www.soste.fi/blogikirjoitus/unelma-riskittomasta-siirtymisesta-tyokyvyttomyyselakkeelta-tyohon-kariutui/?fbclid=IwAR3Lolp2NcnpX2Saj_hlaOwZqZnunanqq96y9k5XLYLcHBluXafQWWaX5gc.

²² Backman, H. (2022) *Lineaarisen työkyvyttömyyseläkemallin valmistelu ei etene*, Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö. Helsinki. Available at: <https://stm.fi/-/lineaarisen-tyokyvyttomyyselakemallin-valmistelu-ei-etene>.

²³ *THL. Hankinnoilla työllistäminen*. Available at: <https://thl.fi/fi/web/hyvinvoinnin-ja-terveyden-edistamisen-johtaminen/osallisuuden-edistaminen/tyoelamaosallisuus/hankinnoilla-tyollistaminen>.

the Mental Health at Work Programme. All these working life programmes aim to promote employment and strengthen work ability, wellbeing at work, productivity and mental health in working life.²⁴

²⁴ Ministry of Finance (2022) *Finland's National Reform Programme 2022. Economic prospects*, Publication of Ministry of Finance 2022:35. Available at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-367-239-0>.

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

Finland's initial CRPD implementation report was submitted in 2019²⁵ but dialogue with the UN CRPD Committee has not yet been scheduled.

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

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

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

4.1 Summary of the social situation of persons with disabilities

Data from EU-SILC indicate the poverty risk rate for working age persons with disabilities in Finland was 14.3 % in 2020, compared to 10.7 % for other persons of similar age – an estimated disability poverty gap of approximately 4 percentage points (see Table 14). For people aged over 65, the disability poverty gap was 7.6 points (18.0 % for older persons with disabilities and 10.4 % for other persons of similar age). The tables in the Annex also indicate the respective rates of risk of poverty or social exclusion and break these down by gender as well as age. Recently updated data from Eurostat indicate that the relative poverty risk for the working age disabled population rose to 25.7 % and for the older age group to 26.2 % in 2021.²⁶

For persons with disabilities of working age in Finland (aged 18-64) the risk of poverty before social transfers was 39.6 % and 14.3 % after transfers. The in-work poverty rate for persons with disabilities in this age range was 3.3 % in 2020 and 2.5 % in 2021.²⁷

Of interest for 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 persons with disabilities in Finland was 11.3 %, compared to 2.2 % for other persons.

According to a survey study conducted by the Finnish Disability Forum in 2018²⁸ (not a representative study), 53.8 % of the respondents with disabilities experienced poverty. In particular, 42.1 % experienced restrictions in practising their hobbies. In a survey conducted by the Finnish National Advisory Board on the Rights of Persons

²⁵ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2019. Initial report submitted by Finland under Article 35 of the Convention, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2fC%2fFIN%2f1.

²⁶ Eurostat 2022. People at risk of poverty by level of activity limitation, sex and age, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/HLTH_DPE020_custom_3348056.

²⁷ Eurostat 2022. In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate by level of activity limitation, sex and age, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_dpe050/default/table.

²⁸ Vesala, H. and Valtio, E. (2018) *Miten vammaisten ihmisten oikeudet toteutuvat Suomessa? Vammaisfoorumin vuonna 2018 toteuttaman kyselyn tulokset taulukkomuodossa*, Suomen vammaisfoorumi, Helsinki. Available at: <https://vammaisfoorumi.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/VFKyselyn-perusraportti2019.pdf>.

with Disabilities,²⁹ 96 (32 %) respondents and 79 (27 %) respondents answered that the right to a reasonable standard of living and social security was realised ‘poorly’ or ‘rather poorly’, respectively.

According to a survey study conducted by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL),³⁰ persons with disabilities have encountered many challenges that were accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, accessibility to personal assistant services was problematic even before the pandemic, but 70 % of the respondents felt that the situation deteriorated even further during the pandemic. Due to restricted social contact, about 60 % of the respondents who had insufficient personal assistant services experienced loneliness. Half of the respondents experienced poorer mental health.

4.2 Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see the 2022 National Reform Programme, the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Finland and the National Program of Action of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2020-2023.³¹

Many reforms and legislative changes are on hold due to the SOTE reform. Many are also planned to be launched at the same time as the reform or just after it, so that the workload is not overwhelming for personnel. The RRP does not include measures to support the ongoing social security reform, mainly because it is a long-term reform that will take two government terms to complete. The SOTE reform will finally be implemented at the beginning of 2023. The new Disability Services Act has been under discussion on the basis of the draft law, which will also be enacted at the beginning of 2023.

One of the heated discussions that has taken place among different disability stakeholders concerns eligibility for the personal assistant service, one of the fundamental services for enabling persons with disabilities to live independently (Article 19). The current, old law excludes persons with intellectual disabilities due to incapacity or limited capacity for self-determination from defining their own service needs. The same distinction is in the new draft law: people with disabilities (except for those with intellectual disabilities) are entitled to their subjective rights to personal assistant services, but those with intellectual disabilities have subjective rights to special participation support in the place of personal assistance. In the course of the

²⁹ Hoffren, T. (2018) *Kysely oikeuksien toteutumisesta vammaisten henkilöiden arjessa. Raportti keskeisistä kyselytuloksista*, Vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien neuvottelukunta, Helsinki. Available at:

<https://vane.to/documents/2308875/2395516/Raportti+kyselyn+tuloksista.pdf/e6bd3b12-1554-43b4-8f6a-38a21143e419>.

³⁰ THL. (2021) *Vammaisten henkilöiden kokemuksia koronaepidemian ajalta – tuloksia henkilökohtaisen avun asiakaskyselystä. TUTKIMUKSESTA TIIVIISTI 24/2021*, THL, Helsinki. Available at: https://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/142612/URN_ISBN_978-952-343-657-2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

³¹ 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.

discussion, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities made a statement (CRPD/C/26/D/46/2018) on the claim made by a Finnish person with physical and intellectual disabilities using the Optional Protocol,³² and concluded that in terms of living independently, the rights of persons with physical and intellectual disability were violated due to the lack of personal assistant services in the Finnish system. The final law was not yet public at the time of writing of this report.

The SOTE reform³³ is expected to increase citizens' freedom of choice by enlarging the administrative unit area, reducing the number of responsible authorities from over 300 municipalities into 21 wellbeing service counties, plus Helsinki City. At the same time, one of the objectives of the reform is to cut the social and health service budget. The Ministry of the Environment is planning to cut 90 % of its budget for the home renovation costs of persons with disabilities next year, from EUR 6 250 000 to EUR 450 000. Home renovation is a subjective right of persons with disabilities. Due to the general lack of accessibility in Finland, organisations of persons with disabilities have expressed concern about this budget cut.³⁴

Personal budgeting (PB), as a form of social services, has been piloted in several projects: the last national project ended in 2021. The Finnish Institute for Welfare and Health (THL) has published a report evaluating the project and the current situation and suggesting how to continue with PB.³⁵ THL suggests PB as one way to organise social services in Finland. The model should be restricted to social services and legislative changes and coordinated with the forthcoming changes in the Disability Services Act.

The Incomes Register, important for addressing bureaucratic traps in combining work income and social benefits, was completed in 2021.³⁶ The register collected information on citizens' incomes, both work-related and social security benefits. However, the system does not yet work properly and still needs adjustments. In some cases, combining work and social security is still impossible and in others the social security system lacks flexibility.³⁷

The proposed 'linear model' to enable those who already receive work incapacity allowance to start working, while retaining benefits with tapered income offset, was

³² See:

<https://um.fi/documents/35732/0/YKn+vammaisten+henkilöiden+oikeuksien+komitean+ratkaisu.pdf/54c2bf15-5366-60b0-eb3a-daf1dcf0f572?t=1649416758767>.

³³ SOTE-reform <https://soteuudistus.fi/mika-on-hyvinvointialue>.

³⁴ Suonpää, S. (2022) *Ympäristöministeriö tekemässä asuntojen esteettömyys-remontteihin tarkoitettuihin avustuksiin rajua leikkausta. Helsingin sanomat 12.8.* Available at: <https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000008991587.html>.

³⁵ Nurmi-Koikkalainen, P., Rantala, V., Sjöblom, S., Havakka, P., Vinni, M., Toikka, I., Mätäsaho, J., Lipponen, O. & Härkönen, N. (2022) *Vammaisten henkilöiden henkilökohtaisen budjetoinnin kokeiluhankkeen tuloksia: Esitys Suomen malliksi.* Available at: <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-343-801-9>.

³⁶ Valtiotalouden tarkastusvirasto (2021) *Kannustinloukkujen purkamisen valmistelu ja toimeenpano, Valtiotalouden tarkastusviraston tarkastuskertomukset 14/2021.* Available at: <https://www.vtv.fi/app/uploads/2021/11/VTV-Tarkastus-14-2021-Kannustinloukkujen-purkamisen-valmistelu-ja-toimeenpano.pdf>.

³⁷ Sosiaaliturvakomitean julkaisu (2022) *Ansiotyön ja sosiaaliturvan yhteensovittaminen, Sosiaaliturvakomitean julkaisuja 2022:2.* Available at: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163753>.

discussed in the previous section on employment (Section 3.2). This reform is relevant to reducing the risk of poverty traps at the welfare-work interface.

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

Finland's initial CRPD implementation report was submitted in 2019³⁸ but dialogue with the UN CRPD Committee has not yet been scheduled.

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

5.1 Summary of the educational situation of persons with disabilities

The EU-SILC 2020 estimates concerning educational attainment should be treated with caution due to relatively wide confidence intervals but they consistently indicate disability equality gaps (an average of 2-3 years provides a more stable indication). Table 16 indicates early school leaving rates disaggregated by disability status in Finland. Young people with disabilities (aged 18-24) tend to leave school early significantly more than their non-disabled peers of the same age groups (and this is reinforced by widening the sample size to age 18-29). Table 17 shows completion rates of tertiary education disaggregated by disability and age group. Persons with disabilities (aged 30-34) are less likely to complete tertiary education than their peers (and this is reinforced in the wider age range 30-39).

According to the latest statistics of the Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired in 2020,³⁹ 20.6 % of registered persons with visual disabilities had completed tertiary education in comparison with 34.1 % of the 2018 national census statistics for the whole population.

According to a survey study conducted by the Finnish Disability Forum in 2018⁴⁰ (not a representative study), 11.3 % of the respondents had experienced restrictions to education due to poverty. In a survey conducted by the Finnish National Advisory Board on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,⁴¹ 29 respondents (10 %) and 40 respondents (14 %) answered that the right to participate in inclusive education was realised 'poorly' or 'rather poorly', respectively.

³⁸ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2019. Initial report submitted by Finland under Article 35 of the Convention, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2fC%2fFIN%2f1.

³⁹ Ojamo, M. and Tolkkinen, L. (2020) *The Finnish Register of Visually Impaired annual statistics 2020*, Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired. Available at: https://cms.nkl.fi/sites/default/files/2021-09/Annual%20Statistics%202020_0.pdf?ga=2.188602657.887950730.1660736470-26584301.1649660118.

⁴⁰ Vesala, H. and Valtio, E. (2018) *Miten vammaisten ihmisten oikeudet toteutuvat Suomessa? Vammaisfoorumin vuonna 2018 toteuttaman kyselyn tulokset taulukkumuodossa*, Suomen vammaisfoorumi. Helsinki. Available at: <https://vammaisfoorumi.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/VFKyselyn-perusraportti2019.pdf>.

⁴¹ Hoffren, T. (2018) *Kysely oikeuksien toteutumisesta vammaisten henkilöiden arjessa. Raportti keskeisistä kyselytuloksista*, Vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien neuvottelukunta, Helsinki. Available at: <https://vane.to/documents/2308875/2395516/Raportti+kyselyn+tuloksista.pdf/e6bd3b12-1554-43b4-8f6a-38a21143e419>.

According to the student barometer study data collected by the Research Foundation for Studies and Education (Otus) in 2022,⁴² which we acquired before publication, students with disabilities in higher education institutions in Finland have recently encountered many structural barriers, such as physical and attitudinal obstacles, rigid curriculums and university cultures based on ableism. The distance learning environment during the pandemic led to mixed experiences among students with disabilities: some encountered further difficulties and mental health problems, while others benefited from social interactions being limited.

5.2 Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see the 2022 National Reform Programme, the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Finland and the National Program of Action of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2020-2023.

According to the new Compulsory Education Act (2020/1214), enacted in August 2021, compulsory and free education continues up to high school until the pupil turns 18 or until the pupil completes their high school education. This applies to all pupils, including those with disabilities. Compulsory education can be cancelled if the pupil has an illness or disability, upon request from their guardian. In some cases, pupils with intellectual disabilities, and their families, have been advised not to continue to high school. The equality ombudsman considered this to limit the equal opportunities of pupils with intellectual disabilities and that this is unfortunate.⁴³ In another case of a blind student, the personal assistant service, as well as assistive devices, were much more difficult to obtain to enable her to continue studying at high school. The municipalities and the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA) were poorly prepared for this shift and, as a result, pupils with disabilities have suffered from non-provision of services or difficult access to services.⁴⁴ In addition, the number of places in high schools in Helsinki for pupils with intensive support needs is not sufficient to accommodate them all.

⁴² Unpublished at time of writing.

⁴³ Hakola, M. (2021) *Yhdenvertaisuudesta on huolehdittava oppivelvollisuuden suorittamisessa*. Tukiliitto. 14 April 2021. <https://www.tukiliitto.fi/ajankohtaista/oppivelvollisuus/>

⁴⁴ Aalto, M. (2022) *Sokea Ronja Hampf haaveilee lakiopinnoista*. *Helsingin sanomat A 16*, 30 August 2022.

6 Investment priorities in relation to disability

The main investments are directed towards enhancing employment. The objective is to increase the employment rate and strengthen the functioning of the labour market. This requires structural reforms and investments, such as the Nordic labour market service model, the digitalisation of public employment services, the abolition of unemployment benefits for older workers before statutory retirement age, the facilitation of work-based and study-based immigration, and the promotion of the integration into the labour market of young people and people with partial work ability.

The Government of Finland will allocate EUR 10 million per year of the central government spending limits for the period 2022-2025⁴⁵ to the new special-assignment company, Työlinja Oy. The work ability programme and the IPS – Invest and Coach development project will be extended.

European Social Fund (ESF)

The project S22370 ‘Supported Cooperative’ began on 1 April 2021 and will end on 30 June 2023. The purpose of the project is to create a new type of Supported Cooperative model that works in connection with the public sector’s rehabilitative work activities. The Cooperative provides a pathway to supported entrepreneurship for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and other people who need support for learning. During the project, the existing cooperative models will be reformulated and the new Supported Cooperative model will be piloted in connection with municipal work in Central Finland. The aim is to involve the Supported Cooperatives in the work activities of municipalities to diversify employment opportunities. The project also collaborates with other relevant actors (social work, schools, work centres and associations). It promotes the role and inclusion of people with intellectual and development disabilities and others who need support with learning and understanding working life. Another 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 through sales of products or services. EU and State funding granted: EUR 92 807, planned public funding (total): EUR 333 472.

The project S22389 ‘The Survival and Coping of Persons with Disabilities and Persons of Migrant Origin in Times of Crisis and Emergencies – Creating a New Future Using Experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic’ began on 1 February 2021 and will end on 31 March 2023. The object of this project is to support the survival and functional capacity of persons with disabilities and persons of migrant origin in times of crisis 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 instructions, plans and operational models. The aim is that in the future, under similar circumstances, the needs and rights of both persons of migrant origin and

⁴⁵ Finnish Government (2021) *Sustainable Growth Programme for Finland. Recovery and Resilience Plan*, Publications of the Finnish Government 2021:69. Available at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-694-5>.

persons with disabilities will be observed and taken into account more carefully. This project will also take intersectional perspectives into account, i.e. persons who are both of migrant origin and who have disabilities. Developing instructions, plans and operational models requires knowledge on how the pandemic has affected persons with disabilities, persons of migrant origin and service organisers and providers. Data are gathered through population survey studies, surveys of municipalities and service units, client interviews and focus group discussions. Data from these different sources are used to determine how the COVID-19 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.

The project S22413 'Netta – supporting young people with special needs to obtain jobs and educating enterprises to recruit people with special needs' started on 1 May 2021 and will end on 30 April 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 restrictions include a lack of communication skills. Another objective is to create more opportunities to develop their careers and work-related skills. EU and State funding granted: EUR 127 640, planned public funding (total): EUR 159 550.

The project S22445 'Let's hire! Supported employment centre' started on 1 January 2021 and will end on 31 August 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 support needs. A job coaching coordination centre called the 'Let's hire! Supported employment centre', will be established. The coordination centre will compile and maintain a cooperation network consisting of the following parties operating in Pirkanmaa; job coaches (organisation, city, municipality and educational institution), employees of employment promotion services, social service employees, employers, job-seekers and future job coaches who work in, for example, daytime activity centres or as mentors 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.

The project S22448 'Power' started on 1 January 2021 and will end on 31 August 2023. The aim of the project is to help people from multicultural backgrounds 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.

The project S22514 'Partially Able to Work as Part of the Open Labour Market' started on 2 August 2021 and will end on 30 June 2023. Its aim is to enhance the participation in labour markets of people with partial work ability, such as persons with disabilities, in Rovaniemi, Lapland. EU and State funding granted: EUR 181 900, planned public funding (total): EUR 240 830.

The project S22423 'Supporting the job' started on 1 June 2021 and will end on 31 December 2022. The project is an extension of 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 their own resources and become 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.

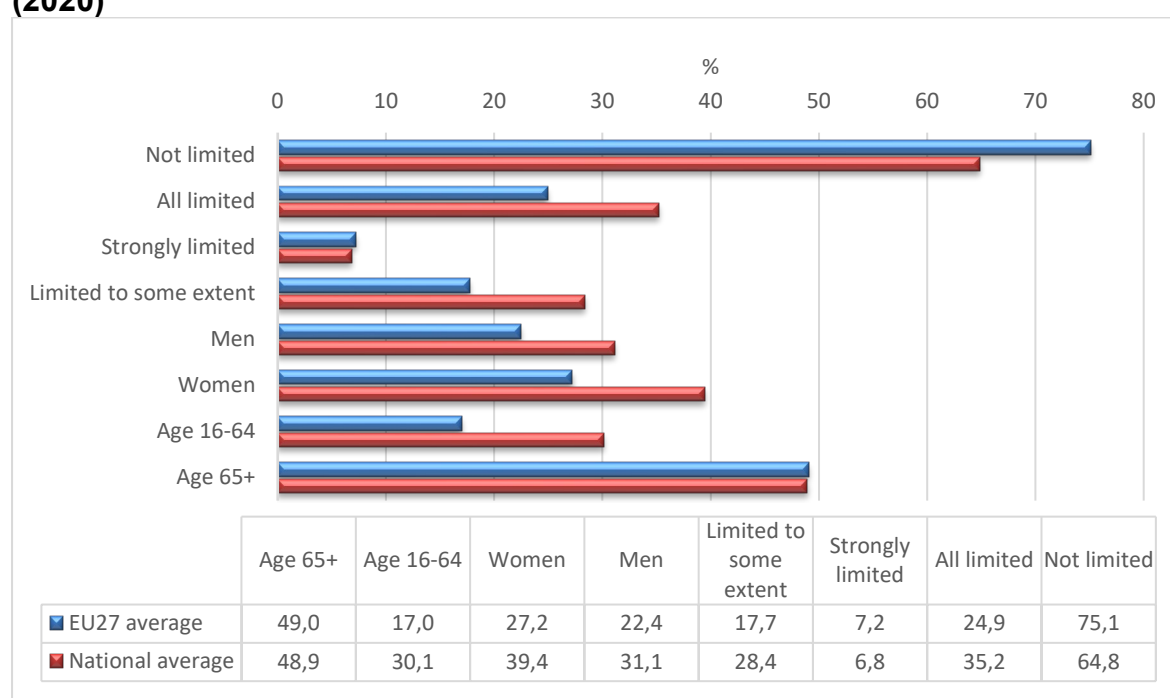
7 Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester

See also disability data published in the Eurostat database⁴⁶ and statistical reports.⁴⁷

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’.⁴⁸

Table 1: Self-reported ‘activity limitations’ as a proxy for impairment / disability (2020)



Source: EU-SILC 2020 Release April 2022

In subsequent tables, these data are used to indicate ‘disability’ equality gaps and trends relevant to the analytical sections – for the labour market, social policies and healthcare, and education – by comparing outcomes for persons who report and do not report ‘activity limitations’.⁴⁹ National estimates for Finland are compared with EU27 mean averages for the most recent year.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Eurostat Health Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

⁴⁷ Eurostat (2019) Disability Statistics: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability_statistics.

⁴⁸ The EU-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)).

⁴⁹ This methodology was developed in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at: <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>.

⁵⁰ The exit of the United Kingdom from the EU changed the EU average. EU27 averages have also been affected by time series breaks in other large countries, such as Germany.

7.1 Data relevant to disability and the labour market

Table 2: EU and Finland employment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2020)

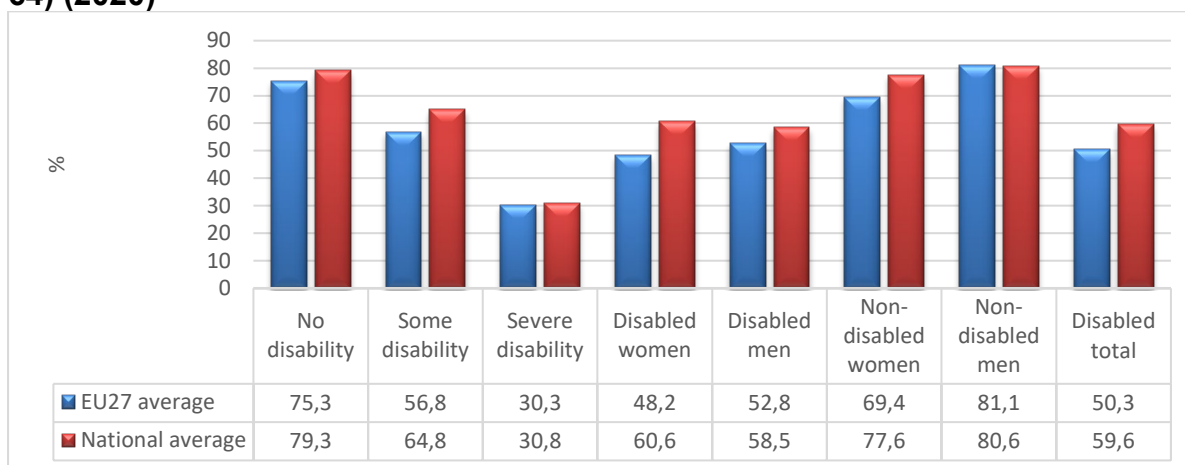


Table 3: Employment rates in Finland, by disability and age group (2020)

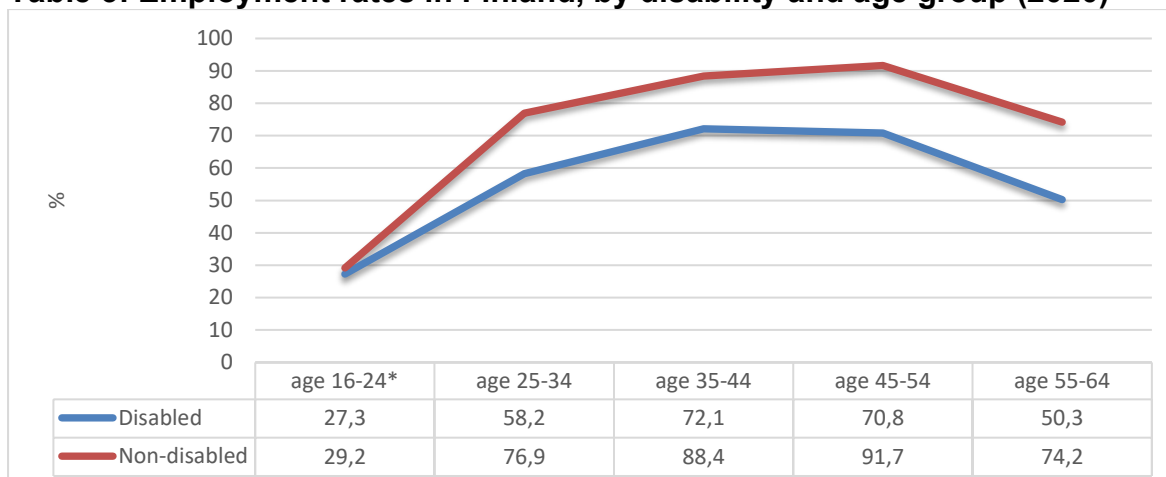
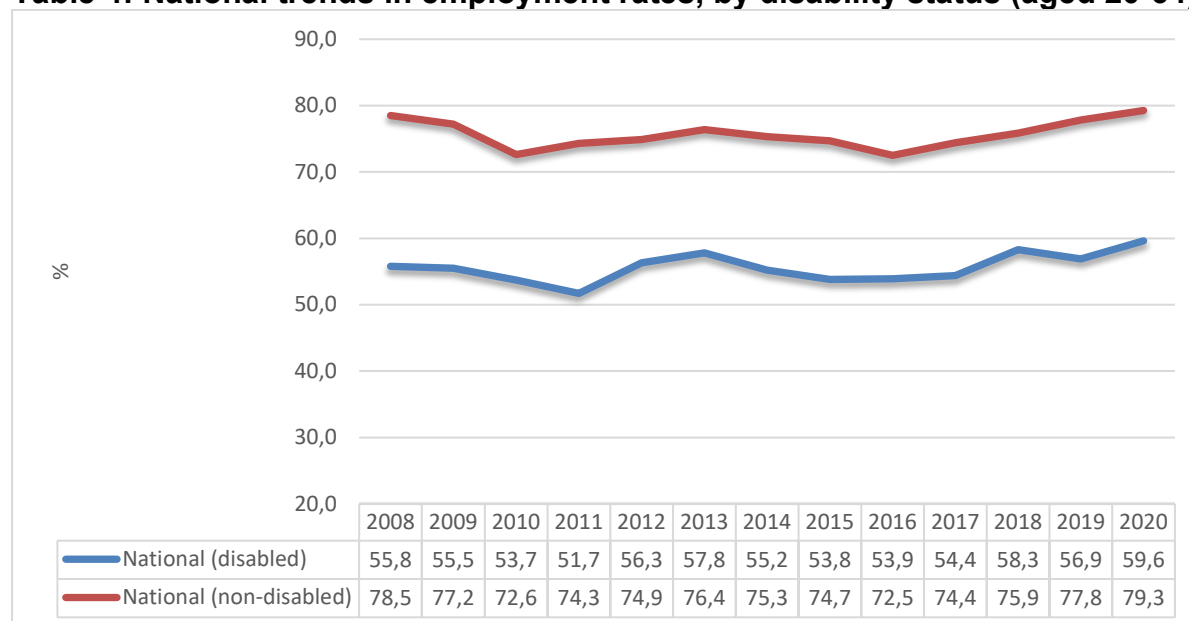


Table 4: National trends in employment rates, by disability status (aged 20-64)

Source: EU-SILC 2020 Release April 2022 (and preceding UDBs)

Note: Microdata concerning employment status was not available for Germany and Italy in this data release, which affects the EU27 average (which is therefore estimated).

7.1.1 Unemployment

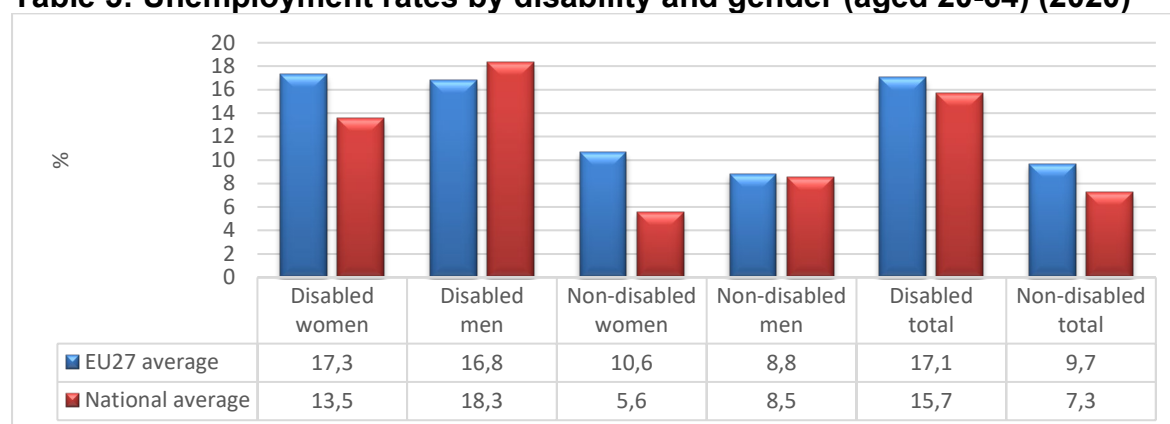
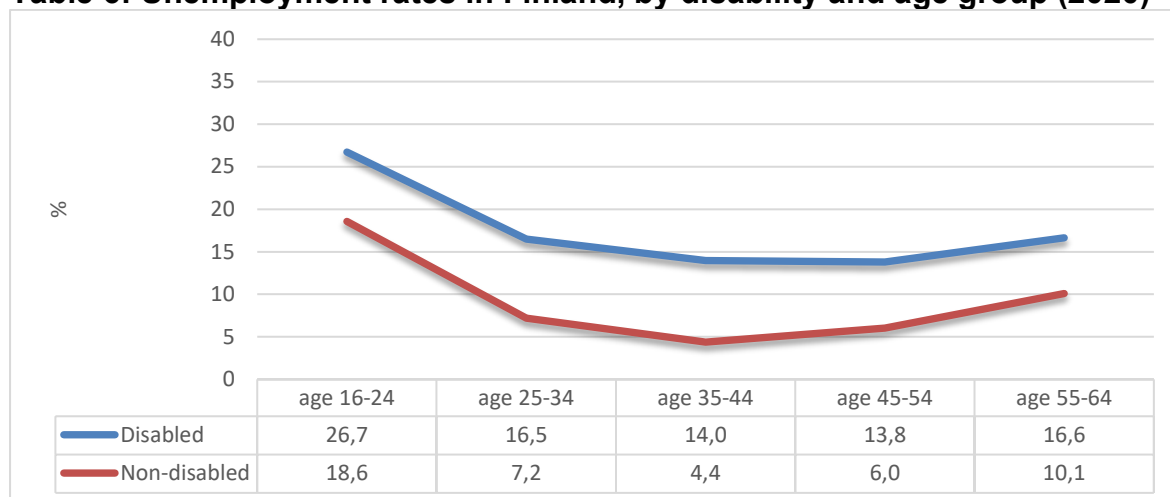
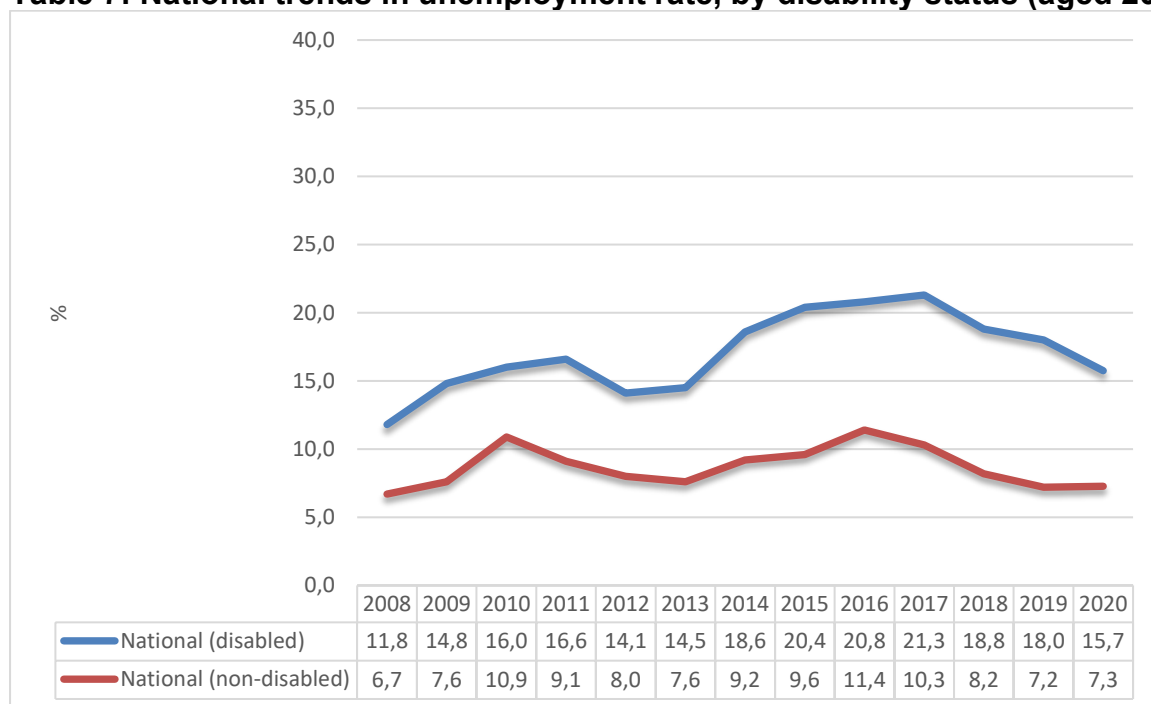
Table 5: Unemployment rates by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2020)

Table 6: Unemployment rates in Finland, by disability and age group (2020)

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


Source: EU-SILC 2020 Release April 2022 (and preceding UDBs)

7.1.2 Economic activity

Table 8: Activity rates in Finland, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2020)

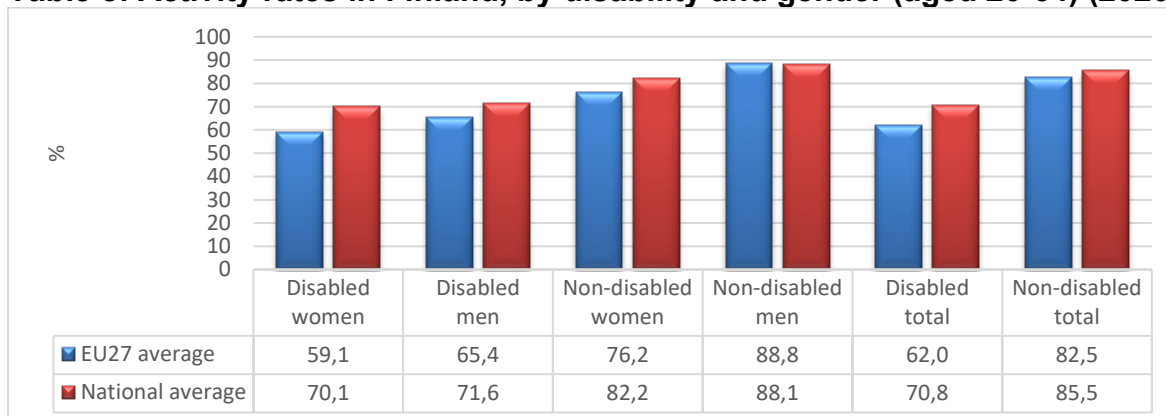


Table 9: Activity rates in Finland, by age group (2020)

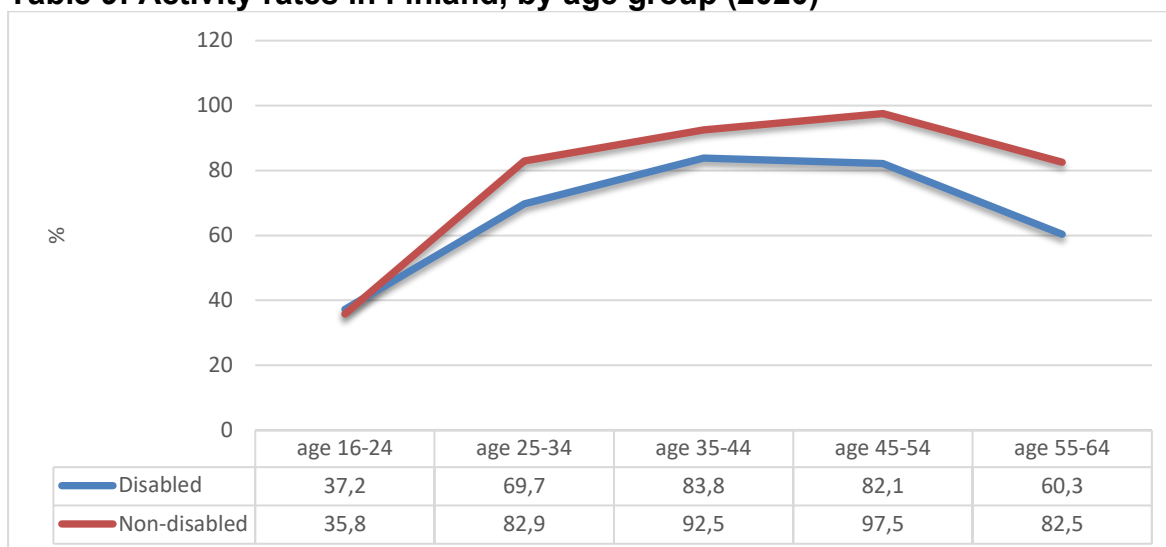
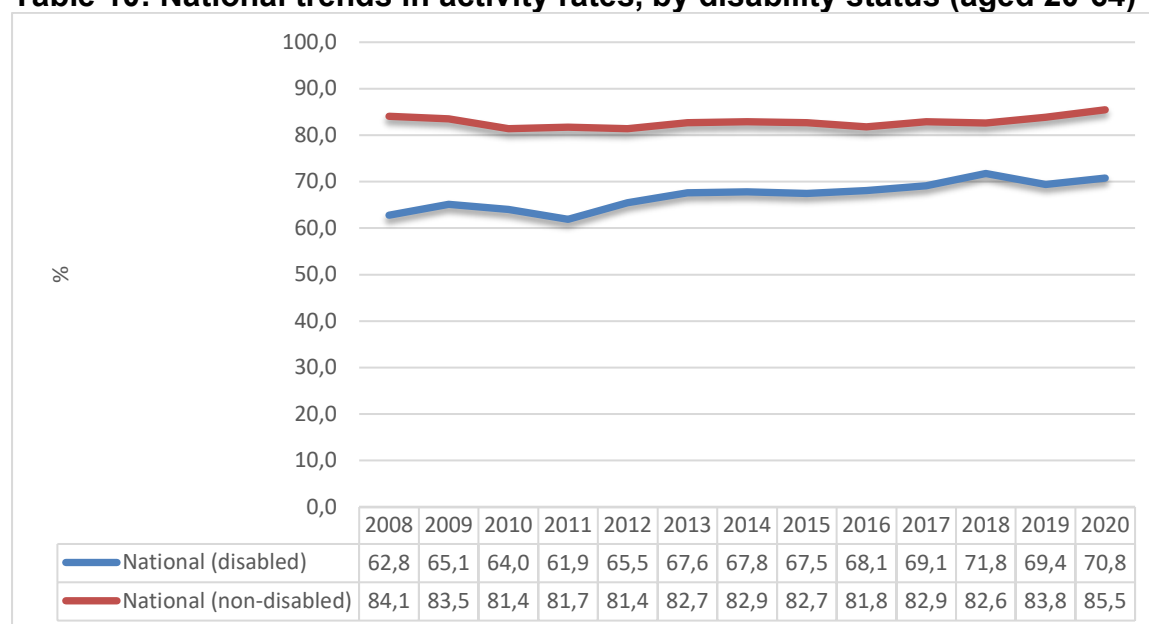


Table 10: National trends in activity rates, by disability status (aged 20-64)

Source: EU-SILC 2020 Release April 2022 (and preceding UDBs)

7.1.3 Alternative sources of labour market data in Finland

Disability data are not yet available from the core European Labour Force Survey but 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.⁵¹

Additional national studies and surveys are referred to in the text of Section 3.1.

⁵¹ Eurostat Health Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

7.2 EU data relevant to disability, social policies and healthcare (2020)

Table 11: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and risk (aged 16-64)⁵²

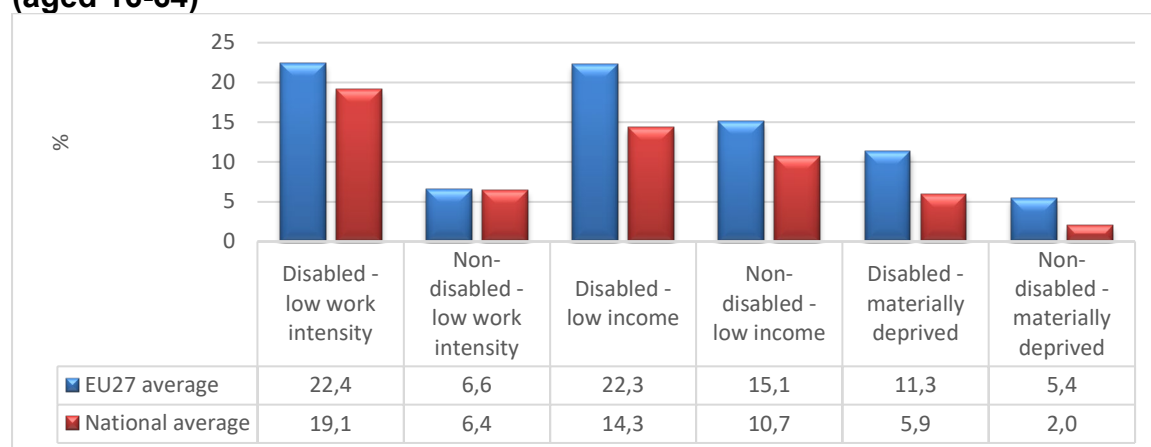


Table 12: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and gender (aged 16+)

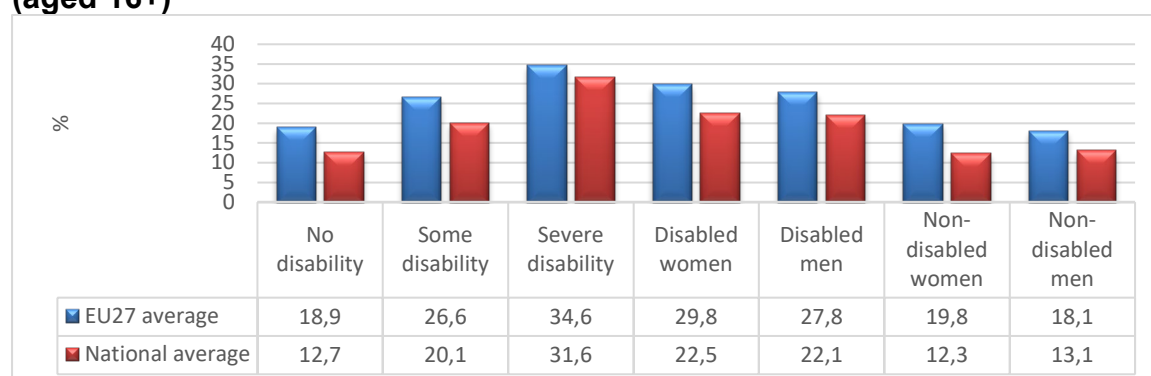
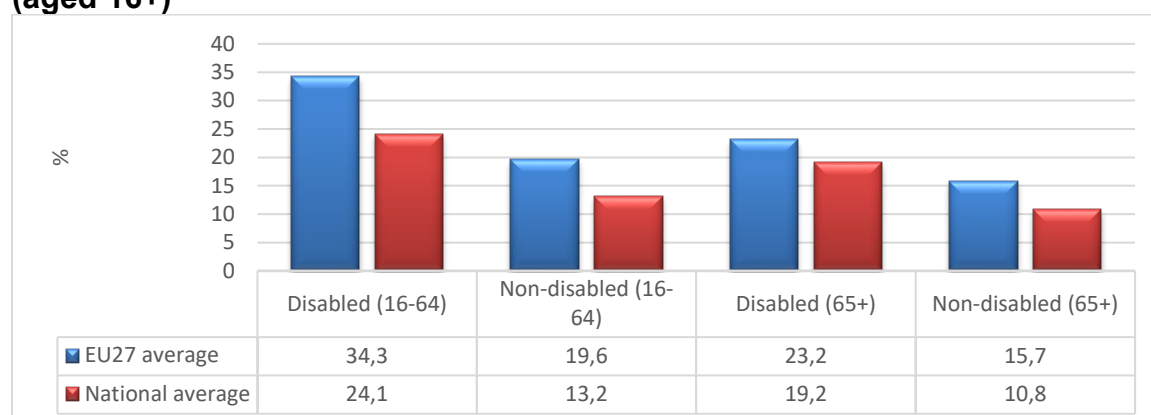
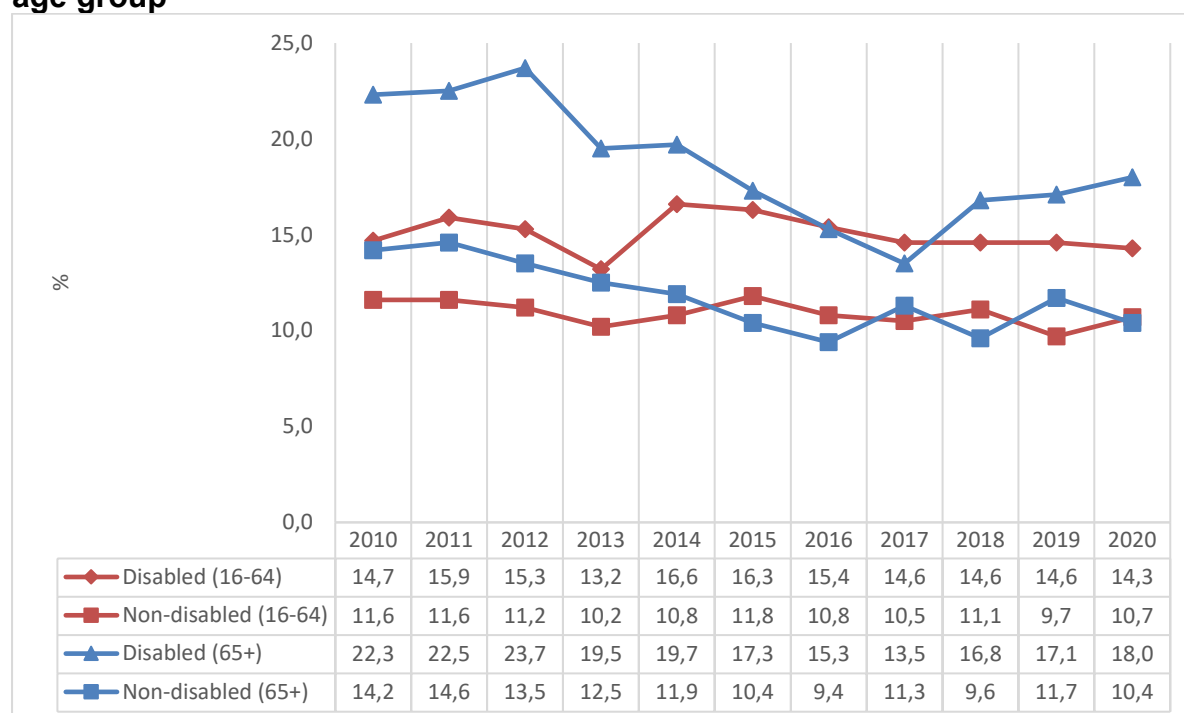


Table 13: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)



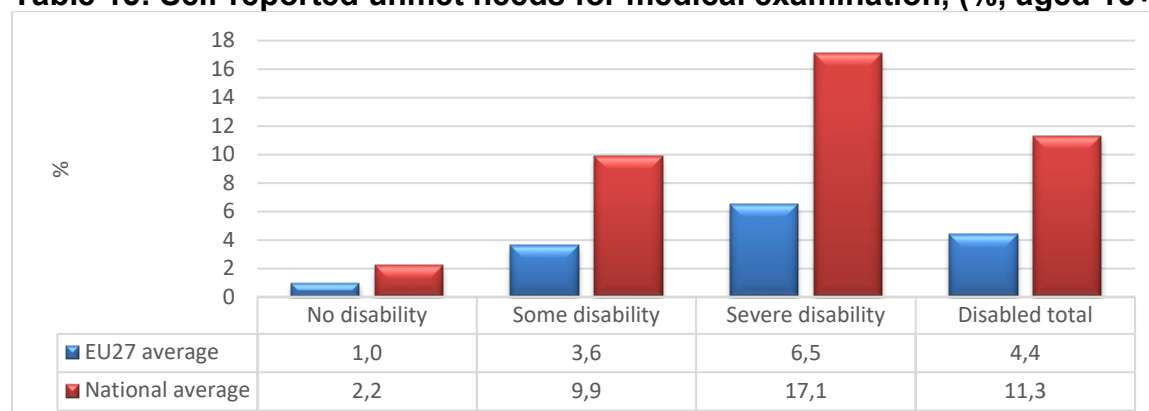
Source: EU-SILC 2020 Release April 2022 (and previous UDB)

⁵² Aged 16-59 for Low work intensity.

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

Source: Eurostat Health Database [[hlth_dpe020](#)] – People at risk of poverty

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

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

Source: Eurostat Health Database [[hlth_dh030](#)] – ‘Too expensive or too far to travel or waiting list’

Note: 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 2020 are consistent with the three-year mean values.

7.2.1 Alternative sources of poverty or healthcare data in Finland

The EU-SILC data provide 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.⁵³

Additional national studies and surveys are referred to in the text of Section 4.1.

7.3 EU data relevant to disability and education

Table 24: Early school leaving rates, by disability status (aged 18-24 and 18-29)⁵⁴

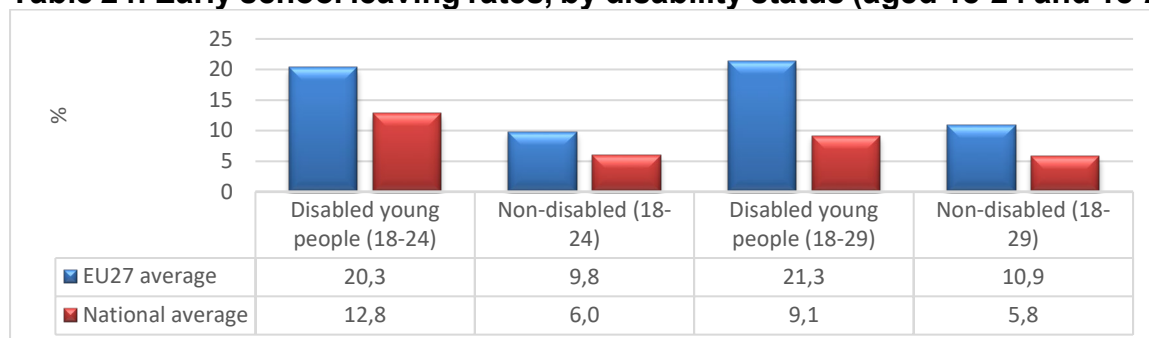
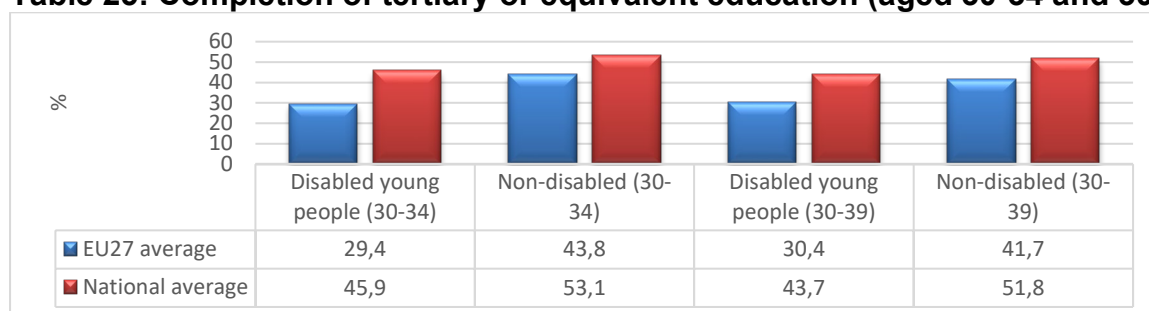


Table 25: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (aged 30-34 and 30-39)



Source: EU-SILC 2020 Release April 2022 (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

Additional national studies and surveys are referred to in the text of Section 5.1.

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

⁵⁴ There was a change from ISCED 1997 to ISCED 2011 qualification definitions in 2014, although some Member States continued to use the older definition after this time.

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