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European Semester 2015/2016 country fiche on disability - Finland: FI - ANED 2015 - Task - EU2020 (for EU28)

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Published: 13.11.2015

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):

Lauronen, J-P., & Vehmas, S. P. (2015). *European Semester 2015/2016 country fiche on disability - Finland: FI - ANED 2015 - Task - EU2020 (for EU28)*.

European Semester 2015/2016 country fiche on disability

Finland

Report prepared by: Juha-Pekka Lauronen,
Simo Vehmas

With comparative data provided by the ANED
core team



The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network support the development of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People in the EU.

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

Note:

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



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1 Summary of the overall situation and challenges

The National Reform Programme of Finland emphasizes that disability is a significant factor for shortened careers. The government's goal is to prevent work incapacities and improve labour market opportunities for people with partial work incapacities, and to prolong their careers. This program is based on OECD's analysis on Finland's economic sustainability and labour market. Finland was recommended to review its disability pension entitlement and to reduce the number of older workers leaving the workforce due to disability.¹

The employment rate of 58.4% of people with partial work incapacity is reasonably good compared to the whole population's rate of 70% in 2014. 7.17 % of people with partial work incapacity were registered job seekers and in all 41.6% of all people with partial work incapacity were economically inactive or unemployed. Of the unemployed population, 190, 000 were job seekers. The number of economically inactive and unemployed disabled people (236,886) is greater than the number of non-disabled unemployed (218 000). 21.6% of all registered job seekers have some sort of incapacity.

The educational challenge is significant, since only modest efforts have been made to include severely and moderately disabled young people into upper secondary and tertiary education. This is clearly in conflict with governmental policy that speaks for the inclusion of young people and other groups in difficult labour market situations. Nevertheless, new amendments to improve access to the labour market and rehabilitative education services have been implemented.

In order to lower the risk of poverty or social exclusion of disabled people, more synergy between education and employment is required. Along with work opportunities, there is a need for alternative solutions to create social wellbeing for disabled people who face challenges to access the labour market conditioned by the standards of non-disabled people.

¹ OECD Economic Surveys. Finland. February 2014. Overview.
http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Overview_Finland_2014.pdf

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

2.1 Strategic targets

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

	Europe 2020 targets	National targets ²
Employment	75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed	78%
Education	Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%	8%
	At least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education	42% (narrow national definition)
Fighting poverty and social exclusion	At least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion	770,000 persons living at risk of poverty or social exclusion, equivalent to an absolute decrease by 140,000 persons

Relevant disability targets from national strategies or sources:

The National Reform Programme of Finland highlights that disability is a significant factor that shortens work careers. However, the program does not specify people in terms of their impairment. The strategic goal is to prevent incapacity to work and to improve working opportunities for people with partial work incapacity in order to extend their working careers. The focus is on increased health promotion, occupational health care and rehabilitation. Thus, the overall emphasis is on working life: health of the labour force and their productivity.

The disability program of The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2010-2015³ states the main targets for employment, education and social inclusion but these are not quantified. Many of the targets are general rights of citizens. In addition, there are certain mandatory objectives, such as accessibility, related to the quality of life regulated by the Finnish law 117 e § (21.12.2012/958)⁴ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by UN.

² http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets_en.pdf

³ Vahva pohja osallisuudelle ja yhdenvertaisuudelle. Suomen vammaispoliittinen ohjelma VAMPO 2010-2015 [Finland's disability policy program] <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/112497>

⁴ [https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1999/19990132?search\[type\]=pika&search\[pika\]=esteett%C3%B6myys](https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1999/19990132?search[type]=pika&search[pika]=esteett%C3%B6myys)



Employment

- Work is a basic right for disabled people.
- The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, together with the employment authorities, need to develop job-hunting services that suit better disabled people.
- Employers ought to develop accessible workplace environments with required daily support for disabled workers.
- Necessary language interpretation services should be provided by employers.
- The employment service law has been revised so that an employee's disability is no longer a status barrier for employment services and availability in the labour market.
- The Minister of Health and Social Affairs' program of partial work ability aims to improve the employment services for disabled job seekers.

Education

- Disabled people require the necessary support to be included in primary and secondary education. This requires training of teachers and other staff.
- Officials should make more efforts to support the schooling and work of disabled people by, for example, improving both educational and career counselling.
- The connection between vocational special training and working life needs to be strengthened.
- At the primary level of education disabled children should have morning and evening activities in local schools.

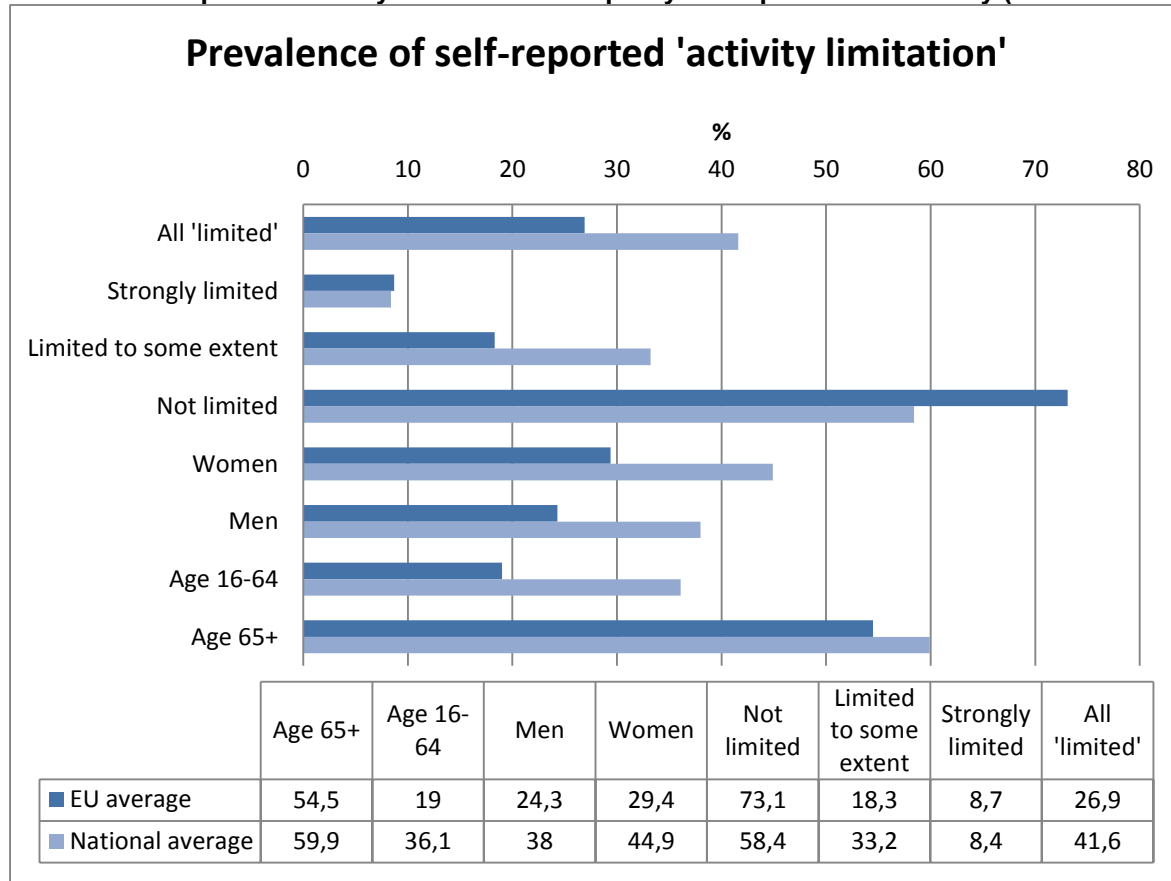
Poverty and Social Exclusion

- Prevention of poverty is based on means-tested disability benefits by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela).
- The social exclusion strategy emphasises independent living, social inclusion, accessibility and anti-discrimination acts.
- Services must be arranged so that they support independent living of a disabled person. Accessibility is an important part of this strategy. Accessibility also supports social inclusion when basic services are easy to reach and use.
- Public premises and public transportation are required to be accessible in order to enable physical mobility.

2.1.1 A note on the use of EU data

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

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



Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

It is relevant to observe that Finnish estimates of impairment prevalence are well above average, especially for working age adults, which may affect estimations of equality gaps.

In subsequent tables, these data are used as a proxy to estimate 'disability' equality in the main target areas for EU2020 – employment, education and poverty risk.⁷ The tables are presented by disaggregating the estimated proportion of people who report and do not report limitations for each indicator (e.g. among those who are employed, unemployed, at risk of poverty, etc.).

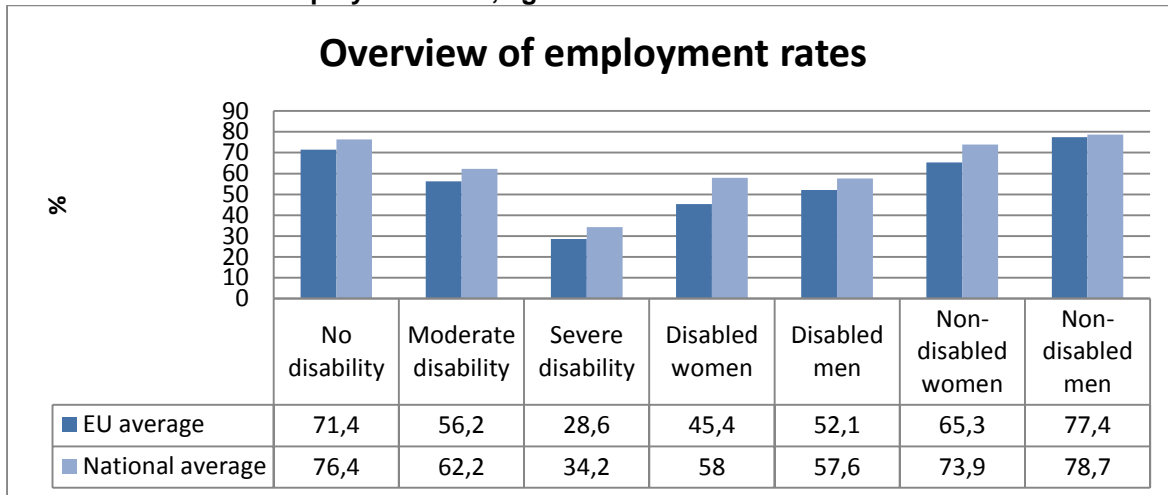
⁵ EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

⁶ The SILC survey questions are contained in the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM) [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_\(MEHM\)](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_(MEHM))

⁷ The methodology is further explained in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>

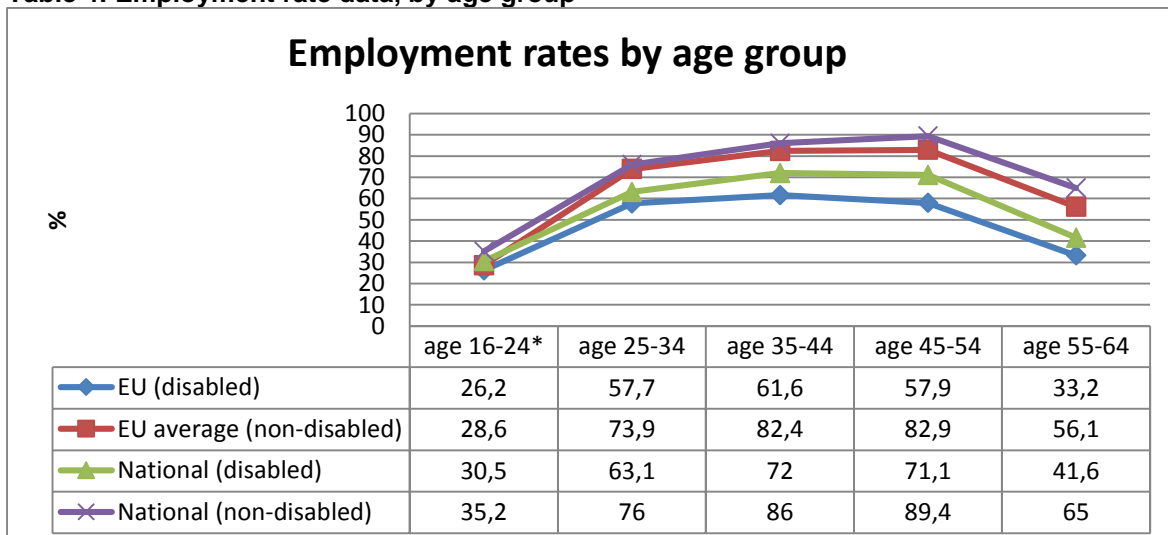
2.2 Employment data

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

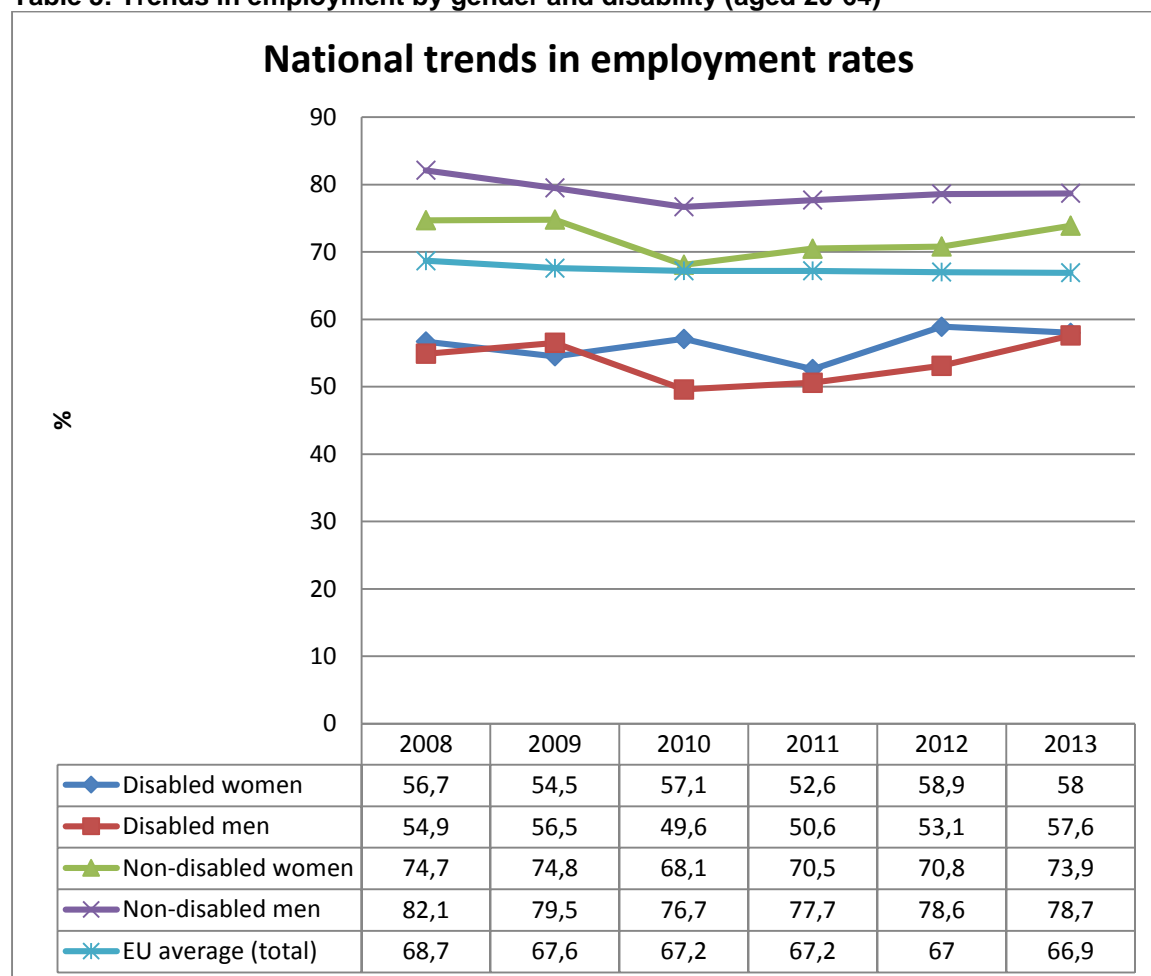


Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 4: Employment rate data, by age group



Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

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

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

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

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

The national data on employment rates of disabled people is fragmented and sometimes based on estimates of the officers. The data lacks the distinctions and categories used in EU-SILC. Therefore the comparisons are approximate. Different categorizations used by Finnish administration causes problems. EU-SILC definition of disability (impairment) is wider than the concept of “people with partial work incapacity” used by Finnish administration, as in Labour Force Survey methodology there is a larger group of people who report ‘limitations’ in everyday activities and a smaller sub-group who report ‘work limitations’. In EU-SILC statistics the concept of disability means a limited health condition for any reason; it does not refer to disabilities as medically diagnosed conditions. A diagnosed condition, however, is required in the Finnish system. Thus, EU-SILC gives a more optimistic view about the employment rates of disabled people because it considers also people with low level of impairment protected by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Moreover, the reported disability rate of Finland is much higher than the



EU average in EU-SILC, which may imply that the criteria used to indicate impairment is looser, as people may have reported minor temporary illnesses.

The Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs can provide estimates of the employment situation of disabled people based on the data of the Employment Office but only those disabled people who have enrolled to the job-seeking register can be taken into account. According to the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, there were 333,974 employed people with partial work incapacity, which is 58.4% of all 571,860 people with partial incapacity in 2014. The problem is that these numbers include people who receive disability pension or partial disability pension depending on the degree of disability (236,886). Thus, the rate is rather high as it includes all those who are qualified to receive the disability tax reduction. Approximately 20% of severely disabled are employed full time and another 20% part time.^{8, 9, 10}

The last full report is from 2006¹¹. This old Finnish data from the year 2000 supports EU-SILC data regarding the minimal difference between employment of disabled men and women. The report also points out the employment differences between different educational backgrounds. Higher educational degrees indicate better employment among disabled people. The worst situation is among the people who have no degree after elementary education. However, highly educated severely disabled people have no disadvantage in employment, but disabled people, in general, are less likely to be entrepreneurs than non-disabled people.

2.2.1 Unemployment

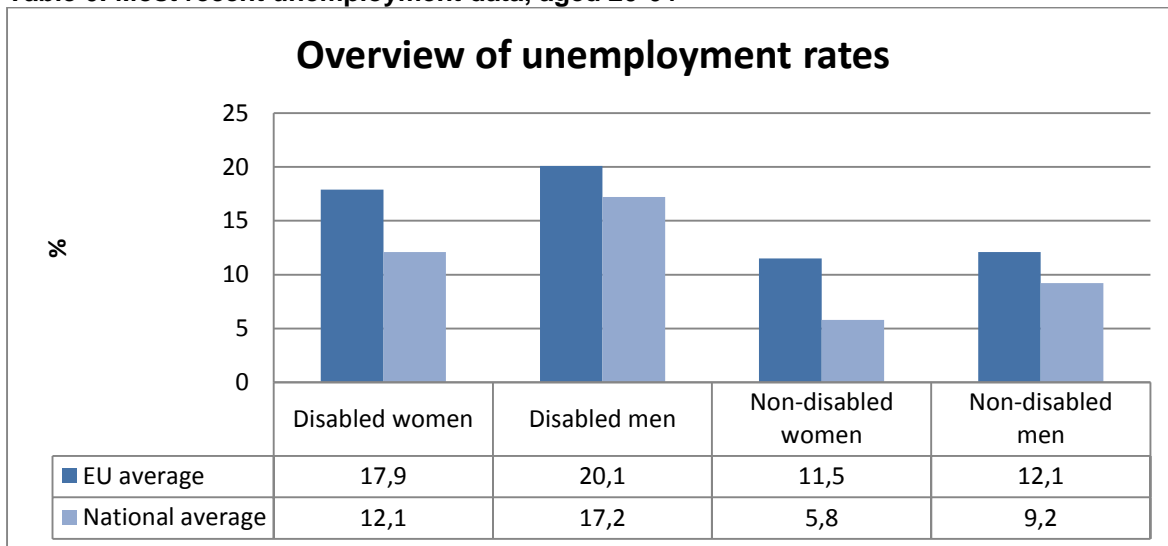
National administrative rules and definitions of 'unemployment' vary, and these may affect the way in which disabled people are categorised in different countries. The following tables compare national data with the EU2020 headline indicator for the EU

⁸ Totterman, Patrik (2015). Unpublished estimates of combined data of employment of people with partial work incapacity and of disability pensioners (interview). The Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

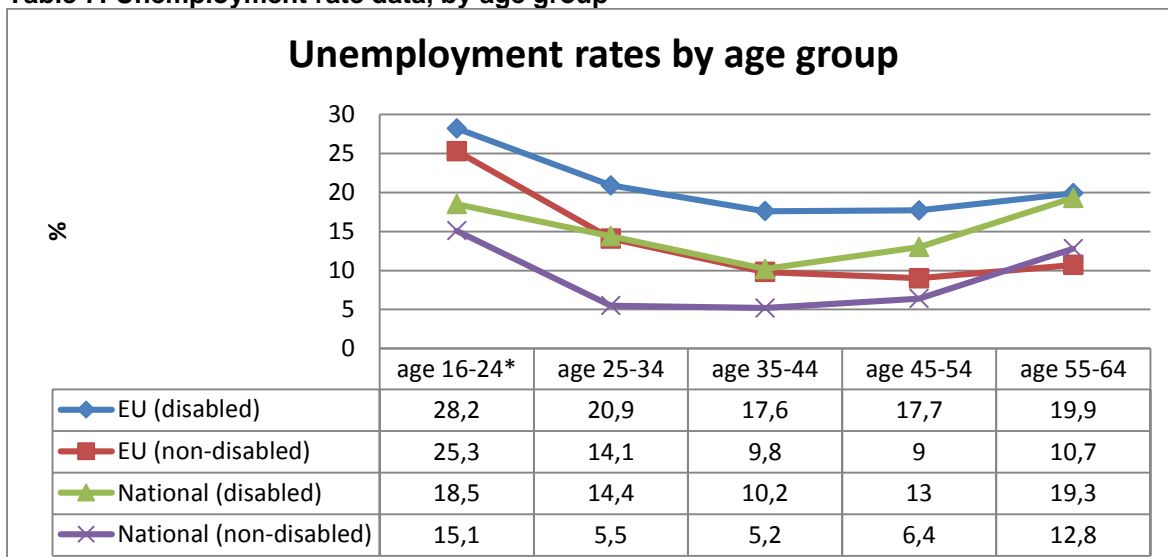
⁹ Taskinen, Pertti (2012) Osatyökykyisillä on työhaluja terveysongelmista huolimatta [Report on people with partial work incapacity]. Tilastokeskus [Finnish statistical service center]. http://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2012/art_2012-12-10_005.html?s=1

¹⁰ The Employment Office (2011) Employment statistics.

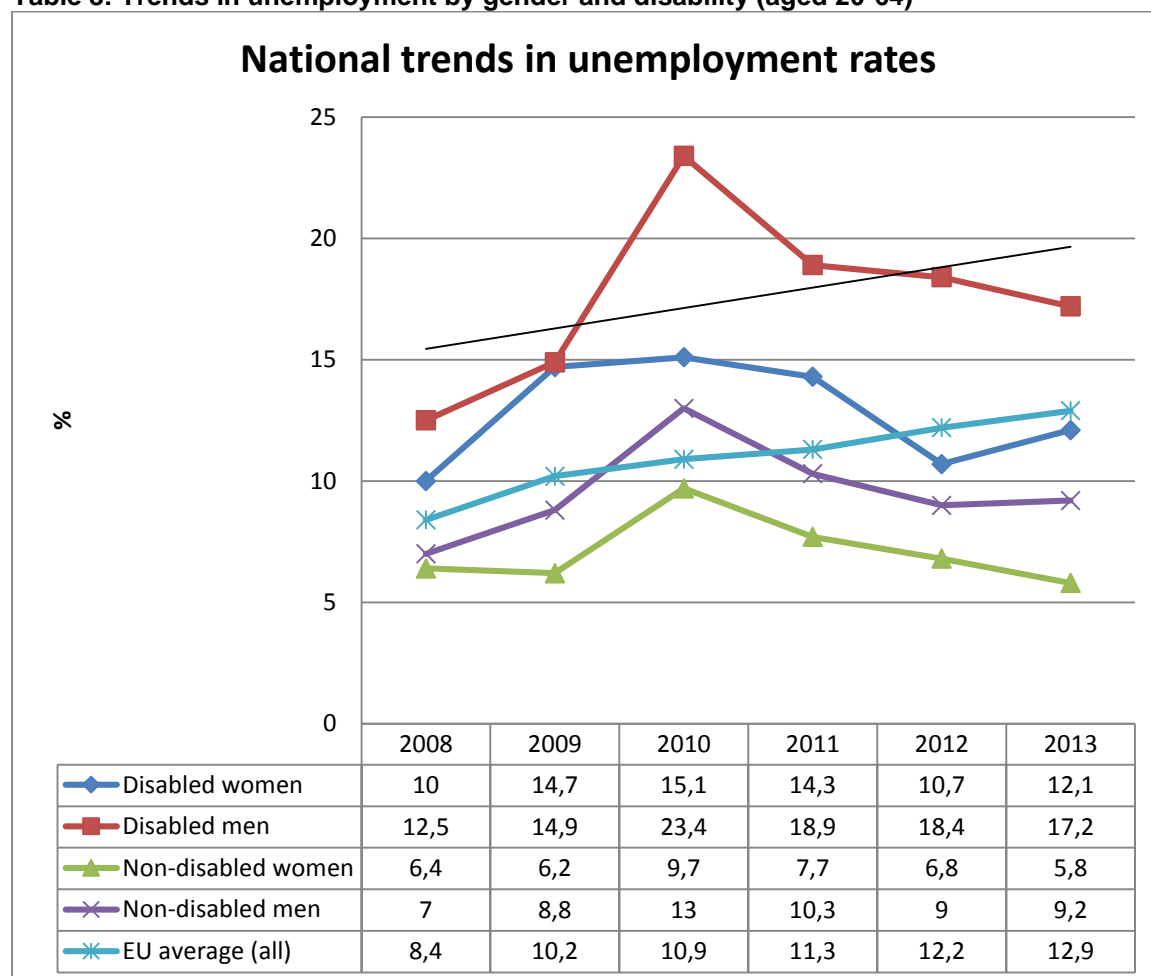
¹¹ Linnakangas, Ritva; Suikkanen, Asko; Savtschenko, Victor; Virta, Lauri (2006) Uuden alussa vai umpikujassa?: Vammaiset matkalla yhdenvertaiseen kansalaisuuteen. Stakes. [Socioeconomic situation of disabled people in Finland] <https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/77056>

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


Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

Table 7: Unemployment rate data, by age group


Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

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

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

Fluctuations in the gendered trends of unemployment for people with impairments at national level should be treated with some caution. An illustrative trend line is added for disabled men but this should not be regarded as a reliable indication.

Alternative data on disability and unemployment from national sources:

The data sources are same as those mentioned above. The data is based on a sample from 2012, according to which there were 18% of people who reported a limitation in labour market. There were 41,000 people with partial work incapacity who were unemployed registered job seekers in 2014, which is 7.17 % of all of them. However, the rate of all non-working people with partial work incapacity (unemployed and economically inactive) is approximately 41.6 %, 236,886, of all disabled people (including pensioners) in 2014.

The ministry's data^{12,13} show that economic cycles do not change radically the unemployment rates of people with partial work incapacity like they do on non-disabled people. According to the ministry, people with partial incapacity are more

¹² Totterman, Patrik (2013) An unpublished comparative graph of the employment development of people with partial work incapacity and non-disabled people.

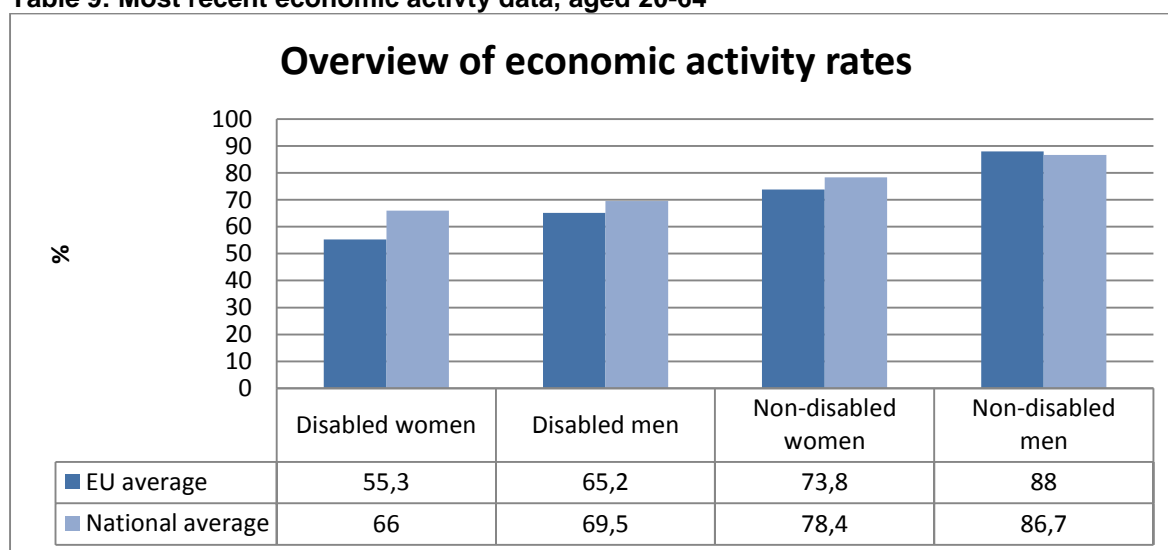
¹³ Vates-säätiö (2013): The Ministry of Employment and the Economy (2001-2012)
<http://www.vates.tx.fi/cntum/documents/52506/Tilastokooste%2020202013.pdf>

likely to have prolonged unemployment periods, which less frequently end up in employment. It is two times more likely that a person with partial incapacity becomes a long-term unemployed than a non-disabled person. Unemployment of a person with partial incapacity ends usually with employment promotion measures, for instance rehabilitative work activity or work trial.¹⁴

Both EU-SILC and the national data lack a dynamic illustration of disabled people's unemployment periods, since unemployment is changing factor in people's life. It would be useful to see the variations of unemployment periods (cf. Räsänen & Sardar 2014)¹⁵

2.2.2 Economic activity

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

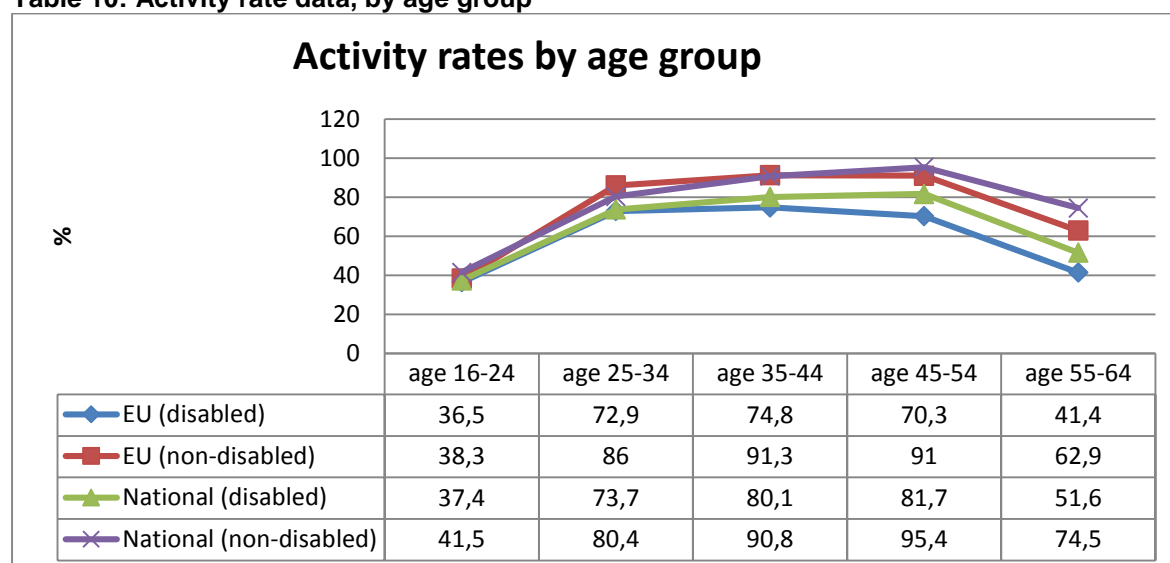


Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

¹⁴ Totterman, Patrik (2015) Unpublished data of employment of people with partial incapacity (interview). The Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

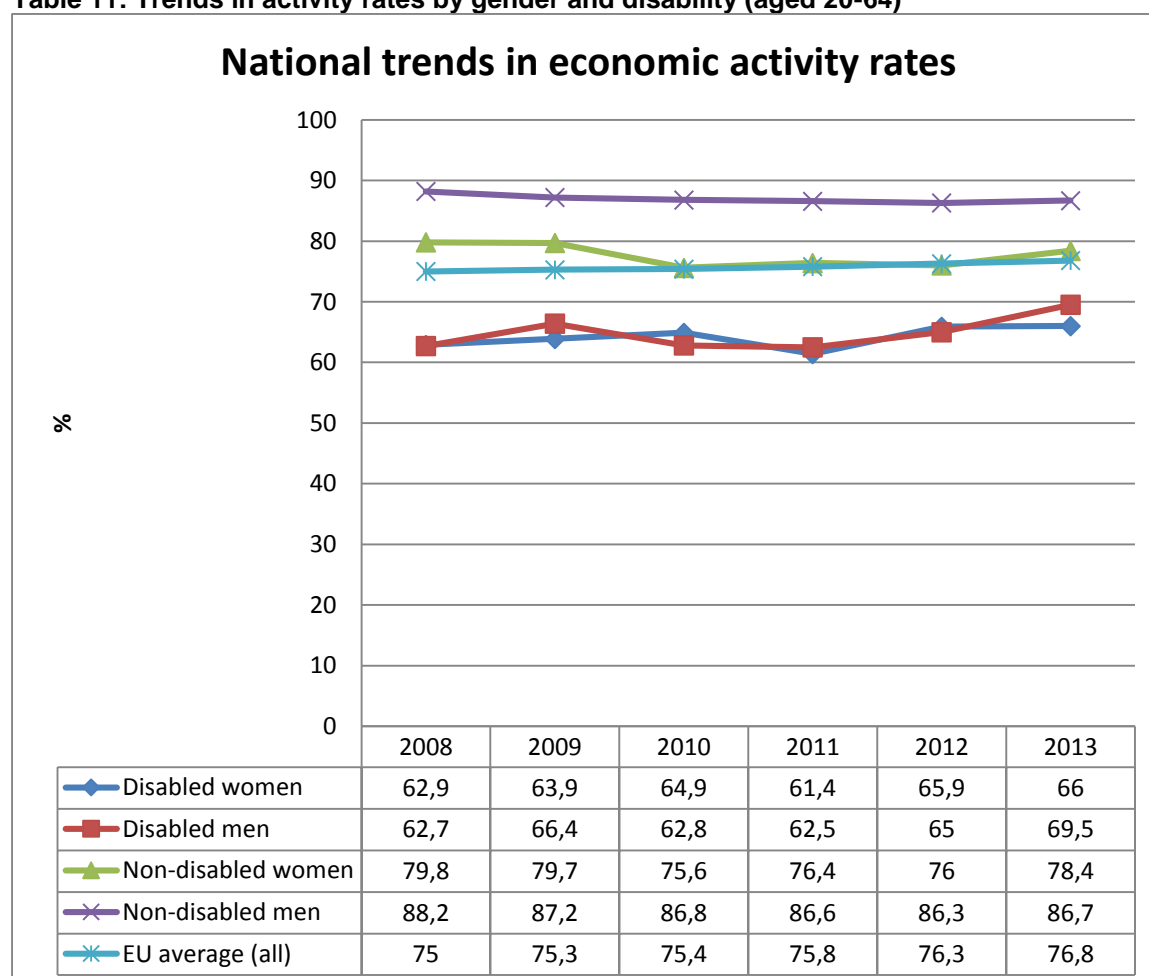
¹⁵ Räsänen, Heikki & Sardar, Paula (2014) Virta-varanto –kaaviot TEM:n työnvälityksen tilastojärjestelmässä – käsitteitä, sovelluksia ja tulkintoja. TEM-analyseja 55. [Statistical analysis tool of unemployment in Finland] <https://www.tem.fi/files/39023/Virta-varanto-kaaviot.pdf>

Table 10: Activity rate data, by age group



Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

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



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

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

The data sources are the same as the previous section. If the disability pensioners were in 2014 on the same level as in 2011, there were approximately 333,974 (58.4%) employed people with partial work incapacity and 41,000 (7.17 %) registered unemployed job seekers with partial work incapacity in 2014. So, in total 374,974 economically active people with partial work incapacity were in the labour market. Among the 571,860 people with partial work incapacity there were 236,886 disability pensioners and 40 000 of them were employed.

The degree of impairment predicts the chance of employment. Severely disabled people have lower economic activity, partly because of the disability pension. If one's illness/impairment becomes persistent, it is possible to apply for a disability pension. This is payable both in the form of an earnings-related pension and as a national pension. One can receive disability pension if earnings before taxes do not exceed €746.57 per month or earnings are less than 40% of former regular earnings.¹⁶ OECD has hinted the advantages of a single working-age benefit against separate disability pension such as in Finland.¹⁷

2.3 Education data

EU statistical comparisons are more limited concerning the education of young disabled women and men in the EU2020 target age groups. Data is available from EU-SILC (annually) as well as the Eurostat Labour Force Survey ad-hoc disability module (for 2011), but with low reliability for several countries on the key measures.¹⁸ Using a wider age range can improve reliability but estimations by gender remain indicative. EU trends are evident but administrative data may offer more reliable alternatives to identify national trends, where available.

2.3.1 Early school leavers

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

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

	Age 18-24		Age 18-29	
	No activity 'limitation'	Activity 'limitation'	No activity 'limitation'	Activity 'limitation'
EU sample	34,413	2,728	56,461	4,916
National sample	697	201	1,072	332

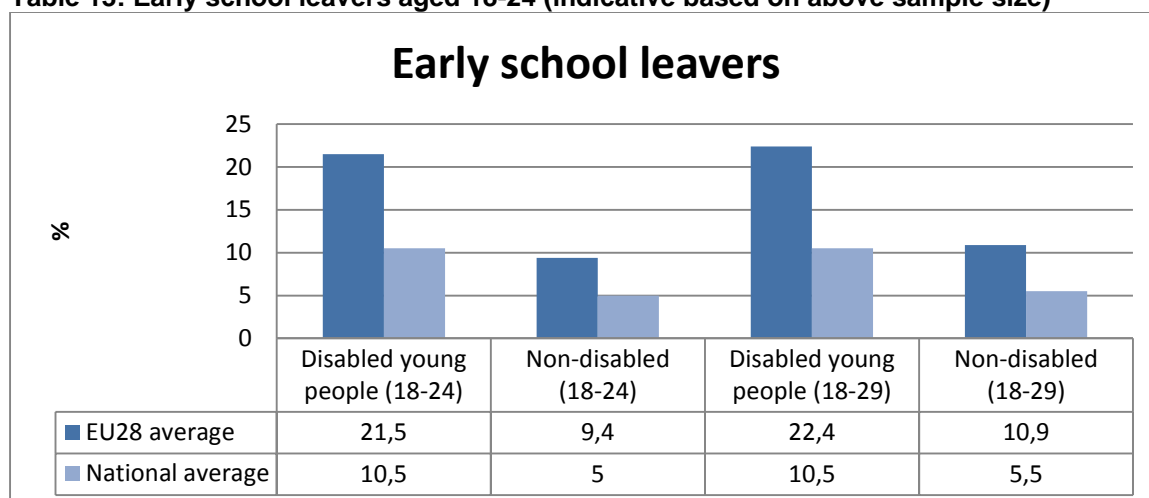
¹⁶ <http://www.kela.fi/web/en/employment-in-retirement>

¹⁷ OECD (2010) *Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers: A Synthesis of Findings across OECD countries*. http://ec.europa.eu/health/mental_health/eu_compass/reports_studies/disability_synthesis_2010_en.pdf

¹⁸ For the LFS AHM data see, Early school leavers http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_de010&lang=en and tertiary educational attainment http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_de020&lang=en

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

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



Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

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

There is no data on early school leavers. However, there is information about disabled children in special education.¹⁹ In 2007 around 7-8% of students were receiving full time special education and part-time around 22-23%. Of all enrolled students in compulsory schools, 4% were placed in regular classes, 2.6% in special classes and 1.4% in special schools. In 2010 there were 31.6% (175 367) of students in some form of special education. This does not mean an increased number of disabled children, but increase of children with learning challenges by specific categorization in special education.²⁰

¹⁹ Graham, J. Linda & Jahnukainen, Markku (2010) Wherefore art thou, inclusion? Analysing the development of inclusive education in New South Wales, Alberta and Finland. *Journal of Education Policy* (2) 26. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02680939.2010.493230>

²⁰ Jahnukainen, Markku & Pösö, Tarja & Kivirauma, Joel & Heinonen, Hanna (2012) Erityisopetuksen ja lastensuojelun kehitys ja nykytila [The current situation of special education and child protection in Finland]. In Jahnukainen, Markku (eds.) *Lasten erityishuolto ja -opetus Suomessa*. Vastapaino, pp. 15–56.

2.3.2 Tertiary education

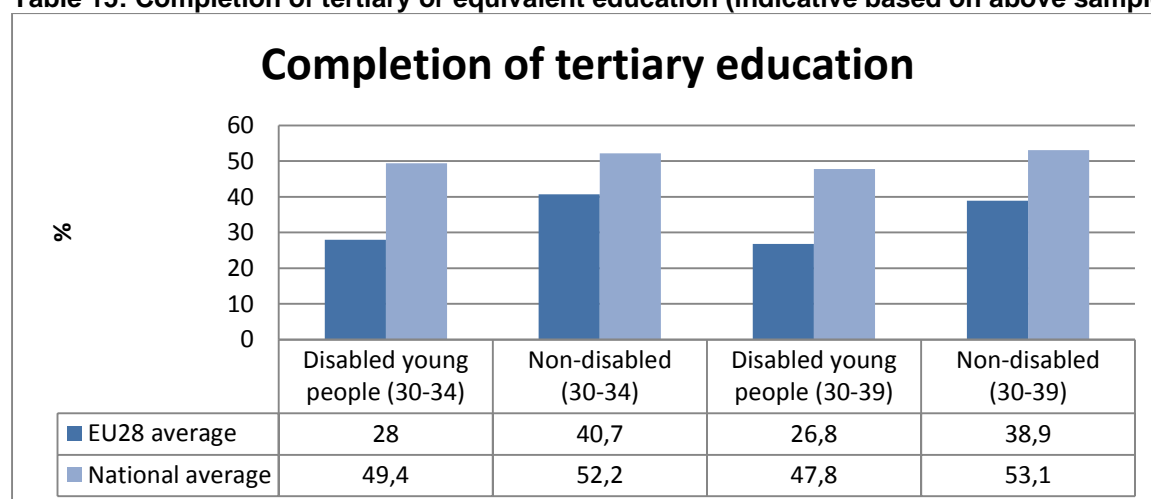
The EU-SILC sample for the target age group (aged 30-34) includes the following number of people reporting activity 'limitation' (a proxy for impairment/disability) although the number of missing observations is larger than the number of observations for activity limitation.

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

	Age 30-34		Age 30-39	
	No activity 'limitation'	Activity 'limitation'	No activity 'limitation'	Activity 'limitation'
EU sample	23,851	2,866	50,496	6,732
National sample	520	233	1,044	463

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

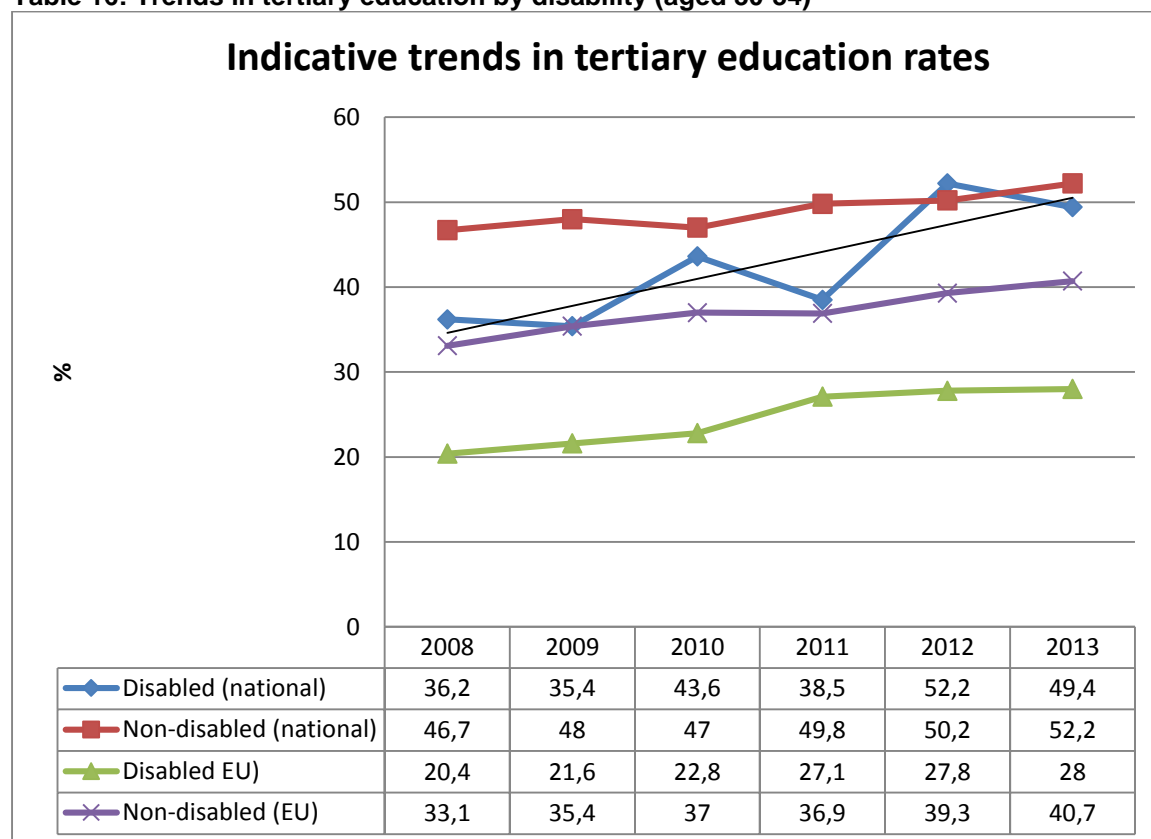
Table 15: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (indicative based on above sample)



Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

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

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

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

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

Fluctuations in the trend for people with impairments at national level should be treated with some caution. An illustrative trend line is added for disabled women but should not be regarded as a robust indication.

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

There are no current data on the completion rate of tertiary education, but in 1998 2.8% of all moderately or severely disabled people completed a lower tertiary degree and 2.2% a higher tertiary degree.²¹ These rates are radically lower than in EU-SILC data, and the definition of disability may cause the difference. Thus, the rate is very low even among all Finnish disabled people. As Antti Teittinen points out on the last ANED report and in his study, disabled people's tertiary education is a problem in Finland. The educational policy is focusing only on vocational paths and careers.²² There happens to be rather accurate data on visually impaired people and 2012 data

²¹ Savtchenko, Victor & Suikkanen, Asko & Linnakangas, Ritva (2010) Vammaiset ja pitkäaikaissairaat Suomen maankunnissa: prevelanssi, työllisyys ja tulot [Disabled and long-term ill in Finnish municipals]. Yhteiskuntapolitiikka (1) 75.

<http://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/101548/savtschenko.pdf?sequence=1>

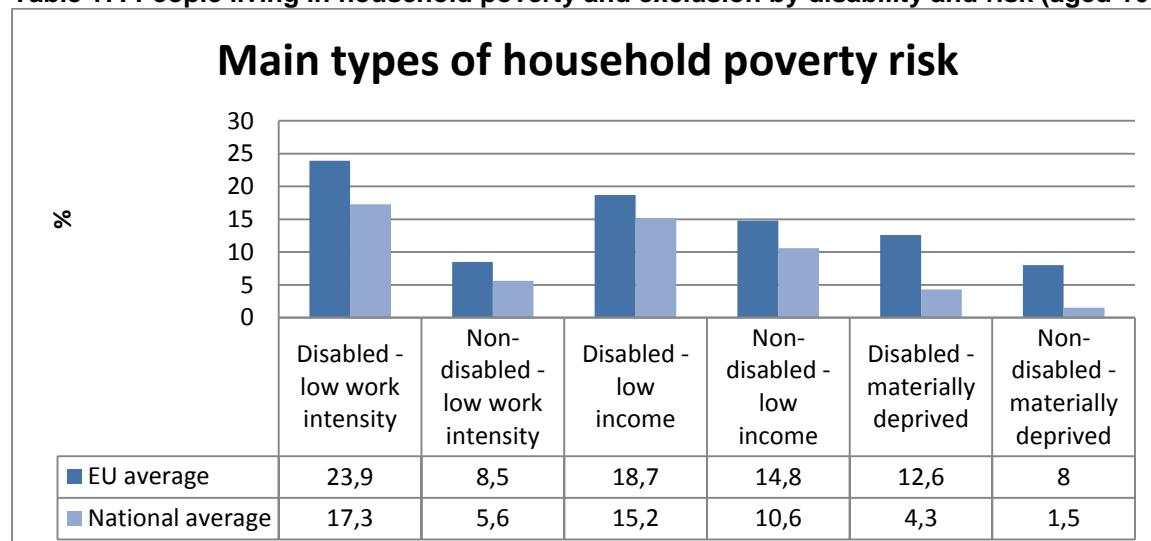
²² Katariina Hakala, Reetta Mietola & Antti Teittinen (2013). Valinta ja valikointi ammatillisessa erityisopetuksessa [Choosing and selection in vocational special education]. In Kristiina Brunila, Katariina Hakala, Elina Lahelma & Antti Teittinen (eds) (2013). Ammatillinen koulutus ja yhteiskunnalliset eronteot [Vocational Education and Societal Differentiation]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, pp. 173–200.

shows how their tertiary education rate (18% of all visually impaired) is much higher than among other impairment groups²³. According to the Ministry of Education, accessibility of physically challenged students should be a priority in higher education policy.²⁴

2.4 Poverty and social exclusion data

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

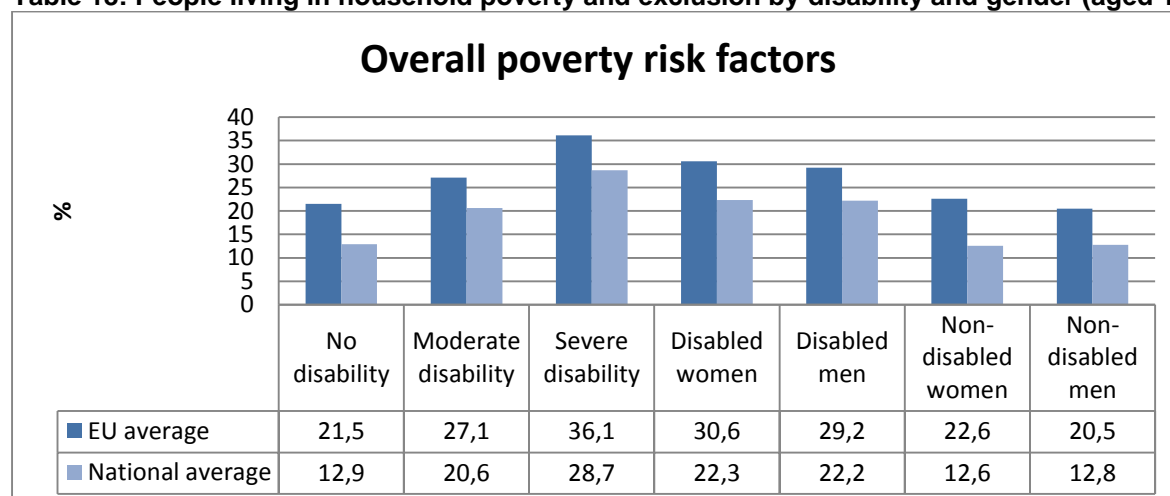
Table 17: People living in household poverty and exclusion by disability and risk (aged 16-59)



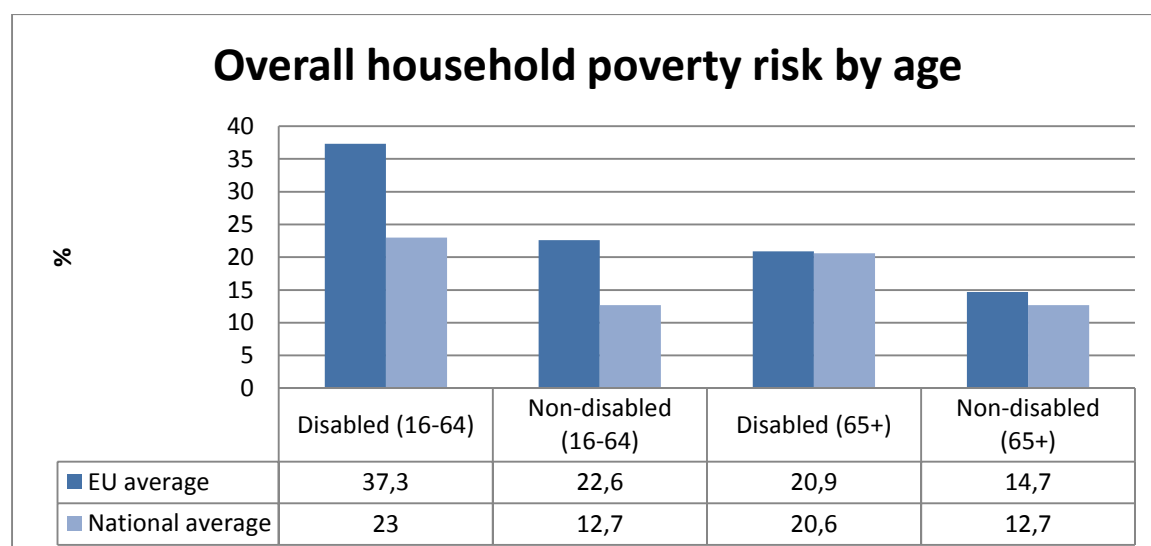
Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

²³ http://www.nkl.fi/fi/etusivu/nakeminen/julkaisu/nvrek_vuosikirja/3_2_koulutusaste_ja_alat

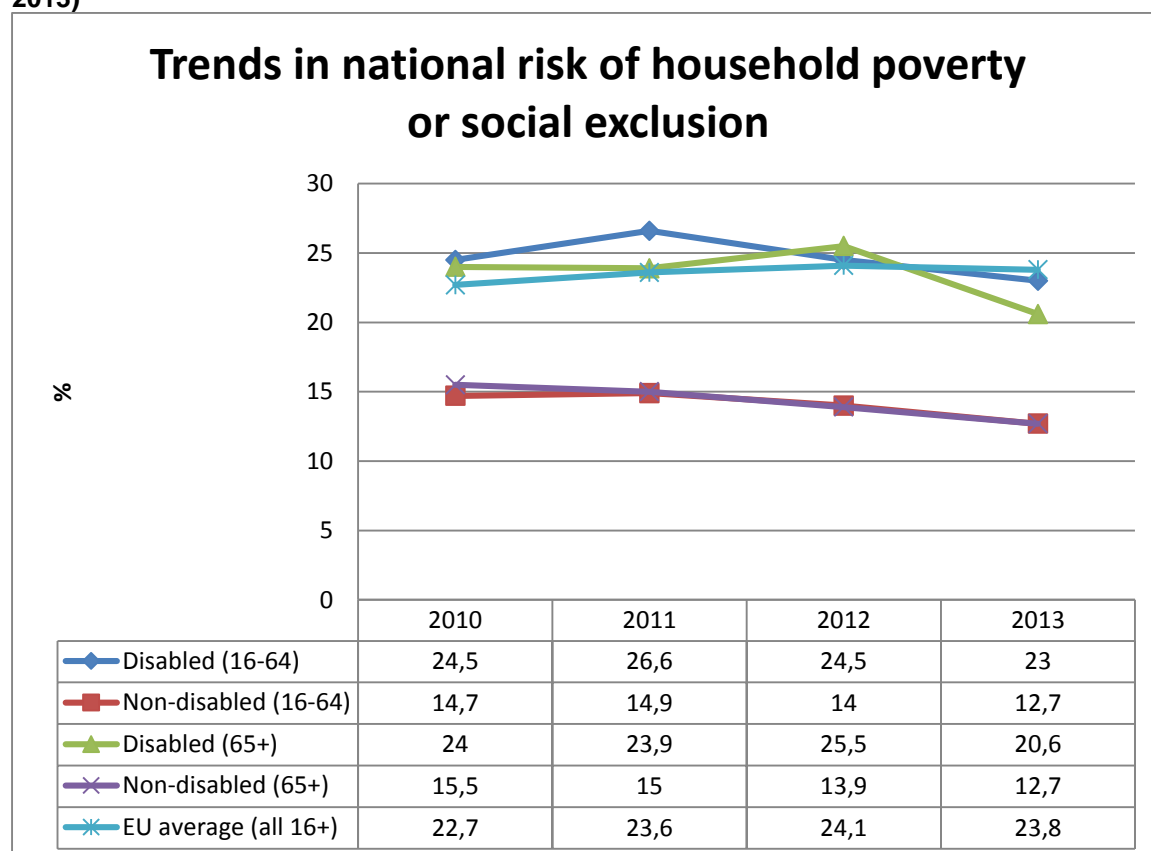
²⁴ Laaksonen, Elina (2005) Esteetön opiskelu. Report (6) [Accessible studying]. Ministry of Education. http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2005/liitteet/opm_297_opm06.pdf?lang=fi

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

Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015 Table 19: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)



Source: EUSILC UDB 2013 – version 2 of August 2015

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

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

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

There is no alternative data from recent years. A report by the National Institute for Health and Welfare shows that in 2005 there were 22% of disabled people below the poverty threshold and in 1995 12%.²⁵ In 2005 whole population's relative poverty rate was 12% and in 1995 7%. So, the current situation in EU-SILC is similar to that in the 2005 Finnish data. In 2002 disabled people's average (taxable) income was €15,144, but whole population's €24,374. Disabled women's average income was only €13,145 whereas men's was €16,773. The average income of economically inactive disabled persons was €11,200 and economically active persons €21,600 in 2002.²⁶ So, disabled women seem to have the weakest socioeconomic position in

²⁵ Parrukoski, Sanna & Karjalainen, Jouko (2009) Tietoja vammaisten työllisyydestä ja toimeentulosta. Helsinki: Terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskus, [Knowledge on employment and livelihood of disabled people] <http://www.koyhyyskirjoitukset.org/alustuksia/2009-2/Tilastoja%20vammaisten%20k%F6yhydest%E4.doc>.

²⁶ Linnakangas, Ritva; Suikkanen, Asko; Savtschenko, Victor; Virta, Lauri (2006) Uuden alussa vai umpikujassa?: Vammaiset matkalla yhdenvertaiseen kansalaisuuteen. Stakes. [Socioeconomic situation of disabled people in Finland] <https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/77056>



Finland when comparing individually, unlike in the recent EU-SILC data of household poverty risk factors.



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

3.1 Employment

When comparing EU-SILC data and the national estimates from the ministry, the employment rates (57% and 58%) are close enough to each other that one can say that the information is comparable. Young disabled people have the lowest employment rate in the data, which can be explained by low educational qualifications of those who are not in tertiary or vocational education. The employment rate is slightly lower among older disabled people. This decrease is related to the higher rate of their health conditions, especially in physically demanding occupations.²⁷ The Finnish data shows that economic cycles do not influence significantly the unemployment rate of people with partial work incapacity, as they do for non-disabled people, which indicates that people with impairments face other structural barriers than economy. Employers and disabled job seekers have had problems to find each other in the labour market because of lack of knowledge, false expectations and negative attitudes. Employers' negative attitudes make it difficult for disabled people to find a job, but employers' good experiences encourage to employ a disabled person in the future. Negative attitudes related to the lack of knowledge are the biggest barriers for employment. Thus, the government has put an effort into easing employment by social campaigns for employers and by incentives such as wage-subsidies.^{28, 29, 30} However, inflexible work contracts and working hours can also cause barriers, as the Country Report suggests.

3.2 Education

The rate of early school leavers is relatively low in Finland, but the drop-out rate is two times higher than in the case of non-disabled people. Thus, one can assume that disability indicates shortened educational routes. The reasons for the very low education of severely and moderately disabled young people have included discouraging policies and practices. There is some evidence that instead of encouraging young disabled people to seek higher education, officials have directly

²⁷ Pensola, Tiina & Gould, Raija & Polvinen, Anu (2010) Ammatit ja työkyvyttömyyseläkkeet: Masennukseen, muihin mielenterveyden häiriöihin sekä tuki- ja liikuntaelinten sairauksiin perustuvat eläkkeet. [Occupations and disability pension]. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön selvityksiä 2010:16. <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/111777>

²⁸ Ekholm, Elina & Teittinen, Antti (2014) Vammaiset nuoret ja työntekijä kansalaisuus: Osallistumisen esteitä ja edellytyksiä [Barriers and opportunities of working for young disabled people]. Sosiaali- ja terveysturvan tutkimuksia 133. Kelan tutkimusosasto, Helsinki.

²⁹ Hietala, Outi & Sippola, Aulikki & Riipinen, Markku & Lampinen, Pauliina & Nevalainen, Marja (2015) Kaikille sopiva työ ja työyhteisö [A Model to improve employment of disabled people and people with partial work incapacity]. Final report of development project. The Finnish Work Environment Fund. <http://www.vammas.fi/kaikille-sopiva-tyo-tiedote/>

³⁰ Linnakangas, Ritva; Suikkanen, Asko; Savtschenko, Victor; Virta, Lauri (2006) Uuden alussa vai umpikujassa?: Vammaiset matkalla yhdenvertaiseen kansalaisuuteen. Stakes. [Socioeconomic situation of disabled people in Finland] <https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/77056>

guided disabled youngsters onto disability pension.³¹ As the Finnish data³² indicates, only small amount of students are in full-time special classes or schools and the relatively low amount of early school leavers indicate successful inclusion in elementary education.

Unlike EU-SILC, the old Finnish data³³ from the year 1998 gives a poor impression of tertiary level completion and it is unlikely that the situation has improved radically under similar policy and practices, as the ministry's disability program still concentrates on the same issues. It seems that the Finnish policy has not encouraged disabled youngsters to carry on studying after elementary schooling. After upper secondary education, the completion rates drastically decrease. One can assume that the degree of disability is an important factor when designing more equal educational system for young disabled individuals. In addition, social inclusion to the educational system - regardless the disability pension entitlement – is an essential aspect to improve the educational situation of disabled people.

3.3 Poverty and social inclusion

According to Parrukoski & Karjalainen (2009), disabled person's income was in average 60% of the income of a non-disabled person in 2002. In the 2000s the income gap between working and non-working disabled people has increased and the relative poverty of disabled people has also got higher, albeit along the non-disabled population. However, disabled people's relative poverty rate was higher (25%) than the whole population's (12%) in 2005.³⁴ According to EU-SILC, it seems that in recent years the situation has remained rather similar with only slight changes, which means that the disability pensions, disability benefits and other provided basic services have not solved the problem of poverty and social exclusion of disabled people. The data shows clearly that it is more difficult to change one's socioeconomic status when one has profound impairments and complex needs of assistance. Linnankangas et al. (2006) evidence that disabled women's individual income was lower than men's in 2002, so gender is also a disadvantage factor among disabled people. As the study of Polvinen et al. (2013) suggests, increasing work opportunities for disabled and chronically ill people improve their socioeconomic status.³⁵

³¹ Savtchenko, Victor & Suikkanen, Asko & Linnakangas, Ritva (2010) Vammaiset ja pitkäaikaissairaat Suomen maankunnissa: prevelanssi, työllisyys ja tulot [Disabled and long-term ill in Finnish municipals]. *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka* (1) 75.

³² Graham, J. Linda & Jahnukainen, Markku (2010) Wherefore art thou, inclusion? Analysing the development of inclusive education in New South Wales, Alberta and Finland. *Journal of Education Policy* (2) 26. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02680939.2010.493230>

³³ Savtchenko, Victor & Suikkanen, Asko & Linnakangas, Ritva (2010)

³⁴ Parrukoski, Sanna & Karjalainen, Jouko (2009) Tietoja vammaisten työllisyydestä ja toimeentulosta. Helsinki: Terveysten ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, [Data of employment and livelihood of disabled people]

³⁵ Polvinen, Anu & Gould, Raija & Lahelma, Eero & Martikainen, Pekka (2013) Socioeconomic differences in disability retirement in Finland: The contribution of ill-health, health behaviours and working conditions. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 41, 470–478. <http://sjp.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/03/26/1403494813482400.full.pdf+html>

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

4.1 Employment

The National Reform Programme highlights one particular policy related to disability: improving the labour force participation rate (particularly for older workers). The emphasis is on older people with partial work incapacity because 30% of them had reached the age 55 in 2012. Only 13% were young adults with partial work incapacity. As the program of people with partial work incapacity suggests, the costs of rehabilitation of disabled workers can be covered with a few working years. Usually the costs are higher for younger disabled people than for older.³⁶ It has been noticed that a part of disability pensioners experience their work ability as moderate.³⁷

As far as the disability policy targets on raising work capacity, prolonging careers and increasing disabled people's working possibilities, Finland is heading in the right direction. The weight of the policy is clearly on older workers and preventing the direct retreat from the labour market onto disability pension. For example, investments in rehabilitation of young people will decrease social exclusion. Applying the 'linear model' related to the idea of a single benefit system by OECD would increase the amount of the earnings of disabled people, as additional income would not decrease the benefit.³⁸ Moreover, the linear model would encourage disabled people to seek work opportunities. Vates foundation has suggested that the national problem has been mostly the fact that people are not always aware of the benefits supporting employment.³⁹

This policy will face the immediate challenges of a difficult labour market situation in the current economic recession. The means of dissolving some of the heavy and stiff labour market structures and, in particular, supporting wage-subsidized work contracts can enable more work and career opportunities for disabled people. However, Kangasharju & Venetoklis (2003)⁴⁰ have showed that wage-subsidies have only a small effect on increasing the employment in private companies and may even cause exploitation of short and cheap labour force or substitution of other

³⁶ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2013) Osatyökykyiset työssä -ohjelma: Osatyökykyisten työllistymistä edistävien säädösmuutostarpeiden ja palvelujen arviointi. [The programme for people with partial work capacity (2013–2015)]. <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/126062>

³⁷ Karisalmi, Seppo & Gould, Raija & Virta, Lauri (2009) Työkyvyttömyyseläkeläiset eri järjestelmissä [Disability pensioners in separate systems]. Eläketurvakeskuksen raportteja. http://www.etk.fi/fi/gateway/PTARGS_0_2139_459_440_3034_43/http%3B/content.etk.fi%3B7087/publishedcontent/publish/etkfi/fi/julkaisut/tutkimusjulkaisut/raportit/tyokyvyttomyyselakelaiset_eri_jarjeste_lmissa_7.pdf

³⁸ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2013)

³⁹ Puroaho, Petri (2014) Välityömarkkinat osana työelämää [Intermediate labour market supporting employment]. Kokous Uudenmaan työllisyyspoliittista avustusta saaville hankkeille. Vates foundation. http://www.vates.fi/media/projektit/tiivistelmat_2014/uusimaa/18.9.2014-valityomarkkinat-osana-tyoelamaa-projektin-esittely-hanketoimijoille.pdf

⁴⁰ Kangasharju, Aki & Venetoklis, Takis (2003) Do wage-subsidies increase employment in firms? VATT discussion papers. Government Institute for Economic Research, Helsinki. https://www.vatt.fi/file/vatt_publication_pdf/k304.pdf

costs. The implementation needs to support fair and lasting contracts with appropriate criteria for wage-subsidies. Work is the most efficient way to increase disabled people's income and reduce poverty risks and the means of the intermediate labour market can support career opportunities in a long run as Kangasharju et al (2003) point out. The government needs to be aware of the current problems of the intermediate labour market because the measures, e.g. work try-out practices, may have not planned employability effect without access to the actual labour market.⁴¹ In a sense, there is a risk of a discrete and unconnected employment practices and provisions. For young disabled education is a more relevant issue, since it enables better work opportunities later in life.

4.2 Education

The disability program of the government emphasizes counselling of disabled students so that they may find the best possible educational path and occupation. However, there is a lack of concrete implementation and practices in how this should be done. As Katriina Hakala et al. (2013)⁴² points out, the education system does not have any programs or degrees for intellectually disabled students and the system over emphasizes pre-vocational programs that are guiding disabled youth to narrow educational paths between special education, subsidized employment and social services.

Overall, the government's policy⁴³ primarily aims at the educational retraining of people with work incapacity in order to prolong their careers. The government plans to raise the rehabilitation support for younger disabled people, who in particular are vulnerable to social exclusion. This would increase the possibilities for disabled youth to seek suitable rehabilitation instead of direct disability pension or unemployment benefit. However, the rehabilitation benefit cannot cover the costs of upper secondary general education, unless it is a further educational program in order to employ an unemployed disabled person who has insufficient labour market competence. Thus, the policy ought to have some practical solutions for the tremendous rate of disabled school leavers in upper secondary and tertiary education. It is promising that the government attaches weight to the education of disabled youth by raising the rehabilitation benefits and, so, prevents the need for supplementary benefits.

⁴¹ The Ministry of Employment and the Economy (2013) *Selvitystyö välityömarkkinoiden mahdollisuuksista tukea vaikeasti työllistyvien työelämään osallistumista ja työmarkkinoille pääsyä*. [A report on the opportunities of the intermediate labour market]. http://www.tem.fi/files/35574/TEMrap_7_2013.pdf

⁴² Katriina Hakala, Reetta Mietola & Antti Teittinen (2013). *Valinta ja valikointi ammatillisessa erityisopetuksessa* [Choosing and selection in vocational special education]. Teoksessa: Kristiina Brunila, Katriina Hakala, Elina Lahelma & Antti Teittinen (toim.) (2013). *Ammatillinen koulutus ja yhteiskunnalliset eronteot* [Vocational Education and Societal Differentiation]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, pp. 173–200.

⁴³ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2013) *Osatyökykyiset työssä -ohjelma: Osatyökykyisten työllistymistä edistävien säädösmuutostarpeiden ja palvelujen arviointi*. [The programme for people with partial work capacity (2013–2015)]. <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/126062>

Since 1st of January 2015 the legislation has set an obligation to participate in one-year long pre-school education. Disabled children can start the pre-school period already at the age of five because of extended compulsory elementary education. In the special education groups, 72% of the teaching assistants had a proper qualification in 2002.⁴⁴

4.3 Poverty and social inclusion

The government has been planning an amendment for reforming the disability legislation. The main targets of the reformation is to integrate different services and make them more equal and available to all disabled people regardless of their impairment. The law will combine the disability service law and the developmental disability law. Services are planned to be more efficient and equal without separate disability groups. Integration of different services is the planned solution for this goal; for example, employment services, work rehabilitation and health care will be integrated under the same system. This amendment is linked to the ongoing reformation of social and health care services.^{45, 46}

Reducing the poverty risk of any kind is highly relevant regarding social inclusion. The government's policy underlines work and prolonging careers. Traditionally work has been a way to make one's life better. More flexible labour market structure and employment services in order to dissolve possible welfare traps provide an opportunity to employ more people with partial work incapacity. However, in the current economic situation government's policy objectives are ambitious considering that there have been only little effort into previous educational improvements of disabled individuals and that the employment resources in general are already limited. Moreover, there should also be a plan to influence the negative attitudes of employers towards disabled workers. A recent study by Hietala et al. (2015) points out that work community's ability to welcome a person with partial work incapacity is more relevant than the competence of the person if the organization can recognize the benefits and skills of diverse employees.⁴⁷

It would be essential to consider other ways to increase social inclusion of disabled people, especially those with severe impairments. Subjective experience of poverty is related to social connections. Stronger social wellbeing can decrease the harmful

⁴⁴ The Government of Finland (2004) Valtioneuvoston selonteko eduskunnalle esiopetusuudistuksen vaikutuksista ja asetettujen tavoitteiden toteutumisesta. [A report on the impacts and effectiveness of the pre-school education reform].

http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2004/liitteet/opm_186_opm32.pdf?lang=fi

⁴⁵ Autio, Anu & Konttinen, Juha-Pekka & Sjöblom, Stina (2014) Tulevaisuuden vammaispalvelut [Disability services in the future]. THL.

http://www.asiantuntijapaivat.fi/files/3511/B2_Tulevaisuuden_vammaispalvelut.pdf

⁴⁶ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2015) Vammaislainsäädännön uudistamistyöryhmän loppuraportti [Reformation of the disability legislation: final report].

<http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/125919>

⁴⁷ Hietala, Outi & Sippola, Aulikki & Riipinen, Markku & Lampinen, Pauliina & Nevalainen, Marja (2015) Kaikille sopiva työ ja työyhteisö [A Model to improve employment of disabled people and people with partial work incapacity]. Final report of development project. The Finnish Work Environment Fund. <http://www.vamlas.fi/kaikille-sopiva-tyo-tiedote/>



effects of material and relative poverty. Work, of course, is one way to increase social wellbeing. The government is trying to make employment and work opportunities easier for disabled people with, for instance, social entrepreneurship.⁴⁸

4.4 Synergies between developments in the different areas

As mentioned, government's policy aims heavily to prolong careers of disabled workers, introduce more flexible labour market structures and rehabilitate people with partial work incapacity. Educational solutions are limited in individual rehabilitation programs. In order to reduce poverty and strengthen social inclusion, disabled people need both education and work. However, education policy of young disabled students still lacks concrete practices. There are a few ESIF funded projects, but it is always necessary to assess whether they lead to any long lasting practices.

⁴⁸ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2013) Osatyökykyiset työssä -ohjelma: Osatyökykyisten työllistymistä edistävien säädösmuutostarpeiden ja palvelujen arviointi. [The programme for people with partial work capacity (2013–2015)]. <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/126062>



5 Review of the European Semester from a disability perspective

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

There are no disability – specific CSRs for Finland.

5.2 Progress on other CSRs from a disability perspective

CSR recommends the agreed pension reform, which will affect the retirement age. The retirement age is bound to the general life expectancy and the time frame of disability pension is extended to the earliest starting point of the old-age pension.⁴⁹ The pension reform is a part of the broader strategy to eliminate early exit pathways in the labour market by amendments on partial sickness benefit, which would allow partial working, and rehabilitating disability pensioners back to working life. Occupational rehabilitation, retraining and education are in the centre of this strategy. Raising the possible age limit of older people's partial rehabilitation benefits and allowing partial rehabilitation benefit is the key measure to prolong over 63 year old people's work life activity. For young disabled people the raise in rehabilitation benefit is the main incentive to continue in the rehabilitation process and possible working because otherwise the disability pension with disability income reduction would be higher than the rehabilitation benefit. In addition, the raise of the age limit (20) of the young disabled person's rehabilitation benefit prevents unnecessary retirements on disability benefit. Integration of the main services of the Employment office and the National Social Security Institution is a major part of the administrative development.⁵⁰

At large, these amendments are meant to support the structural changes in social and health services. The reform of disability legislation is supposed to dissolve barriers between different agencies and integrate actions. The equality of different groups of people is an important aspect of developing the services. The reform of the social and health care services (in finish SOTE) is in progress regardless the political disputes and hidden agendas of political parties, which have slowed down the legislation process.⁵¹ CSR's recommendation for effective municipal structure has been in the centre of these disputes. It has been decided that the country will consist of 18 autonomous social and health care service regions.

Finland's country specific recommendations are focusing heavily on the stability and growth of economy. The measures emphasize boosting innovation products, workforce efficiency and cost-effective administration services. The possible impacts

⁴⁹ Sopimus vuoden 2017 työeläkeuudistuksesta [An agreement for the reform of the earning-related pension for the year 2017. http://www.eläkeuudistus.fi/media/linkkitiedostot/elakesopimus-2017_allekirjoitettu-versio.pdf

⁵⁰ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2013) Osatyökykyiset työssä -ohjelma: Osatyökykyisten työllistymistä edistävien säädösmuutostarpeiden ja palvelujen arviointi. [The programme for people with partial work capacity (2013–2015)]. <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/126062>

⁵¹ Hiilamo, Heikki (2015) Hyvinvoinnin vakuutusyhtiö – Mistä sote-uudistuksessa on kysymys? [Specific considerations on the social and health service reformation]. Into, Helsinki

on disabled people and other disadvantaged groups in the society may be more strict measures regarding social security, disability benefits and pensions. Along the discourse of social inclusion, there is a strong demand to increase workforce efficiency, which is not necessary salutary for disabled people when it comes to conditional benefits.

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

The Country Report stresses the same policy issues as the CSR. Recent labour market performance has been weak and unemployment rate high. However, early exit from labour market, mainly because of disability, is seen as a problem. Active labour market measures are seen beneficial for the Finnish workforce, especially for low-qualified and older workers. Disabled people have often a lack of educational qualifications whereas older workers (especially in manual labour) some degree of work incapacities, which easily leads to decreased labour market competence.^{52, 53} According to CR there have already been some improvement in this regard, as in 2014 there were 18,000 retiring on disability pension. Usually the number has been around 25,000 retiring.⁵⁴

In addition, the government wants to put more effort into integrating vulnerable groups in the labour market.⁵⁵ This means that people with partial work incapacity could also be better integrated in the labour market. Many retired on disability pension would still like to work at least part-time. The report suggest that there could be more opportunities for employees to negotiate the working hours; in other words, to make the labour market contracts more flexible. Flexibility favours also employers to great extent. The Finnish wage subsidy system has been reformed, with a particular focus on the elderly and disabled people. Practical measures have already been implemented in many local projects, which are mentioned in the next section on ESIF 2014-2020.

The report pays attention to the socioeconomic inequalities of disabled and chronically ill people. The share of Finns in the bottom-income quintile reporting severe limitations in daily activities is four times higher than in the top quintile, while in the EU on average it is less than 2 times higher.

⁵² Linnakangas, Ritva; Suikkanen, Asko; Savtschenko, Victor; Virta, Lauri (2006) Uuden alussa vai umpikujassa?: Vammaiset matkalla yhdenvertaiseen kansalaisuuteen. Stakes. [Socioeconomic situation of disabled people in Finland] <https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/77056>

⁵³ Polvinen, Anu & Gould, Raija & Lahelma, Eero & Martikainen, Pekka (2013) Socioeconomic differences in disability retirement in Finland: The contribution of ill-health, health behaviours and working conditions. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 41, 470–478

⁵⁴ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2013) Osatyökykyiset työssä -ohjelma: Osatyökykyisten työllistymistä edistävien säädösmuutostarpeiden ja palvelujen arviointi. [The programme for people with partial work capacity (2013–2015)]. <http://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/126062>

⁵⁵ The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2014) Sosiaalihuollon työelämäosallisuutta tukevan lainsäädännön ja palvelujärjestelmän uudistamistarpeita selvittänyt työryhmä [A taskforce for reforming work life participation by social services]. <http://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/116877/978-952-00-3524-2.pdf?sequence=1>



Overall, the disability issues are largely reported on the point of economic stability and growth. Work and activity in the labour market are seen the best solutions fighting against poverty and social exclusion of disabled people. This requires more effort into education and occupational retraining and rehabilitation because disabled people with partial work incapacity have often low educational qualifications in the labour market.



6 Assessment of the structural funds ESIF 2014-2020 or other relevant funds in relation to disability challenges

The structural funds (ERDF & ESF) are spent on a total of 42 funded projects that have more or less connection to disability policy.⁵⁶ Most of the projects' weight is on preventing social exclusion of people whose labour market situation is weak. Mainly this means young people, long-term unemployed and disabled people. Thus, most projects concern the current policy of the Stability and Growth Pact in Finland and wider, the EU policy of strengthening social inclusion by education and work. Five projects in the database are exclusively concerned with disabled people and three directly with people with diagnosed disability. The five projects granted 389186 euros are the following:

S20317: Towards the service models of people with partial work incapacity

S20031: Special learner's learning curve

S20476: Jump to it! – Leisure time project of young people needing special aid

S20451: Special adolescents and supporting social inclusion of the digital time in multidisciplinary environments.

S20028: Towards better working ability, wellbeing and equality with online based distance rehabilitation

Within all these projects there are three main themes that are also coordinating with the disability measures:

1. Improving the situation of young people and other groups with a disadvantageous labour market situation.
2. Improving equality and preventing discrimination
3. Improving social inclusion and preventing poverty

Overall, these aims are broad and the further question is how well these policies are going to specifically help disabled people and whether they are the best way to improve a disabled person's life. As they have been granted in total millions of euros, some sort of ex post evaluation will be needed to see if any change occurred in a long run.

⁵⁶ <https://www.eura2014.fi/rrtiepa/index.php>



7 Recommendations

Disabled people's employment or educational situation is not clear because of the lack of recent national follow-up data. However, by combining EU-SILC and national estimates and trends it is possible to make some explicit conclusions and recommendations.

1. The employment situation and economic activity have remained stable for years and there is little variation by economic cycles. Equal labour market status can be improved with the improvement of educational qualifications.
2. Educational equality should be improved so that disabled people are provided the same encouragement to seek upper secondary and higher education with their individual capacity and ambition. Effort should be put into educational counselling and equal mainstream education both in elementary and upper secondary education. Especially upper secondary schools (gymnasiums) need to develop their supportive teaching methods for students with developmental disabilities.
3. Equal working conditions are an effective way to increase individuals' social inclusion and income. As the government intends to ease working possibilities and minimize welfare traps of people receiving disability benefits, the government should raise employers' awareness of the part-time working possibilities of disabled people. Reasonable accommodations in the workplace are practicable and the UN Convention demands it.
4. Administrative barriers should be eased and cross-administrative practices should be developed to carry out the current policy plans of integrated social and health care services without the cost of quality and accessibility. Experts and civic actors should be heard in decision-making.