



The employment of persons with disabilities

Statistics

Data 2020

Summary and Conclusions

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Centre for European Social and Economic Policy

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INTRODUCTION

The EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 and the UN CRPD put a high importance at the employment of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, in the framework of the Strategy, the Commission called, notably, on Member States to establish, by 2024, targets for increasing the employment rate of persons with disabilities, strengthen the capacities of employment services for persons with disabilities and facilitate self-employment and entrepreneurship.

It is important to note that statistical indicators, presented here, are extracted from the EU-SILC survey. However, for the monitoring of Europe 2020 and later Europe 2030, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is used. Since the goals of the two surveys are different, the questions included and the nomenclatures used are not the same in both surveys. Consequently, the statistical indicators drawn from the two surveys are not identical. The full report analyses in depth these differences, notably for employment, and unemployment indicators. The LFS plans to include GALI (Global Activity Limitation Indicator) in its 2022 round and future reports ought to include more precise indicators for labour market issues.

This report presents statistical indicators for 2020 which is the last year of Europe 2020 Strategy. The new Europe 2030 strategy redefined a certain number of targets. However, the following data help to assess realisations in 2020 given Europe 2020 targets.

1. Persons with disabilities

The present study valorises the results of the EU-SILC survey in order to elaborate statistical indicators relevant to the above objectives. The EU-SILC survey reports activity limitations. The concept is operationalised by using the Global Activity Limitation Indicator (GALI) for observing limitations in activities people usually do because of one or more health problems.

In the EU 27, in 2020, about 47.2 million persons, aged 16-64, declare a disability. They represent 17.2 % of the population aged 16-64. There are about 35.2 million persons with moderate disabilities (12.8 % of the population) and 12.0 million persons with severe disabilities (4.4 % of the population). The total population aged 16-64, living in private households is 275.4 million persons.

2. Employment of persons with disabilities

2.1 Distribution by economic status

Concerning persons aged 20-64, in the EU 27, in 2020, persons with disabilities are underrepresented among persons working full-time. Also, they are underrepresented among pupils, students, or persons in further training. They are overrepresented among persons unemployed, persons in retirement or in early retirement and persons permanently disabled or / and unfit to work.

Concerning gender differences, in the EU 27, in 2020, we may note that among persons with disabilities, aged 20-64, women are underrepresented among persons

working full-time (15.6 %) compared to men (20.4 %). On the other hand, women with disabilities are overrepresented among persons fulfilling domestic tasks and care responsibilities (10.8 %) compared to men with disabilities (0.6 %). For comparison, the respective rates for persons without disabilities are 10.8 % for women and 0.3 % for men.

2.2 Change in economic status

In the EU 27, in 2020, among those who experienced a change in economic status, the proportion of persons with disabilities passing from employment or unemployment towards retirement or other inactivity is higher compared to persons without disabilities, starting from a similar situation.

On the other hand, among those who experienced a change, the proportion of persons with disabilities passing from unemployment or other inactive towards employed is lower compared to persons without disabilities, starting from a similar situation. In the big majority of Member States, the share of persons with disabilities passing from 'other inactive to employed' is significantly lower compared to persons without disabilities.

Education and training play an important role in reducing the number of persons who lose or do not keep their jobs and help significantly to take persons out of 'other inactive' situation to employment.

2.3 Employment rate

The present indicator is based on self-declarations concerning the economic status. Eurostat uses the LFS survey and the ILO definition of employment. The latter is used for monitoring Europe 2020 and 2030 Strategies. The full report discusses the implications of these differences. The aim here is to identify any employment gap related to disability.

In the EU 27, in 2020, about 50.7 % of persons with disabilities, aged 20-64, are employed compared to 75.1 % of persons without disabilities.¹ The employment rate for all persons aged 20-64 is 70.8 %. The employment rate of people with disabilities is about 24.4 percentage points lower compared to people without disabilities. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan proposed a renewed list of headline indicators in the Social Scoreboard, which now includes the disability employment gap (in percentage points) as a headline indicator measuring progress in social protection and inclusion.

About 48.1 % of women with disabilities, aged 20-64, are employed compared to 53.7 % of men with disabilities of the same age group.

Concerning the degree of disability, the employment rates of persons aged 20-64, in the EU, are 29.6 % for persons with severe disabilities, 58.3 % for persons with moderate disabilities and 75.7 % for persons without disabilities.

¹ Data for Germany and Italy refer to 2019. This affects the EU 27 indicator.

2.4 Number of hours worked

As expected, persons with disabilities aged 20-64, are under-represented among persons working full-time. In fact, persons with disabilities are overrepresented among persons working less than 40 hours per week.

Concerning gender differences, in the EU 27, in 2020, about 36.6 % of women with disabilities work less than 35 hours per week compared to 12.8 % of men with disabilities.

The EU-SILC survey distinguishes different reasons for working less hours. As expected, in the EU 27, in 2020, about 30.7 % of persons with disabilities declare that they work less than 30 hours per week due to personal illness or disability compared to 1.4 % of persons without disabilities. However, we find that about 14.7 % of persons with disabilities would like to work more hours but cannot find a job(s) or work(s) of more hours. The share for persons without disabilities is higher (21.1 %).

2.5 Employment by type of contract

In the EU 27, in 2020, among currently employed persons (full-time or part-time), about 12.3 % of employed persons with disabilities hold a temporary job. This rate is 14.4 % for employed persons without disabilities. But these rates are affected by the age structure. In fact, when we distinguish by age group, the rate of persons with disabilities holding temporary contracts is higher compared to others, for all age groups.

Another important factor is education level. Generally, as the education level increases, the proportion of employed persons holding temporary contracts decreases.

2.6 Employment by economic sector

In the EU 27, in 2020, persons with disabilities are strongly over-represented in human health & social work activities. In fact, about 14.1 % of persons with disabilities, aged 20-64, are employed in the human health & social work activities compared to about 10.7 % of persons without disabilities. At a lesser extent, they are overrepresented in the public sector (8.4 % versus 7.8 %).

Similarly, persons with severe disabilities are strongly over-represented in human health & social work activities. In fact, about 14.6 % of persons with severe disabilities are employed in this sector compared to about 10.7 % of persons without disabilities. At a lesser extent, they are overrepresented in the public sector (9.5 % versus 7.8 %). On the other hand, persons with severe disabilities are underrepresented in the sector 'wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles'. In fact, about 11.1 % of persons with severe disabilities are employed in this sector compared to about 13.6 % of persons without disabilities.

2.7 Employment in public administration

In 2020, in the EU 27, public administration was representing 7.8 % of all jobs, in the age group 20-64. Employment in public administration counted for 8.4 % for persons with disabilities and 7.8 % for persons without disabilities. As noted, persons with disabilities are overrepresented in this sector. But this does not take into account the high unemployment rate and the low activity rate of persons with disabilities.

By degree of disability, public administration represented 8.2 % of all jobs held by persons with moderate disabilities and 9.5 % of all jobs held by persons with severe disabilities, aged 20-64, in the EU 27.

From another perspective, about 11.0 % of all jobs in public administration were held by persons with moderate disabilities and 2.2 % by persons with severe disabilities. The remaining (86.8 %) was held by persons without disabilities.

At the EU level, in 2020, public administration was employing about 307 thousand persons with severe disabilities, 1.540 thousand persons with a moderate disability and 12.094 thousand persons without disabilities. The rates differ significantly across Member States.

Since quota schemes require a minimum degree of disability, we focus on persons with severe disabilities. As noted, in the EU 27, in 2020, persons with severe disabilities represent 2.2 % of all employed in public administration compared to 1.9 % in all economic sectors. For comparison, about 4.5 % of persons aged 20-64 declare severe disabilities.

The share of persons with severe disabilities employed in public administration is higher compared to the national average (all economic sectors grouped together) in twelve (12) Member States. However, the data are indicative for several Member States.

In the following, we compare the employment rates as defined by Europe 2020 (the employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of persons aged 20 to 64 in employment by the total population of the same age group). This will internalise the unemployment rate and the activity rate of persons with disabilities. At the EU level, in 2020, 4.2 % of persons with disabilities aged 20-64 are employed in the public sector compared to 5.9 % of persons without disabilities.

2.8 Employment by occupation

Persons with disabilities are underrepresented in the category 'professionals', requiring the highest skill level. On the other hand, persons with disabilities are overrepresented in elementary occupations, which require the lowest skill level, and in a lesser extent in services and sales workers. The degree of disability reinforces the above noted differences concerning professionals and elementary occupations.

People with occupations with lower skill levels (services and sales, plant and machine operators, and elementary occupations) report the highest inactivity and unemployment rates. Persons with disabilities are strongly overrepresented in this group. At each occupation, persons with disabilities experience a significantly higher

unemployment rate. The highest relative gap can be found among managers, followed closely by plant and machine operators.

2.9 Employment by size of company

In the EU 27, in 2020, about 9.4 % of persons with disabilities, aged 20-64, are self-employed or work as employees in one-person companies, compared to 8.5 % of persons without disabilities. About 42.7 % of persons with disabilities are employed in companies employing 50 persons or more, compared to 40.8 % of persons without disabilities.

The analysis by degree indicates that persons with severe disabilities are overrepresented in big companies (50+ employees). This might be due to different reasons, notably, national policies aiming to maintain workers with disabilities at work, quota schemes applying to big companies, more possibilities to allocate persons with disabilities in alternative tasks, etc.

Concerning gender differences among persons with disabilities, we may note that men are slightly overrepresented among the self-employed compared to women. Similar rates are found for persons without disabilities. We may also note that, women with disabilities are overrepresented in enterprises employing between 20 and 49 persons compared to men with disabilities while men are overrepresented in bigger companies. Similar conclusions can be drawn for persons without disabilities. Women without disabilities are overrepresented in enterprises employing between 20 and 49 persons.

2.10 Employment, unemployment, and education

Increasing education level provides, generally, a bigger increase in the employment rate of persons with disabilities compared to persons without disabilities. Also, both the absolute and the relative disability employment gap decreases as the education level increases. This means that investing in education and training of persons with disabilities yields a higher gain compared to persons without disabilities and decreases the disability gap.

Education and training increase the chance of employment. However, persons with disabilities experience a disadvantage, in this area, compared to persons without disabilities. We may note high rates of persons with disabilities holding a primary education level in several Member States, in 2020.

3. Labour market policies (LMP)

LMP measures cover primarily interventions that provide temporary support for groups that are disadvantaged in the labour market. In the following, we focus on interventions covering supported employment and rehabilitation. However, other categories might include, also, persons with disabilities.

Expenditure covering supported employment and rehabilitation as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) amounts to 0.102 %, in the EU 27, in 2020. We may note the importance of these expenditures in Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark. In Denmark, in 2020, the rate approaches 1 % of GDP.

Supported employment and rehabilitation covers different types of expenditure. In the EU 27, in 2020, transfers to employers represent 64.3 % of all expenditure covering supported employment and rehabilitation. They represent about 0.066 % of GDP but we may note a big variability across Member States.

In the EU 27, in 2020, periodic cash payments to employers represent 74.9 % of all expenditure concerning employers under the title supported employment and rehabilitation.

In the EU 27, in 2010, beneficiaries of supported employment and rehabilitation represented 9.4 % of all beneficiaries of LMP interventions and in 2019, they represented 12.7 %.

Source of data: EU-SILC survey (different years). See the full report for more information.

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