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Malta

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

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¹ For an introduction to the Semester process, see <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/how-european-semester-works/>.

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1 Executive summary and recommendations

1.1 Key points and main challenges for the European Semester in 2021

Disabled people and their families in Malta and Gozo are still facing multiple barriers in every aspect of their life. The inconsistencies present in the implementation of inclusive education policies are in turn impacting on young disabled people's possibilities to continue their tertiary education or to access jobs that are meaningful to them. Consequently, they end up unemployed or in jobs that are not well paid. Their post-schooling expectations are being thwarted. Many report that they are often made redundant when the related government schemes end. This contributes to the low employment rate of disabled people in Malta, which is one of the lowest in the EU. Employment initiatives launched by the government since 2015, including the enforcement of the 2 % quota legislation, seem to be helping in raising the number of disabled people in employment. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has stalled these efforts and many disabled people have lost their jobs. Many have also lost their homes because they are now unable to pay the rent. The real impact of the pandemic on disabled people is yet to be determined and researched, but future statistics regarding poverty and social inclusion of these people and their families are predicted to be concerning.

Although government has introduced various social security schemes to assist employers and disabled people during this time, these are short-term and will only allay the present financial difficulties. It is therefore urgent that any current policies and strategies are implemented with the consequences of the pandemic in mind. Disabled people and their representative organisations need to be involved in all decisions pertaining to them, if the elimination of the current challenges is to take place. It is therefore not sufficient that the national disability strategy was formally launched, as the final strategy document has not been finalised to date. It is also concerning that some of the articles of the UNCRC are still not enforceable under national legislation. Issues related to institutionalisation remain present and the need for community services is becoming always more critical for independent living in the community to become a reality for many disabled people.

There are, however, promising initiatives such as the setting up of the national Business Disability Forum in 2019, which brings together disabled people's organisations and stakeholders from the public and private spheres to facilitate and promote opportunities of training and employment for disabled people. The ESF-funded VASTE project is another good practice example in the field of employment and is inspiring not only locally but also across Europe. EU funds are, and will continue to be, fundamental for Malta, in the creation of projects that leave a lasting impact on the quality of life of disabled people in all its aspects.

1.2 Recommendations for Malta

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

- **Recommendation:** Implement revisions of the 2 % quota for employment of disabled people urgently to include smaller companies.
Rationale: Considering that in Malta, companies consist mostly of SMEs and microenterprises, this revision would open up further employment opportunities for disabled people, as their employment rate is one of the lowest in the EU.
- **Recommendation:** Adopt the European Skills Agenda launched in July 2020 and use ESF Plus, Erasmus, InvestEU Social Investment and Skills programme, the new Digital Europe programme, the European and Global Adjustment Fund and the Recovery and Resilience facility funds to target disability equality.
Rationale: These funds can be fundamental for the upskilling and reskilling of people with disabilities, especially those who have lost their job because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Recommendation:** The need to involve more disabled people and their organisations (especially DPOs) in the Government's plans to provide a new residential home for adults with disability. It is advisable rather, to direct EU funds towards providing community-based supported living that are run on the requirements of the UNCRPD.
Rationale: The recommendations of the UNCRPD Committee with regards to implementing Article 19 in the Government's plan to construct this new residential home for adults with disability need to be taken into consideration. This is recommended so as to avoid the risk of creating institutionalised living arrangements even in residences that are purported to be community-based.
- **Recommendation:** Conduct comprehensive research about inclusive education in Malta that provides statistics as well as detailed information about how inclusion works for learners with different disabilities in state, Church and private educational institutions and at all levels of education (including childcare, further and higher education, and lifelong learning).
Rationale: There are serious concerns and inconsistencies regarding the implementation of inclusive education in the various schools and higher education institutions.
- **Recommendation:** Further research and collect data on social inclusion, including how many disabled people benefitted from the different social security/housing payments benefits made available due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the need to include disabled people as a specific cohort of people in the data related to at-risk-of-poverty cohorts.
Rationale: There is scarce and inconsistent data specific to disabled people in various sectors which makes policy making or review difficult.

2 Opportunities to mainstream disability equality in the Semester documents

2.1 [Country Report](#) for Malta (Staff Working Document)

The Country Report for Malta makes a number of references to employment in relation to persons with disability. It highlights the fact that although Malta has implemented a number of measures to increase the rate of employment of persons with disability such as, the enforcement of the 2 % quota as per the Persons with Disability Employment Act (chapter 210), the schemes supporting the transition of persons with disabilities from unemployment to employment, subsidies to employers and exemptions from social security contributions as well as pre-employment training, job coaching and sheltered employment training for persons with disability, the rate of persons with disability in employment remains low in comparison to the EU average. The participation of older people (between the ages of 55 and 64) who very often might also fall within the category of persons with disability also remains low in comparison to the EU average.

The CR points out that the low rate of employment of persons with disability may be attributed to the low level of qualifications and educational attainment by persons with disability. In fact, there are great disparities in educational attainment between disabled people and non-disabled people. The lack of workplace accessibility (despite schemes to enable employers to make the workplace accessible) and lack of reasonable accommodation in the workplace also continue to contribute to the low rate of employment of persons with disability.

The CR also notes that the low rate of employment of persons with disability very often leads to a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion for persons with disability. Notwithstanding the introduction of a number of measures to alleviate poverty amongst persons with disability, such as the increase in disability and invalidity pensions, and grants to purchase assistive equipment, persons with disability continue to be at a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion.

2.2 [Country Specific Recommendation](#) for Malta (CSR)

The CSR document only refers to persons with disabilities in relation to the support announced by the government for persons with disability vis-à-vis the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CSR document does not specifically mention anything related to increasing the rate of employment of persons with disability or lowering the rate of poverty and social exclusion for persons with disability. The majority of the recommendations in the CSR are related to improving the rule of law in Malta and to addressing the issues related to the ongoing pandemic. However, one specific recommendation highlights the importance of consolidating work arrangements so as to ensure protection from unemployment for all workers. Those workers could also include persons with disability, who were also greatly affected by the rate of unemployment brought about by the COVID-19

pandemic. However, there is no available data which states how many disabled people became unemployed as an effect of the pandemic.

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

In 2018, the UNCRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Malta:

[Article 27 of the UNCRPD](#) addresses Work and Employment.

'40. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt further enforcement mechanisms and incentives to ensure the implementation of the quota system under articles 15 and 16 of the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act and other measures to support persons with disabilities to work in the open labour market, in accordance with the Convention and target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and ensure the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all. It also recommends that the State party:

- (a) Amend Article 17(3) of its Constitution to bring it in conformity with Article 27 of the Convention;
- (b) Review the quota system under the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act in order to make it applicable to enterprises with less than 20 employees;
- (c) Replace any assessment of suitability to work with an assessment that considers the needs and requirements for reasonable accommodation at work for persons with disabilities;
- (d) Step up efforts to raise awareness among employers on the rights of persons with disabilities to work in the open labour market, in particular the provision of reasonable accommodation, and on the benefits of employing persons with disabilities.'

The first National Strategy for Persons with Disability 2020-2030² was formally launched on the 5 December 2019. Objective 4 is dedicated to Employment. Five Strategy Initiatives describe the priority areas in this sector, namely:

- provide disability awareness training for employers;
- publication of a disability employment strategy;
- government departments and entities, para-state and private entities shall enact flexible working hours;
- incentivise social enterprise programmes;
- introduce specialised career and vocational guidance training for persons with disability.

A number of actions are listed under each initiative but without timeframes or deadlines. Unless specific timeframes are planned, there is a risk to implementation.

3.1 Summary of the labour market situation of persons with disabilities

Data from EU-SILC indicate an employment rate for persons with disabilities in Malta of 42.5 % in 2018, compared to 74.8 % for other persons and approximately -8.2 points below the EU27 average - resulting in an estimated disability employment gap of approximately 32 percentage points (EU27 average gap 24.2, see Tables 2-4).

² <https://activeageing.gov.mt/en/Documents/SOCIAL%20POLICY%20WEB.pdf>.

The same data indicate unemployment rates of 5.6 % and 1.6 %, respectively in 2018 (see Tables 5-7) and the economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Malta was 45.1 %, compared to 76.1% for other persons (see Tables 8-10). These indications are broken down by gender and age in the respective tables in annex.

On this basis, the employment rate of disabled people in Malta has been steadily rising (Table 4), such that in 2018 it stood at 42.5 % when compared to the 25.8 % in 2015. The rate, however, is still lower than that for the EU27 average which, in 2018, stood at 50.8 %. The lowest disability employment rate in Malta can be noted for the 16-24 years age group (16.6 %) (Table 3), although it has to be pointed out that for this group the sample only consisted of 50 observations and therefore these statistics need to be taken with caution. Maltese disabled women are still at a disadvantage (31.3 %) when compared to disabled men (53.7 %) (Table 2). The gap is also considerable when compared to the EU27 average - whilst for disabled men the gap is of 0.6 %, for women it is of 16.5 %.

Trends in unemployment rates for disabled people in Malta are also steadily decreasing when compared to unemployment rates for non-disabled people (Table 7). Whereas in 2015, the gap stood at 13.3 %; in 2018, the gap was of 4 %. When the gap between unemployment rates of non-disabled and disabled people in Malta is compared to that of the EU27 average (Table 5), it can be seen that there is a considerable difference, with 9.8 % gap for the EU27 average and only 4 % gap for Malta. This cannot be said, however, for the economic activity rates (Table 8), where, the gap between non-disabled and disabled people in the EU27 average was 19.8 %, and the gap in Malta was of 31 %. This same gap was also seen for disabled women's activity rates in Malta (34.2 %) and the EU27 average (58.5 %). The Commission's Country Report (CR)³ published in May 2020 reported on this.

More recently the Labour Force Survey of the National Statistics Office (NSO, 2020)⁴ reported that in June 2020, the total number of persons registering for work stood at 4,270, increasing by 2,654 when compared to the corresponding month in 2019. Among these, the number of persons with a disability who were registering for work increased by 48 when compared to the previous year, reaching 262. Males accounted for 69.8 % of total registrants with a disability. This data represents only those registered as disabled with the employment service, a smaller population than those reporting activity limitation) in household surveys.

The National Reform Programme (NRP) (2020)⁵ predicts that employment in Malta 'is expected to decline by 3.3 % in 2020, with a concomitant rise in the unemployment rate to 5.9 %' (p. 3). In 2021, a pick-up in economic activity is projected to generate employment growth of 3.2 %. These favourable labour market dynamics correspond to a reduction in the unemployment rate to reach 3.7 %.' (p. 3). There are no predictions as to how these market dynamics will impact disabled people but their marginality to the labour market clearly raises concerns.

³ Commission Country Report. 2020. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0517&from=EN>.

⁴ https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2020/07/News2020_123.pdf.

⁵ National Reform Programme. 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european-semester-national-reform-programme-malta_en_0.pdf.

3.2 Analysis of labour market policies relevant to the Semester

To date, Article 17(3) of the Constitution of Malta is still not conforming with Article 27 of the UNCRPD. However, the National Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD)⁶ and the Office of Disability Issues (ODI) had jointly made the following recommendation during the open call for feedback as part of the Constitutional review process initiated by OPR a few months back (De Gaetano, 2020)⁷ (amendments also cover Articles 17(1) and (2)):

‘17. (1) Every citizen who is unable to work, either temporarily or permanently, and is unprovided with the resources necessary for subsistence, is entitled to maintenance and social assistance

(2) Workers are entitled to reasonable insurance on a contributory basis for their requirements in case of accident, illness, disability, functional impairment, old-age and involuntary unemployment.

(3) Every person is entitled to education and vocational training in line with their particular exigencies, and with the inclusion of reasonable accommodation and any other adjustments that would be necessary and appropriate.’

Quota system

With regard to the UNCRPD Committee recommendation (b) re quota system, research by Axisa (2018)⁸ shows that although many employers admitted that they became more aware of this system with the enforcement of the quota in 2016, they still lack clear and detailed knowledge such that they remain sceptical in its regard. Other research conducted by Pulis,⁹ Cutajar¹⁰ and Borg¹¹ suggests that legislation on its own is not sufficient to eliminate discrimination. Pulis observes that formal equality, such as enacting laws which impose quotas on employers, does not work. These studies suggest that positive action is also required in order to do away with society’s deep-seated ostracising mentality towards disabled people.

Assessment system

With reference to point (c) above, as of today, disabled people who wish to work, have to register with Jobsplus, the national employment agency, and they are first assessed by a medical officer and then by an occupational therapist. Based on the person’s abilities and needs, they are then recommended an employment path, i.e. sheltered, supported or mainstream employment. The person is then referred to the Lino Spiteri

⁶ For the purpose of this report, the abbreviation CRPD will refer to the National Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, whilst UNCRPD will refer to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

⁷ De Gaetano, A. (2020). Personal Communication from the ODI.

⁸ Axisa, T. (2018). The Effectiveness of Disability Quotas when Employing Persons with Disabilities: An Exploratory Study among Maltese Employers. Dissertation submitted for the degree of M.A. Youth and Community Development Studies at De Montfort University.

⁹ Pulis, L.A. (2001) Discrimination and the Disabled under Act 1 2000 relative to Equal Opportunities: An Appraisal (LL.D.).

¹⁰ Cutajar, K. (2006) An Analysis of the Disability Concept as Taken from the Legal Perspective (LL.D.).

¹¹ Borg, E. (2011) The Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (LL.D.).

Foundation, where the job matching, and necessary training/support is carried out. (Jobsplus, 2020)¹²

The assessments used at Jobsplus are still professional-led and based mainly on medical criteria (Avellino, 2020).¹³ A review of these assessments, needs to include disabled people in their design, as recommended by the UNCRPD Committee in 2018, 6b(i) (p. 2).¹⁴

Furthermore, the Malta Budget 2021¹⁵ promises to widen the disability assessment criteria so that more disabled people who cannot work may be entitled to further financial assistance.

Reasonable accommodation

In response to recommendation (d), the CRPD has commissioned a research project on employment and disabled people in Malta, as part of ESF 2.63 Project Knowledge, Training, Communications and Support Measures to Vulnerable Groups which is co-financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union. A set of guidelines¹⁶ for employers will be drawn up based on the research findings. The main aim of these guidelines is to assist employers in gaining more awareness and knowledge about disabled individuals and enabling them to identify sources of any support required to employ disabled individuals (CRPD, 2020).¹⁷ The research findings and the guidelines will be launched later this year.

Specific employment schemes

Although Section 1.2.3 of the NRP speaks of various initiatives and schemes to increase female participation in the work force and reduce the reliance on social benefits, it does not refer explicitly to how these mainstream measures will impact disabled persons. Instead, Malta created specific schemes for disabled persons such as increasing the additional assistance for severe disability, the carer's allowance, the disabled child allowance and non-contributory medical assistance. This question the claims made by government regarding placing social inclusion high on its agenda (addressed in the next chapter).

On the other hand, Jobsplus, the national employment agency, reported that the Lino Spiteri Foundation's (LSF) fourth year of operations experienced a steady growth, generating positive results during 2019 in the services provided to both disabled persons and companies, with a total of 234 disabled persons being placed in employment through LSF's support. It also reported positive outcomes from the

¹² <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/job-seekers-mt-MT-en-GB/guidance-services/inclusive-employment-services#:~:text=The%20Inclusive%20Employment%20Services%20Division,integrate%20into%20the%20labour%20market.>

¹³ Avellino, M. (2020). Personal Communication.

¹⁴

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2fC%2fMLT%2fCO%2f1&Lang=en.

¹⁵ https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2021/BUDGET-2021_Diskors_Malti.pdf.

¹⁶ <https://crpd.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/employers-guidelines-consultation-2306.pdf>

¹⁷ [https://crpd.org.mt/research/.](https://crpd.org.mt/research/)

various government schemes. In 2019, Jobsplus processed 220 applications for the exemption of the employer's part of the National Insurance Contribution. In addition, another 75 different companies received fiscal incentives amounting to EUR 364,000 in relation to the employment of 157 disabled employees.

The Access to Employment Scheme provides employment aid to enterprises in Malta and Gozo to promote the recruitment of registered persons with disability (among others). The first call for applications for the Access to Employment Scheme (A2E) closed at the end of 2019. A second call for applications was launched during 2020 with more advantageous reimbursement rates which reflect the raises in the COLA since the A2E's launch in 2015. Since the launch of the A2E scheme in June 2015 until the end of 2019, 778 unique employers applied for the funding of 2,029 participants. 1,310 of these participants engaged with 573 unique employers, remained active in the scheme with a total of EUR 7.9 million being committed. Jobsplus paid a total of EUR 5.6 million to beneficiaries till the end of 2019. 75 % of the target set for participation has been reached by the end of 2019 as 1,262 unique participants have been supported against a target of 1,675.

The output indicator target in relation to participants aged over 54 was surpassed by 2019, since there are 152 unique participants in the scheme against the 2023 target of 75. Jobsplus has the obligation to conduct 100 % monitoring visits in relation to the A2E Scheme. During these visits, the monitoring officers will check that the employment of the participant, and the respective employment parameters, are being adhered to by the employer. As at end 2019, a total number of 5,200 visits have been conducted by the Jobsplus Monitoring Officers at 579 different Entities.¹⁸

While employers applying for the A2E Scheme from January 2020 onwards will be eligible to receive a subsidy of EUR 104 per week per new recruit engaged, for a period of 26 weeks, 52 weeks or 104 weeks, depending on the target group. In the case of registered disabled persons, a subsidy of EUR 155 per week for a maximum of 156 weeks is provided.¹⁹

Agenzija Sapport, the national service provider to disabled people and their families in Malta, manages 2 EU funded projects related to employment: INK, which is aimed at equipping disabled people with the skills needed to access and retain work; and the Job Enhancing Skills Scheme 2017 – 2019 (JESS). By the 4th quarter of 2017, 5 beneficiaries were on placement as part of JESS, being provided with hands-on training by the employer and mentors in assistance.

In its Annual Report 2019, Jobsplus reports about the success of the VASTE Project ESF.02.048, whose duration has been extended till 2022 with a revised budget of EUR 13 million. Further detail will be given in Section 6.1 of this report, however, it is good to note here that two activities within this project, namely the LSF's job coaching services and relations with employers were recognised as promising best practices

¹⁸ <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/publications/fileprovider.aspx?fileId=8541>.

¹⁹ <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/a2e-scheme>.

and have been listed in the EU Commission's database for 'inspiring practices from Public Employment Services across Europe'.²⁰

Business Disability Forum

Another important initiative by CRPD in 2019 was the setting up of the Malta Business Disability Forum through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Magri, 2019).²¹ It is a new forum which aims to build closer ties between the disability and business sectors, creating a platform for discussion and improving dialogue between persons with a disability and business organisations. It is composed of 9 members, including the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry; the Malta Employers' Association and the GRTU – Malta Chamber of SMEs as founding members, together with the Malta Federation Organisations of Persons with Disability (MFOPD); the Faculty for Social Wellbeing of the University of Malta; the Office of the Commissioner for Mental Health; the Gozo Business Chamber and the Local Councils' Association. Acting as a bridge between employers and persons with disability, the Forum will work to identify the barriers, maximise accessibility in workplaces and in service provision, and facilitate the career and employment aspirations of persons with disability. Another scope of the Forum is to influence policymaking and commission research in the field of disability and employment. Through the creation of an evidence-base, it aims to raise awareness among both employers and the public in general regarding the advantages of employing persons with a disability (CRPD, 2020).²²

Digital skills

The Country-Specific Recommendations (CSR1) 2020²³ suggest that government should:

Consolidate short-time work arrangements and ensure the adequacy of unemployment protection for all workers. Strengthen the quality and inclusiveness of education and skills development (p. 7).

This resonates with EU policy on digital skills and jobs.²⁴ Given that the labour market worldwide is being transformed with the expansion of digital economy, and given that there is a considerable gap between the demand and supply of digitally proficient workers, there should be more investment in the preparation and training of disabled people in this sector. Furthermore, most jobs are requiring at least basic ICT skills and digital work can be more easily adapted to reasonable accommodations for disabled workers (digital = more flexible). On the other hand, employers need to invest in

²⁰ <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/publications/fileprovider.aspx?fileId=8541>

²¹ Magri, G. (2019). *Agreement aims to end unemployment among persons with disability*. *The Malta Independent*. Available from: <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2019-09-16/local-news/Agreement-aims-to-end-unemployment-among-for-persons-with-disability-6736213574>.

²² CRPD. 2020. *Annual Report 2019*. Available from: <https://crpd.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CRPD-Annual-Report-2019-EN.pdf>.

²³ CSR. 2020. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1591720698631&uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0518>.

²⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/policies/digital-skills>.

accessible ICT products and services from the start of any procurement process.²⁵ The European Accessibility Act (2019)²⁶ augurs well in this regard since disabled people will face less barriers when they come to access the open labour market and it may open new opportunities for employment when accessibility expertise is required.

Accessibility

Another issue mentioned in the CSR 2020 is that government should:

(...) Focus investment on the green and digital transition, in particular on clean and efficient production and use of energy, sustainable transport, waste management, research and innovation (p. 7).

Lack of accessible transport was identified as one of the major barriers to employment in various local research studies (Bezzina, 2018,²⁷ Gauci, 2019²⁸). The Malta National Transport Strategy 2050²⁹ dedicates two of its six Strategic Goals to provide accessibility and mobility for all and to support social development and inclusion. This augurs well for disabled people. Transport that is accessible directly influences employment access and retainment of disabled employees, since most of them do not drive and, due to inaccessible public transport, would depend on family members to take them to work every day. In order to mitigate this issue, the Malta Budget 2021³⁰ is offering a grant of EUR 10,000 to taxi companies who purchase wheelchair-accessible taxis.

A related issue is the need for access to internet and adequate technologies which would safeguard disabled people's ability to continue to work from home instead of losing their jobs due to the pandemic e.g. NSO (2020)³¹ reports that Internet usage in Malta is nearly at par with the EU-28 average. Almost nine out of ten persons aged between 16 and 74 years used the internet in 2019. It does not however report on internet usage of particular groups, including disabled people. Although the National Digital Strategy 2014-2020³² emphasises the need re digital access and training for all citizens, no other data sources could be found regarding the effects of this strategy in relation to disabled people.

²⁵ <https://fitamalta.eu/responsible-procurement-is-key-to-ensuring-accessible-ict-in-the-workplace/>.

²⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L0882&from=EN>.

²⁷ Bezzina, L. (2018). *MA Dissertations Systematic Review*. Available from: https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/373781/MADissertationsSystematicReviewNovember2018.pdf.

²⁸ Gauci, M.V. (2018). *Enabling Technology in the Workplace: exploring the dis/ability-semblage*. (Unpublished manuscript). University of Leeds.

²⁹ <https://www.transport.gov.mt/strategies/strategies-policies-actions/national-transport-strategy-and-transport-master-plan-1343>.

³⁰ https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2021/BUDGET-2021_Diskors_Malti.pdf.

³¹ NSO (2020). News Release 026/2020. 19 February 2020. https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2020/02/News2020_026.pdf.

³² [https://economy.gov.mt/en/ministry/The-Parliamentary-Secretary/Documents/Digital%20Malta%202014%20-%202020%20\(2\).pdf](https://economy.gov.mt/en/ministry/The-Parliamentary-Secretary/Documents/Digital%20Malta%202014%20-%202020%20(2).pdf).

COVID response

The CSR 2020 for Malta reported that

'16. The government has also announced support for people with disabilities, families with children where both parents are employed and neither are able to telework, workers who lost their job due to the current crisis and the jobless living in rented accommodation.' (p. 4)

In a News Release published by the NSO (2020) entitled *The Effect of COVID-19 on the Labour Market: A comparison between March and April 2020*,³³ there is no specific mention of the consequences for disabled people. However, a grant was given to disabled persons who worked in the private sector and who, for medical reasons, were unable to hold their jobs and were unable to work from home.³⁴ Employees received a direct payment of EUR 166.15 per week if they worked full-time or EUR 103.85 per week if they worked part-time. In addition, the employees' Social Security Contribution was paid, and their future contributory pension rights safeguarded. Furthermore, these employees continued to receive any of the Disability Assistances without deductions (MEA, 2020).³⁵

³³ NSO (2020). News Release 107/2020. 26 June 2020.

https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2020/06/News2020_107.pdf.

³⁴ <https://ww1.issa.int/news/social-security-responses-covid-19-case-malta>.

³⁵ <https://www.maltaemployers.com/en/disability-benefit>.

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 Malta:

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

‘40. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt further enforcement mechanisms and incentives to ensure the implementation of the quota system under Articles 15 and 16 of the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act and other measures to support persons with disabilities to work in the open labour market, in accordance with the Convention and target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and ensure the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all. It also recommends that the State party:

- (a) Amend Article 17(3) of its Constitution to bring it in conformity with Article 27 of the Convention;
- (b) Review the quota system under the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act in order to make it applicable to enterprises with less than 20 employees;
- (c) Replace any assessment of suitability to work with an assessment that considers the needs and requirements for reasonable accommodation at work for persons with disabilities;
- (d) Step up efforts to raise awareness among employers on the rights of persons with disabilities to work in the open labour market, in particular the provision of reasonable accommodation, and on the benefits of employing persons with disabilities.’

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

‘30. The Committee recommends that the State party take into account its general comment No. 5 (2017) and:

- (a) ensure that existing residential institutions that contribute to the isolation of persons with disabilities are closed and that the provision of appropriate community-based services is strengthened;
- (b) ensure that all projects supported by public funds are carried out in a community setting, do not contribute to isolation of persons with disabilities, are monitored by organizations of persons with disabilities and are provided with sustainable continuous funding;
- (c) adopt the legal and other measures, such as the planned bill on personal autonomy and the bill on the Convention, necessary to make article 19 of the Convention justiciable;
- (d) ensure that financial and other measures are in place to allow persons with disabilities to be provided with personal assistance and that personnel supporting persons with disabilities in the community are appropriately trained, if necessary.’

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

'38. The Committee urges the State party to withdraw its interpretative declaration on article 25 (a) of the Convention in order to allow persons with disabilities to enjoy the right to health on an equal basis with others.'

The first National Strategy for Persons with Disability 2020-2030³⁶ was formally launched on the 5 December 2019. However, given the turmoil following the change in administration in January, and COVID-19 pandemic to date what remains available is a Consultative Document. There are indications that the Final Document will be published by the end of 2020 (De Gaetano, 2020).³⁷ The finalised document of the strategy has never been published. Objective 6 concerns Health, Objective 7 concerns Independent living, and Objective 8 concerns Residential homes, community and rehabilitation centres.

Three strategy initiatives describe the priority areas concerning Objective 7: Independent living:

- develop 4 centres for independent living (3 in Malta, 1 in Gozo);
- report on the accessibility of services in each locality;
- strategy on the accessibility of services.

Four strategy initiatives describe the priority areas concerning Objective 8: Homes, community and rehabilitation centres:

- code of Ethics/Standards of Practice for staff working in residential settings, day services, community services and rehabilitation centres are set out;
- strengthen PA schemes;
- a training unit specialised in the disability sector is to be set up to identify needs and provide on-going, on-site training for practioners in the field;
- develop a comprehensive strategy on alternative models of rehabilitation.

Four strategy initiatives describe the priority areas concerning Objective 6: Health:

- develop further the concept of specialised clinics;
- develop the concept of team treatment;
- basic sign language for all professionals;
- training to other health staff, emphasising the needs of persons with disability through accessible information, support and other provisions.

A number of actions is listed under each initiative, but these remain without any timeframes or deadlines. Unless specific timeframes are planned, there remains a high risk that these incentives will not be implemented in the near future.

³⁶ <https://activeageing.gov.mt/en/Documents/SOCIAL%20POLICY%20WEB.pdf>.

³⁷ De Gaetano, A. (2020). Personal Communication from the Office of Disability Issues, Malta.

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 Malta was 22.2 % in 2018, compared to 12.8 % 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 -0.5 points (25.0 % for older persons with disabilities and 25.5 % for other persons of similar age). The tables in annex also indicate the respective rates of AROPE and break these down by gender as well age.

It is quite striking that the estimated risk of poverty after social transfers for working age persons with disabilities fell substantially in 2017-18 (Table 14) after rising for some years following the financial crisis. Nevertheless, the poverty gap remains wide.

The Social Protection 2020 report published by the National Statistics Office provides details about disability-related expenditure 2014-2018. The statistics show a steady increase in benefits for disabled people. Part of the increases reflect the introduction of new non-contributory benefits for persons with severe disabilities and the replacement of the disability pension with disability assistance that is given to all disabled people, regardless of their employment status. The report states that in 2018, 19 in every 1,000 persons living in Malta received a disability benefit while, according to the 2011 Census, 7 % of the Maltese population has a disability.³⁸

Since Malta's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability in 2012, a number of policies have been published and implemented to ameliorate the social situation of persons with disabilities. Concerns were highlighted in the 2018 Shadow Report submitted by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability and in the Concluding Observations of the CRPD Committee, with the latter also making reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

One of the principal concerns remains the low rate of employment and economic activity of persons with disability. This is evident in the EU-SILC data (see previous chapter and annex 7.1), and notably more so among disabled women. This puts persons with disability in Malta at continued risk for poverty and social exclusion leading to a lack of financial independence and independence living.

Another concern with regards to ensuring an adequate standard of living and social protection for persons with disability in Malta is the need to address the issue of housing and community independent living support for persons with disability, as highlighted in the recommendations on Article 19 UNCRPD.

4.2 Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester

Cash benefits

Malta's NRP 2020 states that the reduction of poverty and the promotion of social inclusion for persons with disability continue to be high on the Government's policy agenda. Some of the measures implemented to target these measures included an

³⁸ <https://crpd.org.mt/research/> (see pp. 39-47).

increase in the assistance for severe disability, an increase in the carer's allowance, an increase in the disabled child's allowance, and an increase in the non-contributory medical assistance. The Malta Budget 2021³⁹ announced an added carer's benefit of EUR 300 a year for a parent of disabled children who are over 16 years of age, who cannot work to take care of their disabled child.

In addition, Malta's NRP 2020 states that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, persons with disability that work in the private sector, who on medical advice, have opted to stay at home for health and safety reasons will be eligible to receive direct payments. Both the medical and the disability benefit schemes were granted to working disabled and vulnerable people who could not carry out their work functions due to being ordered to stay home for medical reasons. These schemes ran between 27 March and 5 June, during which period, a total of 2,058 person benefitted from the schemes, incurring a cost of EUR 3.3 million (Ministry of Finance, 2020).⁴⁰ Whether this financial assistance was sufficient to ensure that disabled people and their families could continue to hold an adequate quality of life is still to be determined. The CRPD has commissioned the Faculty for Social Wellbeing of the University of Malta to carry out research on the effect of COVID-19 and its impact on disabled persons in Malta and Gozo. The research is ongoing at the time of writing of this report.

Housing and support

The UNCRPD Committee recommended that large institutions which hinder community independent living are closed and that community based services are strengthened. The committee also recommends that community homes and projects are overseen by disabled people's organisations and that in these homes the autonomy of persons with disability is ensured.

As a way of alleviating the housing issue, the NRP 2020 states the government has extended the housing benefit to ensure it reaches a broader spectrum of society, including persons with disability. However, to date there is no data stating how many persons with disability have made use of this housing benefit. The NRP 2020 also states that the government has launched a new project to provide a new residential home for adults with disability. However, to date this project continues to be a source of debate due to its large size, thus increasing the fear of becoming another institution, as well as its function. There is also concern as to whether the UNCRPD Committee's recommendation is really being adhered to.⁴¹

The National Strategy for Persons with Disability 2020-2030 mentions poverty only once (in the vision statement) and does not address financial assistance policies. In fact, throughout the whole document, there is not one object that mentions targeting the alleviation of poverty for persons with disability. Nevertheless, the strategy is more developed in relation to independent living. Strategic initiative 56 proposes the

³⁹ https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2021/BUDGET-2021_Diskors_Malti.pdf.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Finance. 2020. *Pre-budget document 2021*.

https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2021/PRE_BUDGET_DIGITAL_2021_01.pdf.

⁴¹ <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2019-07-22/local-news/Government-aims-to-open-Naxxar-community-hub-for-persons-with-disability-in-2022-6736211210>.

development of four 'Centres for Independent living' (three in Malta and one in Gozo) although what this means for service users in practice is not entirely clear. The assumption is that these will be similar to already existing Day Centres for persons with disability who are not in mainstream employment and training. The initiative requires further clarity. There are also commitments to strengthen personal assistance schemes (Initiative 60) which will enable persons with disability to continue living in their own homes and communities.

Health

The National Strategy also highlights the issue of health service usage by persons with disability (Objective 6). Among the Strategic Initiatives proposed are the concept of specialised clinics and multi-disciplinary team treatment 'based on a social model of disability', as well as sign-language access and staff training. However, it must be pointed out that during this past year, most of the health policies revolved around the COVID-19 pandemic leaving very little space for other initiatives related to persons with disability.

At the beginning of the pandemic in Malta in March 2020, daily news bulletins about the number of cases were shown on the national television station. For the first few days, these bulletins lacked Maltese Sign Language interpretation, making it difficult for deaf people in Malta to keep up with the news and remain informed about the situation evolving situation. After some pressure from the Malta Deaf Association, Maltese Sign Language started being made available daily. The bulletins have now become weekly and Maltese Sign Language interpretation continues to be made available. However, during press conferences by the Prime Minister and other Ministers whereby mitigating measures are introduced to combat the pandemic Maltese Sign Language interpretation remain unavailable. This makes it difficult for deaf people in Malta to remain informed at the same time as everyone else.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also left an impact on the number of services available for children and adults with disability, such as physiotherapy and speech therapy⁴² services. At the beginning of the pandemic these were stopped altogether. With the current situation, as the number of active cases keeps increasing, these services are once again being impacted. A research study on the impact of the pandemic on persons with disability by the Commission on the Rights of Persons with Disability and the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta will shed light on this situation. The research is still ongoing.

⁴² <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/restaurant-tables-could-keep-wheelchairs-off-pavements.793811?fbclid=IwAR0e9NSi0FuPGOrqyuaHa0wFDYjkrHfoJWSMQ4HtgJHeMxB59ORuuROtm5g>.

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 Malta:

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

‘36. Recalling its general comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education and Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially targets 4.5 and 4.a, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) ensure the implementation of its laws on education, and accelerate the adoption process of the bill on the Convention, to ensure that violations of the rights under article 24 of the Convention become justiciable in the State party;
- (b) adopt measures to ensure that students with disabilities, including students with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, are provided with reasonable accommodation at all levels of education, and allocate the resources necessary to guarantee reasonable accommodation according to individual requirements in consultation with the person concerned, including the provision of learning support educators and their replacements when they are absent;
- (c) ensure accessible mechanisms for accountability and redress in cases in which educational institutions, such as childcare centres and summer schools, or teachers discriminate against students on the basis of their disability;
- (d) review the curriculum of students with disabilities through individualized education plans to ensure that the curricula allow them to learn the skills required to access the job market on an equal basis with others;
- (e) carry out research on the extent to which accessibility standards are being complied with in the State party to obtain a full understanding of the barriers persons with disabilities face in the education system and the solutions required to enable their full participation, and to make research findings on the socioeconomic and cultural benefits of inclusive education available to all relevant stakeholders.’

The first National Strategy for Persons with Disability 2020-2030⁴³ was formally launched on the 5 December 2019. Objective 3 concerns Education, which is defined as the ‘kingpin when it comes to ensuring that persons with disability have all the opportunities that other citizens in the community benefit from’ (p. 27).

5.1 Summary of the educational situation of persons with disabilities

The EU-SILC estimates concerning educational attainment should be treated with some caution due to variable confidence levels, but they consistently indicate disability quality gaps. Table 16 indicates early school leaving rates disaggregated by disability status. Youth 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 completion rate of tertiary education disaggregated by disability and age group. Persons with disabilities (age 30-34) are less likely to complete tertiary education than their peers (and this is reinforced in the wider sample for age 30-39).

⁴³ <https://activeageing.gov.mt/en/Documents/SOCIAL%20POLICY%20WEB.pdf>.

Compulsory education in Malta is between the ages of 5 and 16. Children either go to state schools, Church schools (which are heavily subsidised by government) or independent (private) schools. For children who have a statement of individual educational needs (IENs) and need a learning support educator (LSE) to be included in mainstream classrooms, the salary of the LSE is paid for by the state, regardless of the school they go to. Within the state education system, there are resource centres that cater for students with intellectual disabilities. These are special schools that were reformed into resource centres to support the inclusion of students with disability in mainstream schools.⁴⁴ There are students who attend these resource centres on a full-time basis. The percentage of students who are do not mainstream schools all or most of the time is less than 1 %.⁴⁵

At the further and higher levels of education, trends show an encouraging increase of the participation of students with disabilities. Statistics made available by the University of Malta show that the number of students with disability have more than double over the past four years. The University of Malta provides support to these students through the ACCESS Disability Support Unit. The Malta College of Arts, Sciences and Technology also provide support through Student Support Services, while the Institute of Tourism Studies provides learning coaches for students who need additional support for their learning.

Concerns about the inclusive education system in Malta were highlighted in the 2018 UNCRPD Shadow Report submitted by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability and in the Concluding Observations of the CRPD Committee. These concerns regard inconsistencies in the implementation of inclusive education policies in different schools; the lack of inclusion of children with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools; problems with providing replacement LSEs; directives issued by unions representing educators that undermine inclusive education practices; providing personal assistants rather than LSEs where needed; ensuring that students are involved in their individual educational planning; and ensuring access to childcare centres and summer schools.

5.2 Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester

The National Reform Programme states that:

‘Government is also investing heavily in education infrastructure and resources including educational facilities for children with disabilities who cannot attend mainstream educational facilities.’ (pp. 6-7)

This statement appears to go contrary to inclusive education, which requires mainstream schools to adapt to students’ needs.

⁴⁴ Special Schools Reform:
https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/Special_Schools_Reform_ENG.pdf.

⁴⁵ EASIE (2019) Malta Data on Children/Learners with an Official Decision on SEN.
https://www.european-agency.org/data/malta/datatable-overview#tab-population_and_enrolment;
WHO 2010 World Report on Disability:
https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en/.

New policy framework

Malta adopted an inclusive education policy in 1994, after signing the Salamanca Statement. Since then, there have been many developments in the area, most of which have ensured greater access to mainstream education for students with disability, at all levels of education. The rights of persons with disabilities in education were further strengthened by amendments to the Education Act (1988) in YEAR, the adoption of the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act in 2000 and the ratification of the UNCRPD in 2012. One of the most recent developments has been the external audit commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Employment in 2014 and that was conducted by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASIE). A *National Inclusive Education Framework* was published in 2019, taking the feedback from the audit into account.⁴⁶

This Framework promotes a holistic approach to developing inclusive schools, thus moving away from approaching inclusion as an add-on to approaching it as the core work of a school. There is also an emphasis on the holistic development of each student, and building on their strengths, rather than assuming what they can or cannot do. There are references to working with students with individual educational needs, however the need to involve students in their own individual educational programme is not explicitly stated.

The Framework is very clearly set out. It provides benchmarks and specifies different types of barriers. For each barrier identified, an action is described to overcome that barrier. The Framework is then broken into ten themes and, for each theme, there is a descriptive summary, a list of best practice indicators and vignettes that present concrete examples of the local scenario. The Framework thus provides very clear guidelines for educators to make their schools more inclusive. The challenge remains to ensure that the Framework and its themes are implemented evenly in each classroom and in different types of schools at all levels.

This Framework covers the compulsory years of education, that is primary and secondary schooling. It is complemented by the *National Disability Policy* and the *National Strategy for Persons with Disability 2020-2030*. These documents refer to all levels and forms of learning, including non-formal learning. However, while they set out clear goals and targets, they do not provide the level of detail provided in the *National Inclusive Education Framework*.

Pre- and post- school provision

The situation around inclusion in pre-compulsory education and childcare centres and in lifelong education is not clear, but indications are that much still needs to be done to ensure inclusion in these areas. Some additional recommendations for this sector, include:

⁴⁶ National Inclusive Education Framework:
https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEDE/Documents/MEDE_Inclusion_Framework_A4_v2.pdf.

- the need to ensure that students with disabilities who are not oriented towards academic studies are able to develop their full educational potential, and to do so in mainstream classrooms, at all levels of education;
- educational investment should ensure that mainstream schools are equipped to cater for the diversity of needs that students with disabilities present with and that resource centres fully serve their intended function to provide support for educators to include disabled children in the mainstream, so that they do not serve as *de facto* special schools;
- students with disabilities should be actively involved in the drawing up and implementation of their own individual educational programme.

Conclusion

At the compulsory levels of education and in further and higher education, the situation seems to be a positive one on the whole. However, the information available indicates that students with physical or sensory disabilities or with specific learning difficulties have better prospects of being included than do those who have intellectual disabilities or psychosocial disabilities.

Addressing any shortcomings in inclusive education in Malta needs to be carried out in the context of the challenges faced by the education system more generally. The 2020 European Semester Report refers to the relatively high rate of underachieving students and the relatively high early school leaving rate in Malta, when compared to the EU averages. These issues are especially relevant for students with disabilities who need additional support to meet curricular requirements, especially those with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

6 Investment priorities in relation to disability

6.1 Updates on use of existing EU funds (to 2020)

There were three major projects that made use of EU funds in the area of disability. Two of them, the INK - Person Focused Inclusion and the VASTE project⁴⁷ are related to employment.

- The INK project is being implemented by Aġenzija Sapport.⁴⁸ In its 2016-2017 Biennial Report, Sapport stated that this EUR 3 million project is aimed at benefitting 300 persons with a disability to enter the labour market, through capacity building, training and placement schemes, and support for family members and employers. No data is yet available on the number of beneficiaries from this project.
- The VASTE project is implemented by Jobsplus, the state employment agency and the Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF), which is jointly funded by Jobsplus and the private sector.⁴⁹ In its 2019 Annual Report, Jobsplus stated that the project has been extended until 2022 and has a revised budget of EUR 13 million. The project started in 2016 and, until the end of 2019, 1247 persons with disability (including 130 Gozitans) benefited from this project through different services including assessments, employment-related training, mentoring, job coaching and employer support. Jobsplus also reports that '[t]wo activities within this project, namely the LSF's job coaching services and relations with employers were recognised as promising best practices and have been listed in the EU Commission's database for 'inspiring practices from Public Employment Services across Europe' (p. 28).

With reference to these two projects, aside from the number of individuals who benefitted, one must also look at the nature of the jobs secured, their salary scales, whether they offer possibilities for career advancement and whether they are on a full-time or part-time basis.

- The third project, which is in the process of being implemented is the REACH project, with an estimate cost of EUR 20 million.⁵⁰ The project, which has undergone several revisions, envisages the building of a complex with residential units, a respite centre, day services, facilities for developing vocational and independent living skills, as well as indoor and outdoor leisure facilities. Concerns about this project include the issue that it is not directly in line with the requirements of Article 19 of the UNCPRD, especially in terms of providing disabled people with community-based homes and enabling them to choose where to live, with who and under which arrangements. The project also refers to 'semi-independent' living, thus implying that to live independently one needs

⁴⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&projectId=3698>.

⁴⁸ <https://sapport.gov.mt/en/Downloads/Documents/Aġenzija%20Sapport%20Biennial%20Report%202016-2017.pdf>.

⁴⁹ <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/publications/fileprovider.aspx?fileId=8541>.

⁵⁰ <https://sapport.gov.mt/en/Pages/REACH.aspx>.

to be able to live without any support, whereas for disabled people independent living means being able to decide for oneself and having support to act on your decisions where necessary. When the project was announced in the 2016 Budget Speech,⁵¹ it was stated that the aim is to promote inclusion and community participation and avoid institutionalisation. However, having a large complex with different facilities and residential units located in the same area can lead to institutionalisation, unless great care is taken to avoid this.

The implementation of this project also needs to be seen in the context of the 'Proġett Soċjetà Ġusta' (Fair Society Project), which was launched in 2015 with the aim of opening 10 new residential homes by 2019.⁵² Subsequent Budget Speeches confirmed the opening of three homes (including one in Gozo). Plans were also announced in the 2018 Budget Speech to demolish and rebuild an existing residential complex for disabled persons.⁵³ The project has therefore fallen short of its targets.

Given all the above, it is advisable to direct EU funds towards providing community-based supported living that are run on the requirements of the UNCRPD, so as to avoid the risk of creating institutionalised living arrangements even in residences that are purported to be community-based.

6.2 Priorities for future investment (after 2020)

The five main objectives that will drive EU investments beyond 2021 – to achieve a smarter, greener, more connected, and more social Europe, and one that is closer to its citizens – are all relevant for disabled people in Malta. Any infrastructural development needs to ensure that buildings, roads and other types of constructions are in line with the Access for All Regulations (Cap. 412.03).

Investment in research and innovation (including enabling/new technologies) should be informed by the principles and practices of universal design so as to ensure that any developments take into account the various needs of the population, including disabled persons.

ESF funding for inclusive training opportunities should also be linked to ensuring that disabled people secure jobs that match their skills and qualifications and that they are not underemployed. They should also ensure that adults with acquired impairment can return to work after they complete their rehabilitation. In this regard, coordination should be ensured between rehabilitation and other allied health professional services on the one hand, and organisations implementing projects, schemes and initiatives to include disabled people in open employment.

⁵¹ https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2016/Budget_Speech_2016_en.pdf.

⁵² https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2015/final-budget_speech_eng.pdf.

⁵³ https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2018/Budget_speech_English_2018.pdf.

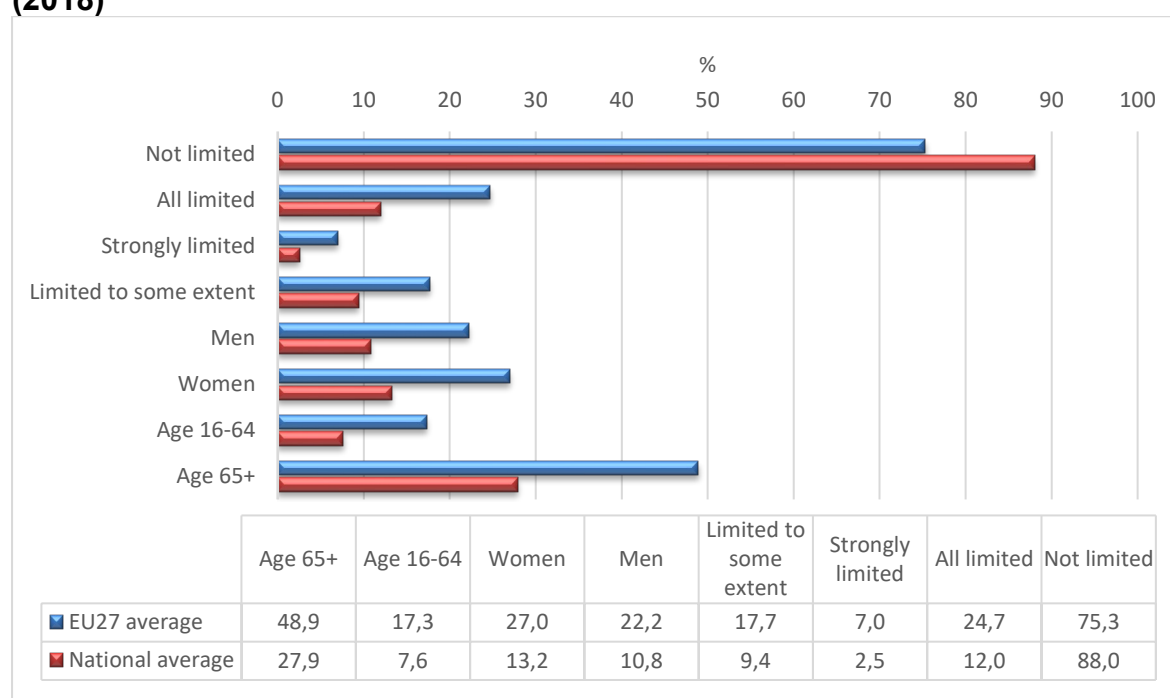
7 Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester

See also disability data published in the Eurostat database⁵⁴ and statistical reports.⁵⁵

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’.⁵⁶

Table 1: Self-reported ‘activity limitations’ as a proxy for impairment/disability (2018)



Source: EU-SILC 2018 Release 2020 version 1

In subsequent tables, these data are used to indicate ‘disability’ equality gaps and trends relevant to the analytical chapters – for the labour market, social policies and healthcare, and education – by comparing outcomes for persons who report and do

⁵⁴ Eurostat health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

⁵⁵ Eurostat (2019) *Disability Statistics* https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability_statistics.

⁵⁶ The SILC survey questions are contained in the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM) [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_\(MEHM\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_(MEHM)).

not report 'activity limitations'.⁵⁷ National estimates for Malta are compared with EU27 mean averages for the most recent year.⁵⁸

7.1 EU data relevant to disability and the labour market (2018)

Table 2: Employment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64)

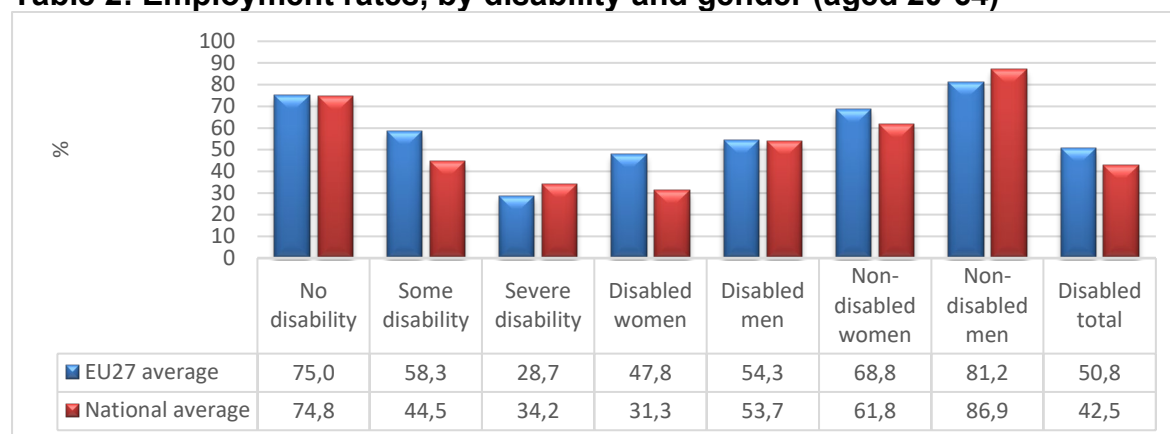
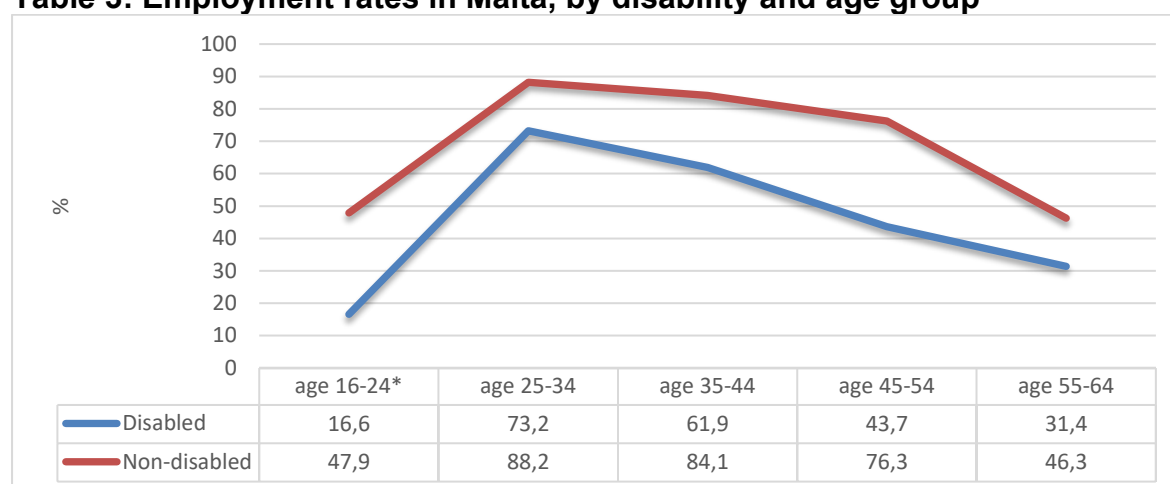
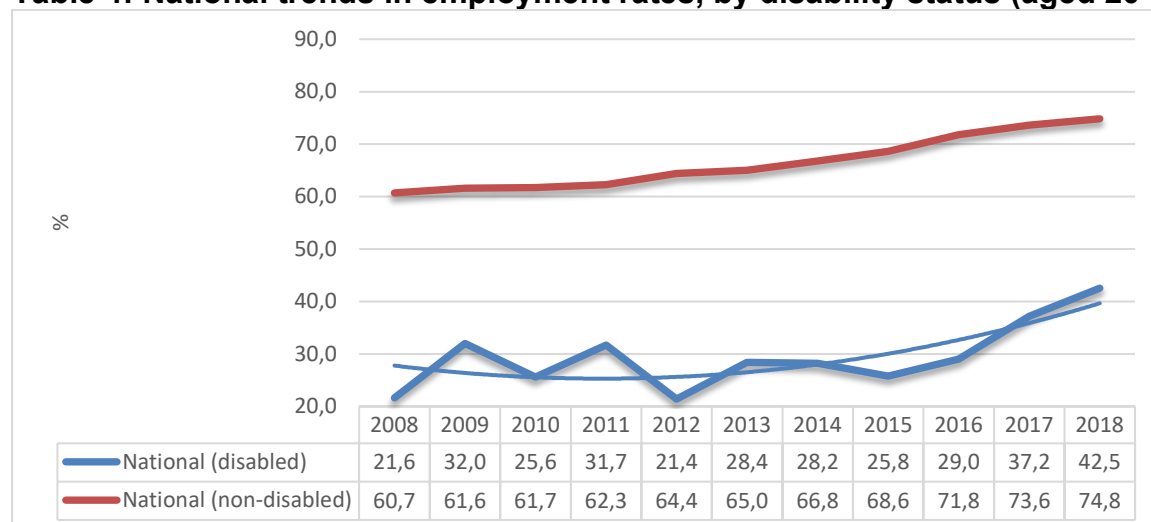


Table 3: Employment rates in Malta, by disability and age group



⁵⁷ This methodology was developed in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>.

⁵⁸ The exit of the United Kingdom from the EU changes the EU average. Averages were also affected in 2015 by a discontinuity in the German disability data due to a definitional change.

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


Source: EU-SILC 2018 Release 2020 version 1 (and preceding UDBs)

7.1.1 Unemployment

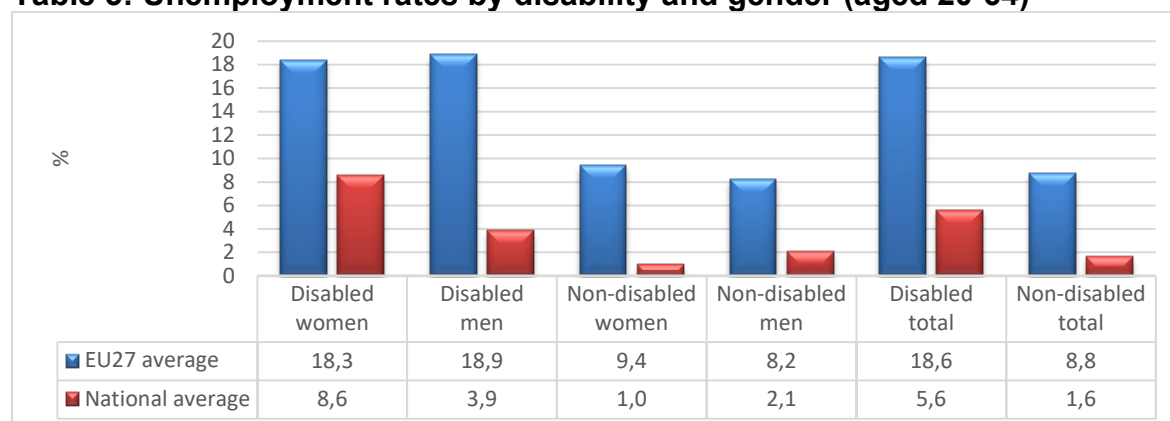
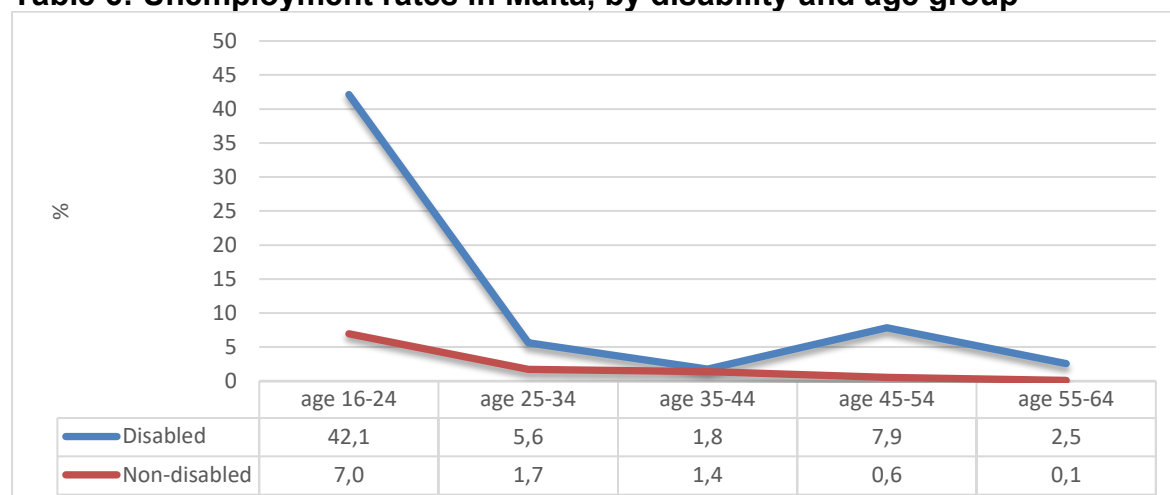
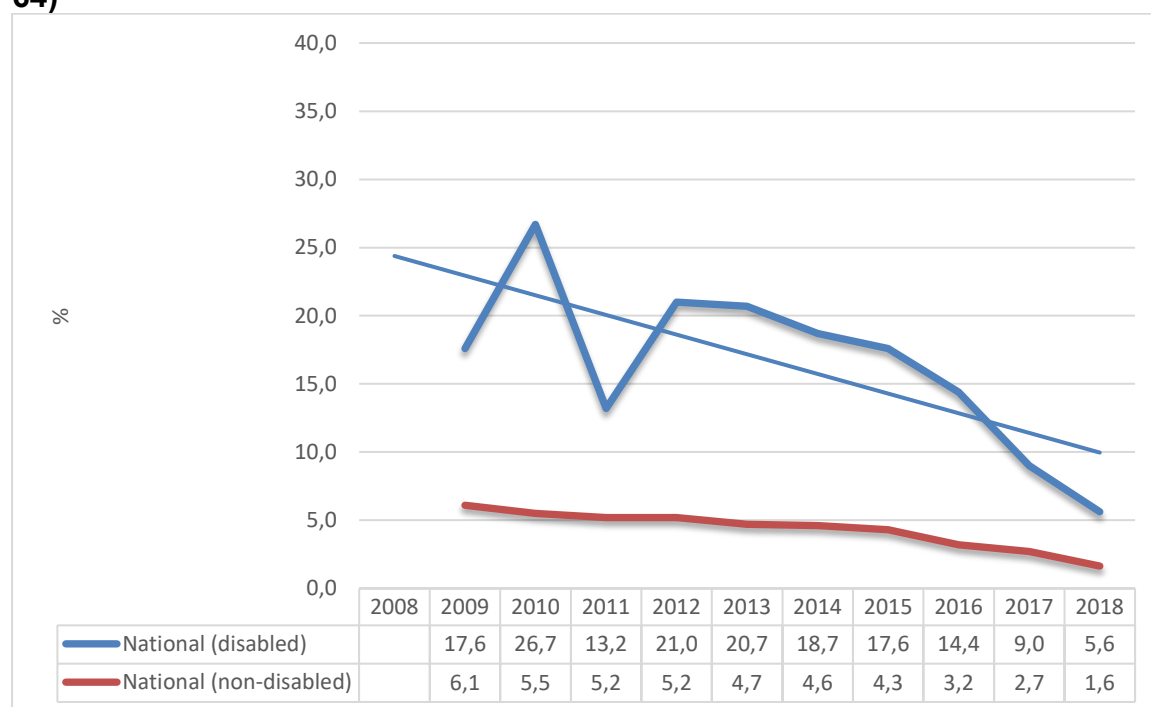
Table 5: Unemployment rates by disability and gender (aged 20-64)

Table 6: Unemployment rates in Malta, by disability and age group


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


Source: EU-SILC 2018 Release 2020 version 1 (and preceding UDBs)

7.1.2 Economic activity

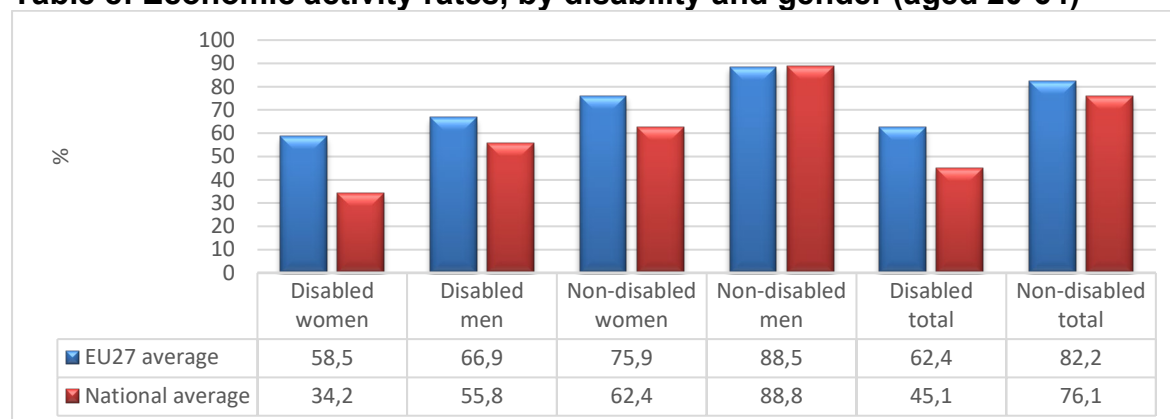
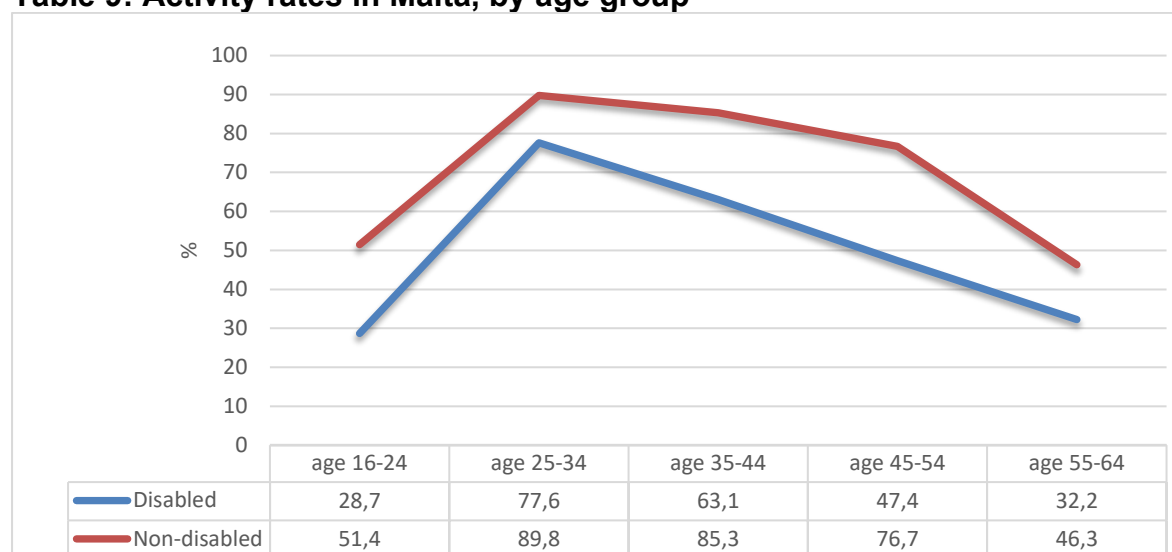
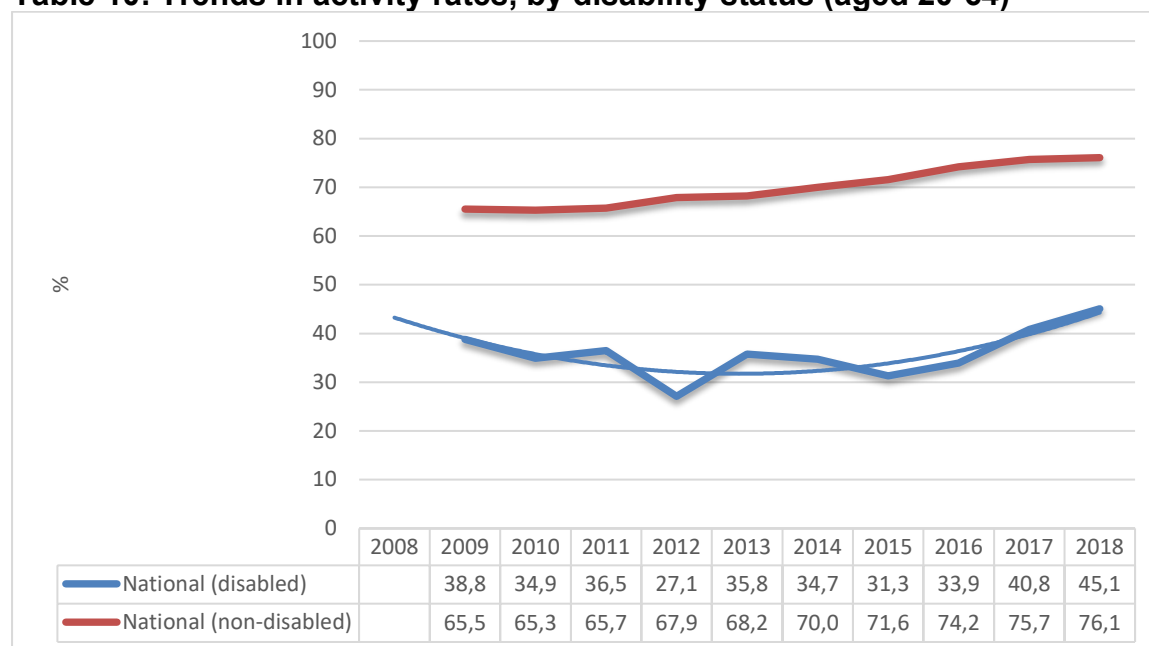
Table 8: Economic activity rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64)


Table 9: Activity rates in Malta, by age group**Table 10: Trends in activity rates, by disability status (aged 20-64)**

Source: EU-SILC 2018 Release 2020 version 1 (and preceding UDBs)

7.1.3 Alternative sources of labour market data in Malta

Disability data is not included in the core European Labour Force Survey but labour market indicators for Malta were disaggregated from ad modules conducted in 2001 and 2011. These can be found in the Eurostat disability database.⁵⁹

The National Statistics Office (NSO) collects data and statistics on the Maltese population and conducts a number of thematic studies exploring data related to age, gender, educational status, employment situation and economic growth, including those developed by Eurostat. Disabled people are also included in some of the studies conducted by NSO. Included in the data collected that makes reference to disabled

⁵⁹ Eurostat Health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

people as part of the sample relate to the number of registered unemployed and employed disabled people (published every quarter) and reports on people having a long-standing illness or disability (the most recent published in 2003). The 2011 Labour Force Survey included an ad hoc module to provide information on the situation of people having any health condition/disease or activity difficulty in the labour market. All the reports issued by the NSO are publicly available on their web page and can be downloaded free of charge.⁶⁰

7.2 EU data relevant to disability, social policies and healthcare (2018)

Table 11: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and risk (aged 16-59)

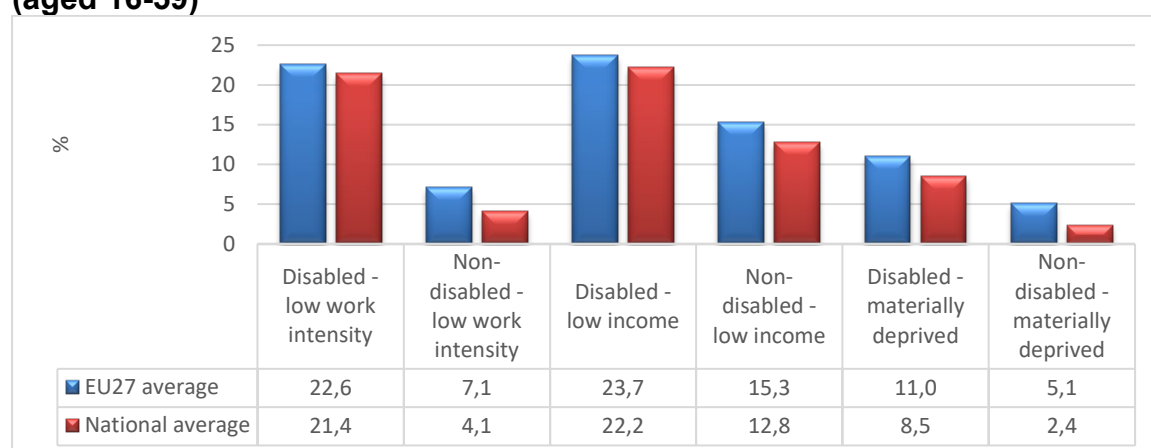
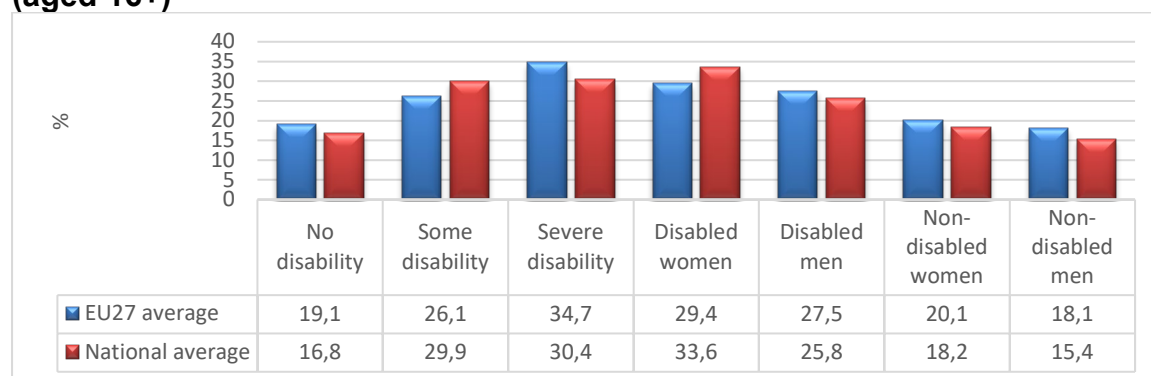
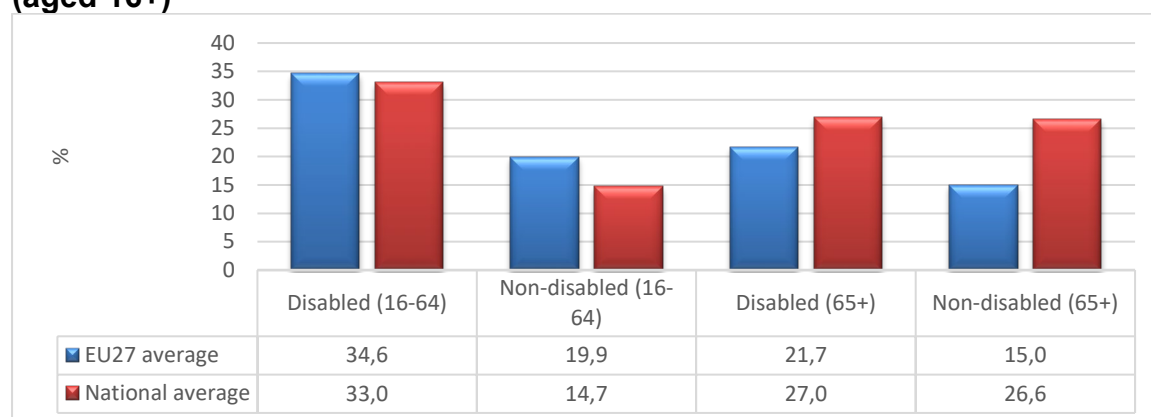


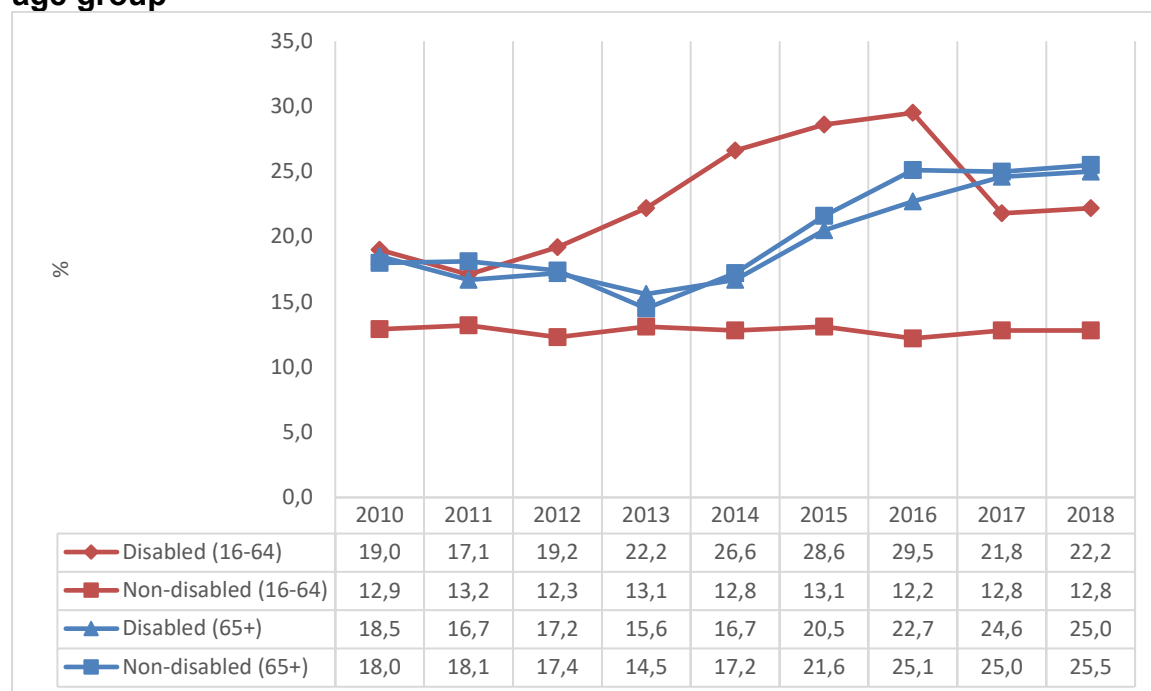
Table 12: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and gender (aged 16+)



⁶⁰ National Statistics Office (2020). <http://www.nso.gov.mt>.

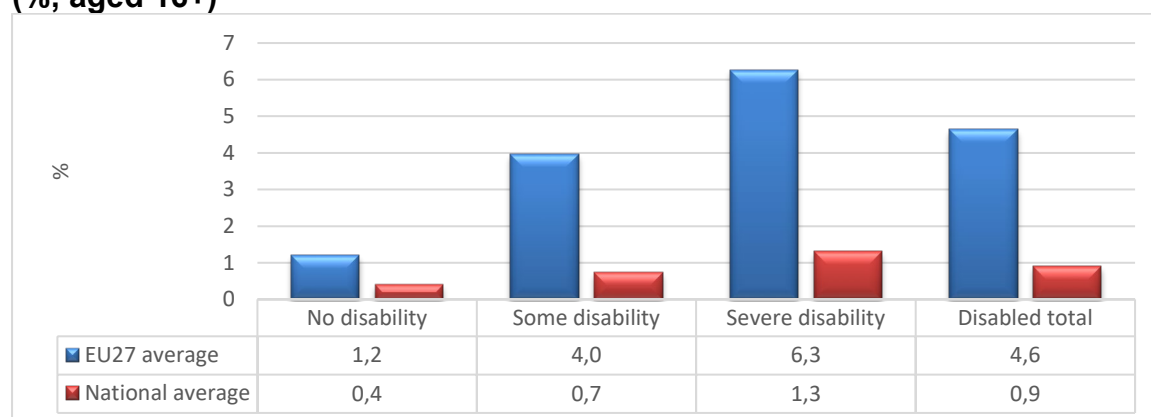
Table 13: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)

Source: EU-SILC 2018 Release 2020 version 1 (and previous UDB)

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, 3-year average (% , aged 16+)

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

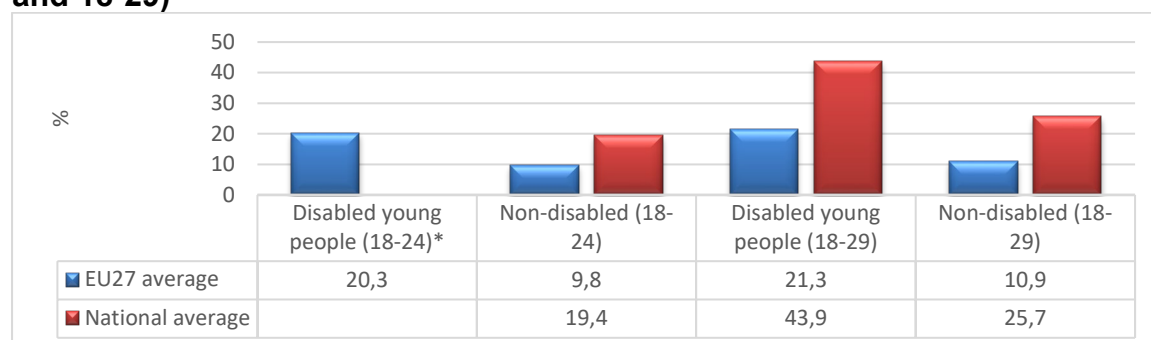
Note: due to large variations an average of three years is indicated. EU mean averages are also skewed by high values in a minority of countries within disability groups but median averages for the total disability and no disability groups in 2018 are consistent with the 3-year mean values.

7.3 Alternative sources of poverty or health care data in Malta

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.⁶¹

The Social Protection 2020 report published by the National Statistics Office provides details about disability-related expenditure for the years 2014-2018 (see pp. 39-47).⁶²

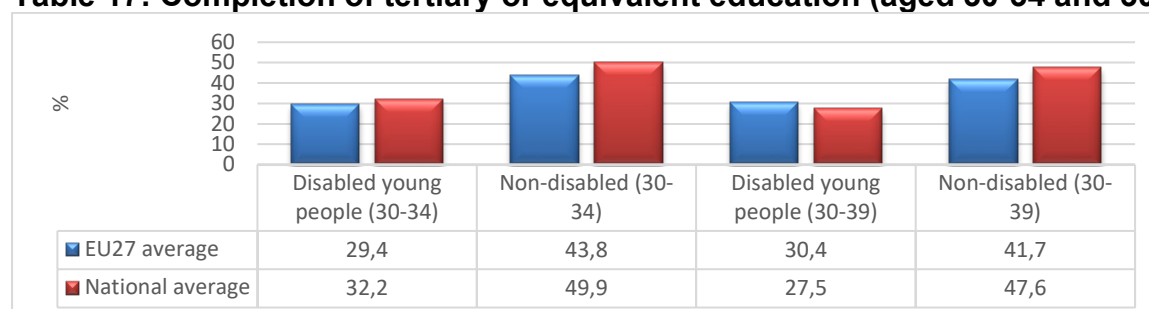
7.4 EU data relevant to disability and education

Table 16: Early school leaving rates, by disability status (aged 18-24 and 18-29)⁶³

⁶¹ Eurostat Health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

⁶² <https://crpd.org.mt/research/>.

⁶³ There was a change from ISCED 1997 to ISCED 2011 qualification definitions in 2014 although some Member States continued to use the older definition after this time.

Table 17: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (aged 30-34 and 30-39)

Source: EU-SILC 2018 Release 2020 version 1 (and preceding UDBs)

Note: Confidence intervals for the disability group are large and reliability low (due to the small sample size in the target age group). An average of several years may be needed to establish trends or to compare breakdowns by gender.

7.4.1 Alternative sources of education data in Malta

Disability data is not included in the core European Labour Force Survey, but education and training indicators were disaggregated from ad hoc modules conducted in 2001 and 2011. These can be found in the Eurostat disability database.⁶⁴ Similar caution is needed with this data.

Some administrative data is also provided in the European Agency's Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE), concerning the population of enrolled students identified with special educational needs in Malta.⁶⁵

No alternative sources of data on disability and early school leavers were identified for this report.

Administrative data were made available by the University of Malta and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) regarding the number of disabled students enrolled over the past years.

⁶⁴ Eurostat Health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

⁶⁵ European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, *Statistics on Inclusive Education*, <https://www.european-agency.org/data/data-tables-background-information>.

Disabled Students at the University of Malta

Year	Number of Disabled Students	Total Number of Students	% Disabled Students
2012-2013	155	10,997	1.41
2013-2014	157	11,202	1.40
2014-2015	207	11,451	1.81
2015-2016	229	11,627	1.97
2016-2017	265	11,500	2.25
2017-2018	310 ⁶⁶	11,500	2.69
2018-2019	183 ⁶⁷	11,670	1.57
2019-2020	201 ⁶⁸	11,117	1.81

Sources: University of Malta, 2020. Facts and Figures

<https://www.um.edu.mt/about/facts/numbers/studentnumbers>; Access Disability Support Unit

(University of Malta), 2020. Personal Communication

Number of disabled students who graduated from the University of Malta

Year	Number of students with disability
2018-2019	47
2019-2020	47 ⁶⁹

Source: Access Disability Support Unit (University of Malta), 2020. Personal Communication

Disabled Students at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology

Year	Number of Disabled Students	Total Number of Students	% Disabled Students
2010-2011	348	6072	5.73
2011-2012	437	6170	7.08
2012-2013	505	6244	8.09
2013-2014	632	6417	9.85
2014-2015	735	6505	11.3
2015-2016	824	6659	12.4
2016-2017	834	5892	14.15
2017-2018	832	6638 ⁷⁰	12.5
2018-2019	837		
2019-2020	710		

Source: Inclusive Education Unit (MCAST). 2020. Personal Communication

⁶⁶ This is the number of students at who were registered as having a disability. The Access Disability Support Unit reports that during the academic year 2017-2018, there were 149 students with disabilities who made use of their services, and these may not be necessarily registered as disabled with the university.

⁶⁷ This is the number of students who approached the Access Disability Support Unit at the University of Malta. There might have been other students who registered as having a disability but did not feel the need to contact ADSU. Data from the Registrar's office about the total number of students registered as disabled could not be given due to an ongoing change in the software.

⁶⁸ Same as above.

⁶⁹ The number of students who graduate this year may increase, since due to the pandemic a higher number of students than usual are still waiting for their September session results.

⁷⁰ This is the number of students enrolled in October 2017. By the end of May 2018 there were 6107. However, the difference between both figures does not reflect the number of dropouts, since new students were also enrolled after October.

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