



# European Semester 2022-2023 country fiche on disability equality

Italy

January 2023

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion  
Directorate D — Social Rights and Inclusion  
Unit D3 — Disability & Inclusion

*European Commission*  
*B-1049 Brussels*

# European Semester 2022-2023 country fiche on disability equality

With comparative data Annex provided by EDE

## Italy

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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.

This country report has been prepared as input for the European Semester in 2022<sup>1</sup> and has been developed under Contract VC/2020/0273 with the European Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> 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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Manuscript completed in January 2023

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023

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## **1 Executive summary and recommendations**

### **1.1 Key points and main challenges for Italy in 2022**

#### **Disability and the labour market**

Post-pandemic employment growth has probably affected persons with disabilities, but recent data are lacking. It has to be noted that, in the coming months, the energy crisis caused by the war in Ukraine could impact the Italian economic framework with heavy consequences.

Employability of persons with disabilities is still a critical issue. The Italian Government approved the long-overdue Guidelines for targeted employment (*Linee guida per il collocamento mirato*) and modified the quantities of the 'exemption contribution' and the penalties provided for by Law No. 68/1999.

#### **Disability, social policies and healthcare**

The health and social inclusion conditions of people with disabilities still present critical issues. In December 2021, Law No. 227/2021 on the 'Delegation to the Government in matters of disability' was approved. It aims to reform the disability assessment system. A series of Recovery and Resilience Plan grants have been dedicated to implementing deinstitutionalisation projects in all Italian regions.

#### **Disability, education and skills**

The reference framework for the right to education is characterised by a substantial territorial gap concerning the accessibility of school buildings. Furthermore, although the number of support teachers has increased, they do not always receive adequate training. The positive figure represented by the constant growth in the number of students with disabilities enrolled in Italian universities should be emphasised.

#### **Investment priorities for inclusion and accessibility**

Italy is facing a new planning stage for post-pandemic EU funds. Italian regions are drafting their projects, taking into account disability mainly with reference to employability skills and education.

## 1.2 Recommendations for Italy

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

**Recommendation:** Make more effective the right to work for persons with disabilities, implement the Guidelines for targeted employment (*Linee guida per il collocamento mirato*), approved in March 2022 and improve data collection about the employment of persons with disabilities, including employee satisfaction and the impact of the incentives for the employment of persons with disabilities.

**Rationale:** The Decree of the Ministry of Labour of 29 December 2021 finally provided implementation measures regarding the Database on targeted employment (*Banca dati sul collocamento mirato*), legislated for in 2015. The participation level of persons with disabilities in the labour market is low. The Court of Auditors has argued that such a tool is indispensable. Moreover, the lack of data obstructs persons with disabilities and their organisations in monitoring the effectiveness of public policies regarding labour market inclusion.

**Recommendation:** Accelerate the process of deinstitutionalisation, providing community and home-based social and health services to improve the autonomy of people with disabilities. Complete the review of the disability assessment procedures and the criteria for promoting the multidimensional assessment of individuals with disabilities to effectively define individual and personalised life plans.

**Rationale:** In the Italian legal system there is no standardised, single procedure that certifies a legal condition of disability, from which the attribution of certain rights or benefits directly derives. Law No. 227/2021 aims to rationalise the procedures and define the methods to guarantee the construction of individualised and personalised life plans for persons with disabilities.

**Recommendation:** Improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of schools, and the presence of teachers qualified to support pupils with disabilities.

**Rationale:** The Italian model of *'integrazione scolastica'* (educational inclusion) has long been regarded as a leader in the field of inclusive education, but there are still many school buildings with architectural barriers. Furthermore, support teachers are often poorly trained.

**Recommendation:** Emphasise empowering persons with disabilities through targeted funding and mainstream disability in every funding programme.

**Rationale:** Persons with disabilities still face discrimination and poor accessibility in education and in the workplace. The impact of targeted funding on the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities should be a key factor in funding-evaluation criteria and in medium / long-term funding evaluation, strengthening social inclusion and independent living.

## **2 Mainstreaming disability equality in the 2022 Semester documents**

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

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

- Italy has excessive macroeconomic imbalances that are not expected to level out in the short term. Italy remains characterised by a high public debt-to-GDP ratio, low productivity growth, as well as structural weaknesses in labour and financial markets. The labour market recovered most of the losses incurred by the pandemic crisis, albeit largely due to an increase in temporary employment. Low employment rates, particularly for women and in Southern regions, and high youth unemployment, persist.
- Rising energy prices, especially for crude oil and natural gas, but also for other raw materials and food keep hiking up firms' operating costs and eroding households' purchasing power. Such a dynamic risks increasing inequality and energy poverty, which is already higher than the EU average.
- Providing more upskilling and re-skilling is key to mitigating increasing labour shortages and unemployment and facilitating a fair and green digital transition. In 2021, a reform of active labour market policies introduced a national programme for the guaranteed employability of workers (GOL) and a national plan for new skills, which will review and integrate job search and training services and put a special focus on digital skills. Challenges remain as regards inclusiveness of and access to education for persons with disabilities.
- The risk of poverty and social exclusion remains high. It is especially high for children, people with disabilities and people with a migrant background. Despite improvements, in 2020 the rate of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion was still above the EU average (24.9 % vs 21.6 % in the EU). It is among the highest in the EU for children and also relatively high for people with disabilities.
- The Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) aims to strengthen social inclusion and prevent marginalisation. The plan includes measures to strengthen social services and their territorial coverage, via reforms in the field of services for dependent people (expected in 2023) and for people with disabilities.
- The new Framework Law on Disability, adopted in December 2021 (Law No. 227 of 21 December 2021), changes the disability assessment to take a more multidisciplinary and international classification of functioning, disability and health (ICF) based approach and aims to strengthen social services, promoting autonomy and deinstitutionalisation.
- Reform of services for non-self-sufficient elderly people and investment in projects to give people with disabilities more autonomy is expected under the RRP in 2022/2023; in 2022, the first 500 projects are expected to adapt homes to the needs of people with disabilities.

The Country Specific Recommendation does not mention disability, but some of the general recommendations of high relevance to people with disabilities include:

- taking into account continued temporary and targeted support to households and firms most vulnerable to energy price hikes;

- support to people fleeing Ukraine, taking into account obligations under the UN CRPD (in particular Article 11, regarding situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies);
- implement reforms and investments to improve employment prospects (e.g. for young people and women) and raise labour supply;
- implementation of RRP and the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy Programme.

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

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

### ***Accessibility of Italian cultural heritage***

Mission 1 provides for specific interventions aimed at removing architectural and sensory barriers in museums, libraries, and archives.

### ***Mobility and public transport***

Strengthening mobility, local public transport, and railway lines to facilitate the improvement and accessibility of infrastructure and services.

### ***Schools***

Mission 2 involves replacing obsolete school building stock to create modern, sustainable, and accessible structures. Mission 4 aims to reduce territorial gaps in higher secondary schools.

### ***Social inclusion and Health***

Mission 5 provides extraordinary investment in social infrastructures, community-based health and social services, and home-based services.

Adoption of the legislation on non-self-sufficiency and the framework law on disability. This is aimed at:

- strengthening and qualification of the offer of social services by the territories;
- simplification of access to social and health services;
- revision of the procedures for assessing disabilities;
- promotion of independent living projects; and
- promotion multidimensional evaluation units on the territories, able to define individual and personalised projects.

In Mission 6, investments are planned for the improvement of local health services and the development of advanced telemedicine solutions to support home care, including for persons with disabilities.

### **2.3 Semester links to CRPD and national disability action plans**

It is important that Semester plans align with national disability strategy. In Italy, this refers to the second biennial action programme for the promotion of the rights and integration of people with disabilities. A process of biennial action programmes on disability rights was developed in 2009, with the most recent version legislated for in 2017.<sup>2</sup> Following public consultation and a national conference on disability policies in December 2021, a third biennial action programme is anticipated. This National Action Plan is not mentioned in the 2022 National Reform Programme (NRP).

Relevant recommendations arising from participation in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are highlighted in the following chapters. The last UN CRPD Committee recommendations to Italy were in 2016, the most recent submission by Italy was in 2016 and the most recent response from the Committee was the 2016 concluding observations.

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<sup>2</sup> See the Second biennial action programme for the promotion of the rights of people with disabilities, available at: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/notizie/Documents/II-Programma-di-azione-biennale-disabilita.pdf>.

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

In 2016, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Italy:

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

‘70. The Committee recommends that the State party be guided by article 27 of the Convention in implementing target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals; and that it ensures the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value. In addition, the State party must implement special measures to address the low level of employment for women with disabilities. It also recommends that the State party remove any legislation limiting the rights of persons with disabilities to perform any profession on the grounds of their disability.’

There have been no significant CRPD developments since the concluding observations and the state’s response in 2016-2017. The next state party report is due in May 2023.

#### **3.1 Summary of the labour market situation of persons with disabilities**

According to the Social Scoreboard indicator, cited in the Semester package, the disability employment gap in Italy is considered ‘Critical situation’.

Microdata from EU-SILC were not available for analysis concerning labour market indicators for persons with disabilities in Italy in 2020, although estimated indicators were considered in the Commission Country Report. These have since been updated on the Eurostat database, indicating a disability employment gap of 14.9 % in 2020, and provisionally a similar level in 2021 (using a slightly different methodology to the EDE estimates).<sup>3</sup> This is notably below the EU27 average of 24.3 % in 2020 but requires interpretation of the national data and context.

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

Labour-market challenges for people with disabilities in Italy are rooted in an overall complex situation, which has worsened in recent years for the population as whole. As underlined by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, ISTAT), ‘in July 2022, the number of employees (in the general population) remained stable above 23.2 million, despite recording a slight decline for the first time since August 2021. The employment rate has dropped to 60.3 %, the unemployment rate fell to 7.9 % and the inactivity rate rose to 34.4 %’.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the Ministry of Labour affirmed that, ‘in the first two months of 2022, the balance between hires and terminations was positive (...), in line with the 2019 data. The

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<sup>3</sup> Eurostat (2020) Disability employment gap by level of activity limitation and sex (source EU-SILC), [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth\\_dlm200/default/table](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_dlm200/default/table).

<sup>4</sup> See: [https://www.istat.it/it/files/2022/09/CS\\_Occupati-e-disoccupati\\_LUGLIO\\_2022.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files/2022/09/CS_Occupati-e-disoccupati_LUGLIO_2022.pdf).

number of activated contracts is therefore almost back on the growth path prior to the pandemic crisis'.<sup>5</sup>

However, recent data specifically regarding persons with disabilities are lacking. The system for collecting national data on disability and labour market in Italy has flaws. Consequently, it is not possible to transpose this general trend onto the condition of persons with disabilities (other than with reference to the EU-SILC estimates). It has to be noted that in the coming months, the energy crisis caused by the war in Ukraine could also impact the Italian economic framework with heavy consequences,<sup>6</sup> so caution is therefore needed when projecting employment trends for the future.

Nevertheless, in December 2019, the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT) published an e-book entitled *Knowing the world of disability: people, relations and institutions*.<sup>7</sup> The data collected in the e-book show that persons with disabilities still face numerous obstacles when they enter the labour market.

In particular, according to the data definitions used in this report:

- In Italy, just 31.3 % of persons with severe impairments, aged 15-64, had an occupation in 2016-2017, versus 57.8 % of persons without impairments (although this relates to the sub-group of those with severe limitations / disability, and is around 20 points and 10 points lower, respectively, than the estimates derived from EU-SILC data for persons aged 20-64 in 2019).
- A gender gap clearly emerged, as just 26.7 % of women with disabilities are employed, versus 36.3 % of men with disabilities (this compares with 43.7 % and 59.8 % in the wider SILC data definition).
- Educational level is a dividing line in general, and obviously, this is also true for persons with disabilities (see Sections 5.1 and 7.3).
- The data show the persistence of the well-known North/South divide, even with regards to working on inclusion.
- The main employers for persons with disabilities are in the public sector because Law No. 68/1999 is strictly enforced by public entities. Moreover, a specific regulation guarantees reservations (i.e. quotas) in public competitions. On the other hand, one could argue that the sanctions referred to in Law No. 69/1999 are not harsh enough to dissuade private firms and employers from discriminating. As pointed out by disability rights activists,<sup>8</sup> for many employers, paying the fines provided for under Law No. 68/1999 is the simplest and

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<sup>5</sup> See: Ministry of Labour, *'Il mercato del lavoro, dati e analisi'*, March 2022, available at: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/studi-e-statistiche/Documents/II%20mercato%20del%20lavoro%20dati%20e%20analisi%20-%20marzo%202022%20numero%208/Comunicazioni-obbligatorie-num8-marzo-2022.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> See: Bank of Italy, *'Considerazioni finali del Governatore della Banca d'Italia, relazione annuale, centovesimo esercizio'*, 31 May 2022, available at: [https://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/interventi-governatore/integov2022/cf\\_2021.pdf](https://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/interventi-governatore/integov2022/cf_2021.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/236301>.

<sup>8</sup> See A. Gianni, *'Disabili e lavoro, è allarme: meno di uno su tre ha un'occupazione. Le aziende preferiscono pagare sanzioni piuttosto che assumerli'*, *Il Giorno*, 21 July 2021, available at: <https://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/lavoro-disabili-1.6628852>.

cheapest choice. Moreover the effectiveness of the monitoring system is questionable.<sup>9</sup>

- Employee satisfaction is lower for persons with disabilities. Among persons without disabilities, the percentage of individuals ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly well satisfied’ is significantly higher.
- In Italy, the achievement of personal autonomy from the family of origin is slower than in other EU countries. Disability narrows the possibilities of reaching this goal, and having a job is the first step on the road to independent living. The findings show that, among persons with disabilities who have their own family unit, the percentage of persons who have a job is meaningfully high (49.5 %). For people with severe disabilities, work inclusion is a determining factor for autonomy.

### 3.2 Analysis of labour market policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see the 2022 National Reform Programme (NRP), the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) for Italy and the second biennial action programme for the promotion of the rights and integration of people with disabilities.

The second two-year programme on disability contained specific lines of work concerning the quality of the targeted employment services throughout the country. For large companies, it proposed measures such as the establishment of ‘company monitoring bodies’ and the recruitment of ‘disability managers’ to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace.<sup>10</sup>

It also stressed the need to coordinate specific interventions regarding the work inclusion of persons with disabilities with far-reaching labour market reforms, such as the one adopted in 2015 with the so-called Jobs Act (Legislative Decree No. 151, 14 September 2015, ‘*Disposizioni di razionalizzazione e semplificazione delle procedure e degli adempimenti a carico di cittadini e imprese e altre disposizioni in materia di rapporto di lavoro e pari opportunità, in attuazione della legge 10 dicembre 2014, n. 183*’), which modified Law No. 68/1999 (‘*Norme per il diritto al lavoro dei disabili*’).

Law No. 68/1999, following Law No. 482/1968 (‘*Disciplina generale delle assunzioni obbligatorie presso le pubbliche amministrazioni e le aziende private*’), aims to promote of the insertion and labour integration of people with disabilities in the world of work through support services and targeted placement (Article 1). Since its approval, Law No. 68/1999 has been unanimously considered the pivotal act regarding disabilities and work inclusion in Italy. Accordingly, every amendment should be carefully considered and promptly implemented. Nevertheless, as already underlined by previous ANED/EDE reports, some new tools have been defined by Legislative Decree No. 151/2015 (the *Linee guida per il collocamento mirato*, Guidelines for targeted employment, and the *Banca dati sul collocamento mirato*

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<sup>9</sup> See G. Griffo, ‘*La l. 68/1999 un bilancio dopo vent’anni*’, in S. Bruzzone (ed.). *Salute e persona: nella formazione, nel lavoro e nel welfare*, ADAPT Labour Studies e-Book series, 68, 2017, 26, [https://www.aiwa.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ADAPT-ebook-Labour-Studies\\_68-2017.pdf](https://www.aiwa.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ADAPT-ebook-Labour-Studies_68-2017.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> See the Second biennial action programme for the promotion of the rights of people with disabilities, available at: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/notizie/Documents/II-Programma-di-azione-biennale-disabilita.pdf>.

delle persone con disabilità, Database on targeted employment for persons with disabilities).

In 2022, the Italian Government approved the Guidelines for targeted employment (*Linee guida per il collocamento mirato*)<sup>11</sup> and modified the quantities of the ‘exemption contribution’ and the penalties provided for by Law No. 68/1999.<sup>12</sup>

These guidelines were long overdue and aimed to:

- favour the presence and usability of adequate services, tools and resources throughout the national territory, according to the principles of equal opportunities;
- support the standardisation of the normative implementation processes throughout the national territory, by the competent services, to reduce the territorial gaps that penalise large areas of the country; and
- direct the actions of the system from the perspective of continuous improvement of the effectiveness of performance, in particular, by monitoring activities and by sharing valid practices between the different local realities.

Such goals will be pursued following some basic principles and approaches (including multidimensionality, adoption of personalised interventions, equity and non-discrimination, adoption of a biopsychosocial approach and participation of persons with disabilities in planning activities). The guidelines also aim to promote and consolidate ‘the systematic management of administrative data referring to targeted placement’, providing the implementation of an information communication technology platform on good practices in targeted employment.

More specifically, the second two-year programme on disability includes three wide-ranging actions. The first action is entitled ‘Identification of specific improvement and work integration interventions’; the second, ‘Interventions in targeted placement activities’; and the third, ‘Technical and organisational interventions to improve the targeted work activity’. Every macro-action is broken down into specific actions that must involve social partners and subnational entities. In particular, regional participation seems to be crucial.

Bearing in mind the Italian constitutional framework, it must be pointed out that work inclusion of persons with disabilities and implementation of Law No. 68/1999 varies from region to region. The Northern and Central regions have adopted promotional measures, with the aim of improving the efficacy of the national regulation. The Southern regions have been less ambitious. Such regional asymmetries are partially tied to relevant disparities in education and the development of professional skills.

It has to be noted that the 2022 Economic and Financial Document (*Documento di Economia e Finanza*, DEF 2022) mentions disability with reference to Italy’s RRP, underlining that, in spring 2022, the Ministry for Disabilities approved a decree

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<sup>11</sup> See Ministerial Decree 11 March 2022, No. 44, available at: [https://www.bollettinoadapt.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/DM-n43-11-03-2022-adozione\\_linee\\_guida\\_collocamento\\_mirato-1.pdf](https://www.bollettinoadapt.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/DM-n43-11-03-2022-adozione_linee_guida_collocamento_mirato-1.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> See: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, press release, 30 September 2021, <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/priorita/Pagine/Diritto-al-lavoro-dei-disabili-il-ministro-Orlando-ha-firmato-due-nuovi-Decreti.aspx>.

regarding the involvement of persons with disabilities in RRP-funded projects and the monitoring of this anti-discriminatory approach in RRP implementation processes.<sup>13</sup>

The DEF 2022 also emphasises that, in late 2021, the Italian Government adopted the national guarantee programme for the employability of workers (*Programma Garanzia di Occupabilità dei Lavoratori*, GOL), as part of the active policies promoted by the RRP.<sup>14</sup> The GOL states that every region will adopt its own ad hoc plan, taking into account the ‘contributions for vulnerable persons’, in line with Article 3 of Inter-ministerial Decree No. 306 of 5 November 2021.<sup>15</sup>

Smart working skills are crucial nowadays, but virtual workplaces have to be fully accessible and inclusive. From this point of view, it should be emphasised how a recent provision (Law Decree No. 76/2020, converted into Law No. 120/2020)<sup>16</sup> has expanded the obligation to use accessible computer media, which included extending it to private entities offering relevant services to the public. In November 2019, the Agenzia per l’Italia Digitale (AGID) published the *Linee guida per l’accessibilità degli strumenti informatici* (Guidelines for the accessibility of informatic tools),<sup>17</sup> implementing EU Directive 2012-2016. These guidelines provide criteria for workplace accessibility.

Regarding smart working skills, the National Plan on New Skills (*Piano nazionale nuove competenze*), adopted in December 2021,<sup>18</sup> is worth mentioning, in addition to the Digital Italy 2026 plan (*Italia digitale 2026*)<sup>19</sup> and the National Strategy for Digital Skills (*Strategia nazionale per le competenze digitali*), adopted in 2020.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, in April 2022, the Italian Court of Auditors published a report regarding the labour market for persons with disabilities and the financial incentives provided by Law No. 68/1999<sup>21</sup> during the period 2014-2021, which concluded that it is not possible to affirm that the goals of Law No. 68/1999 have been successfully pursued. In its final remarks, the Court underlined a lack of coordination between the state and regions, as well as the scarcity of data regarding the incentives for the employment of persons with disabilities.

Possible interventions might aim to:

- improve the efficacy of the placement mechanisms outlined by Law No. 68/1999 and adopt a more effective and persuasive system of incentives and sanctions;

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<sup>13</sup> Ministerial Decree 9 February 2022, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2022/03/29/22A01963/sg>.

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/notizie/Documents/GOL-slide-Programma-20211021.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2021/12/27/21A07646/sg>.

<sup>16</sup> See: <http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legge:2020-07-16:76!vig=2020-09-11>.

<sup>17</sup> See: <https://www.agid.gov.it/it/design-servizi/accessibilita/linee-guida-accessibilita-strumenti-informatici>.

<sup>18</sup> See: [https://lineaamica.gov.it/docs/default-source/focus/piano-nazionale-nuove-competenze.pdf?sfvrsn=2ccb2323\\_9](https://lineaamica.gov.it/docs/default-source/focus/piano-nazionale-nuove-competenze.pdf?sfvrsn=2ccb2323_9).

<sup>19</sup> See: <https://innovazione.gov.it/argomenti/italia-digitale-2026/>.

<sup>20</sup> See: <https://assets.innovazione.gov.it/1610029655-dtd-1277-a-all1.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> See: <https://www.corteconti.it/Download?id=f76d2e19-8bd8-4670-ad84-fa25dc795eca>.

- bring the database on targeted employment (*Banca dati sul collocamento mirato*), provided by Legislative Decree No. 151/2015, up to speed; the Decree of the Ministry of Labour of 29 December 2021<sup>22</sup> finally provided implementation measures. As highlighted by the Court of Auditors, such a tool ‘at present, appears indispensable in order to collect and share information regarding employers, hiring obligations, reasonable accommodations, workers with disabilities hired and any other an element necessary to strengthen the controls on the management of resources, the monitoring of the effects of the incentives and the evaluation of the work placement interventions in implementation of Law No. 68/1999’;
- guarantee the right to education and top quality digital and technological skills;
- improve accessibility in the workplace: legal measures are often ineffective and the funds are inadequate.

The Italian legal framework, after decision CJEU C-312/11 (4 July 2013),<sup>23</sup> expanded the scope of application of reasonable accommodation. But for many employers, the concept of reasonable accommodation is still virtually unknown. A shift in the cultural paradigm should be promoted: reasonable accommodation is mandatory for each and every employer. Denial of reasonable accommodation is a discriminatory action, forbidden by Legislative Decree No. 216, 9 July 2003, as modified by Law No. 99, 9 August 2013.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2022/02/23/22A01276/sg>.

<sup>23</sup> See: Official Journal of the European Union, 24 August 2013, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:62011CA0312&from=IT>.

<sup>24</sup> See: <http://www.normattiva.it/eli/id/2003/08/13/003G0240/CONSOLIDATED/20130628>.

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

In 2016, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Italy:

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

‘72. The Committee recommends that the State party expedite constitutional reform to homogenize social protection interventions and policies throughout the national territory; expedite the adoption and implementation of the Minimum Standards of Social Assistance; conduct assessments of the impact of austerity measures on children and adults with disabilities; and prevent any further reduction in resources that could increase levels of poverty. It also recommends that the State party be guided by article 28 of the Convention in implementing target 10.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, including by mainstreaming disability in its poverty reduction policies.’

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

‘48. The Committee recommends that the State party implement safeguards to retain the right to autonomous independent living across all regions, and redirect resources from institutionalization to community-based services and increase budget support to enable persons with disabilities to live independently across the country and have equal access to services, including personal assistance.’

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

‘62. The Committee recommends that the State party, in close collaboration with organizations representing persons with disabilities and particularly those representing women with disabilities, ensure accessibility to facilities and equipment, information and communications regarding sexual and reproductive health services, and that it provide training to health personnel about the rights of persons with disabilities. It also recommends that the State party strengthen mechanisms to combat discrimination and stereotyping in line with its general comment No. 3.

64. The Committee recommends that the State party abolish all laws that permit medical treatment, including sterilization, consented by a third party (parent or guardian) without the free and informed consent of the person, and that it provide related high-quality training to health professionals.

66. The Committee recommends that the State party expedite the adoption, funding and implementation of Minimum Standards of Health Care so all children have access to early identification and intervention according to their requirements. The Committee recommends that the State party take into account article 25 of the Convention while implementing targets 3.7 and 3.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals.’

There have been no significant CRPD developments since the concluding observations and the state’s response in 2016-2017. The next state party report is due in May 2023.

##### **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 Italy was 22.8 % in 2020, compared to 19.7 % for other persons of similar age – an estimated disability poverty gap of approximately 3 percentage

points (see Table 14). For people aged over 65, the disability poverty gap was 4.2 points (18.8 % for older persons with disabilities and 14.6 % for other persons of similar age). The tables in the Annex also indicate the respective rates of risk of poverty or social exclusion and break these down by gender as well age. Recently updated data from Eurostat indicates that the relative poverty risk for the working age disabled population fell to 21.7 %, and for the older age group to 17.4 % in 2021 (provisionally).<sup>25</sup>

For persons with disabilities of working age (18-64) in Italy, the risk of poverty before social transfers was 45.9 % and 22.8 % after transfers. The in-work poverty rate for persons with disabilities in this age range was 12.3 % in 2020, and provisionally 11.1 % in 2021.<sup>26</sup>

Of interest to health policy are the data on self-reported unmet needs for medical examination (too expensive, too far to travel or waiting list). Disability equality gaps are evident here too and, on this basis, the rate for persons with disabilities in Italy was 4 %, compared to 1.2 % for other persons in 2021 (provisionally).<sup>27</sup>

ISTAT<sup>28</sup> data shows that families of people with disabilities enjoy, on average, a lower level of economic well-being: their average annual income (including transfers by the state) is EUR 17 476; 7.8 % lower than the national one. The welfare system and social transfers aimed at compensating for the reduced income capacity of people with disabilities play a fundamental role, often constituting a significant share of the family's disposable income: 48.9 % of these families receive monetary transfers; in particular, 18.7 % benefit from at least one social security transfer and 39.5 % at least one of a welfare nature.

The risk of poverty for families with people with disabilities at the national level drops from 34.4 % (in the absence of transfers) to 18.9 % thanks to economic transfers (see above). However, the transfers are insufficient to guarantee these families living conditions similar to the rest of the population due to the additional costs of a medical and health nature induced by disability.

The overall indicator of material deprivation highlights the more significant hardship of families with people with disabilities: 28.7 % are in conditions of material deprivation, while the national average is 18 %. The most relevant signs of deprivation are the following:

- 67 % of families in which at least one person with disability lives cannot afford a week's vacation a year away from home;
- 53.7 % are unable to face an unexpected expense of EUR 800;

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<sup>25</sup> Eurostat (2022) People at risk of poverty by level of activity limitation, sex and age, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth\\_dpe010/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_dpe010/default/table?lang=en).

<sup>26</sup> Eurostat (2022) In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate by level of activity limitation, sex and age, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth\\_dpe050/default/table](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_dpe050/default/table).

<sup>27</sup> Eurostat (2022) Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination by level of activity limitation, sex and age, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth\\_dh030/default/table](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_dh030/default/table).

<sup>28</sup> See: [https://www.istat.it/it/files/2021/03/Istat-Audizione-Osservatorio-Disabilit%C3%A0\\_24-marzo-2021.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files/2021/03/Istat-Audizione-Osservatorio-Disabilit%C3%A0_24-marzo-2021.pdf).

- over one-fifth cannot heat the house sufficiently or eat an adequate meal at least once every two days. These conditions of hardship mainly characterise the families of the Southern regions.

## 4.2 Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see the 2022 National Reform Programme, the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Italy and the second biennial action programme for the promotion of the rights and integration of people with disabilities.

The Italian social protection system assigns a central role to local authorities, particularly municipalities, which provide interventions and services to guarantee care and support for social integration.

The expenditure incurred by the municipalities for interventions and social services aimed at persons with disabilities went from about EUR 1.2 billion in 2003 to over EUR 2.5 billion in 2018. This growth is due to the establishment of the National Fund for non-self-sufficient people.

The main expenditure items include day centres (around EUR 312 million) and residential structures (approximately EUR 366 million), which offer assistance to persons with disabilities and support for families either during the day or continuously.

In 2018, the municipal day centres employed over 27 000 people with disabilities, and another 16 500 benefited from municipal contributions to use affiliated private centres. The users of residential structures, municipal and private, are over 30 000.

### ***RRP and project funding to combat institutionalisation and ensure independent living***

The RRP envisages a series of interventions and reforms to ‘accelerate the process of deinstitutionalisation, providing community and home social and health services to improve the autonomy of people with disabilities’.

To this end, on 15 February 2022, the Public Notice No. 1/2022 for the presentation of intervention proposals by the social territorial areas to favour the social inclusion activities of specific categories of fragile subjects was published, including people with disabilities. This would draw on the resources of the RRP, which has an overall financial endowment of EUR 1.45 million. The resources are allocated for seven lines of activity, including one for Investment 1.2 – Autonomy paths for people with disabilities. The recipients are the territorial social areas (*ambiti territoriali sociali*, ATS; about 600) and the individual municipalities.

The regions have a fundamental role in the coordination and planning of the development of territorial social systems:

- evaluation of the projects that will be presented by the ATS; and
- ensuring that the actions set out in the projects are carried out.

Together with the notice, the *Guidelines for Independent Living Projects*<sup>29</sup> were published, which provide for five areas of intervention:

### 1. *Personal Assistant*

The guidelines recognise the central importance of the figure of the personal assistant in the organisation of an independent life project and require the regions to guarantee the principle of the free choice of personal assistant even in cases in which the legislation or regulations have set out the establishment of registers or registers for this category of workers, through correct regulation of the accreditation and selection procedures.

### 2. *Forms of Autonomous Living: Housing and Cohousing*

The guidelines specify that the interventions in this line must be integrated with any planned interventions within the Law No. 112 of 2016 respecting the standards defined by the implementation regulations (Ministerial Decree 23 November 2016). These must be housing solutions that offer hospitality to no more than five people, where there are accessible spaces, providing the use of objects and furniture owned by the person with disability. In compliance with safety and risk prevention measures, rooms must be guaranteed in which privacy is protected, with particular reference to preferably single bedrooms and adequate areas for everyday life and leisure.

### 3. *Social and Relational Inclusion*

This includes services related to the enjoyment of free time, the broader participation in multiple dimensions of daily life, the strengthening of social ties and relationships, the support of work inclusion or learning and transport and social mobility.

### 4. *Home Automation*

Support should be provided for new technologies (e.g. home automation technologies, technologies for social connectivity), which concern the safety of users and autonomy in the home environment (AAL) and contribute to combating all forms of segregation.

### 5. *System Actions*

This includes forms of active involvement of the associative world and of the reference community, as well as the development of strategies that make it possible to guarantee independence for as long as possible through community welfare interventions and new forms of inclusion on a community basis.

It is essential to underline that each region must guarantee, within the regional planning of interventions, a diffusion of the projects, in terms of the number of territorial areas involved and a minimum amount of funding for each area, which is equal to EUR 100 000. This is set out to ensure a certain degree of homogeneity and to avoid excessive territorial differentiation in the use of RRP resources. With

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<sup>29</sup> Guidelines for Independent Living Projects, adopted with the Prime Ministerial Decree of 21 November 2019, available at:

[https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/do/atto/serie\\_generale/caricaPdf?cdimg=20A0063900600010110001&dgu=2020-02-04&art.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=2020-02-04&art.codiceRedazionale=20A00639&art.num=1&art.tiposerie=SG](https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/do/atto/serie_generale/caricaPdf?cdimg=20A0063900600010110001&dgu=2020-02-04&art.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=2020-02-04&art.codiceRedazionale=20A00639&art.num=1&art.tiposerie=SG).

Directorial Decree No. 98 of 9 May 2022,<sup>30</sup> the lists of the ATS admitted to financing were approved. The next few months will be crucial for implementing these projects, which all go towards improving the social inclusion of people with disabilities from multiple points of view.

From this perspective, it is important to remember the adoption of the Directive to the administrations owners of projects, reforms and measures on disability<sup>31</sup> by the Minister for Disabilities. It constitutes an action of address that recognises a normative framework and a set of principles concerning disability. The principles are: accessibility (e.g. Article 9 of the UN CRPD), along with the removal of architectural barriers and the specific reference to the services in favour of the people with disabilities; ‘Design for All’, encompassing seven principles (equity, flexibility, simplicity and intuitiveness, access to information, fault tolerance, physical exertion and versatile use of space); promotion of independent life and support of the self-determination; and the principle of non-discrimination, deriving from the equal social dignity principle and the necessity of total development of the person. Finally, the Directive provides for a specific system for monitoring its effectiveness, also concerning the NRRP. The monitoring action was entrusted to the National Observatory on the condition of people with disabilities (NOD), established under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

### ***National RRP and the Disability Reform***

In December 2021, Law No. 227 of 22 December 2021, ‘Delegation to the Government in matters of disability’ introduced reforms affecting many areas, including:

- the definition of the condition of disability;
- the introduction of the basic assessment, by which this condition can be ascertained;
- the introduction of multidimensional assessment, aimed at accompanying the adoption and implementation of the individual and personalised life project;
- the computerisation of evaluation and archiving processes;
- the requalification of some aspects of the public administration in the sense of greater inclusion and accessibility; and
- the institution of the National Disability Supervisor.<sup>32</sup>

The Government has until August 2023 to adopt the implementing legislative decrees to achieve these ambitious goals. A further 24 months from when each legislative decree enters into force will then be available to take the corrective actions that are deemed appropriate.

Point 1 is crucial because, in the Italian legal system, there is no standardised procedure that attests a legal condition of disability, from which the attribution of

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<sup>30</sup> See: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/normative/Documents/2022/DD-98-del-09052022-Avviso1-PNRR.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Available at: <https://www.osservatoriodisabilita.gov.it/it/pnrr-e-disabilita/la-direttiva/>.

<sup>32</sup> See G. Arconzo, *Legge delega 227/2021 in tema di disabilità: analisi e prospettive future (parte I)*, in *welforum.it*, <https://welforum.it/la-legge-delega-n-227-del-2021-in-tema-di-disabilita-analisi-e-prospettive-future-parte-i/>; F. Pesaresi, *Approvata la Legge delega sulla disabilità (I parte)*, <https://welforum.it/approvata-la-legge-delega-sulla-disabilita-prima-parte/>.

certain rights or benefits directly derives. At present, the relevant certifications are those of civil invalidity (Law No. 118 of 1971) and disability (Law No. 104 of 1992). To this end, Article 2 (2) (a), of the law identifies some principles that the Government will have to follow in adopting the respective implementing decree. In particular, it is worth noting the reference to Article 1(2) of the UN CRPD, according to which the concept of disability requires the interaction between physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments and various barriers that can hinder the full participation in society of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis. Furthermore, the enabling law assigns the Government the task of introducing the definitions of 'functioning profile' and 'reasonable accommodation'. In both cases, the enabling law provides that these definitions are consistent with the provisions of the UN Convention; concerning the operating profile, it is required that the Government also take the international classification of functioning (ICF) and international classification of diseases (ICD) into consideration.

With reference to points 2 and 3, the Government will have to approve legislative decrees aimed at modifying and rationalising the current processes for disability assessment, as indicated in the two-year action programme for the promotion of rights and integration of people with disabilities (Presidential Decree of 12 October 2017). In particular, the Government will have to: (a) introduce the basic assessment and (b) regulate the phases and contents of the multidimensional assessment, which will lead to the drafting of the individual life plan.

The first will lead to the assessment of the condition of disability and will replace all currently existing evaluation processes. This certification will constitute the prerequisite for the subsequent multidimensional assessment necessary for preparing the individual life plan. The multidimensional assessment, according to Article 1 (2) (c) of Law No. 227/2021:

- must be carried out by a multidimensional evaluation unit composed to ensure the integration of the interventions of taking charge, evaluation and planning by the competent administrations in social, health and social care matters;
- must ensure the participation of the persons with disabilities and those who represent them in the development of an individualised, personalised, participatory life plan; for this participation to be effective, it is necessary to ensure the adoption of the essential reasonable accommodation to allow the effective identification and expression of the will of the interested party, even when it is subject to legal protection measures or needs very high-intensity support; and
- must aim to achieve the goals of the person with disabilities according to his or her wishes, expectations and choices, identifying the barriers and facilitations that affect all the life contexts of the person with disabilities.

At the time of writing this report the legislative decrees are being drawn up.

***Energy crisis and disability***

Finally, it should also be noted that Budget Law No. 234 of 30 December 2021<sup>33</sup> provided an extraordinary bonus to compensate for expensive energy costs and to help families in conditions of physical discomfort. The bonus allows families in which there are people in conditions of physical discomfort, with serious and certified diseases that require medical-therapeutic electrical appliances powered by electricity for life support, to get a discount on electricity bills.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See: <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2021-12-30;234!vig=2022-09-14>.

<sup>34</sup> See: <https://www.disabili.com/legge-e-fisco/articoli-legge-e-fisco/sconti-in-bolletta-disabili-quali-risparmi-ci-sono-tra-agevolazioni-e-sconti>.

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

In 2016, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Italy:

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

'56. The Committee recommends that the State party implement an action plan – with sufficient resources, timelines and specific goals – aimed at monitoring the implementation of laws, decrees and regulations to improve the quality of inclusive education in classrooms, support provisions and teacher training across all levels. It also recommends that the State party be guided by article 24 of the Convention, including its general comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education, in implementing targets 4.5 and 4 (a) of the Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training, and build and upgrade education facilities that are disability-sensitive and safe.

58. The Committee recommends that the State party monitor and provide highly qualified sign language interpreters for any deaf child who requests such assistance, and to desist from recommending general communication assistants as an exclusive alternative.

60. The committee recommends that the State party undertake, through legislative and other measures, including the newly drafted Decree on education, to guarantee the availability of accessible learning materials and the provision of assistive technology in a timely manner in order to ensure inclusive and quality education in the mainstream setting.'

There have been no significant CRPD developments since the concluding observations and the state's response in 2016-2017. The next state party report is due in May 2023.

### 5.1 Summary of the educational situation of persons with disabilities

EU-SILC 2020 estimates concerning educational attainment should be treated with caution due to relatively wide confidence intervals but they consistently indicate disability equality gaps (an average of 2-3 years provides a more stable indication). Table 16 indicates early school leaving rates disaggregated by disability status in Italy for 2019, as the 2020 microdata was not available for analysis in preparation of this report. Youths with disabilities (aged 18-24) are significantly more likely to leave school 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, also in 2019. Persons with disabilities (aged 30-34) are less likely to complete tertiary education than their peers (and this is reinforced in the wider age range 30-39).

The ISTAT 2020-2021<sup>35</sup> report notes that in academic year (AY) 2020/21, the number of students with disabilities enrolled in Italian schools has increased (+4 000, 3.6 %), while the number of students with disabilities excluded from distance learning has fallen (-2.3 %). The number of support teachers has increased (+4.4 %), but one-third have not received the proper training and 20 % are assigned behind schedule. Yet, the accessibility to school structures is still limited (37.5 %), with the lowest accessibility levels in the South (28.4 %). Most (75 %) of the schools are equipped with computer stations suitable to the need of students with disabilities,

<sup>35</sup> ISTAT (2022) Scholastic Inclusion of Students with Disabilities – School Year 2020-2021, <https://www.istat.it/en/archivio/266380>.

while 98 % of the schools have satisfied the demands for computer devices by students with disabilities. The level of autonomy and communication assistants is still low in the South (with one assistant for every 5.4 students, in contrast to the national average of one assistant for every 4.6 students).

The Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR) 2022<sup>36</sup> report observes<sup>37</sup> that the number of students with disabilities enrolled in public universities has been increasing constantly (see Table A in Annex 7.3.1). Table B shows the distribution for each type of course offered.

The attested number of students with disabilities and a specific learning disability (SLD) in AY 2019-2020 amounts, in total, to 36 810 (2.3 % of the overall number of students enrolled in Italian universities). Among them, 26 144 are enrolled in three-year courses of study, 5 515 in master's classes and 1 416 in single-cycle courses. A total of 466 students are enrolled in different kind of courses, while there is no information regarding the remaining 372 students. The majority of the students with disabilities and SLD thus appear to achieve only a three-year degree. Yet, 94 students with disabilities are enrolled in PhD courses, showing that even students in disadvantaged positions can reach the highest levels of study. The vast majority of students with disabilities and SLD chose public universities (89.7 %). Table C<sup>38</sup> shows the geographical distribution of students with disabilities: 33.1 % in North-Western universities; 21.2 % in Central universities; 19.6 % in Southern ones; 16.2 % in North-Eastern universities; and 7.7 % on the islands. Most students with disabilities and SLD are enrolled in social sciences fields (35.4 %), while 30.1 % are enrolled in natural sciences areas and 23 % in humanities.

## 5.2 Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see the 2022 National Reform Programme, the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Italy and the second biennial action programme for the promotion of the rights and integration of people with disabilities.

Within the Italian RRP relevant policies are proposed for the education sector. Investments in digitisation are greatly enhanced, together with the removal of architectural barriers, especially in the South. It is also worth incentivising the development of smart working to be in accordance with Point 1 of the European Pillar of Social Rights ('Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market'). Finally, as shown from the second biennial action programme for the promotion of the rights and integration of people with disabilities, more investment is needed in digital inclusion as a tool towards the more general social, political and cultural inclusion of people with disabilities. This is the direction taken by the Italian '*Piano Triennale per l'Informatica nella Pubblica Amministrazione 2019-2021*'.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> See: [https://www.anvur.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ANVUR-Rapporto-disabilita\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.anvur.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ANVUR-Rapporto-disabilita_WEB.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> ANVUR (2022) *Biennial Report*, p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> ANVUR (2022) *Biennial Report*, p. 30.

<sup>39</sup> See: [https://www.agid.gov.it/sites/default/files/repository\\_files/Piano-Triennale-ICT-2019-2021.pdf](https://www.agid.gov.it/sites/default/files/repository_files/Piano-Triennale-ICT-2019-2021.pdf).

The Italian 2022 RRP identifies investment priorities, especially concerning the relationship between disabilities and school. Mission 1 is dedicated to digitalisation, innovation, competitiveness, culture and tourism, and aims to reduce the structural gaps in competitiveness, productivity and digitalisation. The first part of Mission 1 addresses the digitalisation of the Italian Public Administration, which is the only solution suited to drastically shorten the distances between public entities (and schools among them) and individuals with disabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised this necessity. Digital infrastructures, services and platforms will be developed. Access to the labour market and digital competencies of students with disabilities will be facilitated. As far as schools are concerned, the 'Connected School' plan will be completed to ensure a fibre connection to the remaining 9 000 school buildings (about 20 % of the total amount). Italy is now the 25th country in digitalisation, because of both low digital competence and the scarcity of advanced technologies, such as cloud technology. What is needed for the future is a 'cloud first' approach oriented to the migration of data and the consolidation of data centres distributed in Italian territory. This 'once only' approach is to be adopted to provide citizens with all the necessary information once and for all, reducing time and costs. The 'Very High Capacity Network' will be developed to quicken and expand connectivity. More than 45 % of the ultra-broadband will be built in regions in the South to reduce territorial gaps. These measures are to be taken in response to the challenges deriving from the European Semester country-specific recommendations (CSRs) – in particular, the two recommendations concerning school and instruction: to improve the distance learning method and to strengthen digital competences.

Mission 4 of the RRP provides specific dispositions concerning people with disabilities within the scope of the measures to reduce the territorial gap between the North and South (see above for relevant data) in secondary schools. Measures are to be taken to improve the accessibility of schools and to incentivise school attendance among students with disabilities. According to a recent Minister of Education survey (MIUR DGCASIS), there is a basic competence gap compared to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average; another gap divides the North from the South: the former is closer than the latter to the OECD average. In particular, special monitoring and biennial support for the subjects Italian, English and mathematics have been proposed to reduce this gap.

In the sections of the RRP dedicated to the modernisation of schools, there is no specific reference to students with disabilities, although students with disabilities represent 3.05 % of the overall scholar population.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, the condition of students with disabilities will be indirectly improved owing to the following measures within the Mission 'Instruction and Research': quantitative and qualitative improvement of instruction and training services; improvement of the recruiting processes and the structure of teacher training; investments in scholar infrastructures; PhD reforms; and research, innovation and technology support.<sup>41</sup> Another essential step to be taken is strengthening school infrastructure for athletics and reforming the system for teacher recruitment. Finally, another significant point focuses on securing and requalifying school buildings against environmental risks.

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<sup>40</sup> See: <https://www.superando.it/2021/04/30/il-piano-nazionale-di-ripresa-e-resilienza-e-inclusione-scolastica/>.

<sup>41</sup> See: <https://www.superando.it/2021/04/30/il-piano-nazionale-di-ripresa-e-resilienza-e-inclusione-scolastica/>.

It should also be noted that in April 2022, the Decree of 10 January 2022 was approved concerning 'Provisions on the profession of the interpreter in the language of Italian signs and Italian tactile sign language'.<sup>42</sup> The Decree defines the role of LIS interpreters, regulates training by setting up a degree course, establishes the list of interpreters in Italian sign language at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and allocates resources to encourage the activation of degree courses.

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<sup>42</sup> See: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2022/04/06/22A02141/sg>.

## 6 Investment priorities in relation to disability

As already underlined, Italy's RRP<sup>43</sup> affirms that:

'The second component (of the Plan), 'Social Infrastructures, Families, Communities and the Voluntary Sector', aims at addressing situations of social and economic fragility to support families and parenthood. One specific line of intervention is designed for people with disabilities or persons who are not self-sufficient and provides for an increase in infrastructure and the provision of services and local assistance networks, thereby accelerating the deinstitutionalisation process by providing paths of autonomy that are reinforced by integrated services of homecare assistance. It also intervenes with projects aimed at alleviating the main social vulnerabilities in terms of material poverty and housing deprivation by strengthening social services and boosting social housing initiatives. It also seeks to conduct urban regeneration initiatives as well as the re-functionalisation of the existing building stock'.

Inter alia, the plan mentions disability with regards to digital skills, social infrastructure and the accessibility of buildings. In the last few months, the Italian Government has begun to publish notices for the activation of projects funded by the RRP.<sup>44</sup>

The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 (ESF+2021-2027), approved in 2020, underlined that 'integration and inclusion are key for people coming to Europe' and provides measures regarding the inclusion of migrant persons with disabilities. In particular, the ESF+2021-2027 plan affirms that 'migrants with disabilities can also face multiple forms of discrimination', that 'migrant children with disabilities need additional support to participate in education on equal basis with others', and that 'the challenges migrants with disabilities face should be addressed so that they can participate in the labour market'. In a more general way, the ESF+2021-2027 plan affirms that 'technological innovation opens up new opportunities to modernise and facilitate access to integration and other services'; the EU Commission will make 'the most of EU support regarding internet access, purchase of digital equipment and e-learning applications and platforms for schools and in particular for students from disadvantaged groups and for students and educators with disabilities'.

Recently, the EU Commission approved the '*Accordo di partenariato Italia 2021-2027 – CCI 2021IT16FFPA001*'<sup>45</sup> on 15 July 2022; the document mentions persons with disabilities affirming that:

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<sup>43</sup> Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/italys-recovery-and-resilience-plan\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/italys-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en).

<sup>44</sup> See: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 'Avviso 1/2022 - PNRR - Next generation Eu - Proposte di intervento per l'inclusione sociale di soggetti fragili e vulnerabili', 1 April 2022, available at: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/Amministrazione-Trasparente-new/Bandi-gara-e-contratti/Pagine/Avviso-pubblico-1-2022-PNRR.aspx>.

<sup>45</sup> See: [https://ance.it/wp-content/uploads/allegati/2022\\_07\\_15\\_Accordo-di-Partenariato\\_2021-2027.pdf](https://ance.it/wp-content/uploads/allegati/2022_07_15_Accordo-di-Partenariato_2021-2027.pdf).

‘The interventions of the EU funds will contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan on the European Social Pillar in compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and with the strategic guidelines, objectives and operational suggestions of the various initiatives defined at European level. In this framework, the promotion of gender equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups through a general non-discriminatory approach, will be guaranteed’. (p. 18)

Moreover, the compliance of the funded interventions with the UN CRPD will be evaluated by EU Commission.

At the national level, the Ministry of Health is going to approve the ‘National Programme for Equity in Health 2021-2027’ (*‘Programma Nazionale Equità nella Salute’*),<sup>46</sup> which targets seven Southern regions (Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia and Sicily) and aims to facilitate access to health and social health services for vulnerable persons; it has to be stressed that mental health is one of the intervention areas for this programme. Moreover, the Italian Government submitted to the EU Commission the ‘National Programme for Inclusion and the Fight Against Poverty 2021-2027’ (*‘Programma Nazionale Inclusione e lotta alla povertà 2021-2027’*) on 1 July 2022, but, to date, the plan has not yet been approved.

The Italian regions are starting to approve and submit their plans for the use of the resources of the ESF+2021-2027 to EU Commission. Examples include:

- The Tuscany Region plan was approved by EU Commission on 19 August 2022.<sup>47</sup> The Tuscany Regional Plan (PR Toscana FSE+2021-2027)<sup>48</sup> affirms that it is compliant with the EU Strategy 2021-2030 and promotes the full right to education, training and work.
- Similarly, the Lombardy Region’s proposed plan<sup>49</sup> affirms that the region aims to reduce inequalities by strengthening support policies for families, and states that strategic target No. 4 will ‘Promote equal access to high quality and inclusive education and training, particularly for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care, through general and vocational education and training, up to level services and adult education and learning, including by facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for people with disabilities’ (OS4).

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<sup>46</sup> See:

<https://www.pnrr.salute.gov.it/portale/rapportiInternazionali/dettaglioContenutiRapportiInternazionali.jsp?lingua=italiano&id=5797&area=rapporti&menu=programmi>.

<sup>47</sup> See: <https://www.regione.toscana.it/por-fse-2014-2020/verso-la-programmazione-2021-2027>.

<sup>48</sup> The Tuscany Plan (*‘Programma SFC2021 finanziato a titolo del FESR (obiettivo Investimenti a favore dell’occupazione e della crescita), del FSE+, del Fondo di coesione, del JTF e del FEAMPA’*) is available at: <https://www.regione.toscana.it/documents/10180/12973382/sfc2021-PRG-2021IT05SFPR015-1.1.pdf/36d2a65b-56fd-10f0-90ce-f3e6cb551ad0?t=1661938696984>.

<sup>49</sup> The Lombardy proposed plan is available at:

[https://www.ue.regione.lombardia.it/wps/wcm/connect/965c7ca4-2b84-412c-ab6e-afc6529da0bf/dgr+6214\\_2022.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT\\_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-965c7ca4-2b84-412c-ab6e-afc6529da0bf-n.WhzjB](https://www.ue.regione.lombardia.it/wps/wcm/connect/965c7ca4-2b84-412c-ab6e-afc6529da0bf/dgr+6214_2022.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-965c7ca4-2b84-412c-ab6e-afc6529da0bf-n.WhzjB). The plan is updated to 29 March 2022.

- The plan proposed by the Region of Veneto,<sup>50</sup> and approved by the EU Commission on 1 August 2022,<sup>51</sup> mentions persons with disabilities with regard to public transport, education, employability and innovative social interventions.
- The Region of Campania approved its proposed plan in April 2022.<sup>52</sup> The proposed plan mentions previous initiatives regarding persons with disabilities (e.g. the project *Intese Territoriali di Inclusione Attiva*) and affirms that the Campania Region will support the inclusion and autonomy of people with disabilities, ‘also by encouraging measures aimed at promoting the organisation of suitable work environments’; moreover, the Campania plan highlights the promotion of an accessible education and the need for innovative social services, including through the exploitation of assets seized from organised crime.
- The Puglia Region Plan,<sup>53</sup> approved in April 2022,<sup>54</sup> provides measures regarding education and aiming to improve the accessibility and adequacy of social protection systems, as well as independent living paths for all, including people with disabilities, through the development of community-based services and the integration of health, social and long-term care services.
- The plan adopted by the Region of Sardinia,<sup>55</sup> approved by the EU Commission on 25 August 2022,<sup>56</sup> highlights the employment difficulties of persons with disabilities in Sardinia and affirms the need to guarantee the right to education of people with disabilities, in collaboration with third sector subjects.

Like other European countries, Italy is facing the prospect of an energy crunch. Italy is therefore providing measures regarding an ‘energy bonus’ for persons with severe physical disabilities<sup>57</sup> and the ‘National Integrated Plan for Climate and Energy 2021-2030’ (*Piano nazionale integrato per il clima e l’energia 2021-2030*),<sup>58</sup> taking into account ‘energy poverty’, which mentions ‘people with physical discomfort’; but disability mainstreaming must be considered in any intervention and investment related to the future of energy.

<sup>50</sup> See: <https://programmazione-ue-2021-2027.regione.veneto.it/fse>.

<sup>51</sup> See: <https://bur.regione.veneto.it/BurVServices/pubblica/DettaglioDgr.aspx?id=483466>.

<sup>52</sup> See: [https://fse.regione.campania.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Allegato\\_199775.pdf#page28](https://fse.regione.campania.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Allegato_199775.pdf#page28).

<sup>53</sup> See: [https://www.regione.puglia.it/documents/52397/1194219/PR+2021\\_2027.pdf/b80a06a5-3f03-0b14-48ff-7d6c3976c8d1?t=1651831324130](https://www.regione.puglia.it/documents/52397/1194219/PR+2021_2027.pdf/b80a06a5-3f03-0b14-48ff-7d6c3976c8d1?t=1651831324130).

<sup>54</sup> See: [https://www.regione.puglia.it/documents/52397/1194219/DEL\\_556\\_2022.pdf/5de3ee20-0f70-5ef7-2d78-081b2f260051?t=1652428397401](https://www.regione.puglia.it/documents/52397/1194219/DEL_556_2022.pdf/5de3ee20-0f70-5ef7-2d78-081b2f260051?t=1652428397401).

<sup>55</sup> See: [http://www.sardegnaprogrammazione.it/documenti/35\\_146\\_20220901092352.pdf](http://www.sardegnaprogrammazione.it/documenti/35_146_20220901092352.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> See: [https://www.regione.sardegna.it/j/v/13?s=440110&v=2&c=3&t=1#:~:text=Il%20PR%20Sardegna%20FSE%2B%202021,%25\)%3B%20Occupazione%20Giovanile%20\(16%25\)](https://www.regione.sardegna.it/j/v/13?s=440110&v=2&c=3&t=1#:~:text=Il%20PR%20Sardegna%20FSE%2B%202021,%25)%3B%20Occupazione%20Giovanile%20(16%25)).

<sup>57</sup> See: [https://www.arera.it/it/consumatori/ele/bonusele\\_df.htm#diritto](https://www.arera.it/it/consumatori/ele/bonusele_df.htm#diritto).

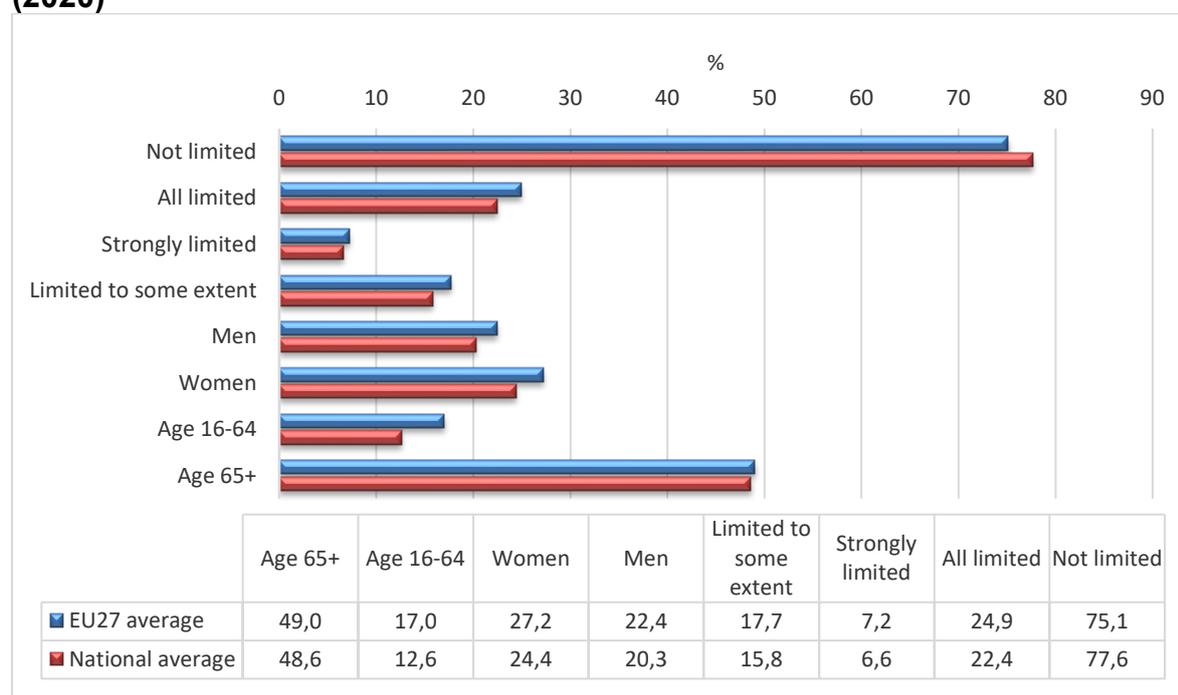
<sup>58</sup> See: [https://www.mise.gov.it/images/stories/documenti/PNIEC\\_finale\\_17012020.pdf](https://www.mise.gov.it/images/stories/documenti/PNIEC_finale_17012020.pdf).

## 7 Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester

See also disability data published in the Eurostat database<sup>59</sup> and statistical reports.<sup>60</sup>

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’.<sup>61</sup>

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



Source: EU-SILC 2020 Release April 2022

In subsequent tables, these data are used to indicate ‘disability’ equality gaps and trends relevant to the analytical chapters – for the labour market, social policies and healthcare, and education – by comparing outcomes for persons who report and do not report ‘activity limitations’.<sup>62</sup> National estimates for Italy are compared with EU27 mean averages for the most recent year.<sup>63</sup> Some data was missing for Italy in 2020.

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

<sup>60</sup> Eurostat (2019) Disability Statistics: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability_statistics).

<sup>61</sup> The EU-SILC survey questions are contained in the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM), [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum\\_European\\_Health\\_Module\\_\(MEHM\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_(MEHM)).

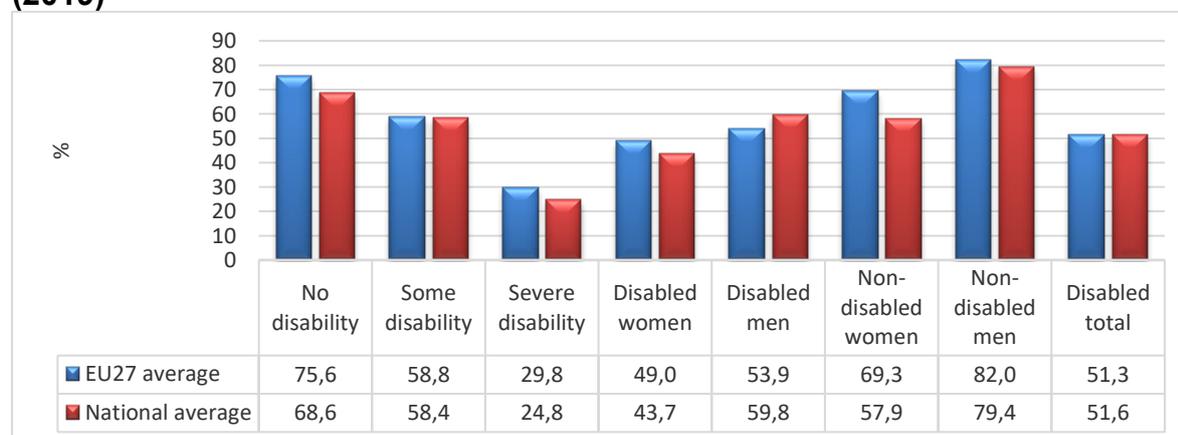
<sup>62</sup> This methodology was developed in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at: <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>.

<sup>63</sup> The exit of the United Kingdom from the EU changed the EU average. EU27 averages have been affected also by time series breaks in other large countries, such as Germany.

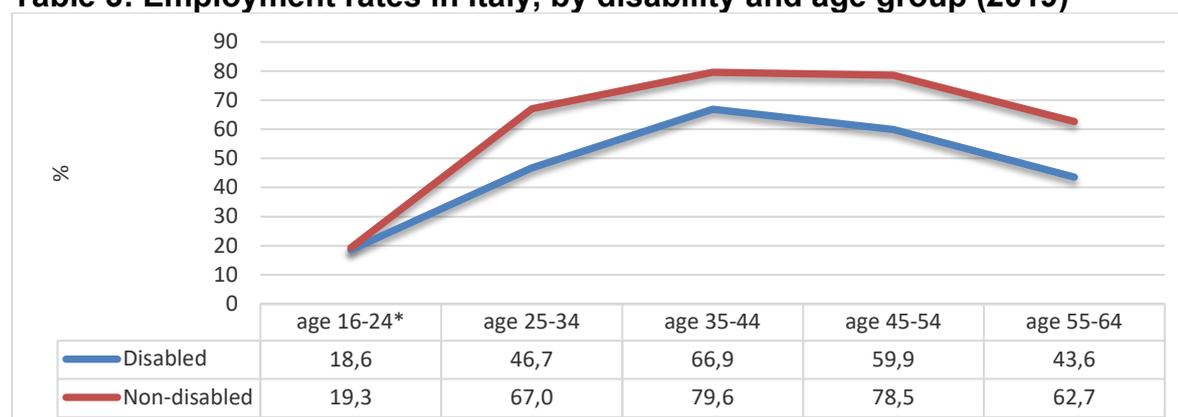
## 7.1 Data relevant to disability and the labour market

Microdata from EU-SILC were not available for analysis of labour market indicators in Italy in 2020, so it was not possible to update these parts of the statistical annex.

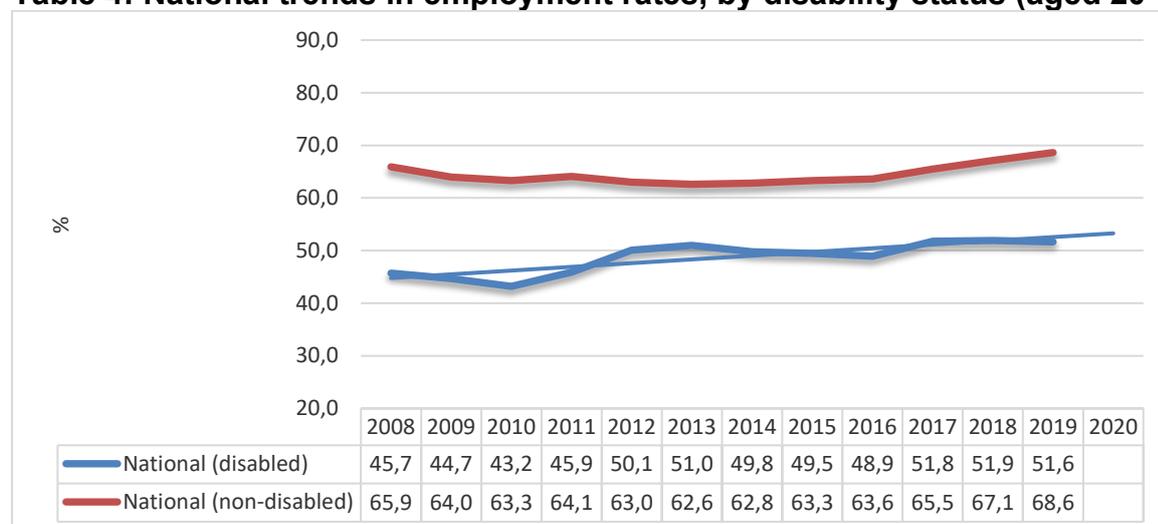
**Table 2: EU and Italy employment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)**



**Table 3: Employment rates in Italy, by disability and age group (2019)**



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

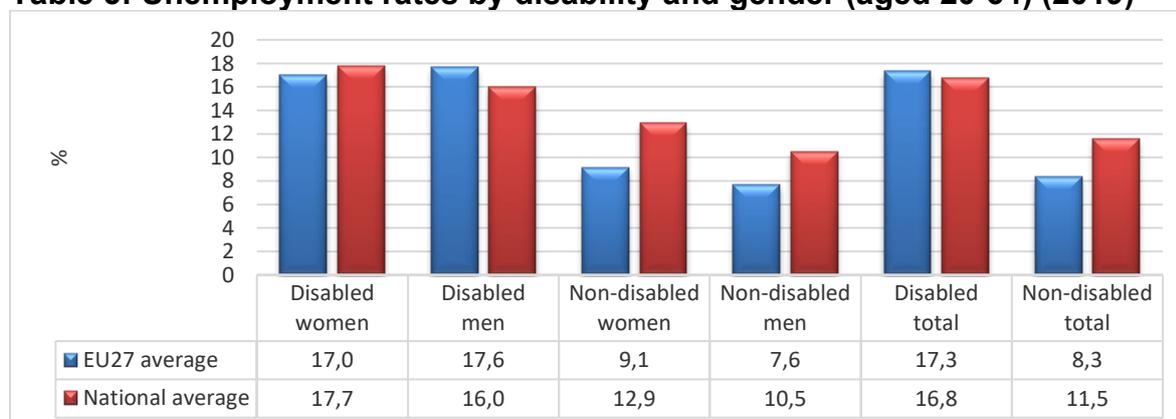


Source: EU-SILC 2020 Release April 2022 (and preceding UDBs)

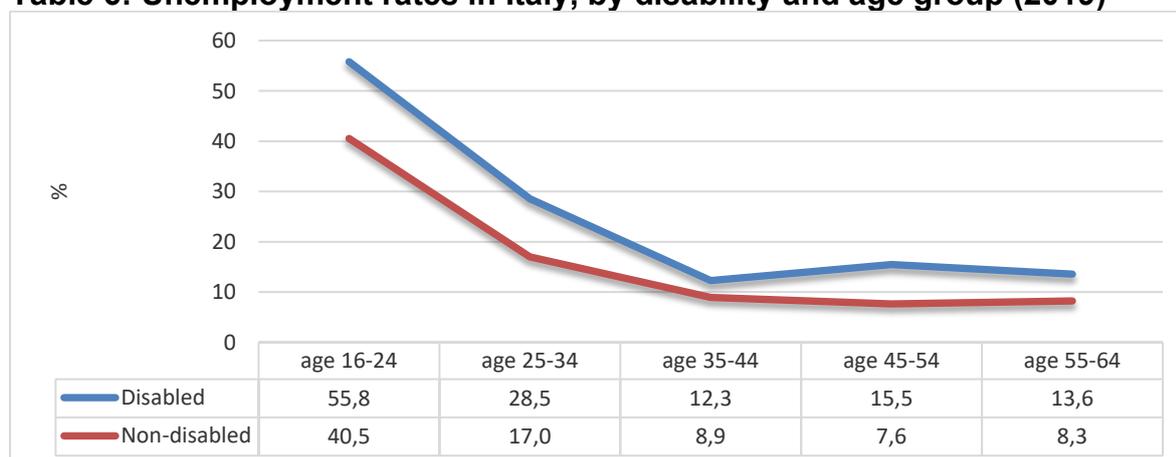
Note: Microdata concerning employment status was not available for Germany and Italy in this data release, which affects the EU27 average (which is therefore estimated).

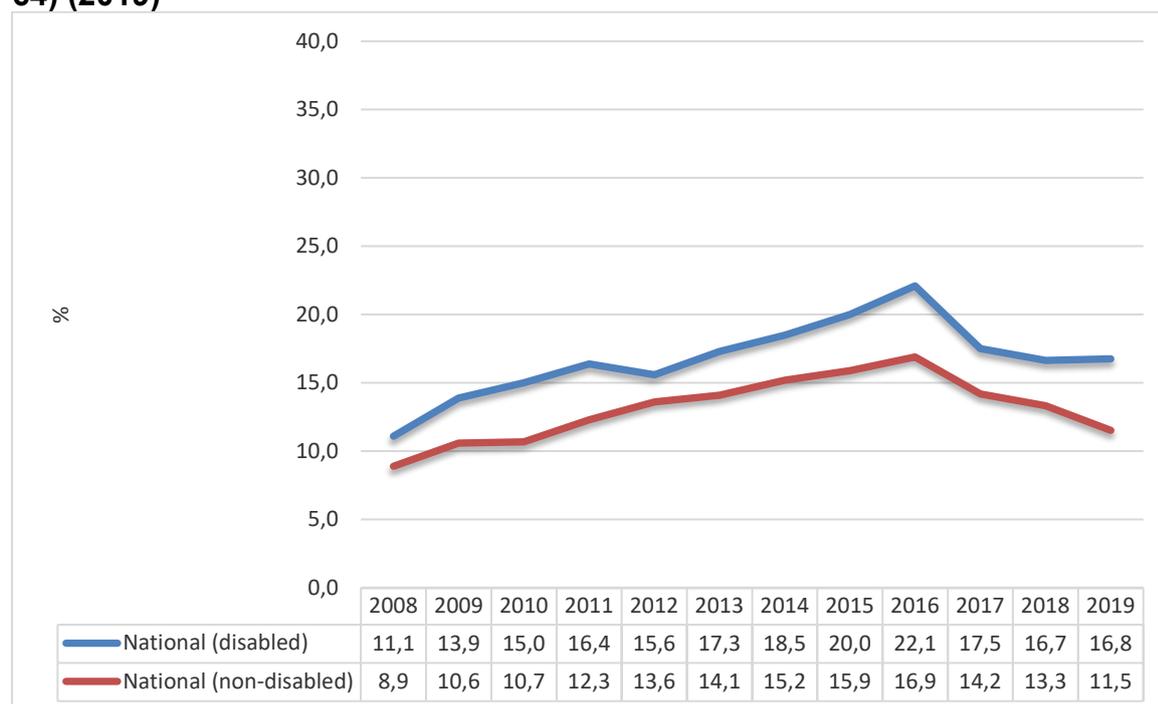
### 7.1.1 Unemployment

**Table 5: Unemployment rates by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)**



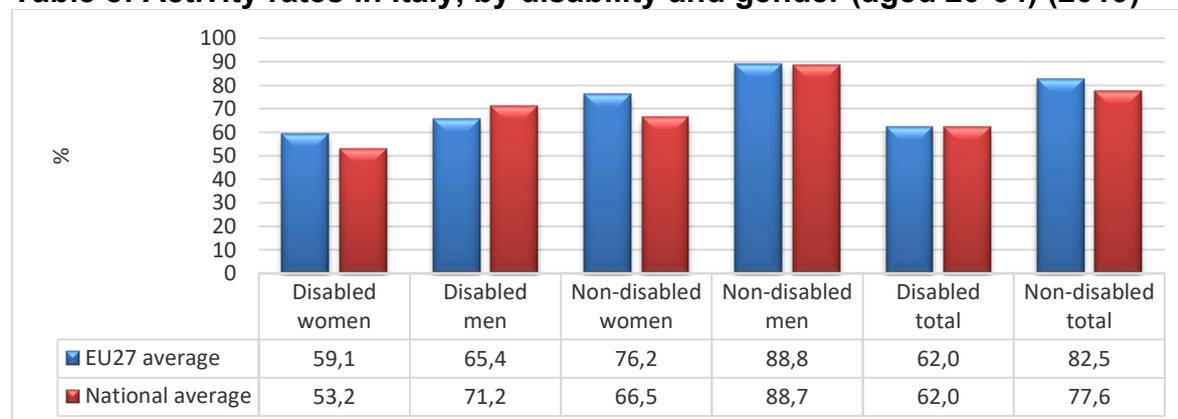
**Table 6: Unemployment rates in Italy, by disability and age group (2019)**

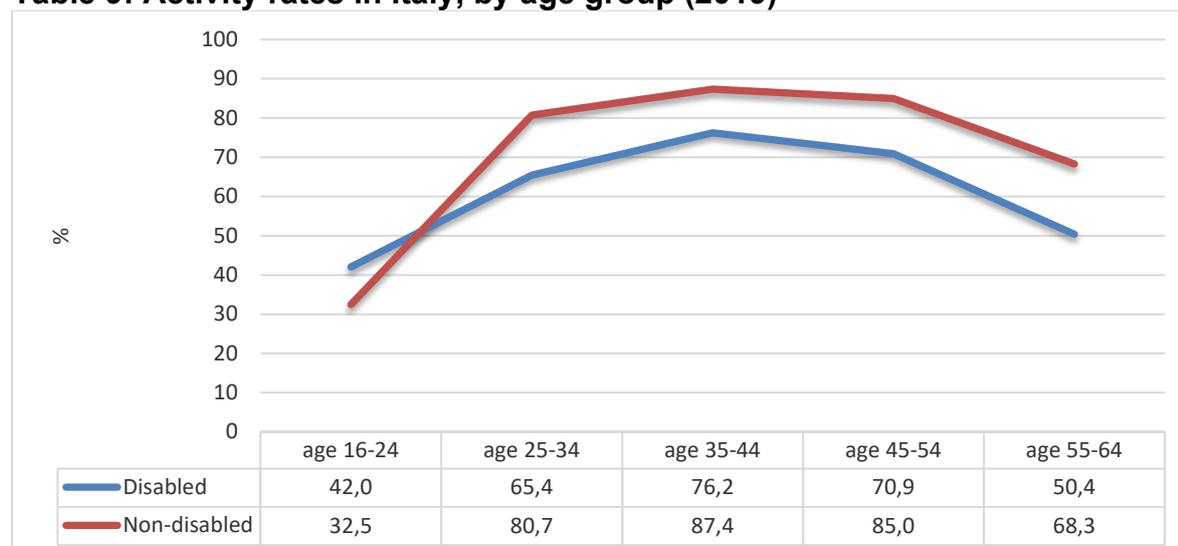
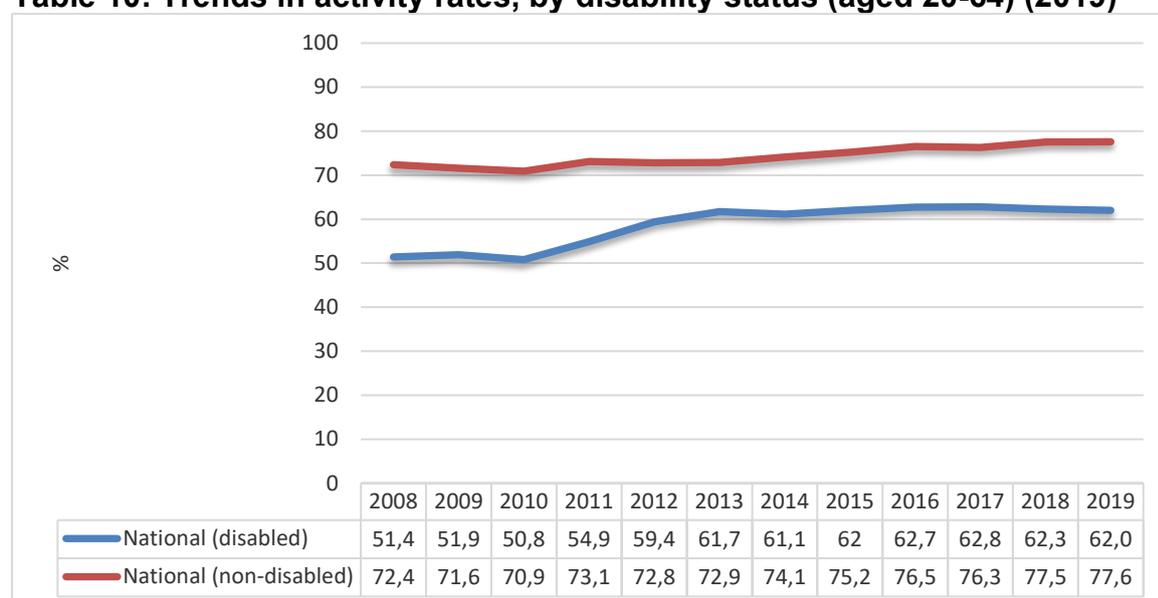


**Table 7: National trends in unemployment rate, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)**


Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

### 7.1.2 Economic activity

**Table 8: Activity rates in Italy, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)**


**Table 9: Activity rates in Italy, by age group (2019)****Table 10: Trends in activity rates, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)**

Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

### 7.1.3 Alternative sources of labour market data in Italy

Disability data is not yet available from the core European Labour Force Survey but labour market indicators for Italy were disaggregated from ad hoc modules conducted in 2001 and 2011. These can be found in the Eurostat disability database.<sup>64</sup>

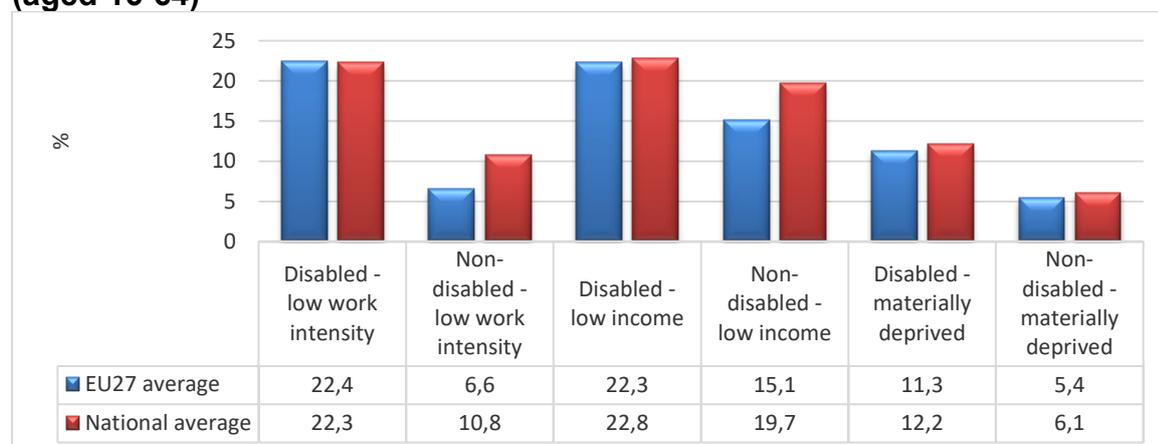
Disability employment data were last published by ISTAT for the period 2016-2017, in the e-book *Knowing the world of disability: people, relations and institutions* (see Section 3.1).<sup>65</sup>

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

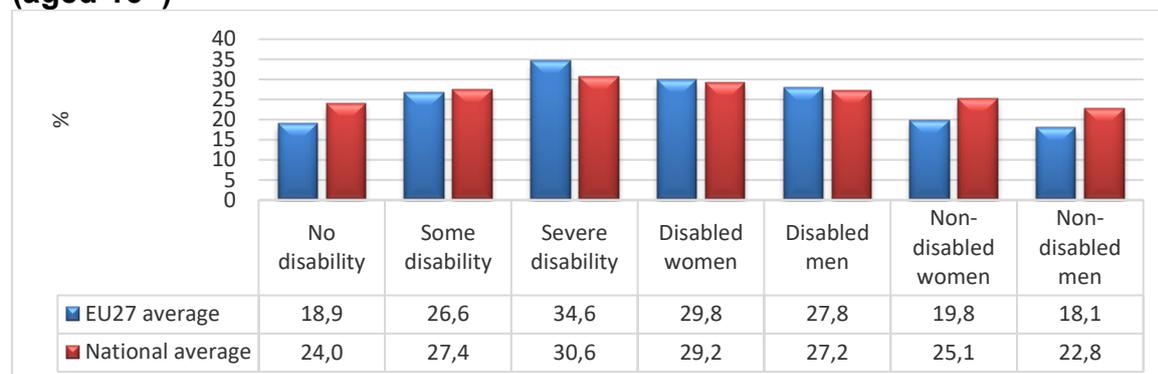
<sup>65</sup> See: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/236301>.

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

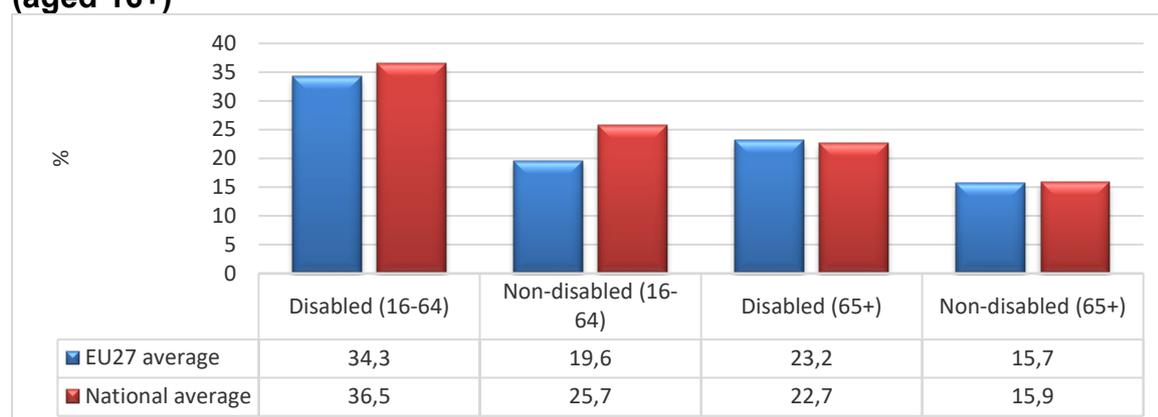
**Table 11: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and risk (aged 16-64)<sup>66</sup>**



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

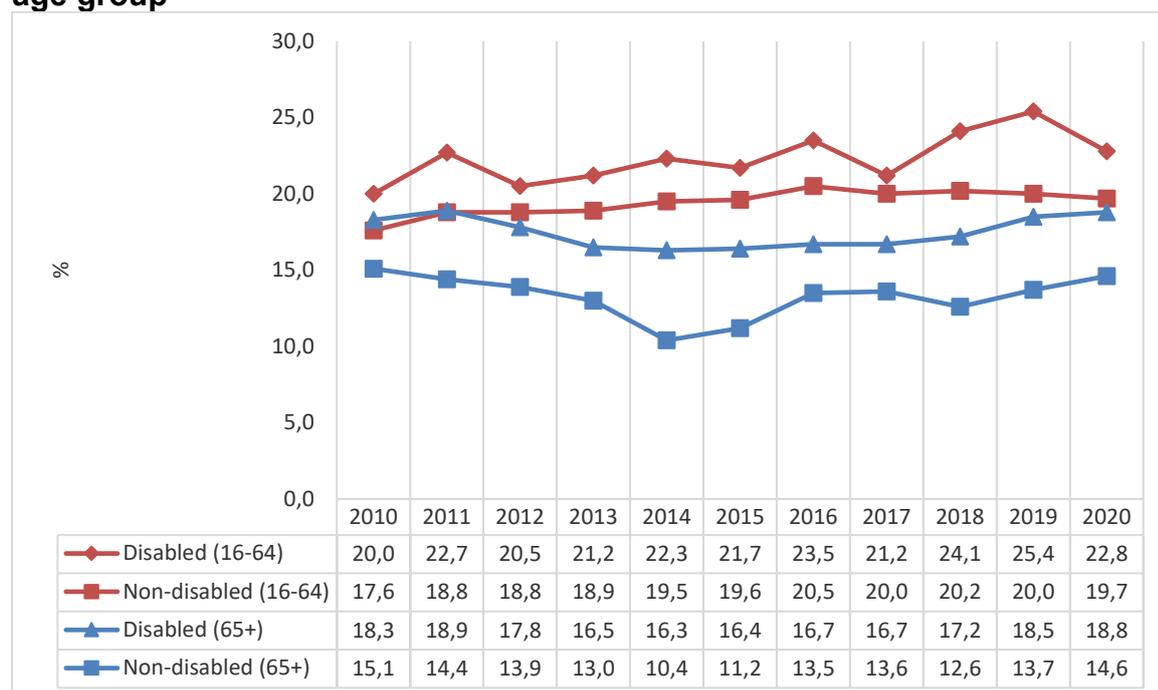


**Table 13: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)**



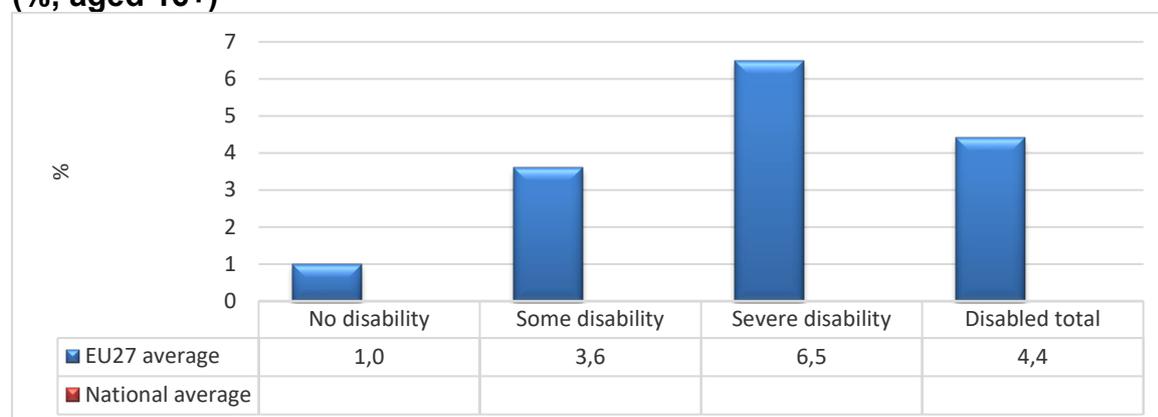
Source: EU-SILC 2020 Release April 2022 (and previous UDB)

<sup>66</sup> Aged 16-59 for Low work intensity.

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

Source: Eurostat Health Database [[hlth\\_dpe020](#)] – People at risk of poverty

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

**Table 15: Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination, 3-year average (% , aged 16+)**

Source: Eurostat Health Database [[hlth\\_dh030](#)] – 'Too expensive or too far to travel or waiting list'

Note: EU mean averages are skewed by high values in a minority of countries within disability groups but median averages for the total disability and no disability groups in 2020 are consistent with the 3-year mean values. No data was available for Italy in 2020 (but provisional updates may be available on the Eurostat database).

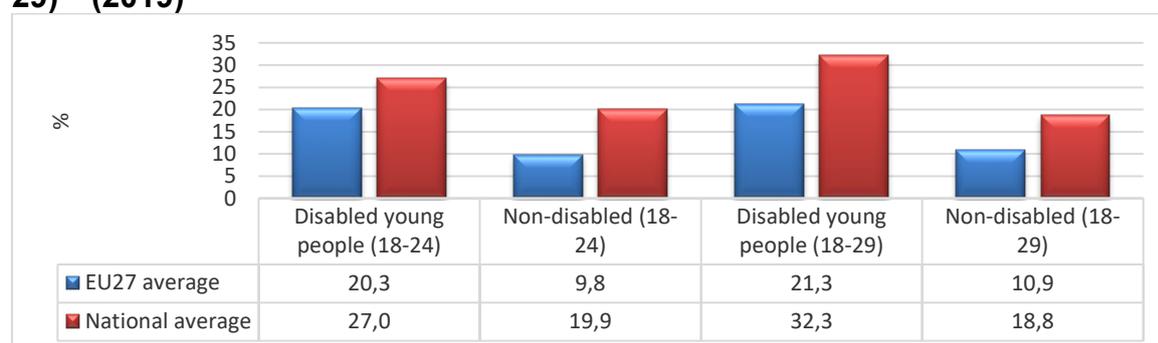
## 7.2.1 Alternative sources of poverty or healthcare data in Italy

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.<sup>67</sup>

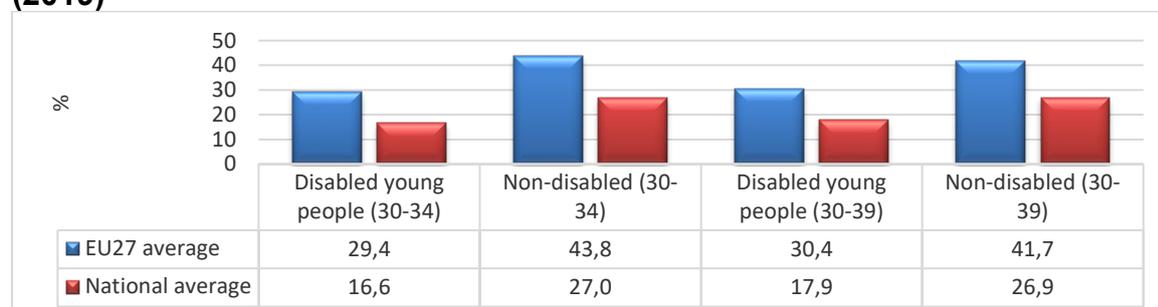
## 7.3 EU data relevant to disability and education

Microdata from EU-SILC were not available for analysis of labour market indicators in Italy in 2020, so it was not possible to update these parts of the statistical annex.

**Table 24: Early school leaving rates, by disability status (aged 18-24 and 18-29)<sup>68</sup> (2019)**



**Table 25: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (aged 30-34 and 30-39) (2019)**



Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

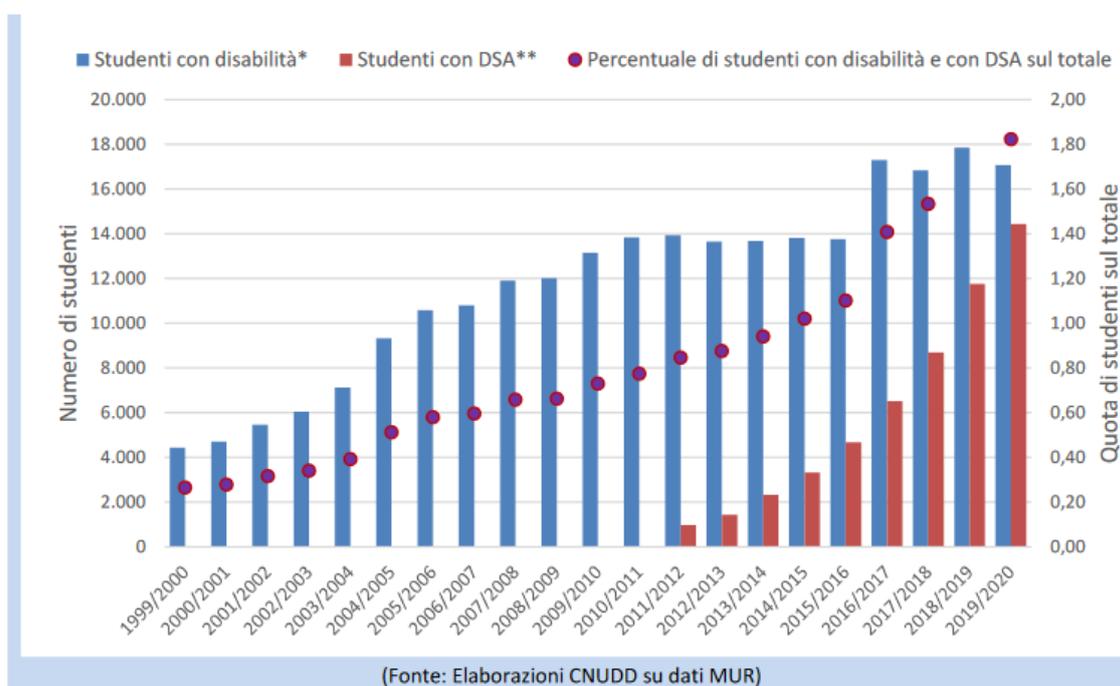
Note: Confidence intervals for the disability group are large and reliability low (due to the small sample size in the target age group). An average of several years may be needed to establish trends or to compare breakdowns by gender. No data was available on this measure for Italy in 2020.

<sup>67</sup> Eurostat Health Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

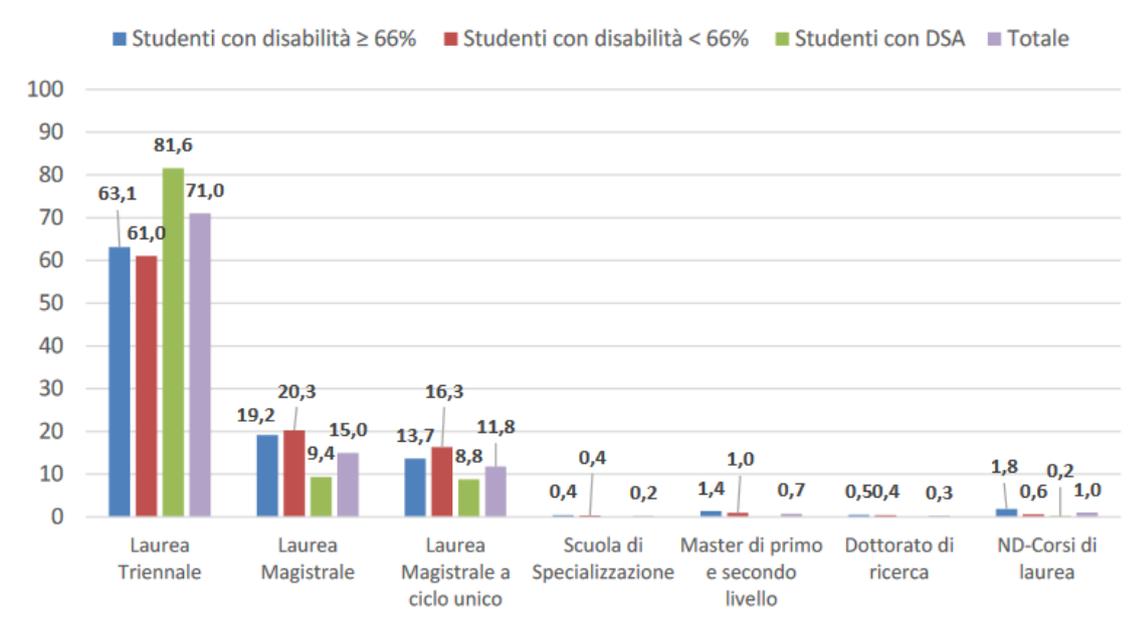
<sup>68</sup> There was a change from ISCED 1997 to ISCED 2011 qualification definitions in 2014 although some Member States continued to use the older definition after this time.

### 7.3.1 Alternative sources of education data in Italy

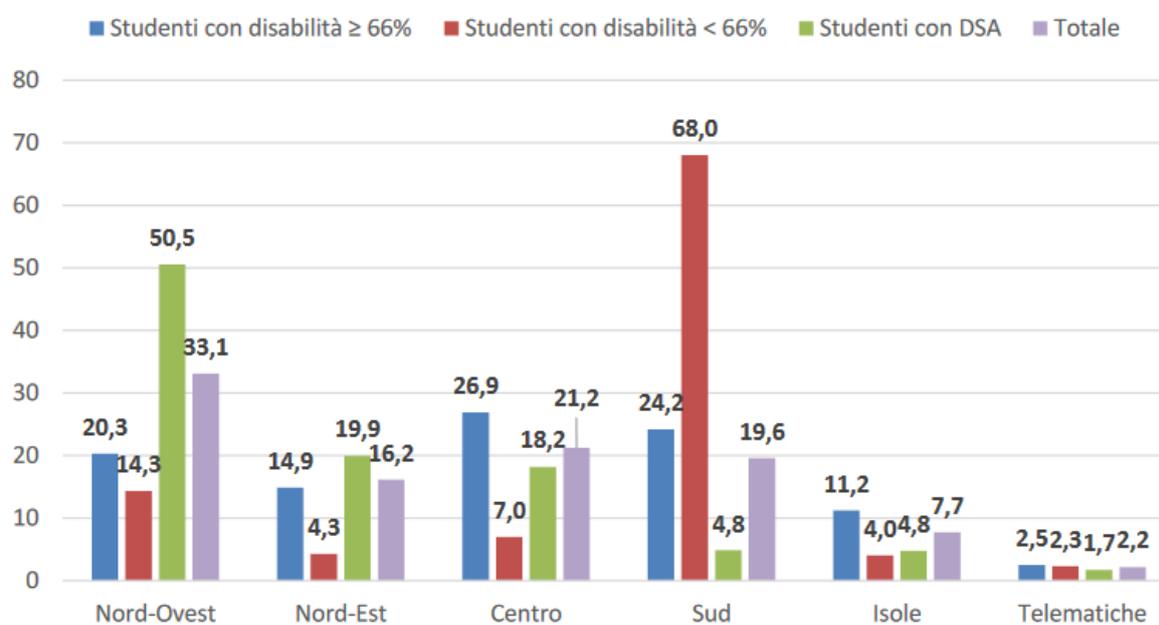
**Table A: Students with disabilities enrolled in public universities**



**Table B: Distribution of students with disabilities by type of course**



**Table C: Geographical distribution of students with disabilities**



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