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Slovenia

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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:
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Table of contents

1	Executive summary and recommendations	6
1.1	Key points and main challenges for Slovenia in 2022	6
1.2	Recommendations for Slovenia	7
2	Mainstreaming disability equality in the 2022 Semester documents	8
2.1	Country Report (CR) and Country Specific Recommendation (CSR)	8
2.2	National Reform Programme (NRP) and Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP)	10
2.3	Semester links to CRPD and national disability action plans	13
3	Disability and the labour market – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies	15
3.1	Summary of the labour market situation of persons with disabilities	15
3.2	Analysis of labour market policies relevant to the Semester	16
4	Disability, social policies and healthcare – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies	20
4.1	Summary of the social situation of persons with disabilities	21
4.2	Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester	21
5	Disability, education and skills – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies	25
5.1	Summary of the educational situation of persons with disabilities	25
5.2	Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester	26
6	Investment priorities in relation to disability	30
7	Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester	32
7.1	Data relevant to disability and the labour market	33
7.2	EU data relevant to disability, social policies and healthcare (2020)	37
7.3	EU data relevant to disability and education	39

1 Executive summary and recommendations

1.1 Key points and main challenges for Slovenia in 2022

Disability and the labour market

Disability is mainstreamed in the Country Report (CR) for Slovenia 2022 to some extent, highlighting the employment gap for people with disabilities (21.7 percentage points for 2020 and 21.1 percentage points for 2021), but not enough emphasis is put on the adaptation of the working environment to the needs of people with disabilities. The CR does not specify how the European Social Fund will be used to increase employment and activity measures for young people with disabilities, people with lower education and vocational training, long-term unemployed people with disabilities and other people with disabilities.

Disability, social policies and healthcare

Social issues of people with disabilities are closely related to their level of education, employment opportunities, social transfers, social status in society, and access to the healthcare system. Public financing of the healthcare system is below the EU average (72.8 % in 2019 compared to 79.7 % in the EU), and healthcare spending is expected to increase due to the aging of the population and the cost of long-term care. Although Slovenia has initiated comprehensive reforms in health and long-term care in recent years, these reforms have not yet shown results, and inequalities in the health sector continue to increase (with no evidence on how this affects people with disabilities with lower economic power and a poorer social safety net).

Disability, education and skills

The Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026 (RRP) articulated concrete plans to implement education reform for children with special needs, including investments in digitalisation, more individualised support, and efforts to reduce the achievement gap between children from better socioeconomic backgrounds and economically disadvantaged children. Some progress has been made in the right to use and develop Slovenian Sign Language under the Audio-visual Media Services Act. The new Article 62a of the Constitution stipulates that the free use and development of the language of the deaf-blind is regulated by law and that the free use and development of Slovenian Sign Language is guaranteed. In municipal areas where Italian or Hungarian are also official languages, the free use of Italian and Hungarian sign languages is guaranteed, as well as the free use and development of the language of the deaf-blind. However, the new resolution on the National Programme of Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2021-2030 does not focus on people with disabilities.

Investment priorities for inclusion and accessibility

In relation to people with disabilities, the RRP Slovenia mentions investment priorities in the flexibility of special workplaces for people with disabilities who work in disability companies and in employment centres, digitalisation, accessibility of the built environment and transport, the long-term care system, medical equipment and education. These investment priorities are important; however, investing in more special workplaces for people with disabilities, such as work in disability companies and in employment centres, instead of in ordinary and accessible jobs, is only half way to inclusion and disability mainstreaming.

1.2 Recommendations for Slovenia

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

Recommendation: The new Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030 needs a specific assessment of the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities on an annual basis with concrete data and figures showing progress, instead of a fragmented description of activities in different areas and it must be mentioned in the national documents for the European Commission.

Rationale: A new Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030 published in October 2021 with 13 objectives is not mentioned in the National Reform Programme (NRP) 2022.

Recommendation: Close the disability employment gap.

Rationale: The current employment gap for people with disabilities is 21.7 percentage points for 2020 (ratio).

Recommendation: Use existing RRP funds to promote reasonable accommodation as a framework to enable people with disabilities to work in ordinary environment.

Rationale: No particular project is designed to promote reasonable accommodation as a framework to enable people with disabilities to work in ordinary environment and it is not mentioned in any of the national documents and strategic policy papers.

Recommendation: Ensure digital accessibility for people with disabilities during the implementation of the RRP Slovenia.

Rationale: The 2020 Report on Implementation of the Action Plan for People with Disabilities 2014-2021 mentions the need for increased digitalisation skills of persons with disabilities. Digital knowledge is lacking among older persons with disabilities. There are no on-going accessible programmes for people with disabilities related to the improvement of their digital skills.

Recommendation: In the field of education, concrete plans are needed to implement the goals formulated in the RRP 2021-2026 for the educational reform for children with special needs; more concrete plans are also needed in line with the new Resolution on the National Programme of Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2021-2030.

Rationale: The Resolution on the National Programme of Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2021-2030 is rather disappointing because it does not pay enough attention to people with disabilities and people with special needs.

Recommendation: Increase public funding for healthcare and implement long-term care legislation.

Rationale: Public financing of healthcare is below the EU average (72.8 % in 2019 compared to 79.7 % in the EU), and healthcare spending is projected to increase due to population aging and long-term care costs. Low accessibility of the health sector continues to increase. The Long-Term Care Act of 2021 has not yet been implemented.

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 in the next chapters.

The Slovenian CR 2022² explicitly mentions people with disabilities in relation to the disability employment gap (21 percentage points) and in relation to social policy challenges in light of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Other mentions of people with disabilities are not explicit. Both the CR and the RRP 2022³ identify macroeconomic challenges that include low employment rates of older workers and early leavers from the labour market. There is no indication of how many of them are people with disabilities, but it is very likely that many older workers and early leavers from the labour market have long-term impairments. One of the reasons might be their lower educational attainment compared to the general population. The low employment rates of older workers and early leavers from the labour market are long-term problems that have also been reported in previous CRs for Slovenia. Another long-term structural problem repeatedly mentioned in the CRs for Slovenia and in CR 2022 is the share of young people in precarious employment (fixed/short-term contracts, temporary agency work, student work), which is the highest in the EU and higher than for other age groups.⁴ People with disabilities are very likely to be within this group. In Slovenia, only half of the 55 to 64-year-olds are employed (compared to 59.6 % in the EU27).

The CR 2022 mentions social policy challenges in light of the European Pillar of Social Rights.⁵ Slovenia is rated as at least 'average' on 14 of the 16 Social Scoreboard indicators that support the European Pillar of Social Rights. For the indicators 'risk of poverty or social exclusion' and 'disability employment gap', the country is rated as 'good, but to be monitored.' Regarding people with disabilities, the employment gap is 21.7 percentage points for 2020 and is cited as a problem. The employment gap for people with disabilities was mentioned for the first time in CR 2022; other structural problems were mentioned in previous years but there was no specific reference to people with disabilities.

CR 2022 is not specific enough in terms of planned actions and allocated resources to address these issues. Future measures include flexible work arrangements, encouraging employers to hire young workers on long-term/permanent contracts,

² Country Report Slovenia 2022 (CR): https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/2022-european-semester-country-report-slovenia_en.pdf. RRP 2022 Slovenia, https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en#slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan.

³ Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026, Slovenia (adopted by the Slovenian Government on 28 April 2021), https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en#slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan.

⁴ Country Report Slovenia 2022, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/2022-european-semester-country-report-slovenia_en.pdf.

⁵ Country Report Slovenia 2022, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/2022-european-semester-country-report-slovenia_en.pdf.

adapting the work environment to meet the needs of people with disabilities, and employee education and training. The CR 2022 also mentioned that the European Social Fund will be used for these purposes, especially for increasing employment and activation measures, especially for young people, long-term unemployed and 'other vulnerable groups'. The latter include people with disabilities.

One of the greatest challenges mentioned in the CR 2022 is aging and public expenditure on pensions, healthcare and long-term care is projected to rise by as much as 8.8 percentage points of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2070, the bulk of which is expected already by 2045. People with disabilities and older people with disabilities are included in this calculation but are not mentioned specifically. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted labour shortages in the health and social sectors, which will be aggravated due to the aging population.

For this reason, it is important that the CSR for Slovenia mentions that public financing of the health system is below the EU average (72.8 % in 2019 vs 79.7 % in the EU), that healthcare spending is expected to increase by 1.5 percentage points of GDP between 2019 and 2070 and that long-term care costs will double by 2055. It also mentions that the country started comprehensive reforms in healthcare and long-term care in recent years. The document says that the healthcare reform will extend access to high-quality services and improve social rights and inclusion, which would be of crucial importance due to the decline of health rights of the general population, including people with disabilities.

The CSR for Slovenia⁶ also mentions that the country can use the European Social Fund Plus to improve employment opportunities and strengthen social cohesion. People with disabilities are not specifically mentioned but given the above figures in the CR for Slovenia 2022, improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities would be important in order to close the employment gap of 21.7 percentage points.

It can be said that CR Slovenia⁷ has considered the issue of disability at least in the field of employment to some extent (and has highlighted the employment gap for people with disabilities), but has not put enough emphasis on the so-called adaptation of the working environment to the needs of people with disabilities and has not specified how the European Social Fund will be used to increase employment and activation measures for young people with disabilities, people with lower education and vocational training, long-term unemployed people with disabilities and other people with disabilities.

⁶ Country Specific Recommendations Slovenia 2022 (CSR Slovenia),

https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/2022-european-semester-csr-slovenia_en.pdf.

⁷ Country Report Slovenia 2022 (CR), https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/2022-european-semester-country-report-slovenia_en.pdf.

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 are relevant to the NRP/RRP. We analyse the most relevant of these in the next chapters.

The NRP 2022 Slovenia⁸ explicitly mentions people with disabilities on two occasions: in the area of employment and in the area of pension increase. In the area of employment, the project 'Introducing more flexible work arrangements adapted to the needs of people with disabilities in disability enterprises and employment centres', will be implemented to maintain and create new jobs suitable for the most severely disabled workers (see also Sections 3.1 and 3.2). In the area of pension reform, where there will be increases in the social security and wellbeing of pensioners, there were some increases of pensions. The guaranteed pension for the full insurance period has been increased. Especially important is that in May 2021, the minimum pension for insured persons with 15 years of insurance who are entitled to an early retirement, old-age or invalidity pension has been increased to 29.5 % of the minimum pension base. In addition, a new institution of a guaranteed invalidity pension has been introduced (i.e. minimum invalidity pension) for all recipients of an invalidity pension.

The National Reform Programme 2022 mentions three main targets for Slovenia under the European Pillar of Social Rights: employment, adult participation in training programmes and poverty decline. These targets are related to people with disabilities although they are not explicitly mentioned.

The NRP 2022 Slovenia mentions the increase of the employment rate of the population aged 20-64 to at least 79.5 % by 2030. It speaks about the inclusive labour market for all 'vulnerable groups' under which people with disabilities are subsumed. Further, the plan is that at least 60 % of adults should participate in training programmes each year and a national resolution was adopted for this purpose in 2021. It is expected that the level of participation in lifelong learning by adults aged 25 to 64 will increase from the estimated 40 % in 2016 to 60 % in 2030. Key actions include the development and implementation of public adult education programmes to raise literacy and basic skills levels and improve general educational attainment, the development of adaptations for the use of digital technology for distance education and the delivery of these programmes at a distance, the development and implementation of new educational approaches and animations for the less educated, the development and support of advisory activities, etc.

In the area of the protection of poverty, the NRP 2022 mentions that Slovenia aims to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 9 000 by 2030, including 3 000 children.

⁸ National Reform Programme 2022 Republic of Slovenia (NRP 2022 Slovenia). April 2022, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/nrp_2022_slovenia_en.pdf.

Both the Slovenian Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026⁹ and NRP 2022¹⁰ talk about measures to ensure more flexible forms of work organisation, activation of unemployed people and for the ‘most vulnerable people’ to enter employment. Only one project mentions people with disabilities specifically (see Section 3.2). In the RRP 2021-2026, people with disabilities were mentioned in the areas of employment, education, accessibility, health, long-term care, social protection, and digitalisation.¹¹

Disability and labour market

The RRP focuses on the adaptation of more flexible work formats (home-office, flexible work schedule, digitalisation) in disability companies and in employment centres across Slovenia. The aim is to maintain jobs and to open new jobs including those for severely disabled people. The focus is on employers and employees. The plans are to develop psychosocial support for people with disabilities and to modernise disability companies and employment centres with information and communications technology. In other areas of employment, like full-time and long-term employment of young people, inclusion of adults with lower education and skills in employment, and awareness raising among employers, people with disabilities are not explicitly mentioned. For example, the RRP speaks about ‘faster entry of the young into the labour market’ which would reduce youth unemployment by providing financial incentives for employers to hire young people up to 25 years of age on open-ended contracts (EUR 28 million of available funds). It seems that the RRP does not break with existing practice of prioritising parallel employment and is not innovative in the area of employment of people with disabilities. The RRP mentions that the main reasons why people with disabilities cannot get jobs in the open labour market are, first, their impairment, and secondly, their lack of digital skills. The lack of digital and other work skills of workers with disabilities would need to be understood from a structural and life course perspective as disadvantage from early age.

Education

The planned educational reform aims to address vulnerable children, including children with special needs, with usual measures: activation, developing social-protection programmes for vulnerable groups in disadvantaged areas, the development of social competencies, social inclusion, the increase of motivation, building of self-esteem, empowerment, gaining skills and knowledge. Children with special needs are mentioned in the context of digitalisation of education; they will receive more individualised support during education. The reform expects to lessen the differences in performance between children from better social-economic backgrounds and those who do not receive additional support outside of the schools. The CRPD aims in regard to the education of children, young people and adults with disabilities are not specifically addressed as the plan is very broad and does not target particular problems.

⁹ Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026, Slovenia (adopted by the Slovenian Government on 28 April 2021), https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en#slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan.

¹⁰ National Reform Programme 2022 Republic of Slovenia (NRP 2022 Slovenia). April 2022, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/nrp_2022_slovenia_en.pdf.

¹¹ NextGenerationEU: European Commission endorses Slovenia's EUR 2.5 billion Recovery and Resilience Plan. European Commission, Brussels, 1 July 2021, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-07/com-2021-384-slovenia_press-release_en.pdf.

Social policies and healthcare

The resilience and sustainability of the healthcare system is targeted in the setting-up of a long-term care system. The Long-Term Care Act is planned to be a new universal pillar of social protection for individuals with the need for long-term care, which will integrate healthcare and social care services for all age groups and will increase their accessibility across the country. The development of community-based services and ensuring institutional care for those with more complex needs is planned. The long-term care system reform plans to focus on qualified personnel who work in the long-term care for elders in old-people's homes as well as those who provide informal care and plans to improve their professional competencies. The RRP speaks about strengthening institutional as well as home care. Nursing homes for severely health-challenged people (*negovalni domovi*) and care homes (*oskrbni domovi*) will be new types of institutions. Deinstitutionalisation is mentioned in relation to the development of smaller care homes and the option that people get home care (by paid relatives) instead of institutional care (EUR 79 million in available funds).

Accessibility and digitalisation

Accessible buildings are mentioned in the RRP for all groups including people with disabilities. The investment in infrastructure will consider accessibility for all; the renovation of old buildings will improve accessibility for people with disabilities; access to public buildings will be improved; railway stations will be re-built in order to be fully accessible for people with different impairments; the railway system will be digitalised for consumers, including the information system for timetables and traffic information; ramps, signs for the visually impaired and other forms of accessibility will be built. In relation to accessibility of the railway system, Commission Regulation (EU) 1300/2014, 18 November 2014, about accessibility of the railways system of the European Union for people with disabilities and those who are functionally disabled is mentioned as needing to be fully implemented. Accessibility will also be improved with the digitalisation of the judicial system and public administration. The RRP plans to reskill and upskill with digital skills and competences different groups of people (students, employees, public servants); people with disabilities are not mentioned explicitly but it seems that they will benefit during the modernisation of the education system and through lifelong learning (EUR 114 million). The ANED Digitalisation Report 2021 showed the lack of digital skills among people with disabilities, especially those older than 65 years of age, which is a gap that needs to be considered.

The RRP addresses the need for the national document to be harmonised with the European Pillar of Social rights in the areas of: accommodation of workplaces of persons with disabilities in disability companies and employment centres; unified entry point for long-term care (the adoption of the new Act, ensuring enough public funds for its implementation; strengthening competencies of the employees and the providers of long-term care, infrastructure and training for new workers in long-term care); social protection and inclusion (integrated treatment of persons with a higher amount of medical needs who will be placed in nursing homes with capacities of 300 beds); safe living environment for people who depend on the continuous help of other people and who need basic social care and healthcare (smaller living units with 850 placements which will be built in the context of the long-term care system); increased funding for public flats for rent, which will benefit the needs of vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and families including members with disabilities.

2.3 Semester links to CRPD and national disability action plans

It is important that Semester plans align with national disability strategy. In Slovenia, this refers to the Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030.¹² A national action programme, based on United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) implementation, was agreed in 2014 for the period 2014-2021. A new Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030 was published in October 2021 with 13 objectives. This national action programme is not mentioned in the 2022 NRP.

Relevant recommendations arising from participation in the UN CRPD are highlighted in the following chapters. The last UN CRPD Committee recommendations to Slovenia were in 2018, the most recent submission by Slovenia was in 2017 and the most recent response from the Committee was the 2018 Concluding Observations.

The Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030 mentions 10 tasks of the disability care policy for the period 2022-2030:

- formulating measures to remove obstacles to the full participation (equality of opportunity) of people with disabilities at the level of the local community and society;
- prevention of and measures against discrimination of people with disabilities, which ensure access to fundamental rights;
- further harmonisation of future Slovenian legislation with European Union legislation and the measures included in this programme (e.g. adoption of the Long-Term Care Act);
- ensuring partnership with people with disabilities in the planning, selection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects that will be financed from the ESF;
- provision of quality health and disability insurance;
- ensuring employment rehabilitation and professional rehabilitation of unemployed and employed people with disabilities;
- providing personal assistance to everyone who needs it;
- provision of long-term care;
- provision of social security;
- special concern for institutional care;
- deinstitutionalisation.

In contrast to the previous Action Plan 2014-2021, personal assistance, long-term-care and deinstitutionalisation are explicitly mentioned in the Action Programme 2022-2030, which is very important. Risk of poverty is not addressed.

The Action Programme 2022-2030 explicitly says that it includes children with intellectual disabilities, blind and visually impaired children, and children with limited vision, deaf and hard of hearing children, and children with physical disabilities and adolescents. These are individuals whose rights are governed by the Placement of

¹² Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030. Republic of Slovenia. October 2021, [Akcijški program za invalide 2022_2030.docx \(live.com\)](#).

Children with Special Needs Act¹³ and received little attention in previous action plans. This could be a consequence of the UN CRPD Committee recommendations, which state that disability policy in Slovenia is fragmented and that people with disabilities are treated under different names and legislation and have different rights.

One of the main problems with the implementation of the action plans in recent years has been that while various ministries, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations are listed as those that are supposed to implement each goal, there is no body that coordinates the activities. There is also no specific institution that collects information and statistics, except that the Directorate for People with Disabilities in the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities prepares an annual report. For this purpose, all the activities reported by different entities are listed in the annual report, resulting in a fragmented document that provides little information on how certain actions have been implemented and the objectives pursued. There is no assessment of whether 5-10 institutions that are supposed to take on tasks to implement certain measures of the action programme in a year really contribute to the rights of people with disabilities on a systemic level and to what extent.

¹³ Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia* 58/2011, 40/2012 – ZUJF, 90/2012, 41/2017 – ZOPOPP in 200/2020 – ZOOMTVI), [Zakon o usmerjanju otrok s posebnimi potrebami \(pisrs.si\)](#).

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

In 2018, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Slovenia:

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

‘46. The Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Adopt measures aimed at promoting an inclusive, open and accessible labour market in all sectors for all persons with disabilities; (b) Create specific incentives for employers and provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, particularly for persons with intellectual disabilities, aimed at facilitating their inclusion in the open labour market; (c) Ensure the safeguarding of all incomes, including disability pensions for self-employed persons with disabilities; (d) Ensure equal requirements for employment quotas in the public administration and information services and other work sectors, and monitor their implementation. The State party should collect data on compliance with the quota system and provide for adequate sanctions in cases of non-compliance.’

The most recent CRPD development was the 2018 Concluding Observations responding to the state’s submission in 2017.

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 Slovenia is considered ‘Good but to monitor’.

Data from EU-SILC indicate an employment rate for persons with disabilities in Slovenia of 53.3 % in 2020, compared to 76.5 % for other persons. This results in an estimated disability employment gap of approximately 22 percentage points (estimated EU27 average gap 24.5, see Tables 2-4) or an employment chances ratio of 0.7. Statistics published on the Eurostat database indicate a disability employment gap of 21.7 percentage points in 2020, falling to 21.1 percentage points in 2021 (but against a pre-COVID-19 figure of 18.5 percentage points).¹⁴

The same data indicate unemployment rates of 20.1 % and 7.8 %, respectively in 2020 (see Tables 5-7) and the economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Slovenia was 66.7 %, compared to 83.0 % 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.

The employment rate in Slovenia increased in the general population in 2021 compared to the previous two years, reaching 76.1 % (aged 20-64). This is higher than the EU average (73.6 %). Nevertheless, the Slovenian Country Report and the RRP 2022 identify macroeconomic challenges that include low employment rates of older

¹⁴ 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.

workers and early leavers from the labour market.¹⁵ Both the Slovenian Recovery and Resilience Plan¹⁶ and NRP 2022¹⁷ talk about measures to ensure more flexible forms of work organisation, activation of unemployed people and the measurements for the ‘most vulnerable people’ to enter employment. Only one project mentions people with disabilities specifically (see Section 3.2).

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 Slovenia and the Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030.

The NRP 2022 Slovenia¹⁸ mentions that activation of the unemployed and measures to help the most vulnerable groups to enter the labour market remain a key focus of the Government. It explicitly mentions people with disabilities in employment related to the project ‘Introducing more flexible work arrangements adapted to the needs of people with disabilities in disability enterprises and employment centres’. The project is intended to create new jobs suitable for severely disabled workers. The Business Report of the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia from July 2022 also mentions this project as one of the future activities in the field of promoting employment of people with disabilities (see Section 6).¹⁹ The programme is funded by the RRP Slovenia, and will be under the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Nevertheless, the structural problem remains. That is, employment continues to be in segregated employment organisations instead of in ordinary employment environments with supportive employers and adapted jobs. Given that the disability employment gap is widening, evaluating the impact of NRP 2022 on the activation of unemployed individuals with disabilities would be very important.

Among the 10 main tasks mentioned in the new Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030 related to employment is the ‘employment rehabilitation and professional rehabilitation of unemployed and employed people with disabilities’. However, there is no mention of reasonable accommodation of workplaces, which is a major gap and shows that the legislation that ensures reasonable accommodation of workplaces is not being implemented. Under Goal 5 (Labour and Employment), there is no mention of the importance of people with disabilities having the right to be employed in an ordinary work environment. There is only a brief mention of raising

¹⁵ Country Report Slovenia 2022 (CR), https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/2022-european-semester-country-report-slovenia_en.pdf. RRP 2022 Slovenia, https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en#slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan.

¹⁶ Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026, Slovenia, https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en#slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan.

¹⁷ National Reform Programme 2022 Republic of Slovenia (NRP 2022 Slovenia). April 2022, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/nrp_2022_slovenia_en.pdf.

¹⁸ National Reform Programme 2022 Republic of Slovenia (NRP 2022 Slovenia). April 2022, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/nrp_2022_slovenia_en.pdf.

¹⁹ The Business Report of the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for the Period 2022- 2025. (2022). The Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia. [PP_2022_2025_cist.pdf \(vlada.si\)](https://www.vlada.si/podrocje/PP_2022_2025_cist.pdf).

awareness among employers to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the open labour market.

Another strategic national policy document to increase activation of most disadvantaged people in the labour market mentioned by the NRP 2022, is the *Guidelines for the implementation of active employment policy measures 2021-2025*.²⁰ The document, which was adopted in 2021 indicates that the people most affected by long-term unemployment in Slovenia are the following:

- people who are older than 50 years (48.3 %);
- unemployed people with lower education (34.8 %); and
- people with disabilities (26.7 %).

The document also states that in 2020, 38.3 % of unemployed people over 50 years of age received financial compensation for unemployment and 30 % received monthly social assistance money.²¹

The main objectives of the document are to reduce the number of long-term unemployed, to accelerate the activation of the unemployed, especially the over-50s, the low-educated and recipients of social assistance, to accelerate the transition of unemployed young people up to 29 years of age to the labour market (the Youth Guarantee), and to address structural imbalances in the labour market, in order to provide the skills needed to meet the labour market needs.

National legislation that is mentioned in the NRP 2022 and might contribute to the more inclusive labour market of the people with disabilities includes:

- 2020, amendments to the Labour Market Regulation Act²² on unemployment benefits (eligibility conditions and duration). The age of unemployed persons eligible for unemployment benefits for a period of 19 months has been increased from 50 to 53 years (the insurance period has remained unchanged at 25 years) and for those entitled to the unemployment benefit for 25 months, the age condition has been increased from 55 to 58 and the insurance period has been increased from 25 to 28 years.
- 2022, the Government endorsed a proposal by coalition Members of the Parliament regarding the new amendments to the Labour Market Regulation Act, which aims to increase the activation of the unemployed (still pending before the National Assembly). The key changes are to extend the permissible period of inclusion in public works programmes, thus allowing those who are defined as 'most vulnerable' to reintegrate into the labour market and reduce their social exclusion. The amendments provide those jobseekers who have been on the unemployment register for more than six months can be posted to a job

²⁰ Guidelines for the implementation of active employment policy measures 2021-2025 (*Smernice za izvajanje ukrepov aktivne politike zaposlovanja 2021-2025*). MDDSZ, December 2020. [Smernice-APZ-2021-2025.docx \(live.com\)](#).

²¹ Guidelines for the implementation of active employment policy measures 2021-2025 (*Smernice za izvajanje ukrepov aktivne politike zaposlovanja 2021-2025*). MDDSZ, December 2020. [Smernice-APZ-2021-2025.docx \(live.com\)](#).

²² Labour Market Regulation Act, 80/2010 and further. [Zakon o urejanju trga dela \(ZUTD\) \(pisrs.si\)](#).

corresponding to a maximum of two levels of educational attainment below the person's level of the corresponding job, irrespective of the type of education acquired by the unemployed person. The reintroduction of a one-step infringement procedure for all grounds for breach of obligations and the provision that an appeal against a decision to terminate the management would not suspend enforcement are also part of the proposed amendments, which also address, *inter alia*, the abuse of registration in the unemployment register and the consequent entitlement to social assistance benefits.

- The adoption of the amendment to the Corporate Income Tax Act²³ extended the already existing employment reliefs not only to employees aged between 29 and 55, but also for occupations needed on the labour market (so-called 'deficit occupations'). There is also a new relief for employers who employ a person under the age of 25 who is being employed for the first time.
- 2022, adoption of the Act on Intervention Measures to Support the Labour Market²⁴ to address the consequences of employee sickness absence and absences due to ordered quarantines (to be in force until end of 2022). The Act addresses labour shortages by increasing the number of hours of occasional and temporary work of pensioners, which is regulated by the Labour Market Regulation Act.

Another national document, *Directions for implementation of the active labour market policies (ALMPs) 2021-2025*,²⁵ shows that among unemployed people age 50+ many people are long-term unemployed (58.3 % in August 2020). Among the long-term unemployed aged 50+, 26.8 % of persons had disabilities; 38.3 % of the unemployed over 50 receive a monthly replacement for unemployment and 30 % receive monthly social protection money.

In July 2022 the Government started the project, 'Faster entry of young people into the labour market (2022-2024)',²⁶ mentioned in the NRP, which might include people with disabilities. The project aims to accelerate the activation of young people up to and including 25 years of age by means of subsidies for permanent employment. The project addresses the key challenges that young people face in their transition to the labour market. It plans to provide work experience, compulsory training during subsidised employment and to promote permanent employment policies. The aim is to strengthen the long-term resilience of young workers to economic fluctuations in the face of crises. The measure will encourage young people to take up supplementary pension insurance. Subsidies are in the amount of EUR 5 400 to EUR 8 820 for selected employers for long-term employment of unemployed youth up to 25 years of age. Employers also provide mentoring and training or education for both the person and the mentor for a minimum of 30 school hours/person. The subsidy ranges from EUR 300 to 490 EUR per month and is paid for a maximum of 18 months if the

²³ Corporate Income Tax Act, 117/2006 and further. [Zakon o davku od dohodkov pravnih oseb \(pisrs.si\)](https://pisrs.si).

²⁴ Act on Intervention Measures to Support the Labour Market, 29/2022. [Zakon o interventnih ukrepih za podporo trgu dela \(ZIUPTD1\) \(pisrs.si\)](https://pisrs.si).

²⁵ Directions for implementation of the ALMPs 2021-2025 (*Smernice za izvajanje ukrepov aktivne politike zaposlovanja za obdobje 2021-2025*), Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. December 2020.

²⁶ See: [Hitrejši vstop mladih na trg dela - Zavod Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje \(gov.si\)](https://gov.si) and [Besedilo 2 javno povabilo Hitrejši vstop mladih.pdf \(gov.si\)](https://gov.si).

employer signs a long-term contract with a person and a mentor (minimum 30 school hours). The subsidy can be paid to the employee and a mentor. For the entire period of 18 months, the grant is a maximum of EUR 5 400 to a maximum of EUR 8 820. The project envisages the employment of 4 000 unemployed young people from all over Slovenia. The project is funded by the RRP 2021-2026 (approximately EUR 27.36 million is available).

A positive development is the Catalogue of Provisions for Active Labour Market Policies from 2021,²⁷ which lists people with disabilities among the main target groups for public work (including Roma people and persons age 58+) which was not the case before (its implementation has not yet been evaluated). People with disabilities who have a written order of disability have two provisions in the ALMPs to increase their employability. First, unemployed persons with disabilities can re-enter the public work scheme again after one year under certain conditions. If they were enrolled in public work in 2018 and 2019 (or in 2019 and 2020), they can be re-enrolled if they were registered as unemployed without breaks over one year before their first public tender job and were already defined as disabled when they first enrolled in public work. The maximum time of employment at the same employer cannot exceed two years. Secondly, unemployed persons with disabilities (as well as long-term unemployed people) can be employed for shorter working hours, but not less than 20 hours/week while other target groups must have full-time employment (40 hours/week).

As mentioned above, the RRP for Slovenia plans more flexible work formats for people with disabilities in line with Principle 17 of the European Pillar of Social Rights.²⁸ The adaptation of workplaces for people with disabilities working in disability companies (as of 2020, there were 151 such companies) and in employment centres (66) is mentioned specifically. The flexible work formats mentioned include home-office, flexible work schedule, and digitalisation. The RRP included a project plan with the aim of keeping existing workplaces for people with disabilities and to open new ones including those for severely disabled people. The project focuses on employers and employees. It plans to develop psychosocial support for workers with disabilities and to modernise disability companies and employment centres with ICT. The project will include 53 work organisations, made up of 33 disability companies and 20 employment centres, covering 266 persons with disabilities. The financial cost of the project (EUR 4 million) will cover the cost for the implementation of the flexible models of employment, education and training, psychosocial support, and the development of the ICT systems in the organisations.

The gap that remains is that mainstreaming disability employment; supported workplaces, job coaching, support at the workplace and accommodated workplaces in ordinary environments are not addressed for investment.

²⁷ Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, May 2021, Catalogue of Provisions for Active Labour Market Policies.

²⁸ Principle 17: Inclusion of people with disabilities: People with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs. European Commission (2019) The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en.

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

In 2018, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Slovenia:

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

‘48. In the light of the links between article 28 of the Convention and target 1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of social protection and poverty reduction programmes for persons with disabilities, especially persons with psychosocial and/or intellectual disabilities; (b) Restore all support measures curtailed under the austerity policy and prevent any hardship that may be faced by persons with disabilities whose income was reduced as a result of that policy; (c) Ensure the accessibility of public housing for persons with disabilities, disseminate information about available and affordable housing in accessible formats and engage with the private sector with a view to promoting the development of accessible housing units; (d) Implement positive measures to provide taxation relief in respect of pensions and disability insurance for persons with disabilities living in poverty; (e) Recognize the right of persons with disabilities to receive a full disability pension and insurance through the relevant legal and administrative mechanisms; (f) Ensure a dignified and inclusive social protection system for older persons with disabilities.’

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

‘32. With reference to the Committee’s general comment No. 5 (2017) on living independently and being included in the community, the Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Adopt and implement a strategy and action plan, within a time frame, aimed at deinstitutionalization; (b) Prevent any form of re-institutionalization and provide sufficient funding for developing community-based independent living schemes; (c) Allocate sufficient resources to ensure that services in the community are available, accessible, affordable, acceptable and accommodating of persons with disabilities, so that such persons may exercise their right to live independently and be included in their communities, in both urban and rural areas; (d) Strengthen the national and municipal capacity to implement deinstitutionalization, in close cooperation with organizations of persons with disabilities.’

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

‘42. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the accessibility and availability of health services for all persons with disabilities, whatever their impairment and wherever they live, whether in institutions or elsewhere. It also recommends that the State party ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including family planning, information and education, and integrate the right to reproductive health into national strategies and programmes, as set out in target 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Committee further recommends that the State party pay due attention to the links between article 25 of the Convention and target 3.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure the implementation of the Health Care and Health Insurance Act.’

The most recent CRPD development was the 2018 Concluding Observations responding to the state’s submission in 2017.

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 Slovenia was 17.8 % in 2020, compared to 9.3 % for other persons of similar age – an estimated disability poverty gap of approximately 9 percentage points (see Table 14). For people aged over 65, the disability poverty gap was 12.4 points (26.9 % for older persons with disabilities and 14.5 % 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 age. Recently updated data from Eurostat indicates that this relative risk rose for the working-age disabled population (18.9 %) but fell considerably for the older age group (20.8 %) in 2021.²⁹

For persons with disabilities of working age in Slovenia (aged 18-64) the risk of poverty before social transfers was 45.9 % and 17.8 % after transfers. The in-work poverty rate for persons with disabilities in this age range was 5.5 % in 2020, rising to 5.9 % in 2021.

Of interest to health policy are the data on self-reported unmet needs for medical examination (too expensive, 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 Slovenia was 5.7 %, compared to 1.8 % for other persons.

A disability equality gap is evident in the poverty risk rate for working-age persons with disabilities as well as in the health policy area. The National Health Care Plan 2016-2025 highlights that Slovenia lags behind the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average in terms of the proportion of people affected by long-term care and resources invested in this area, and that 66 179 people received long-term care services in 2018, most of whom lived in institutions (23 782 persons or 36 %).³⁰

4.2 Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see the 2022 National Reform Programme, the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovenia and the Action Programme for Persons with Disabilities 2022-2030.

The RRP 2021-2026 addresses the healthcare system and its sustainability is targeted with the setting-up of a long-term care system. The Long-Term Care Act from 2021³¹ is planned to be a new universal pillar of social protection for individuals who need long-term care, which will integrate healthcare and social care services for all age groups and will increase their accessibility across the country. The development of community-based services and ensuring institutional care for those with more complex needs is planned. The long-term care system reform plans to focus on qualified personnel who work in long-term care for elders in old-people's homes as well as those

²⁹ Eurostat, People at risk of poverty by level of activity limitation, sex and age, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/HLTH_DPE020_custom_3348056.

³⁰ Resolution on the National Health Care Plan 2016-2025. [Resolucija o nacionalnem planu zdravstvenega varstva 2016–2025 »Skupaj za družbo zdravja« \(ReNPZV16–25\) \(pisrs.si\)](#).

³¹ Long Term Care Act, 196/2021. [Zakon o dolgotrajni oskrbi \(ZDOsk\) \(pisrs.si\)](#).

who provide informal care and plans to improve their professional competencies. The RRP speaks about strengthening institutional as well as home care. Nursing homes for severely health-challenged people (*negovalni domovi*) and care homes (*oskrbni domovi*) will be new types of institutions. Deinstitutionalisation is mentioned in relation to the development of smaller care homes and the option for people to get home care (by paid relatives) instead of institutional care (EUR 79 million in available funds).

The long-anticipated Long-Term Care Act of 2021 continues the institutionalisation of people over age 65, including people with disabilities.³² Community-based services still receive less funding than institutional long-term care (Report on the Implementation of the Action Programme for Persons with Disabilities 2014-2021 for 2020, 2021). The Long-Term Care Act has been criticised for its medicalised approach and lack of attention to the social needs of individuals. In 2020 the National Council of Disability Organisations emphasised that the law does not universalise rights and excludes some people with disabilities from the right to choose between different types of long-term care, for example, deaf-blind people who cannot receive long-term care at home, but only in an institution. The legislation makes little provision for community-based services or the hiring of new professionals for these services. Even more, people who choose to live at home can only be supported by their relatives, presumably women. The facilities envisioned in the law will not strengthen the right to privacy of people with disabilities, as only 25 % of all rooms are planned as single rooms.³³

The process of deinstitutionalisation, which was not really intended by the political decision makers but is being carried out more due to the flow of EU funds, shows a great inconsistency in its plans. After the pandemic crisis that led to a high number of deaths among older people living in institutions (people living in long-term care facilities faced the highest number of COVID-19 infections in Slovenia, and 80 % of all deaths in the country between March and June 2020 occurred in residential facilities for the elderly and disabled),³⁴ the same ministry that oversees the Department of Older People and Deinstitutionalisation promised to increase the number of institutions for older people and to allocate EUR 30 million for new long-term care facilities for older people in 2022 and 2023. The privatisation of institutional care for old people and those with disabilities came into full swing. The Ministry granted a concession for 11 facilities with a total of 1 285 beds, or about 120 beds in each facility, to be operated by private companies from Slovenia and abroad (including SeneCura, an Austrian transnational company).³⁵

³² The Act was in preparation since 2002. The Act was supposed to be another measure for deinstitutionalisation and individualisation of long-term housing for old people and those with disabilities.

³³ National Council of Disability Organisations of Slovenia. Letter to the Ministry of Health regarding the public discussion of the draft Long-Term Care Act. October 4, 2020. No: 093/2020, signed by the president of the National Council Borut Sever (unpublished document).

³⁴ Zaviršek, Darja (2021). People with disabilities and older people in social care institutions: the importance of transdisciplinarity for ethical decision-making in emergencies. In: Salecl, Renata ed. (2021), *Whom to Save in the Times of Pandemic? Ethical, Medical and the Criminal Law Aspects of Triage*. Institute of Criminology at the Faculty of Law, Ljubljana, pp. 195-228.

³⁵ G.C. (2021). The Ministry of Labour selected 11 homes for the elderly for concession, MMC RTV SLO, 16th February 2021, <https://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/za-podelitev-koncesije-je-ministrstvo-za-delo-izbralo-11-domov-za-starejse/569740>.

As mentioned above, the NRP 2022 speaks about increased social security for persons with disabilities due to the increase of pensions. The guaranteed pension for the full insurance period has been increased. Especially important is that in May 2021, the minimum pension for insured persons with 15 years of insurance who are entitled to an early retirement, old-age or invalidity pension has been increased to 29.5 % of the minimum pension base. In addition, a new guaranteed invalidity pension has been introduced (i.e. minimum invalidity pension) for all recipients of an invalidity pension.

The prevention of risk of poverty among older people generally including people with disabilities was addressed in the NRP 2022 with the appropriate indexation of pensions. These have been regularly adjusted by 2.5 % in 2021 and 4.4 % in 2022. In addition, pensions were also adjusted on an extraordinary basis in January 2022 on the basis of the Law on the Amendment of the Pension and Disability Insurance Act.

The Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030³⁶ talks about the financial and social security of persons with disabilities in its Goal 6. It says that people with disabilities are at greater risk of poverty than other people. It also states that people with disabilities faced an increase in poverty and high levels of violence, neglect and abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is necessary to take appropriate social security measures to ensure a decent standard of living for them. The Action Programme also states that people with disabilities and their families or dependents often face higher costs due to disabilities than other people. Further, it says that government support, i.e., services and cash benefits, should be unified or harmonised according to the type and degree of disability. Similarly, cash benefits should be coordinated with increases in the price of consumer goods. Social insurance programmes should provide incentives to rely on one's strengths and abilities. They should also ensure the development and financing of vocational training and employment.

Among the measures to achieve these goals are:

- unification of the system of state support and relief benefits, intended for services and cash benefits to cover additional costs related to disability. The system should be based primarily on the needs of the person;
- provide a minimum monthly income that provides adequate social security for persons who have no other adequate income;
- providing income and social security also for persons caring for a person with disabilities;
- providing some money for persons with disabilities who live in an institution and have no income of their own;
- allowing longer maternity leave and childcare leave for mothers or fathers with disabilities;
- access for vulnerable groups of people with disabilities, such as women with disabilities, the elderly, and the severely disabled, to mechanisms to increase social security and reduce the risk of poverty;
- create a unified long-term care system that guarantees equal access and rights for all persons with disabilities.

³⁶ Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030. Republic of Slovenia. October 2021, [Akcijski program za invalide 2022 2030.docx \(live.com\)](#).

However, the Action Programme does not say how these goals will be achieved. There is no research into how effective the policies in these area are.

Increasing funding for healthcare is a challenge that could be exacerbated by the increase in the elderly and the resulting rapid increase in healthcare spending. This could impact the current and future health rights of people with disabilities. An important issue mentioned in the RRP and CR 2022 is the lack of an adequate long-term care system in Slovenia, while the healthcare system faces many structural weaknesses (e.g. staff shortages, unmet needs and long queues, outdated infrastructure). All of this has an impact on people with disabilities. Recently, the shortage of caregivers has become an issue; some caregivers who worked in long-term care facilities for the elderly have changed jobs and become personal assistants due to better salaries and a less stressful and more rewarding work environment.

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

In 2018, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Slovenia:

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

‘40. Recalling its general comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education and targets 4.5 and 4.a of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Recognize the right of all children with disabilities to inclusive education and abandon segregated education schemes; (b) Adopt a strategy and action plan with a clear time frame for the implementation of inclusive education at all levels for all children with disabilities and, further, establish a comprehensive monitoring system to assess the progress of inclusive education; (c) Strengthen the capacity of inclusive schools to train teachers in inclusive education, curriculum accommodation and teaching methods. The State party should enhance the quality of educational support by adopting an individualized approach to children with disabilities and their capacity-building; (d) Provide lifelong learning for persons with disabilities and ensure accessibility and reasonable accommodation in all tertiary education institutions, including vocational and higher education schools; (e) Provide transport services for students with disabilities from their place of residence to their education facilities.’

The most recent CRPD development was the 2018 Concluding Observations responding to the state’s submission in 2017.

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 Slovenia. Youths with disabilities (aged 18-24) tend to leave school significantly more than non-disabled peers of the same age groups (and this is reinforced by widening the sample size to age 18-29). Table 17 shows the completion rate 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).

It is worth mentioning that one of the members of the Council of People with Disabilities of the Republic of Slovenia at the regular meeting of the Council in 2021 addressed two long-term problems of education of children and youth with disabilities: a) inclusive education and b) the competencies that children and youth acquire during the educational process to enter the labour market and live independently.³⁷

Therefore, it is important that the Action Programme 2022-2030³⁸ mentions education in its aim 4. Since people with disabilities face various barriers in education, especially architectural and informational ones, such as problems in accessibility of study

³⁷ The Council of People with Disabilities of the Republic of Slovenia. The 10th meeting of the Council of People with Disabilities, 26 May 2021.

³⁸ Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030. Republic of Slovenia. October 2021, [Akcijski program za invalide 2022 2030.docx \(live.com\)](#).

literature for the blind and visually impaired, interpreters for the deaf, and induction loops for the hard of hearing, etc., measures must be taken to eliminate such barriers. The Action Programme mentions two important measures. One is to promote the learning of sign language, the language of the deaf-blind and bilingual education for the deaf, to make the learning of sign language and the language of the deaf-blind an elective subject for all in primary and secondary schools, and to promote the learning of sign language and the language of the deaf-blind for employees in public administration and public service providers who communicate with customers or service users as part of their jobs. Secondly, to create an educational system for children with intellectual disabilities that allows more flexible adaptation to educational needs and better conditions for further education (switching between different programmes, inclusion in educational programmes, etc).

5.2 Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see the 2022 National Reform Programme, the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovenia and the Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030.

The planned educational reform mentioned in the RRP 2021-2026 aims to address vulnerable children including children with special needs with common measures: activation, developing social-protection programmes for vulnerable groups in disadvantaged areas, the development of social competencies, social inclusion, the increase of motivation, building of self-esteem, empowerment, gaining skills and knowledge. Children with special needs are mentioned in the context of digitalisation of education; they will receive more individualised support during education. The reform expects to lessen the differences in performances between children from better socioeconomic backgrounds and those who do not receive additional support outside of school. The CRPD aims in regard to the education of children, young people and adults with disabilities are not addressed specifically as the plan is very broad and does not target particular problems.

On 27 May 2021, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted a constitutional law according to which Article 62a of the Constitution is supplemented with the right to use and develop Slovenian Sign Language.³⁹ It also stipulates that the free use and development of the language of people who are deaf-blinded is regulated by law and that the free use and development of Slovenian Sign Language is guaranteed. In areas of municipalities where Italian or Hungarian are also official languages, the free use of Italian and Hungarian sign languages is guaranteed as is the free use and development of the language of people with deaf-blindness. This is a positive improvement and might be a result of previous annual reports on the implementation of the Action Programme for Persons with Disabilities 2014-2021, which emphasised that people with disabilities face various obstacles during education, including architectural and information-technical barriers. People with visual impairments have

³⁹ Action Programme for People with Disabilities 2022-2030. Republic of Slovenia. October 2021, [Akcijski program za invalide 2022 2030.docx \(live.com\)](#).

accessibility problems with study literature. People with hearing impairments have difficulties getting interpreters and an induction loop, etc.⁴⁰

This might also be the consequence of the 2021 Advocate of the Principle of Equality of the Republic of Slovenia Special Report⁴¹ about the situation of children and young people with hearing impairments throughout all levels of the education system.⁴² The report shows that the right to accessible education and the right to Slovenian Sign Language are not yet fully fulfilled. The Advocate made several recommendations to different ministries on how to end discrimination, which are summarised below. The report mentions previous research from 2011 on the situation of children and young people with hearing impairment at schools, by the Association of Deaf and Hearing Deaf Clubs of Slovenia (ZGNS).⁴³ The research showed that the educational achievement of hearing-impaired persons was poor compared to other persons in the population. Among 800 hearing-impaired people only 10 % completed at most secondary education and only 1 % higher education (the completion rate for the whole population was 17 %). At that time not all hearing-impaired people had the right to learn Slovenian Sign Language.

The report showed discrimination during educational process, as follows. Each child has the right to have only up to five hours of assistance/week, which is not enough for pupils with hearing disabilities. They do not have full access to education in sign language and have limited access to sign language interpreters. They have a limited amount of accessible literature. Teachers lack language competences when they teach children with hearing disabilities and children and young people cannot choose whether to use sign language or speech. Those who are educated in institutions for hearing-impaired children have a lower level of knowledge as the educational programmes in institutions (meaning parallel education) have lower standards than ordinary schools. Hearing-impaired students have limited access to information and are isolated during the educational process. The consequences are that people with hearing impairments have one of the lowest educational levels among different social groups which is caused by long-term discrimination and by the lack of accommodation in the educational system. Young people do not get financial support and scholarships and can therefore hardly enter tertiary education.

To close the disability education gap, it is important that the 2011 Audio-visual Media Services Law be amended in 2021.⁴⁴ Article 14(a), which deals with the protection of persons with disabilities in audio-visual media services, states that audio-visual media service providers must gradually and continuously improve the accessibility of their services for persons with disabilities through proportionate measures such as sign

⁴⁰ The Report on Implementation of the Action Programme for Persons with Disabilities 2014-2021 for the year 2020, [VG API 2020 P.pdf \(vlada.si\)](#).

⁴¹ See: <http://www.zagovornik.si/en/>.

⁴² The Advocate of the Principle of Equality of the Republic of Slovenia (2021). Special Report on the Status of Deaf and Hearing-Impaired People in the Educational System, Ljubljana, <https://zagovornik.si/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/The-Situation-of-the-deaf-in-the-Educational-System-1-1.pdf>.

⁴³ Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Clubs of Slovenia (2011): *80 let organiziranega delovanja odraslih gluhih in naglušnih na Slovenskem: (1931–2011)*, <http://www.zveza-gns.si/uploads/datoteke/ZDGNS%20monografija.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Audio-visual Media Services Act, 87/2011, 84/2015, 204/2021. [Zakon o avdiovizualnih medijskih storitvah \(ZAVMS\) \(pisrs.si\)](#).

language translation, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, spoken subtitles, and audio description. It also establishes that audio-visual media service providers must prepare an accessibility improvement plan for persons with disabilities for each three-year period. At the end of each three-year period, audio-visual media service providers must report to the Agency on the implementation of the measures provided for in the plan to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the Agency will report to the European Commission on the fulfilment of the obligations referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article. The Agency will also establish and manage an online contact point accessible to persons with disabilities in a simple (easy to read, adapted to the needs of persons with sensory impairments) form.

The Agency also provides information and enables the receipt of complaints about the accessibility of audio-visual media services. Accessibility complaints may be filed by mail, in person, or by telephone. The Agency shall adopt a general legal act regulating the manner in which complaints are to be handled. The article also states that public announcements, as well as urgent information in the event of natural disasters, published through audio-visual media services must be transmitted in a technique, format or language suitable for persons with disabilities.

In Article 14(b), the legislation refers to the protection of vulnerable social groups. It states that the Republic of Slovenia, in accordance with the Media Act, encourages providers to gradually grant persons with visual or hearing disabilities access to their services, and that the country promotes media literacy, i.e. the skills, knowledge and understanding that enable users to use media and audio-visual media services effectively and safely.

Article 45 also provides for a fine of between EUR 500 and EUR 5 000 for a legal entity that fails to submit a plan for improving accessibility for persons with disabilities to the Agency within the prescribed period. The same fine will be imposed on a legal entity that fails to report to the Agency within the prescribed period on the implementation of the measures provided for in the plan for improving accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The legislative changes mentioned above are very promising and could help to reduce the disability education gap. Nevertheless, the action programme remains quite general and the new Resolution on the National Programme of Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2021-2030⁴⁵ adopted in December 2021 is rather disappointing. It aims to contribute to the coordinated implementation of adult education at the national level and to promote the development of various forms of learning, educational programmes and activities, and new approaches for 'vulnerable groups', which include people with disabilities and adults with special needs. One of the target groups of the resolution is adults with 'poorly developed basic abilities', 'adults who have limited access to social, cultural, economic, and educational goods', and people with disabilities and people with special needs are listed among them. People with disabilities are mentioned only twice. The resolution does not contain data and figures that would allow for a comparison of the level of achievement of adults with and without

⁴⁵ Resolution on the National Programme of Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2021-2030. [Resolucija o nacionalnem programu izobraževanja odraslih v Republiki Sloveniji za obdobje 2022–2030 \(ReNPIO22–30\) \(pisrs.si\)](#).

disabilities and a comparison that would give a picture of the level of education of people with disabilities in Slovenia. The overall analysis shows that the resolution does not really pay attention to people with disabilities and their needs.

6 Investment priorities in relation to disability

In relation to people with disabilities, the RRP Slovenia mentions investment priorities in the flexibility of special workplaces for people with disabilities who work in disability companies and employment centres, digitalisation, accessibility of the built environment and transport, the long-term care system, medical equipment and education. The RRP plans more flexible work formats for people with disabilities in line with Principle 17 of the European Pillar of Social Rights.⁴⁶ The RRP mentions the adaptation of workplaces for people with disabilities working in disability companies and in employment centres and the flexible work formats of home-office, flexible work schedules and digitalisation are mentioned.

Approximately EUR 27.36 million is available for the period 2022-2026, financed by the European Union under the EU instrument nextGeneration. The project is called 'Faster entry of young people into the labour market' (about 4 000 new workplaces for young people below 25 are planned). The RRP also includes a project with the aim to keep existing workplaces for people with disabilities and to open new ones including those for severely disabled people. The project focuses on employers and employees and plans to develop psychosocial support for people with disabilities and to modernise disability companies and employment centres with ICT. The project will include 53 work organisations, made up of 33 disability companies and 20 employment centres, covering 266 persons with disabilities. The financial cost of the project is EUR 4 million.

The report of the national Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia mentions a programme for people with disabilities financed by the Operational Programme of the European Cohesion Policy 2021-2027, which is in the preparatory phase: 'Programme to support companies for active ageing of the workforce'.⁴⁷ The programme targets the preconceptions and prejudices of employers and the general public and aims to encourage older workers to participate in lifelong learning. The programme is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. One of the roles of the fund is to promote the employment of people with disabilities and the preservation of their jobs.

To strengthen health and social resilience, the RRP 2022 for Slovenia plans investments of EUR 110 million in medical infrastructure and equipment, while EUR 79 million will go toward building a long-term care system (institutional care as well as smaller community nursing homes in the area of long-term care).

⁴⁶ Principle 17: Inclusion of people with disabilities: People with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs. European Commission. (2019). The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en.

⁴⁷ The Business Report of the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for the Period 2022- 2025. (2022). The Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia. [PP_2022_2025_cist.pdf \(vlada.si\)](#).

Access to more affordable housing for people experiencing or at risk of poverty and social exclusion will be supported with investments of EUR 60 million. Other projects include the modernisation of an infectious diseases and fever clinic in Ljubljana (EUR 70 million) and the construction of a new infectious diseases clinic in Maribor (EUR 40 million).⁴⁸

Over EUR 67 million is planned to strengthen competences, in particular digital competences.

⁴⁸ Slovenia Country Report 2022, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/2022-european-semester-country-report-slovenia_en.pdf and RRP 2022 Slovenia, https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en#slovenias-recovery-and-resilience-plan.

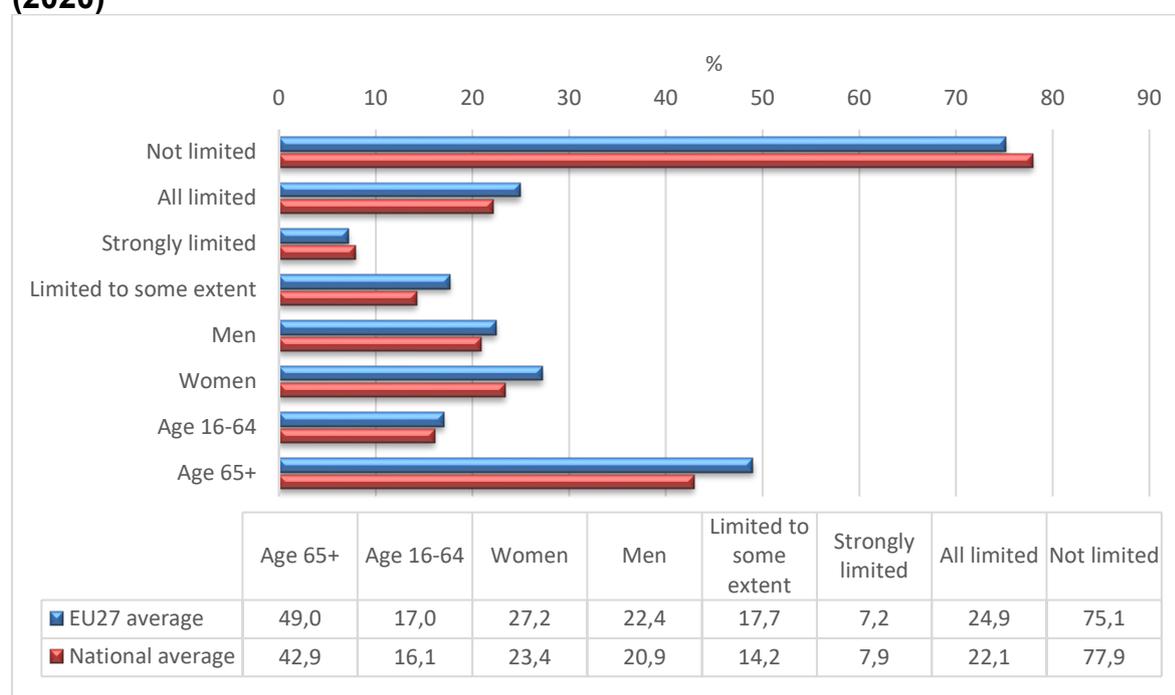
7 Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester

See also disability data published in the Eurostat database⁴⁹ and statistical reports.⁵⁰

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’.⁵¹

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 chapters – for the labour market, social policies and healthcare, and education – by comparing outcomes for persons who report and do not report ‘activity limitations’.⁵² National estimates for Slovenia are compared with EU27 mean averages for the most recent year.⁵³

⁴⁹ Eurostat Health Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

⁵⁰ Eurostat (2019) Disability Statistics: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability_statistics.

⁵¹ 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)).

⁵² This methodology was developed in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at: <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>.

⁵³ 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 Slovenia employment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2020)

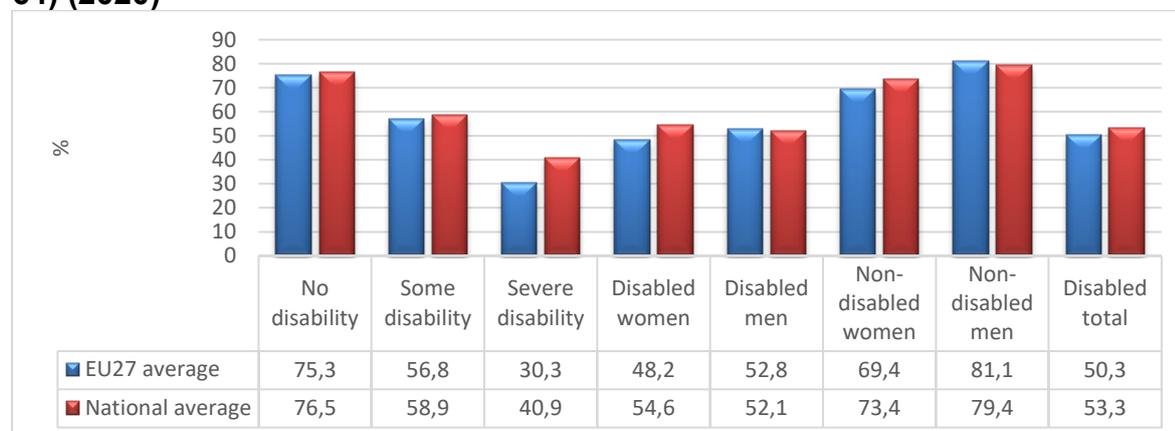


Table 3: Employment rates in Slovenia, by disability and age group (2020)

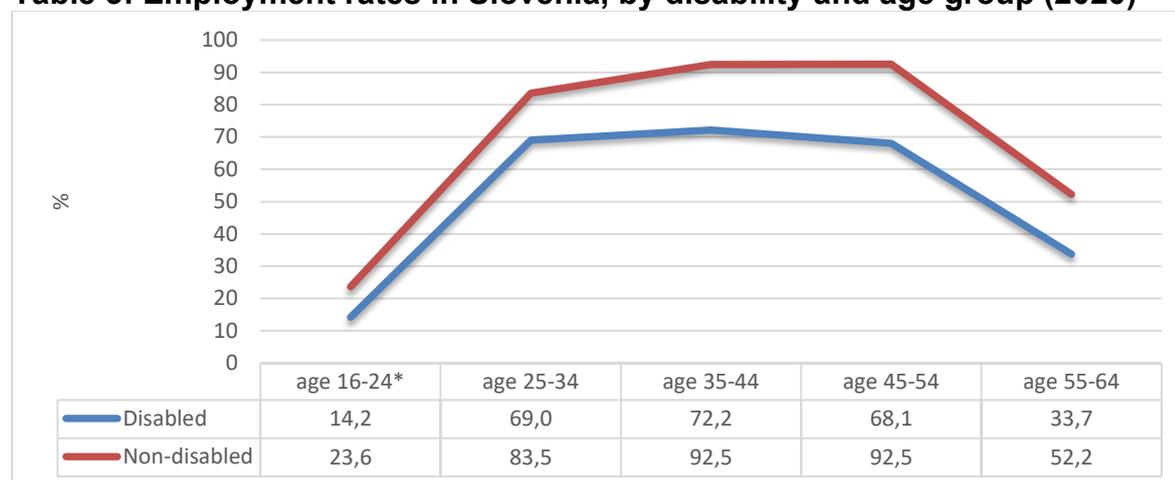
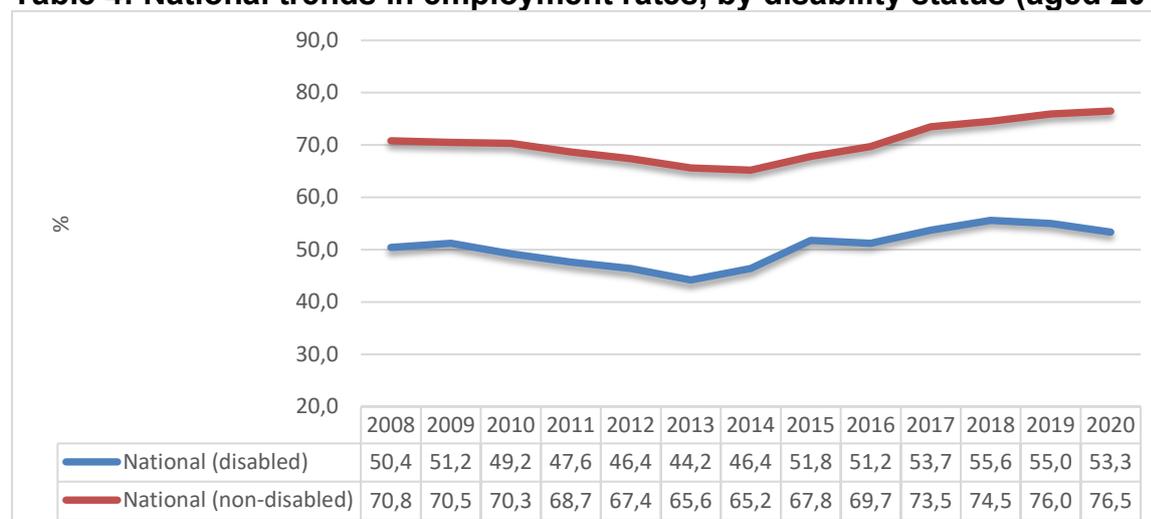


Table 4: National trends in employment rates, by disability status (aged 20-64)



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)

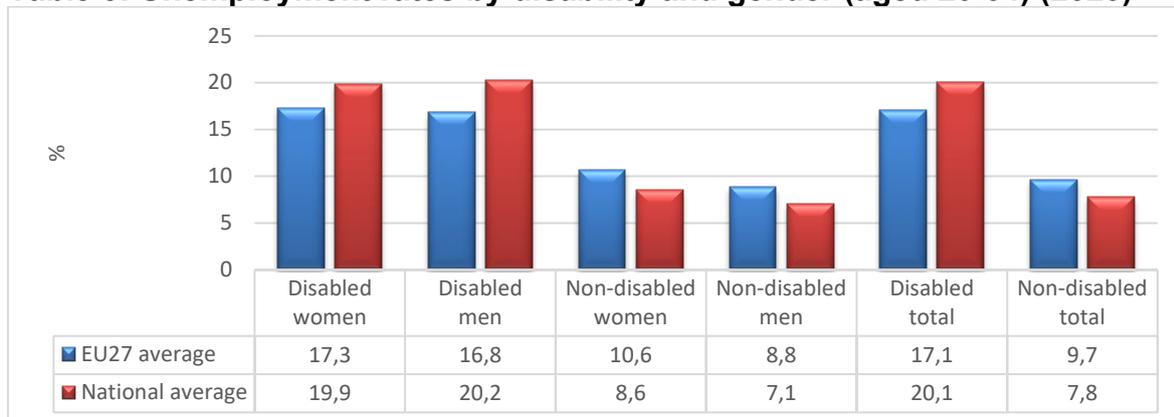


Table 6: Unemployment rates in Slovenia, by disability and age group (2020)

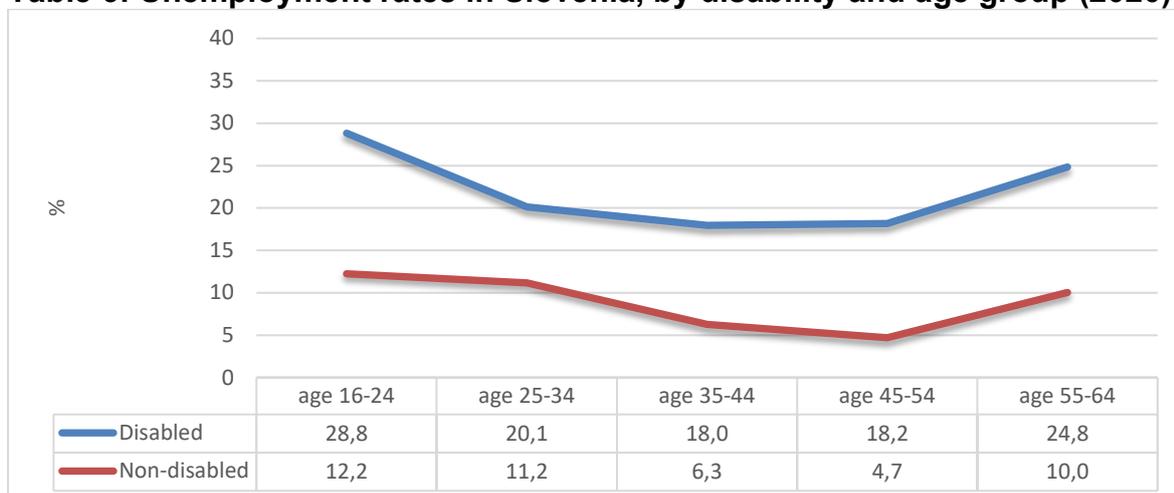
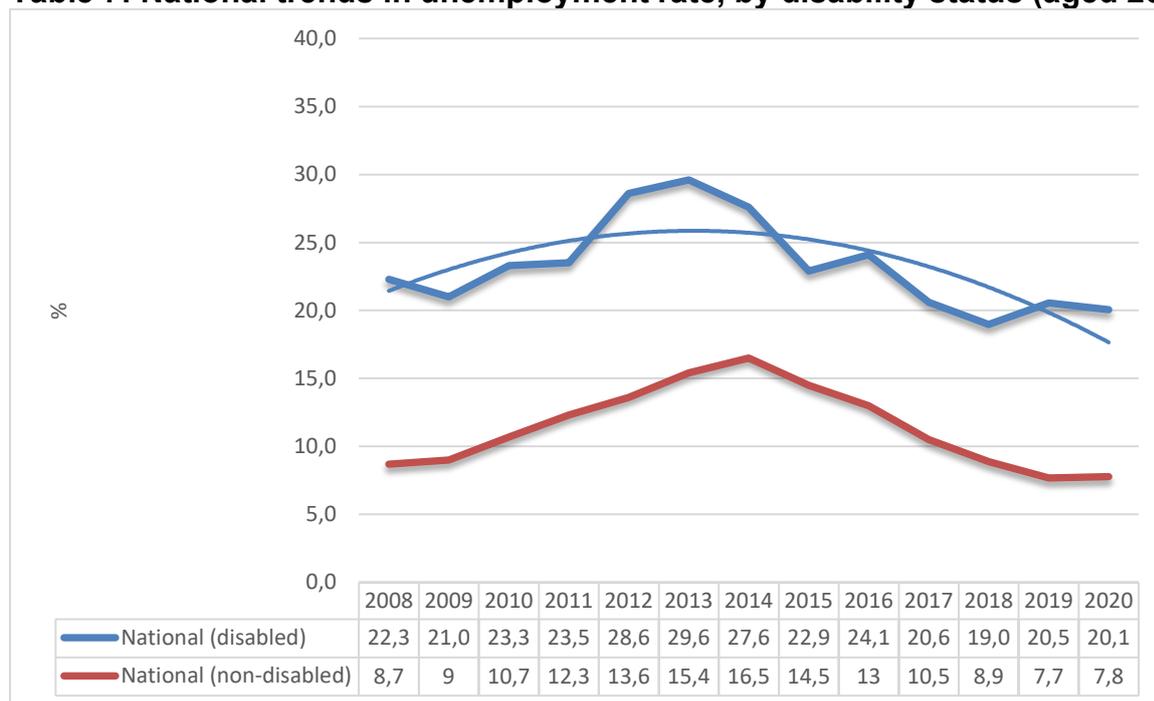


Table 7: National trends in unemployment rate, by disability status (aged 20-64)


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

7.1.2 Economic activity

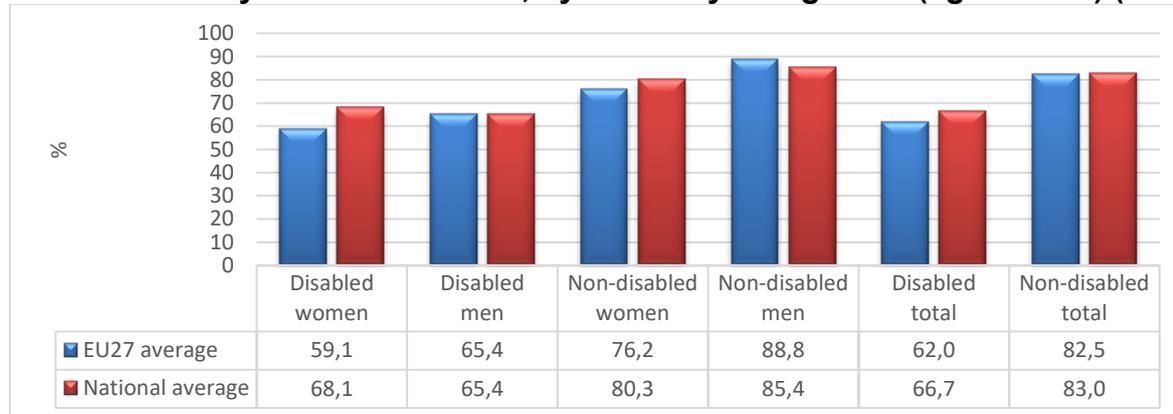
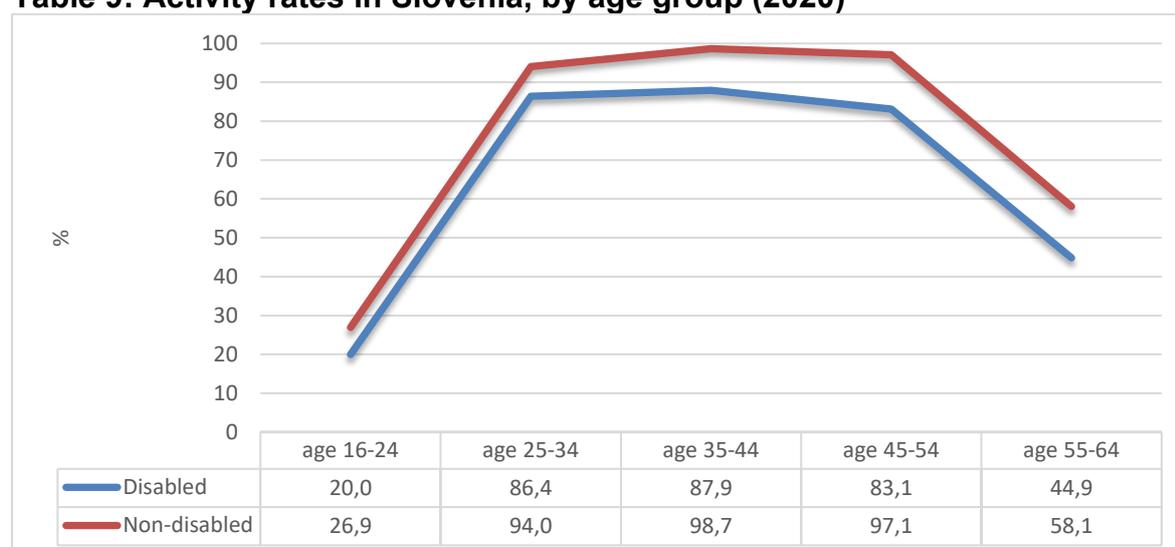
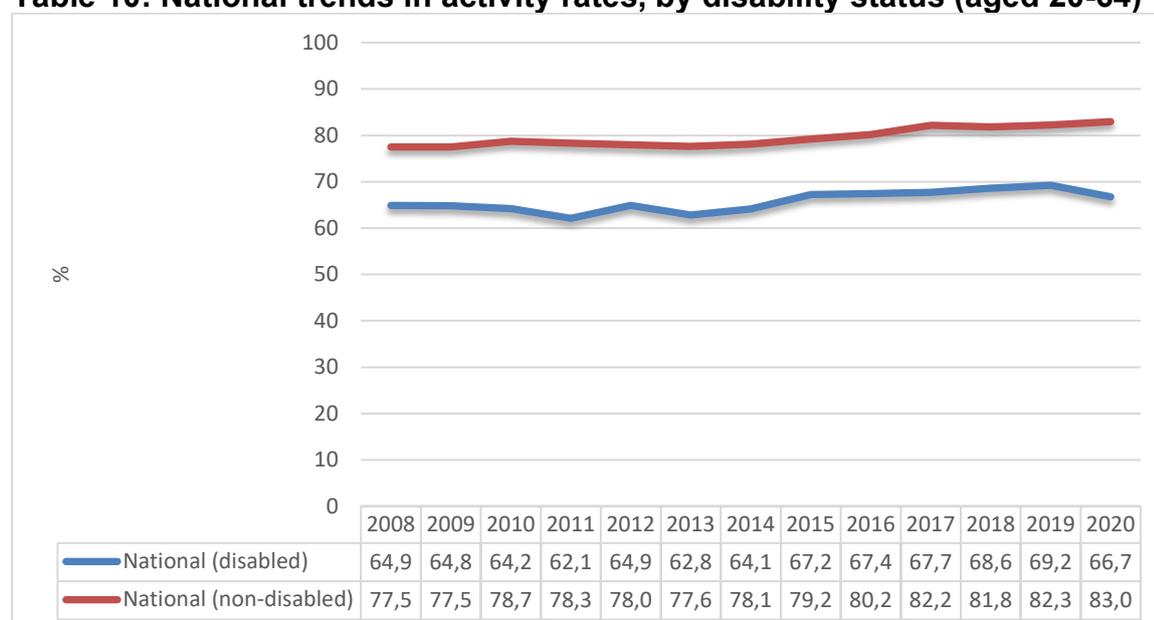
Table 8: Activity rates in Slovenia, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2020)


Table 9: Activity rates in Slovenia, 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 Slovenia

Disability data is not yet available from the core European Labour Force Survey but labour market indicators for Slovenia were disaggregated from ad hoc modules conducted in 2001 and 2011. These can be found in the Eurostat disability database.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ 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)⁵⁵

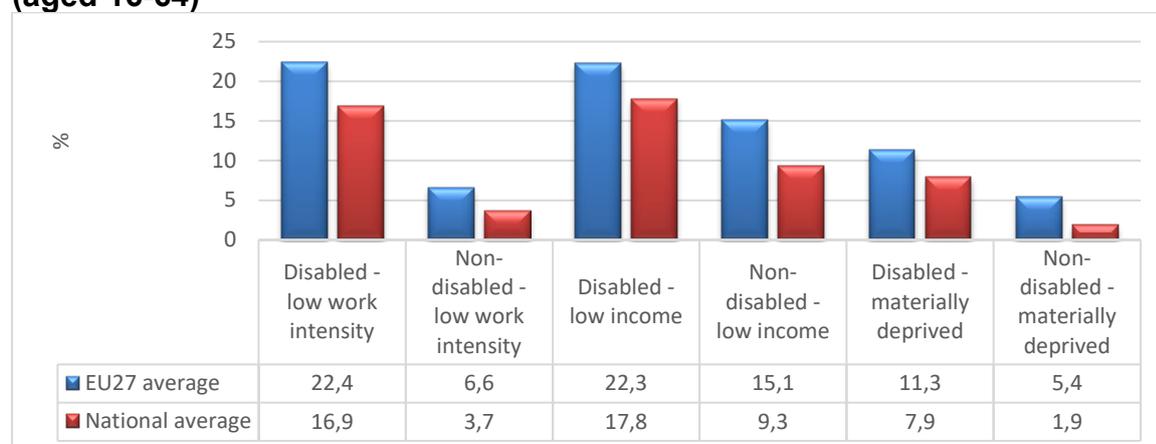


Table 12: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and gender (aged 16+)

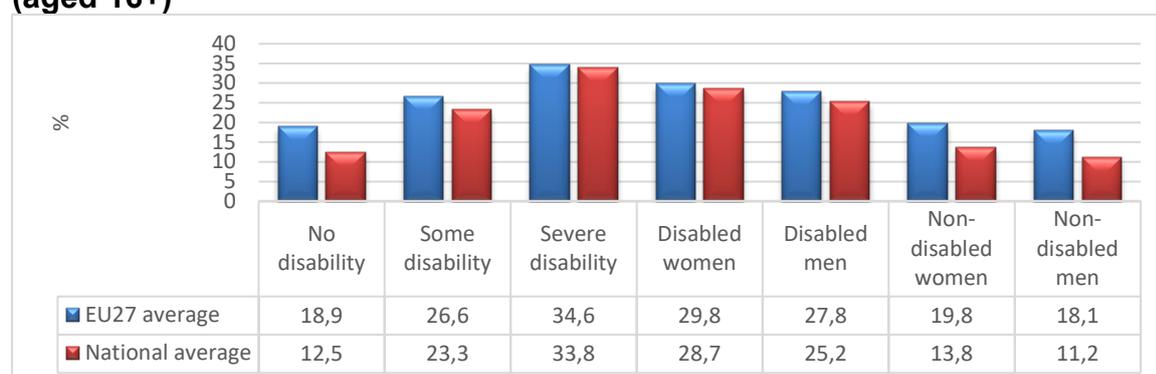
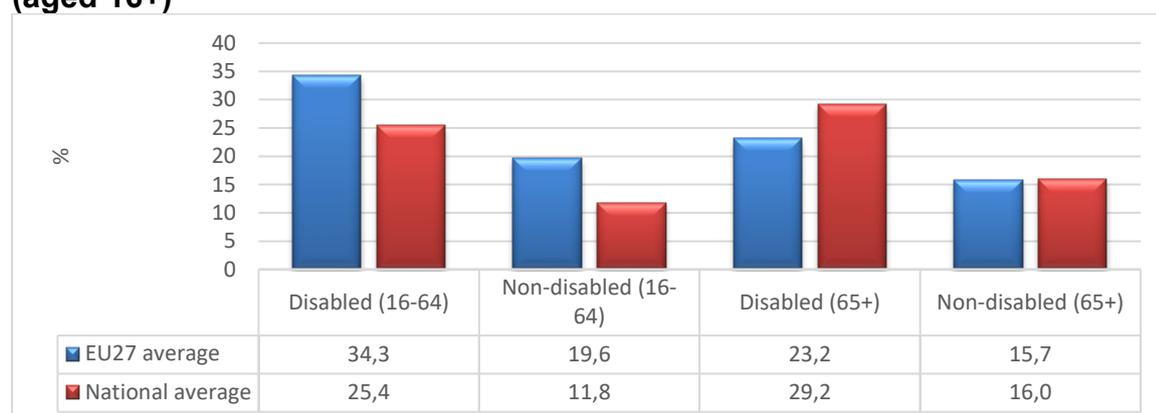
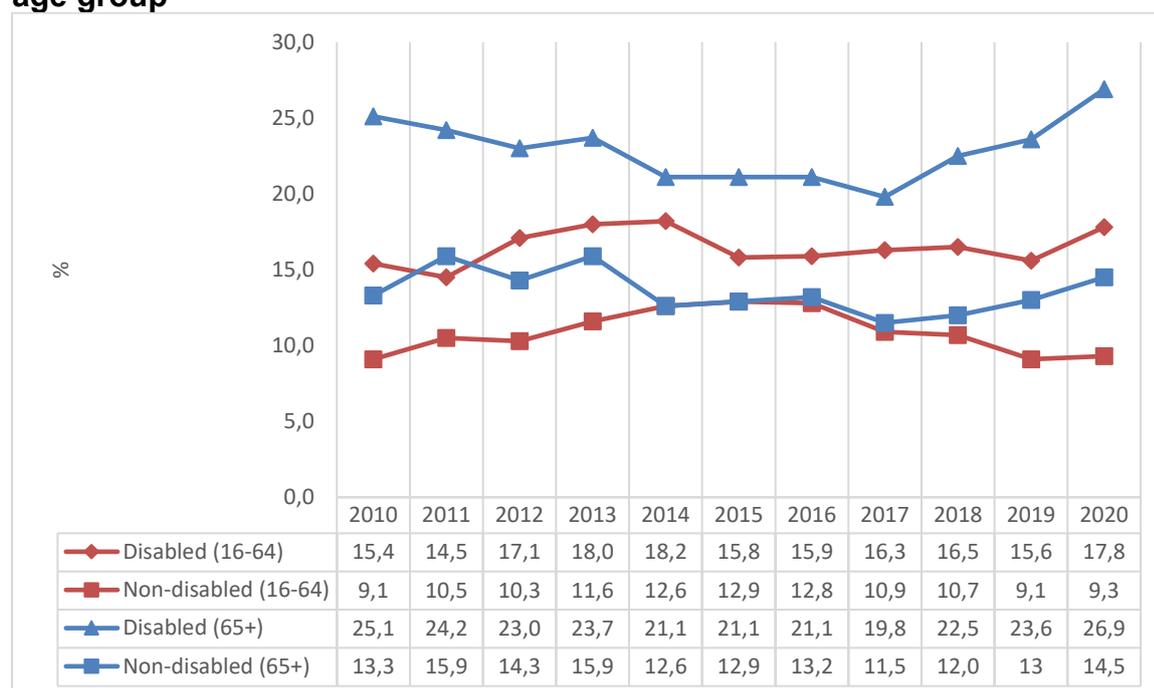


Table 13: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)



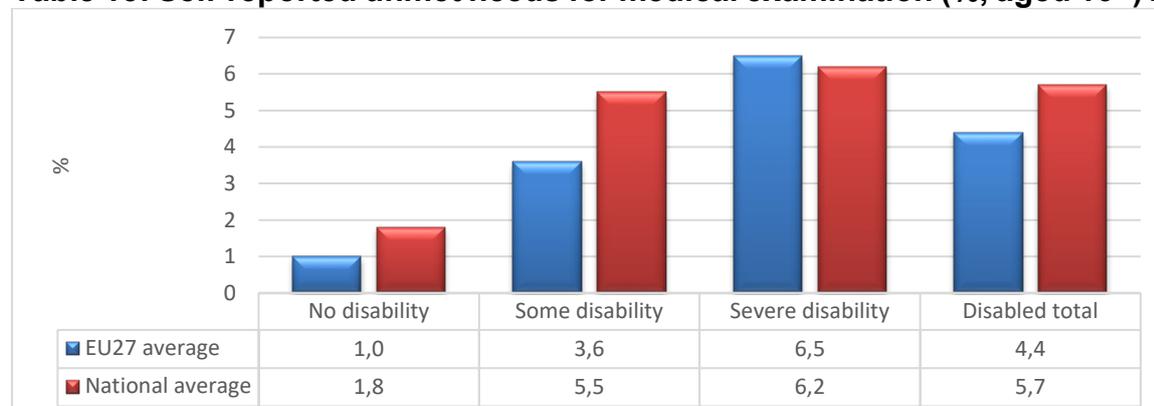
Source: EU-SILC 2020 Release April 2022 (and previous UDB)

⁵⁵ 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+) 2020

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 3-year mean values.

7.2.1 Alternative sources of poverty or healthcare data in Slovenia

The EU-SILC data provides a comprehensive and reliable source concerning poverty or social exclusion rates. In addition to the summary tables presented so far, the Eurostat disability database also contains breakdowns concerning disability and poverty before and after social transfers, as well as in-work poverty.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Eurostat Health Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

7.3 EU data relevant to disability and education

Table 24: Early school leaving rates, by disability status (aged 18-24 and 18-29)⁵⁷

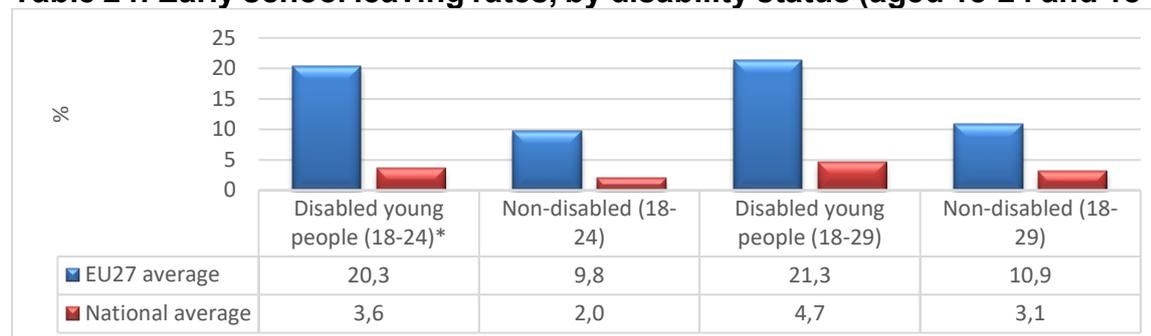
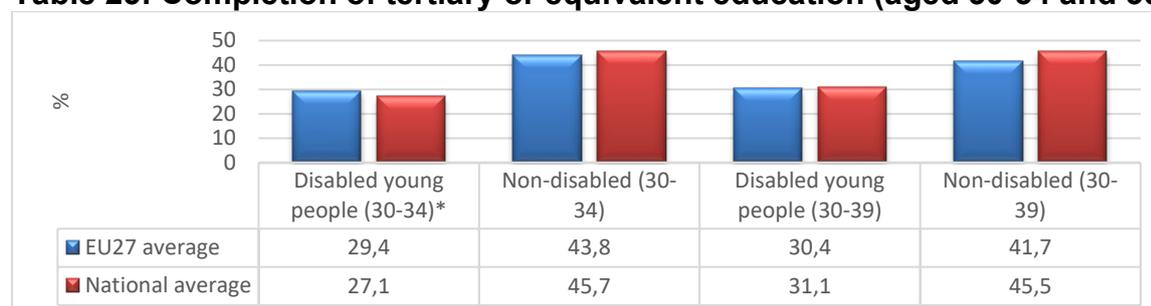


Table 25: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (aged 30-34 and 30-39)



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. There were fewer than 50 observations in the youngest disability groups in Slovenia, which should be treated with caution.

7.3.1 Alternative sources of education data in Slovenia

Some additional sources of national data are referred to in Section 5.

⁵⁷ There was a change from International Standard Classification of Education (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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