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Belgium

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¹ 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.

² 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 Belgium in 2025

Disability and the labour market

The employment rate of persons with disabilities in Belgium has shown an overall positive trend since 2012, reaching 45.9 % in 2023. However, the disability employment gap has remained almost unchanged over the past decade. The gap between the employment rates of persons with and without disabilities in Belgium was 33.6 percentage points in 2023 and 33.5 percentage points in 2024 – one of the largest gaps in the EU. Belgium has set itself the objective of reducing the employment gap between persons with and without disabilities to 24.5 percentage points by 2030. However, without significant policy changes, the gap is unlikely to close at the required pace.

Disability, social policies and healthcare

The federal government has announced a reform of the regulations governing the granting of allowances including for persons with disabilities. In 2025, no action plan explicitly aimed at reducing the number of persons placed in institutions had been adopted at the various levels of government. Following the decision to end subsidies for personal assistance in Brussels, from 2026 around 44 persons with disabilities will be deprived of a budget that guarantees them independent living. While the Flemish and Walloon regions continue to grant a personal assistance budget to adults with disabilities, a lack of sufficient funding has led to applicants being placed on long waiting lists, effectively preventing them from enjoying the right to an independent life and inclusion in the community.

Disability, education and skills

The school population in special education continues to increase, except in the German-speaking Community where it decreased. No commitment has been made to end segregation for all pupils with disabilities. In April 2025, the Flemish Government adopted an ambitious long-term engagement to evolve towards a more inclusive education system by 2040. Special education is still seen as necessary for some pupils. There is no comprehensive plan in the other entities. The French Community has not yet taken measures to extend integration measures to pupils with intellectual disabilities.

Investment priorities in relation to disability

The amendments submitted by Belgium in 2025 to its Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) include a key investment aimed at making 25 train stations accessible by June 2026. Despite this, the national rail network remains largely inaccessible. A deinstitutionalisation strategy in Wallonia aims to help older people and persons with disabilities to live independently, supported by investments that fund low-rent, inclusive housing and equip homes with remote assistance technology. Digital inclusion is also a priority, though access remains unequal, with many public and private websites failing to meet accessibility standards. As public services increasingly shift online, a lack of digital access disproportionately affects persons with disabilities. Most funding from the European Social Fund Plus allocated to promote labour market access, is directed to sheltered workshops¹. Employment reforms and reintegration strategies lack adequate resources. Belgium is also working to close healthcare gaps through ESF+ investments, but disparities persist, especially among those living in poverty.

1.2 Recommendations for Belgium

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

Recommendation: Establish a clear strategy to achieve the ambitious targets to reduce the disability employment gap. Make employment measures, such as the reintegration

¹ In Belgium, the term 'sheltered workshop' has been replaced by 'adapted work companies'.

procedures for persons with disabilities, subsidies for employers, and the quota obligations in the public sector more effective. Strengthen supported employment initiatives.

Rationale: Existing policy measures mean that investment continues to be directed at segregated employment and too little effort is being made to strengthen and develop measures to promote the inclusive employment of persons with disabilities.

Recommendation: Set up a system for granting benefits to persons with disabilities that guarantees a standard of living above the poverty line and that corrects the financial impact of paid employment and the receipt of an integration allowance.

Rationale: A reform of the social benefits system is necessary to eliminate remaining inactivity traps and to ensure that persons with disabilities who are able to work receive the support they need to start or resume working.

Recommendation: Establish in each region a deinstitutionalisation plan with a precise timetable and reoriented resources. Abolish waiting lists for personalised budgets for persons with disabilities and provide sufficient, open-ended funding that is tailored to the support needs of applicants.

Rationale: Persons with disabilities experience a number of obstacles to independent living, such as a lack of financial means, unavailability of personal assistance budgets and the cost of care, which creates a situation where they are dependent on those around them.

Recommendation: Establish, in close consultation with persons with disabilities through their representative organisations, a comprehensive plan with clear objectives and methodologies to achieve quality inclusive education, which includes all pupils with disabilities, and which is within their local environment.

Rationale: Various policy measures are taken which are described as measures to move forward inclusive education. None aims to end segregation for all children. The French Community's measures continue to reflect an integration-based approach. The reforms engaged in the German-speaking and the Flemish Communities (*Zentrum für Förderpädagogik* and *Visienota 'Stappenplan richting een inclusiever onderwijs'*) mark important progress but they must be fully implemented throughout their territory and be subject to regular evaluation.

2 Mainstreaming disability equality in the 2025 Semester documents

2.1 Country Report (CR) and Country Specific Recommendations (CSR)

The following key points highlight where a disability perspective was considered, or should be considered, in the Country Report (CR)/Country Specific Recommendations (CSR). We address the most relevant of these in the next sections.

The 2025 CR notes that major challenges persist in the labour market for persons with disabilities and those on long-term sick leave. Over 500 000 workers were on long-term sick leave in 2023, prompting reintegration initiatives such as the 'Back-To-Work' plan. The disability employment gap remains high at 33.5 percentage points (pps), among the worst in the EU, with a 2030 target to reduce it to 24.5 pps. The NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate for young persons with disabilities was also high at 27.2 % in 2022. Public services fell short of their 3 % disability employment goal, reaching only 1.44 % in 2023. Many persons with disabilities were inactive in Belgium in 2023, in spite of a majority of them wanting to work. Measures to improve their employment include reforms to benefit-work combination rules and new financial aid schemes, particularly in the Brussels Capital Region, supported by ESF+ and RRF.²

The CR also states that people in a more vulnerable situation on the labour market, such as those with a migrant background or those with disabilities, experience a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion. Concerning persons with disabilities, despite a continuous, albeit small, decline since 2020, 30.0 % of persons with disabilities were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (EU 28.8 %) in 2024. This is linked to lower employment and a high disability employment gap in Belgium.³

The CR observes that housing cost overburden remains relatively low, despite gradual increases over the past decade and long waiting times to access social housing. Individuals over 16 years of age with disabilities suffer an above EU average housing cost overburden (12.0 % vs 10.4 %).⁴

In the 2025 CSR, recommendations were made to Belgium regarding the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities in the labour market: 'Strengthen the effectiveness and targeting of active labour market policies to further integrate disadvantaged groups into the labour market, in particular (...) persons with disabilities'.⁵

² European Commission (2025), 2025 Country Report Belgium, pp. 95-96, https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/db66340f-3711-4f6e-aadd-81528e029de8_en?filename=BE_CR_SWD_2025_201_1_EN_autre_document_travail_service_part1_v5.pdf.

³ Country Report Belgium, p. 98.

⁴ Country Report Belgium, p. 100.

⁵ European Commission (2025), Council Recommendation of 04.06.2025 on the economic, social, employment, structural and budgetary policies of Belgium, p. 12, recommendation 5, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/3fc66825-87e4-4ccd-98d1-8094997cf079_en?filename=COM_2025_201_1_EN_ACT_part1_v3.pdf.

2.2 National medium-term fiscal-structural plans (MTPs) and Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP)

The following key points highlight where the situation of persons with disabilities or disability policies is relevant to the National medium-term fiscal-structural plans (MTPs)/Recovery Resilience Plan (RRP). We analyse the most relevant of these in the next sections.

Since 2024, the National Reform Programme (NRP) has been replaced by the medium-term fiscal structural plans (MTPs).

On fiscal strategy, the MTPs state that two-thirds of the fiscal consolidation effort over the plan period is coming from structural reforms to the labour market (limitation of unemployment benefits) and pension reform (introduction of a bonus/malus system, harmonisation of different pension regimes to strengthen the link between years worked and pension received, change indexations).⁶

In line with the reform of the sickness pension for statutory civil servants in the 'Temporary Disability for Civil Servants' (TAVA) scheme, which has already been decided, new inflows into the system will be stopped from 1 January 2026, ensuring that the system will eventually be completely phased out at the federal, regional, and local levels. A transition to disability and invalidity insurance, consistent with private sector provisions, will be implemented for federal civil servants.⁷

The Flemish Government remains committed to sound public finances, aiming for a balanced budget by 2027 (see also above). Key reforms contributing to this goal include the 'Spending and revenue review' and the 'Commitment to greater efficiency in long-term care'.

Since the elections of 9 June 2024, the Brussels-Capital Region is still without a government with full powers. A caretaker government is responsible for day-to-day management, current affairs, and urgent matters, but it cannot set policy or introduce new measures.⁸

The French Community is undertaking a series of strategic investments. Approximately EUR 240 million has been or will be allocated for the renovation of school buildings. These funds will be used to demolish, decommission and build new school buildings. No specific attention to accessibility for persons with disabilities was originally included in the NRP. However, a selection criterion relating to 'inclusion' was included by the French Community during the project selection process.⁹ In reality, this criterion aims to ensure compliance with existing legal requirements. However, these requirements are not ambitious enough to guarantee effective accessibility for all types of disability.¹⁰ A significant amount is also

⁶ Council recommendation of 20 June 2025 endorsing the national medium-term fiscal-structural plan of Belgium (C/2025/3698), Official Journal of the European Union, 20 August 2025, p. 6 (27), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202503698.

⁷ Belgium (2025), Medium-term fiscal-structural plan, 18 March 2025, https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/9aafb902-d754-4b8e-a202-1848cda5a4bb_en?filename=national_medium-term_fiscal-structural_plan_belgium_fr.pdf&prefLang=sl, p. 36: 'law voted by Q4 2025; impact for pensions received for first time from 1-1-2026 onwards (workers in the public sector on disability leave cannot really "claim" a disability pension, it is the employer who request a medical commission to decide on a transfer to the disability pension; entrance into the disability pension pathway will be not possible anymore from 1-1-2026 onwards); budgetary impact from 2026 onwards.'

⁸ Medium-term fiscal-structural plan, p. 59.

⁹ French-speaking Community (2021), Circular 8291, School buildings: procedure for awarding exceptional funding and grants as part of the investment plan in school buildings drawn up as part of the European recovery and resilience plan (PRR), 1 October 2021, [48861_000.pdf](https://www.fco.be/fr/ressources/8291-2021-10-01), see Annexe 1, pool A, 3.

¹⁰ Unia (2024), Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Second and third periodic reports of NHRI and 33.2 CRPD, Update 2024, p. 12, §§38 and 39, <https://www.unia.be/en/knowledge-recommendations/second-evaluation-of-belgium-by-the-un-committee-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-report-and-recommendations-2024?lang=en>.

being invested in culture: around EUR 50 million is currently earmarked for the renovation of cultural infrastructure. This involves modernising museums, cultural centres, and libraries. These renovations aim to protect and enhance cultural heritage while making it more accessible and appealing to an increasingly diverse public.¹¹

In the German-speaking Community, a better balance between family and professional life enhances employability and strengthens the region. To achieve this, there is a need for childcare facilities that are financially and geographically accessible, flexible childcare hours, and better support for parents of children with disabilities. For persons with disabilities, the government plans to invest in day centres, leisure activities for children who need support, housing projects for adults with disabilities, and other specific initiatives.¹²

The amendments made in the first half of 2025 to Belgium's RRP are not specifically aimed at persons with disabilities, except for investments related to the accessibility of train stations.¹³

2.3 Semester links to CRPD and national disability action plans

The new federal Government has begun to develop a new Federal Disability Action Plan for 2025–2029. The National High Council for Persons with Disabilities and Unia, an independent Belgian mechanism under Article 33.2 CRPD, are involved in the development process and will be involved in the monitoring process. The new plan will be submitted to the Council of Ministers at the end of 2025.

¹¹ Belgium (2025), Medium-term fiscal-structural plan, 18 March 2025, p. 59-60, https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/9aafb902-d754-4b8e-a202-1848cda5a4bb_en?filename=national_medium-term_fiscal-structural_plan_belgium_fr.pdf&prefLang=sl.

¹² Medium-term fiscal-structural plan, p. 63.

¹³ See below, section 6.

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

In 2024, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Belgium:

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

'55. Recalling its general comment No. 8 (2022), the Committee recommends that the State party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations: (a) Develop and implement a strategy and action plan, applicable at the federal and regional levels, to facilitate the transition of persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, from unemployment, or from employment in sheltered workshops, to inclusive employment in the open labour market; (b) Promote employment opportunities and strengthen programmes to increase the employment rate of persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, in both the private and the public sectors, and improve assistance for finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment; (c) Adopt effective legal mechanisms to implement and monitor implementation of the Act of 10 May 2007 on combating certain forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation, including complaint mechanisms; (d) Effectively implement the policy on the reintegration of persons after a period of long-term work incapacity; (e) Ensure that persons with hearing impairments, in particular French-speaking persons, have effective access to training in professional sign language interpretation.

'57. The Committee recommends the State party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, provide accessible information on the measures available to facilitate return to regular employment, on reasonable accommodation, on available benefits and on associations that specialize in specific areas of work, at all levels of government, and take structural measures to ensure effective cooperation between all entities involved in supporting persons with disabilities in the labour market.'

3.1 Summary of the labour market situation of persons with disabilities

Data from European Union statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) indicate an employment rate of 45.9 % in 2023 for persons with disabilities in Belgium (EU27 average: 54.6 %), compared to 78.4 % for persons without disabilities (EU27 average: 76.6 %) (see Tables 2-4). The 2023 employment rate of persons with disabilities was 34.1 percentage points (pps) below the national 2030 headline target¹⁴ of an 80 % employment rate. Men with disabilities had an employment rate of 44.8 %, compared to 46.7 % for women with disabilities. The employment rate for persons with disabilities drops strongly from the age category of 35-44 (60.5 %) to the age category of 45-54 (50.9 %), whereas no such decline is observed for the EU27 average (64.1 % and 64.0 %). It is also in this age range (45-54) that the difference in employment rates between persons with and without disabilities is widest.

The employment gap between persons with and without disabilities in Belgium remains among the highest in the EU, ranking eighth in 2024, and continues to exceed the gaps reported by neighbouring countries.¹⁵ The difference between persons with and without disabilities results in a disability employment gap of 33.6 pps for 2023 and of 33.5 pps for 2024 (EU27 average: 21.5 pps and 24 pps). In 2023, women with disabilities had an

¹⁴ The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1607&langId=en>.

¹⁵ Eurostat (2025), Disability employment gap by level of activity limitation and sex (source EU-SILC), <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/dbe2dd07-2cd7-4b93-bc84-902a9e93e54e?lang=en>.

employment gap of 30.1 pps (EU27 average: 19.1 pps) compared to 36.9 pps for men with disabilities (EU27 average: 23.2 pps).

In 2024, the employment gap increased slightly for men (to 37.8 pps), a pattern which is also seen for the EU27 average (27.2 pps). For women, however, contrary to the trend for the EU27 average (which also increased to 20.4 pps in 2024), the employment gap in Belgium decreased slightly in 2024 (to 29.1 pps) (see Table 4b).

The same data indicate unemployment rates of 9.9 % for persons with disabilities and 5.4 % for persons without disabilities in 2023 (EU27 average: 15.2 % and 7.2 %) (see Tables 5-7). Women with disabilities had an unemployment rate of 8.7 % (EU27 average: 15.3 %), compared to 11.3 % for men with disabilities (EU27 average: 15 %). As shown in Table 7, the trend indicates a significant decrease in the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities in Belgium between 2021 and 2023 – a decline that is not observed to the same extent in the EU27 average for persons with disabilities, nor for persons without disabilities.

The economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Belgium was 50.9 % in 2023, compared to 82.9 % for persons without disabilities (EU27 average: 64.4 % and 82.6 %) (see Tables 8-10). Women with disabilities had an economic activity rate of 51.2 % (EU27 average: 61.1 %), while men with disabilities had an economic activity rate of 50.5 % (EU27 average: 68.2 %). Table 10 shows that the very slight increase in the activity rate of persons with disabilities in Belgium between 2021 and 2023 is not as significant as the evolution observed in the decline in the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities over the same period, and that this increase is slightly higher for the EU27 average.

All indicators are further broken down by age group and gender and are compared to previous years in the respective tables in the Annex. Note that the EU-SILC data refer to persons who self-report limitations in everyday activities and may present a different picture to national data sources.

The 2024 Belgian statistics National Labour Force Survey (LFS) data indicate an employment rate of persons without disabilities of working age (20-64 years) of 77.8%, while this percentage is 24.9 % and 59 % respectively for persons who experience severe or some limitation as a result of a disability or long-standing health problems.¹⁶

On the basis of the LFS data, the employment rate of persons with disabilities (20-64 years) has continued to grow slowly over the past decade from 38.1 % in 2014 to 44.6 % in 2024.¹⁷

The LFS indicates that among the 26.4 % of workers who worked part-time in 2024, 8.6 % reported doing so because of illness or disability.¹⁸ The amount of time worked differs greatly between persons with and without disability. In Flanders, 41.4 % of workers with disabilities worked part-time, compared to 21.9 % of workers without disabilities. Part-time work was also more common when the degree of disability was more severe.¹⁹

The 2024 Belgian LFS shows an unemployment rate of 5.1% for persons without disabilities of working age, while the corresponding percentage was 8.9 % and 8.1 % respectively for

¹⁶ Statbel (2025), see Table 10a in the Annex. Source : <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/work-training/labour-market/employment-and-unemployment#figures>.

¹⁷ Steunpunt Werk (2025), see Table 10d in the Annex: <https://www.steunpuntwerk.be/cijfers/werkzaamheidsgraad-personen-met-hinder-door-handicap-aandoening-of-ziekte>.

¹⁸ Statbel (2025), <https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/emploi-formation/marche-du-travail/le-travail-temps-partiel#news>.

¹⁹ Botterman, S., Geraert, F. & Vansteenkiste S. (2023), Trend Report 2023: Vulnerable groups in the Flemish labour market, Brussels/Leuven, Department of Work and Social Economy/Steunpunt Werk. ISBN: 9789040304637, December 2023, p. 75. werk.rapport_2023_01.pdf.

persons with severe and some limitation²⁰ and an activity rate of 82.4% for persons without disabilities of working age, while these percentages are 27.3 % and 64.2 % respectively for persons with severe and some limitation.²¹ Among European countries, Belgium has one of the highest proportions of people who are inactive due to illness or disability.²²

In 2023, Belgium had 493 681 workers who were on long-term sick leave and receiving invalidity benefits (more than one year of incapacity for work).²³ Between 2019 and 2023, their number continued to increase (see Table 15). The average annual increase is 5.02 % for women, compared with 2.74 % for men. Among these persons on long-term sick leave, 78 752 are partially active in the labour market (return to work authorised by their medical caregiver on a part-time basis during the period of incapacity).

Based on figures from the VDAB Employment agency of the Flemish region (see Table 10f), it can be seen that jobseekers with disabilities continued to have a very low rate of transition to employment. In 2022, the transition rate remained at 3.9 % for persons with disabilities, compared to 10.5 % for those without disabilities. The gap between the two groups therefore remained significant at 6.6 percentage points.²⁴

Research into the labour market in Ghent, using correspondence tests, also reveals a high degree of discrimination: on average, deaf persons are 51 % less likely to receive a positive response after applying for a vacancy. In terms of the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, deaf applicants are 53 % less likely to be interviewed. Discrimination is particularly pronounced when it comes to deaf candidates.²⁵

In Belgium, approximately 35 000 persons with disabilities work in sheltered workshops (adapted work companies²⁶).²⁷ In Flanders, 25 733 target group employees worked in sheltered workshops in 2024.²⁸ That is 6 % more than in 2022. The target group employees consist mostly of persons with an occupational disability (mental or physical), although long-term jobseekers at a distance from the labour market and persons with psychosocial problems are also included in the data. In Wallonia, approximately 10 250 persons work in sheltered workshops. The vast majority of them are workers with disabilities (+/- 80 %); 8 500 workers with disabilities in 2022.²⁹ In the Brussels Capital Region, a total of 1 630 persons with disabilities were employed in a sheltered workshop in 2022.³⁰

²⁰ Statbel (2025), see Table 10b in the Annex. Source =: <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/work-training/labour-market/employment-and-unemployment#figures>.

²¹ Statbel (2025), see Table 10c in the Annex. Source: <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/work-training/labour-market/employment-and-unemployment#figures>.

²² High Council for Employment (2024), Incapacity for work and reintegration of employees into the job market, March 2024, <https://cse.belgique.be/fr/accueil/rapports-avis/rapports-2024/incapacite-de-travail-et-reintegration-des-salaries-sur-le-marche-de-lemploi-mars-2024>.

²³ National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI) (2024), Statistics on invalidity among employed and unemployed persons in 2023, <https://www.inami.fgov.be/fr/statistiques/statistiques-indemnitees/statistiques-2023/statistiques-sur-l-invalidite-des-travailleurs-salaries-et-chomeurs-en-2023>.

²⁴ Botterman, S., Geraert, F. & Vansteenkiste S. (2023), Trend Report 2023: Vulnerable groups in the Flemish labour market, Brussels/Leuven, Department of Work and Social Economy/Steunpunt Werk. ISBN: 9789040304637, December 2023, p. 78. werk.rapport.2023.01.pdf.

²⁵ Dinger, B E. and Verhaeghe, P-P., *Juridische en sensibiliserende praktijktesten op de Gentse arbeidsmarkt : Opvolgmeting 2023-2024* (Legal and awareness-raising field tests on the Ghent labour market: Follow-up measurement 2023-2024), <https://d21buns5ku92am.cloudfront.net/62000/documents/54531-1716878521-Juridische%20praktijktesten%20op%20de%20Gentse%20arbeidsmarkt%20-%20finaal-45eb5a.pdf>.

²⁶ The adapted work sector has become more professional over the last few decades. This means that these organisations must position themselves as companies active in the market which are subject to the same constraints as any other organisation engaged in commercial activities. However, they retain their social objective, namely the socio-professional integration of persons at a distance from the labour market, including persons with disabilities. The status of workers has evolved significantly. Persons with disabilities, who were initially welcomed on a more or less voluntary basis then subsequently offered some form of compensation, have now become employees.

²⁷ Own calculation.

²⁸ Statistics Flanders, 'Doelgroepwerknemers in sociale economie' (Target group employees in the social economy), 23 February 2024.

²⁹ See <https://leseta.be/a-propos/>.

³⁰ Gerard, S., Ide, N., Dumont, D. and Tojerow, I. (2022), *Cadastre of services for persons with disabilities in Brussels: a legal, economic and practical map*, p. 371.

A great deal of public funding in Belgium is directed towards employment in sheltered workshops.³¹ Too few resources are directed towards job searching and employment support in the mainstream labour market. For example, the Walloon Regional Disability Agency is investing EUR 164 517 000 (2.36 % of its total budget) in work in sheltered workshops and EUR 48 176 000 (0.69 % of its total budget) in employment aid in the mainstream sector.³²

3.2 Analysis of labour market policies relevant to the Semester

According to the High Council for Employment,³³ Belgium's relatively low employment rate can partly be attributed to the difficulty of increasing the participation of vulnerable groups – including persons with disabilities – in the labour market. Several barriers hinder their access to employment, such as discrimination, requirements related to work experience or qualifications, longer career trajectories, mobility limitations, and health-related challenges.

The CR notes that, in Belgium, major challenges persist in the labour market for persons with disabilities and those on long-term sick leave. Indeed, the disability employment gap remains high at 33.5 percentage points, among the worst in the EU. Belgium has set a target for 2030 to reduce this to 24.5 pps. It is, however, not clear how the country plans to achieve this target.

The CR stated that the design of social benefits creates disincentives to work. As a result, the 2025-2029 federal coalition agreement³⁴ sets out plans for unemployment benefits to be limited in time, in principle to a maximum of two years. In a recommendation submitted to federal negotiators in September 2024, Unia warned of the risks of such a measure for persons who are structurally disadvantaged on the labour market, such as persons with disabilities.³⁵ Unia called for the government to implement an ambitious anti-discrimination policy alongside this reform, combining prevention, monitoring and active promotion of equality. It also asked the authorities to develop an action plan to improve employment for persons with disabilities and to provide legal exemptions to this measure for them.

As mentioned in the CR, Belgium will continue to develop its 'back to work' policy. So far, the use of reintegration and back-to-work tools remains limited.³⁶ In 2023, only 6 685 decisions were made within the framework of a formal reintegration pathway. Most of the persons on sick leave do not use these formal reintegration pathways because this involves a longer and more formal procedure.

Investment in a 'back-to-work' policy for persons with long-term illnesses may contribute to a higher employment rate of persons with disabilities. It is doubtful, however, that these measures will stop the increase in the number of persons on long-term sick leave. The number of workers on long-term sick leave continues to rise, from 458 252 persons in January 2022 to 502 580 persons in June 2024. There is a need for greater investment in

³¹ Unia (2024), Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Second and third periodic reports of NHRI and 33.2 CRPD, Update 2024, p. 31, §110, <https://www.unia.be/en/knowledge-recommendations/second-evaluation-of-belgium-by-the-un-committee-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-report-and-recommendations-2024?lang=en>. See also section 6.

³² AVIQ (2024), Aviq Activity Report 2023, [Rapport annuel d'activités 2023](https://www.aviq.be/fr/publications/rapport-annuel-d-activites-2023).

³³ High Council for Employment (2022), Current situation and outlook for the labour market in Belgium and the Regions, 4 July 2022, [Etat des lieux du marché du travail en Belgique et dans les régions - juillet 2022 | Conseil supérieur de l'emploi](https://www.hce.be/fr/publications/etat-des-lieux-du-marche-du-travail-en-belgique-et-dans-les-regions-juliet-2022).

³⁴ Belgian federal government (2025), *Federal coalition agreement 2025-2029*, 31 January 2025, <https://www.belgium.be/fr/publications/accord-de-gouvernement-du-gouvernement-federal-bart-de-wever>.

³⁵ Unia (2024), Limitation of unemployment benefits over time, September 2024, <https://www.unia.be/fr/connaissances-recommandations/avis-limitation-des-allocations-de-ch%C3%B4mage-2024>.

³⁶ High Council for Employment (2024), *Incapacity to Work and the Reintegration of Workers into the Labour Market: March 2024*; Court of Audit (2021), Long-term illnesses: Labour market reintegration measures.

prevention to avoid people becoming inactive as well as to further promote and improve the accessibility of the available reintegration instruments.³⁷

Belgium plans to better enforce the quota for hiring persons with disabilities in the civil service. Quota obligations for persons with disabilities currently exist only in the public sector and are hardly ever met. For example, the percentage of persons with disabilities working in the federal public service was 1.36 % in 2024; this is still far from the 3 % quota.³⁸ The federal coalition agreement (2025-2029) plans to impose sanctions on federal administrations that do not comply with the quota. The Walloon Government³⁹ has also set out some measures in its coalition agreement (2024-2029) to improve the employment of persons with disabilities. These include achieving the quota by making it part of the administrative management assessment. Failure to meet the quota may result in financial penalties for the department. Pending these reforms, the quota obligation appears to be very soft in Belgium, especially in the absence of penalties for non-compliance.⁴⁰ Some authorities are using other actions and positive measures that are more ambitious than a quota for hiring, such as jobs reserved for persons with disabilities. The development of these positive actions remains relatively modest and they are deployed on too small a scale to have any influence on the employment rate.

Receiving disability benefits is currently a major barrier to employment for persons with disabilities. When a person starts working and receives an income, their income replacement allowance is reduced or even withdrawn according to a complex and unclear scale. In addition, part-time work, which many persons with disabilities rely on, is often difficult to combine with receiving benefits. Finally, persons with disabilities fear that they will lose their benefits permanently if they do not return to work successfully, and that they will not be able to recover them quickly if they have to stop working (due to illness, dismissal, overload, etc.), and that the administrative procedures for restoring their rights will be long and complex. The coalition agreement plans to lower barriers to employment by offering a simple and predictable system for combining income from work with disability allowances (through a progressive scheme), thereby strengthening support to help the person to go to work or return to it.

Despite these various measures, the root causes of low labour market participation by persons with disabilities and their vulnerable position are not sufficiently addressed. Persons with disabilities still suffer from a highly negative image in society and are victims of discrimination. Private employers are not sufficiently encouraged to hire them. Much of the available budget for the promotion of the employment of persons with disabilities is directed towards adapted work companies. Too few resources are directed towards the promotion of inclusive employment on the regular labour market. There is a need for more funding in order to help persons with disabilities to find, obtain, maintain and return to employment in the mainstream sector.⁴¹ As recommended by the UN CRPD Committee, Belgium must establish a broad, cross-cutting strategy to promote the employment of persons with disabilities and reach the target to reduce the Disability Employment Gap to 24.5 pps by 2030.

³⁷ High Council for Employment (2024), Inability to work and reintegrating workers into the labour market, March 2024, <https://hrw.belgie.be/nl/home/verslagen-adviezen/verslagen-2024/arbeidsongeschied-en-de-re-integratie-van-werknemers-op-de-arbeidsmarkt-maart-2024>.

³⁸ Commission for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2024), *Evaluation report CIPH 2024*, <https://bosa.belgium.be/nl/networks/ciph>.

³⁹ Walloon Government (2024), *Coalition agreement 2024-2029*, <https://www.wallonie.be/fr/actualites/declaration-de-politique-regionale-du-gouvernement-wallon>.

⁴⁰ Hachez, Neven and Ringelheim (2022), *Positive action in Belgian law*, p. 28.

⁴¹ Unia (2024), *Parallel report on the second and third periodic reports submitted by Belgium*, Update 2024, <https://www.unia.be/en/knowledge-recommendations/second-evaluation-of-belgium-by-the-un-committee-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-report-and-recommendations-2024?lang=en>.

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

In 2024, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Belgium:

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

'59. The Committee recommends that the State party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations: (a) Ensure that the income of persons with disabilities is sufficient to lead their life with dignity, including by maintaining the full allowance covering disability-related costs when they enter employment; (b) Mainstream disability into poverty and homelessness reduction strategies in the next federal anti-poverty plan, and adopt regional action plans to combat poverty, in particular to address the situation of women and children with disabilities and older persons with disabilities, and set up monitoring mechanisms to ensure their effective implementation.'

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

'39. Recalling its general comment No. 5 (2017), its guidelines on deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies, and the report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on the transformation of services for persons with disabilities, the Committee recommends that the State party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations: (a) Devise and enact an effective strategy for deinstitutionalization, with time frames, goals, funding and monitoring, offering various forms of housing to provide persons with disabilities with real choice as to how and where they live; ensure that community-based services are available; and ensure that persons with disabilities, including persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, can effectively exercise their right to live independently and be included in the community; (b) Ensure sufficient administrative and financial resources for personal assistance to live independently and be included in society in order to abolish waiting lists in all regions, and provide information in accessible formats on how to obtain access to personal assistance; (c) Provide the support necessary to children with disabilities and their caregivers to allow them access to non-segregated services – for example, in school, leisure and accommodation – on an equal basis with other children; (d) Cease the practice of actively promoting the placement in psychiatric hospitals and other institutions in the State party of persons with disabilities who reside in France.'

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

'51. The Committee recommends the State party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations: (a) Extend mandatory accessibility standards to all medical and paramedical infrastructure and health services, and render them age- and gender-responsive; (b) Establish a framework that ensures that persons with disabilities can effectively give their free and informed personal consent with regard to any medical procedure or intervention, including through the provision of all information on healthcare and treatment in accessible formats; (c) Ensure that persons with disabilities have access to healthcare on an equal basis with others and at an affordable cost, including by granting specific benefits to financially disadvantaged people with disabilities and by integrating such benefits into the overall benefits system across the regions; (d) Ensure that the human rights model of disability and respect for the dignity, autonomy and requirements of persons with disabilities are systematically included in the curricula for the training of all medical and health professionals.'

4.1 Summary of the social situation of persons with disabilities

In 2023, the at-risk-of-poverty rate (AROP) for working-age persons with disabilities (age 16-64 years) in Belgium was 18.4 % (EU27 average: 20.8 %), compared to 9 % for working-age persons without disabilities (EU27 average: 14.1 %). This results in an estimated disability poverty gap of approximately 9.4 pps (see Table 11). In 2024, working-age persons with disabilities had a disability poverty gap of 5.6 pps (14.7 % for persons with disabilities and 9.1 % for persons without disabilities).

For older persons (age 65 years or more), the disability poverty gap was 2.2 pps in 2023 (17 % for older persons with disabilities and 14.8 % without disabilities) and -0.2 pps in 2024 (12.1 % compared to 12.3 %) (see Table 14). The disability poverty gap for working-age women was 6.2 pps (15.8 % for women with disabilities and 9.6 % without disabilities) and -1 pps for older women (15.6 % compared to 16.6 %). Working-age men had a disability poverty gap of 13.1 pps (21.6 % for men with disabilities and 8.5 % without disabilities) and 6.2 pps for older men (18.9 % compared to 12.7 %).

In 2023, 32.1 % of persons with disabilities (age 16 years or older) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), compared to 13.8 % for persons without disabilities (EU27 average: 28.8 % and 18 %) (see Table 12). The AROPE disability gap was 18.3 pps. Women with disabilities had an AROPE rate of 29.9 % (EU27 average: 29.7 %) compared to 34.9 % for men with disabilities (EU27 average: 27.5 %). The AROPE disability gap was 14.8 pps for women and 22.3 pps for men. In 2024 the AROPE rate for persons with disabilities was 30 % compared to 13.4 % for persons without disabilities.

Working-age persons with disabilities had an AROPE rate of 39 % in 2023, compared to 13.3 % for persons without disabilities in this age group (EU27 average: 33.6 % and 18.4 %). Older persons with disabilities had an AROPE rate of 21.2 % compared to 16.1 % for older persons without disabilities (EU27 average: 23.7 % and 16 %) (see Table 13). The AROPE disability gap was 25.7 pps for working-age persons and 5.1 pps for older persons. In 2024, the AROPE rate for the working-age population with disabilities amounted to 38.2 % compared to 13.5 % without disabilities, and for the older age group 16.1 %, compared to 13.2 % without disabilities.

For persons with disabilities of working age, the risk of poverty before social transfers (pensions included) in 2023 was 54.3 % and 18.4 % after transfers. In 2024, the risk of poverty of working-age persons with disabilities before social transfers stood at 55.6 % and after transfers 14.7 %.⁴² Comparing the at-risk-of-poverty rates of employed persons (age 18-64 years), persons with disabilities had an in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate of 7.1 % and persons without disabilities of 4.3 % (EU27 average: 10.1 % and 8 %). In 2024, the rates amounted to 6.8 % and 3.9 % (EU27 average: 9.7 % and 8 %).⁴³

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). The rate for persons with disabilities (age 16+) in Belgium was 2.7 % compared to 0.5 % for persons without disabilities, which is below the EU27 average of 5 % for persons with disabilities in 2023 (see Table 15). In 2024, the rate for persons with disabilities was 3.3 % (compared to 0.7% for persons without disabilities).⁴⁴

In terms of housing, 14.3 % of persons with disabilities reported excess housing costs (housing costs accounting for more than 40 % of the disposable income) in 2023, compared to 6.5 % of persons without disabilities. In 2024, this gap decreased slightly

⁴² Eurostat (2025): Persons at risk of poverty before social transfers (pensions included in social transfers) by level of disability (activity limitation), sex and age, https://doi.org/10.2908/HLTH_DPE030.

⁴³ Eurostat (2025): In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate by level of disability (activity limitation), sex and age, https://doi.org/10.2908/HLTH_DPE050.

⁴⁴ Eurostat (2025), Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination by level of disability (activity limitation), sex and age. https://doi.org/10.2908/HLTH_DH030.

(12.0 % for persons with disabilities compared to 5.7% for persons without disabilities).⁴⁵ In 2024, 61.5 % of persons with disabilities lived in a home owned by them or their household, whereas 38.5 % lived in a rented home. This rate of ownership is lower than for persons without disabilities (73.4 % ownership versus 26.6 % tenancy).⁴⁶ In terms of housing quality, in 2023 16.6 % of persons with disabilities (16+) reported living in a home with structural issues (leaking roof, damp, or rot), compared to 12.7 % of persons without disabilities.⁴⁷ In addition, 9.3 % of persons with disabilities reported not being able to keep their home adequately warm, compared to 4.7 % of persons without disabilities. This gap decreased only slightly in 2024 (7.3 % of persons with disabilities versus 3.7 % without disabilities).⁴⁸

Recent field tests on the rental market reveal persistent discrimination against persons with physical disabilities. In Leuven,⁴⁹ wheelchair users were excluded from property viewings in 51 % of cases, and blind men with guide dogs in 28 % of cases, despite men without disabilities being invited. The net discrimination rate for blind men without guide dogs was 12 %. In Antwerp,⁵⁰ discrimination against wheelchair users slightly decreased from 36 % to 30 %, while discrimination against blind persons with guide dogs rose from 15 % in 2021 to 20 % in 2023–2024.

4.2 Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester

The data in section 4.1 show persistent inequalities between persons with and without disabilities, particularly among working-age men. Consistently, the figures show that progress has been made since 2023 to reduce the risk of poverty for persons with disabilities, and social transfers play a major role in this. The percentages also indicate that the rate at which both the AROP for retired persons (65+) and the AROP for persons with disabilities have declined in recent years varies slightly from group to group, leading to annual fluctuations in the gap for older persons. These fluctuations are likely linked to recent changes to social protection, including increases in the minimum pension levels which may have a gender dimension, as women often receive lower pensions.⁵¹ Recent decisions regarding disability benefits may also have influenced these fluctuations.⁵² Nevertheless, persons with disabilities remain much more exposed to poverty, social exclusion and barriers to accessing healthcare than persons without disabilities. Finally, it appears that employment does not fully protect persons with disabilities against poverty.

⁴⁵ Statbel (2025), SILC-indicators 2019-2024, <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/households/poverty-and-living-conditions/risk-poverty-or-social-exclusion#figures>.

⁴⁶ Eurostat (2025), Tenure status by level of disability (activity limitation) and poverty status, https://doi.org/10.2908/HLTH_DHC010.

⁴⁷ Eurostat (2025), Persons living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in window frames or floor by level of disability (activity limitation), sex and age, https://doi.org/10.2908/HLTH_DHC070.

⁴⁸ Eurostat (2025), Inability to keep home adequately warm by level of disability (activity limitation), sex and age, https://doi.org/10.2908/HLTH_DHC140.

⁴⁹ Pieter-Paul Verhaeghe & Elif Beyza Dincer, *Discrimination in the rental housing market in Leuven: follow-up measurement 2023-2024*, 6 June 2024, Brussels Institute for Social and Population Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Available online at: <https://zenodo.org/records/11520396>.

⁵⁰ Pieter-Paul Verhaeghe & Elif Beyza Dincer, *Discrimination in the rental housing market in Antwerp: second follow-up measurement*, 15 September 2024, Brussels Institute for Social and Population Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Available online at: <https://pers.antwerpen.be/nieuwe-resultaten-over-discriminatie-op-de-arbeids-en-huurwoningmarkt-in-antwerpen>.

⁵¹ Federal Public Service Social Security (2025), 'Belgium on the path to achieving the European poverty reduction goal?', *La Belgique en route vers l'atteinte de l'objectif européen de réduction de la pauvreté ? | Service Public Fédéral - Sécurité Sociale*.

⁵² Federal Public Service Social Security (2024), 'Allowances for persons with disabilities: a steady rise in the number of beneficiaries by 2024', *Allocations aux personnes en situation de handicap : augmentation continue du nombre de bénéficiaires en 2024 | Service Public Fédéral - Sécurité Sociale*.

Workers with disabilities find it harder than workers without disabilities to escape poverty. Firstly, because they are much more likely to work part-time (39 %, compared with 25 % of the total population) and secondly, because their disability entails additional costs.⁵³

Since 2015, the number of people receiving disability benefits has risen by 44.7 %.⁵⁴

In December 2024, the number of beneficiaries of disability allowances (income replacement allowances or integration allowances) reached 253 866 (or 2.7 % of the population aged over 18). By 2024, almost half of all beneficiaries were receiving both the income replacement allowance and the integration allowance. 52.4 % of beneficiaries of disability allowances are women and 47.3 % are aged 55 or over (in 2015, the proportion of recipients over 55 was 43.3 %).

Between 2023 and 2024, the average monthly income replacement and/or integration allowance rose by 2.2 %, to EUR 934. However, if inflation (constant price) is taken into account, this average monthly amount had fallen slightly.

The amount of allowances received is reduced if the person receives other income, except under certain conditions (this effect is known as the 'price for work') or if the partner also receives an income (this effect is known as the 'price for love').⁵⁵

The income replacement allowance remains substantially below the poverty line.⁵⁶

The Federal Disability Action Plan did, however, call for income replacement allowances to be brought up to the poverty line.⁵⁷

However, the positive trend in the income guarantee for the elderly, which now covers 100 % of the poverty line, is welcomed.⁵⁸

The lack of accessibility and adaptability of housing is a major obstacle to enabling the deinstitutionalisation of persons with disabilities. In its memorandum for the 2024 elections, Unia recommended that regional authorities put in place an action plan to enable the large-scale development of adaptable housing in both the public and private sectors. The adaptability of housing must therefore become a quality criterion to be introduced in new buildings or during major renovations. In addition, Unia has asked for a structural review of home adaptations to social housing and is calling for the vulnerable situation and the needs of individuals in terms of their social environment or living conditions (importance of accessibility to the environment, access to shops and public transport) to

⁵³ Jeroen Horemans, 'Being disabled, but not poor? It is possible when persons with disabilities realise their income potential with additional financial support', paper written as part of the Thematic Book 'Poverty and Work', p. 2. Available online at: <https://www.mi-is.be/fr/etudes-publications-statistiques/livre-thematique-pauvrete-et-travail>.

⁵⁴ Federal Public Service Social Security (2024), 'Allowances for persons with disabilities: a steady rise in the number of beneficiaries by 2024', [Allocations aux personnes en situation de handicap : augmentation continue du nombre de bénéficiaires en 2024 | Service Public Fédéral - Sécurité Sociale](#).

⁵⁵ Regarding the exceptions for the 'price for work', the integration allowance is not affected by the receipt of income from work up to EUR 63 000. Persons with disabilities who start or return to work after at least two years of inactivity have the option of temporarily combining their income replacement allowance with a work-related income. See European Commission (2024), European Semester 2024-2025 country fiche on disability equality, Belgium, September 2024, p. 20, [Reports - European Commission](#).

⁵⁶ For example, according to data from the Federal Public Service Social Security, in 2024, a single person received a maximum income replacement allowance of EUR 1 320 93 euros/month (before taking income into account). See [Tout savoir sur les montants et paiement de l'ARR en Belgique en 2025](#). However, according to Statbel's SILC survey, the poverty line for a single person is estimated at EUR 1 520 euros net/month (see [Risque de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale | Statbel](#)).

⁵⁷ Federal Public Service Social Security (2021), Federal Disability Action Plan (2021-2024), measure 8, p. 12, [handicap-plan-federal-2021-2024-fr.pdf](#).

⁵⁸ Federal Public Service Social Security (2024), 'Minimum benefits approach the poverty line', 18 September 2024, [Les prestations minimales se rapprochent du seuil de pauvreté | Service Public Fédéral - Sécurité Sociale](#).

be taken into account when deciding whether or not to grant permission for home adaptations or when proposing a transfer to another home.⁵⁹

In Flanders, the waiting list for personalised budgets for persons with disabilities⁶⁰ has grown further with 18 261 persons on this waiting list in December 2024.⁶¹ People can find themselves on a waiting list for over a decade before they effectively receive their budget.⁶²

In 2022, 1 100 people who had been waiting the longest in priority group 2 were able to start with a partial budget of half the amount they had requested.⁶³ Several Belgian courts ruled against this reform as being in violation of the Belgian Constitution and the standstill principle.⁶⁴ The new Flemish Government decided to allocate full budgets to 1 200 people (also to those who had refused the partial budget) at a cost of approximately EUR 30 million, starting on 1 January 2025.⁶⁵

In May 2025 the Flemish Government adopted a draft memorandum 'Towards a renewed, integrated care and support policy for persons with disabilities'.⁶⁶ This document provides for a reform of the allocation of personalised budgets for persons with disabilities by 2028, in response to growing waiting lists and the complexity of care needs. Among other things, the Flemish government wants to guide people with lesser care needs (currently in priority groups 2 and 3) towards 'directly accessible assistance' (such as home support, group support, day care, etc.). Several institutions and organisations, such as the VMRI⁶⁷ (Monitoring Mechanism for CRPD in Flanders), GRIP⁶⁸ (representative organisation for persons with disabilities) and NOOZO⁶⁹ (Advisory Council for persons with disabilities for the Flemish government), fear the reform will result in fewer beneficiaries receiving a full personalised budget that corresponds to their actual needs. According to GRIP, this means the Flemish government is abandoning the principle of a budget tailored to individual support needs and moving towards dependence on supply-driven services for a large group of people.

There has been no positive evolution with regards to deinstitutionalisation in either the Brussels and Walloon regions, or in the German-speaking community, since 2023. On the contrary, in June 2024, the Brussels public interest organisation Iriscare announced that it would end subsidies for personal assistance budgets completely from 2027, currently received by 44 beneficiaries. These subsidies amount to an annual budget of EUR 300 000. For 2025, before total abolition, the budget has been reduced to EUR 218 333 (of which 163 333 for beneficiaries of the personal assistance budget).⁷⁰

Iriscare does not offer any alternative solutions for financing independent living, directing beneficiaries of personal assistance budgets to collective accommodation structures or to

⁵⁹ Unia (2023), Memorandum: 74 proposals from Unia for the 2024 elections, June 2023,

<https://www.unia.be/fr/connaissances-recommandations/elections-2024-memorandum?lang=fr>.

⁶⁰ Since the Decree of 25 April 2014 on personalised funding for persons with disabilities and reforming the way care and support are funded for persons with disabilities, Flanders has adopted a principle of personalised financing.

⁶¹ VAPH, Year Report 2024, see [Vragen geregistreerd in de prioriteitengroepen](#).

⁶² In December 2024, there were 526 requests in priority group 1, 8 091 requests in priority group 2 and 9 685 requests in priority group 3.

⁶³ Decision of 16 September 2022 on an experiment for the partial provision of budgets for non-directly accessible care and support to persons with disabilities in priority group 2.

⁶⁴ See for example, Leuven Labour Tribunal, 9 February 2024, available at <https://www.rechtbanken-tribunaux.be/nl/nieuws-lokaal/vonnis-9-februari-2024-arbeidsrechtbank-leuven-vernietigt-beslissing-waarbij-eeen>; Ghent Labour Tribunal, 6 October 2024, available at <https://www.rechtbanken-tribunaux.be/nl/arbeidshof-gent/news/2939>.

⁶⁵ See [PERSBERICHT - VAPH trekt deelbudgetten op van bijna 1200 mensen met een handicap | VAPH](#).

⁶⁶ Decision of the Flemish government of 23 May 2025, available at: [download](#).

⁶⁷ See, [Advies over het persoonsvolgend budget: Voorstel van decreet tot wijziging van de toeleidingsprocedure | Vlaams Mensenrechteninstituut](#).

⁶⁸ See, [Plannen draaien uit op afbraak van zelfregie en keuzevrijheid: "onaanvaardbaar" - Grip](#)

⁶⁹ See, [Advies over de hervorming van de toeleidingsprocedure persoonsvolgende financiering | Noozo](#).

⁷⁰ Brussels Parliament (2025), Parliamentary question from Stéphanie Lange in Brussels Parliament to Alain Maron, Minister responsible for Iriscare, 30 January 2025 [Stéphanie Lange \(Engagé\) interpelle le Ministre Maron sur la suppression du BAP](#).

support paid for by the network. And yet, in the Brussels Region, there is a distressing lack of accommodation solutions for adults with disabilities.

In Brussels, in November 2024, 792 people were waiting for a place in a residential centre (338 of whom wanted a place in both a day centre and a residential centre).⁷¹ These figures are not indicative of the demand as a whole. They relate solely to requests submitted to the Brussels institutions that are approved and subsidised by the French Community Commission (and therefore not by the Common Community Commission).

In July 2024, there were only 434 places in adult accommodation centres. Despite a large number of people waiting for a place, only 10 additional places were created in 2024.⁷² In the Walloon region, personal assistance budgets come in two distinct packages. The first package is granted to people requiring daytime services only. In 2025, this will amount to EUR 10 089 per year. The second package covers both daytime and night-time services. In 2025, this will amount to EUR 19 505 per person. The total allocation for Walloon personal assistance budgets for 2024 was EUR 4.4 million, for 668 beneficiaries (against 537 beneficiaries in May 2023).⁷³ 114 persons are still waiting for a personal assistance budget.

Also in the Walloon Region, the available care solutions are not meeting demand. On 4 June 4 2025, the waiting list (the same for all establishments) showed a total of 2 135 adults waiting for a care centre or residential solution (against 1 897 adults in May 2023).⁷⁴ A total of 187 persons were on the waiting list for priority cases in June 2025.⁷⁵

In the absence of significant and structural progress since the first judgments rendered by the European Court of Human Rights in 2012 for a lack of appropriate therapeutic treatment for internees,⁷⁶ the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe finally adopted an interim resolution in December 2024 urging Belgium to comply with its international obligations on internment by speeding up the creation of places for internees outside prisons.⁷⁷ Since 2019, 60 internees have been awarded compensation following judgments by the European Court of Human Rights, for a total amount of EUR 693 426.19.⁷⁸

In its concluding observations of 5 September 2024, the UN CRPD Committee urges Belgium to amend and/or repeal all laws and abolish practices that allow for harsher measures against persons with disabilities than against other persons convicted of the same crime, and which also allow for indefinite detention.⁷⁹ Even though the Committee sees the reform of its internment policy as one of the three most urgent priorities for Belgium, the Belgian authorities have not yet taken measures to reform the system and/or drastically decrease the number of internees. However, the new federal government does acknowledge that interned people have no place in prison and wants to create an inter-

⁷¹ These figures were communicated by Phare by email on 17 June 2025.

⁷² Parliament of the French Community Commission (COCOF) (2024), C.R. No 3 (2024-2025), 15 November 2024, p. 16, [document](#).

⁷³ These figures were communicated by Aviq by email on 28 February 2025.

⁷⁴ These figures were communicated by Aviq by email on 6 June 2025.

⁷⁵ These figures were communicated by Aviq by email on 16 June 2025.

⁷⁶ Law on internment of 5 May 2014: the internment measure can be imposed for persons who commit a crime but suffer from mental illness or intellectual disability. It has a dual purpose: to protect society, but also to provide necessary, adapted care for the person with a view to their reintegration into society.

⁷⁷ Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (2024), Decision CM/ResDH(2024)331, available at [L.B. AGAINST BELGIUM AND 4 OTHER CASES](#).

⁷⁸ Response to parliamentary question 56-1-000135 posed by Sophie De Wit (N-VA) by Minister of Justice Dirk Van Tigchelt on the European convictions of Belgium, January 23, 2025, available at [De Belgische Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers](#).

⁷⁹ UN CRPD Committee (2024), *Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Belgium*, 5 September 2024, pp. 8-9, [tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2FCO%2FBEL%2FCO%2F2-3&Lang=en](#).

federal plan for forensic care and create sufficient care facilities to provide tailor-made care for internees.⁸⁰

In June 2025, Unia and the Central prison monitoring council (CCSP/CTRG) published a joint monitoring report on the state of mental health care in prison, both for internees and detainees (convicted persons and defendants).⁸¹ After comparing the situation in 5 Belgian prisons, Unia and CCSP/CTRG concluded that mental health care in prison is fundamentally inadequate. The combination of inadequate care for persons with multiple psychiatric problems and vulnerabilities, degrading living conditions, overcrowding and acute staff shortages cause the mental health situation of detainees to deteriorate drastically during detention. Therefore, Unia and CCSP/CTRG ask the Belgian authorities to completely prohibit the imprisonment of interned persons and to find alternatives to detention for detainees with mental health problems by offering them support to find housing and care. Such care should not be limited to high-security facilities, but should consist primarily of more open outpatient or residential care that promotes autonomy.

⁸⁰ Belgian federal government (2025), *Federal coalition agreement 2025-2029*, 31 January 2025, https://www.belgium.be/fr/publications/accord_de_gouvernement_du_gouvernement_federal_bart_de_wever.

⁸¹ Unia (2024), 'Mental health in prison: a way out of the impasse!', 5 June 2025, available at [Rapport-interner.pdf](#).

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

In 2024, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Belgium:

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

49. Recalling its general comment No. 4 (2016), the Committee recommends that the State party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations: (a) Remove the barriers and address the challenges that have prevented effective transition from special education to inclusive mainstream education, by, inter alia, raising awareness of the right to inclusive education, combating negative attitudes towards and low expectations of students with disabilities, promoting research on inclusive education methodologies and defining best practices for inclusive educational facilities in the State party; (b) Develop a comprehensive transition plan and strategy, including a detailed timeline and the requisite funding, to promote coordinated quality inclusive education across different policy areas, with specific steps outlined to evolve towards a quality inclusive education system; (c) Make training on inclusive education and its implementation mandatory for all teaching and non-teaching personnel in all schools, and train and employ a sufficient number of qualified professionals to support students with disabilities, including students with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities; (d) Provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities at all educational levels, including tertiary education.

5.1 Summary of the educational situation of persons with disabilities

The EU-SILC estimates concerning educational attainment should be treated with additional caution due to relatively wide confidence intervals, but they consistently indicate disability equality gaps. Table 16 shows early school leaving rates disaggregated by disability status in Belgium for 2023. Young adults with disabilities (age 18-24 years) are more likely to leave school early (14.9 % compared to 5.9 % for young adults without disabilities). On average, young adults with disabilities in the EU are more likely to leave school early than their peers without disabilities (EU27 average: 19.1 % with disabilities and 9.3 % without disabilities). This means that the early school leavers rate of young adults with disabilities in Belgium is above the EU 2030 target of below 9 %.⁸²

In the wider age group of 18-29 years, young adults with disabilities in Belgium were more likely to leave school early (23.8 % compared to 7.7 % for young adults without disabilities). The average EU27 early school leaving rate for persons with disabilities in 2023 was 20 % compared to 10.2 % for persons without disabilities.

Table 17 shows the completion rate of tertiary education disaggregated by disability status and two age groups in Belgium for 2023. Persons with disabilities (age 30-34 years) were less likely to complete tertiary education than their peers (45.7 % compared to 61.7 % for persons without disabilities). In the wider age group of 25-34 years, 41 % of persons with disabilities completed tertiary education, compared to 59.8 % for persons without disabilities. This disability gap is clearly wider than the EU27 average (36.0 % for persons with disabilities compared to 45.8 % for persons without disabilities). Moreover, the early school leaving rate of young persons with disabilities in Belgium is below the EU 2030 target of 45 %⁸³ for persons in the age group of 25 to 34 years.

⁸² European Education Area Strategic Framework: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/about-eea/strategic-framework>.

⁸³ Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32021G0226%2801%29>.

Tables 18 to 21 show that the school population in special education continues to increase, except in the German-speaking Community. This increase relates to secondary schools in Flanders and nursery and primary schools in the French Community:

- In Flanders, the number of pupils in special education increased by 11 % between 2010-2011 and 2023-2024.⁸⁴ The 2024-2025 school year marks a new record with 55 075 pupils attending special education (compared to 54 994 in 2023-2024).⁸⁵ The increase relates to secondary schools (from 24 720 pupils to 25 527) while the number of pupils in special nursery and primary education has decreased slightly (2 868 to 2 677 for nursery schools and from 27 406 to 26 871 for primary schools).⁸⁶ 4.5 % of pupils attended special education during the 2023-2024 school year compared to 4.4 % in 2010-2011 and 4 % between 2016 and 2019.⁸⁷
- In the French Community, special education recorded more enrolments in 2022-2023 than in 2021-2022 (+0.4 %), particularly in nursery education (+11.3 %).⁸⁸ The number of pupils in special secondary schools continues to decrease slightly. However, the proportion of pupils in special education in 2022-2023 remained stable compared to 2021-2022 (4.10 %).⁸⁹ This proportion is higher than the rate in 2008-2009 (3.67 %).⁹⁰
- In the German-speaking Community, the number of pupils in special education decreased by 3 % between 2020 and 2025.⁹¹ 310 pupils attended special education during the 2024-2025 school year compared to 319 in 2020-2021 and a peak of 323 in 2022-2023.⁹²

Special education receives the most funding. In the Flemish Community, the annual cost per pupil for 2024 ranges in mainstream education from EUR 7 281 (primary) to EUR 11 309 (secondary) compared to EUR 19 278 (primary) and EUR 26 234 (secondary) in special education.⁹³ In the French Community the annual cost per pupil for 2023 ranges in mainstream education from EUR 4 901 (nursery) to EUR 8 983 (secondary) compared to EUR 22 746 in special education.⁹⁴

Special education continues to issue few certificates of achievement. In the Flemish Community, 417 pupils obtained their basic education certificate in primary and 489 in

⁸⁴ Statistics Flanders (2025), M. Vanweddungen, J. Noppe, D. Moons, Statistics Flanders report 2025/1, Social position and participation of persons with disabilities, January 2025, p. 32, [Maatschappelijke positie en participatie van personen met een handicap | Vlaanderen.be](#). See also Table 18.

⁸⁵ Flanders Ministry of Education and Training, tables by academic year available at [Workbook: Dataloep Inschrijvingen Leerplicht](#). See also Tables 18 and 19.

⁸⁶ Flanders Ministry of Education and Training, tables by academic year available at [Workbook: Dataloep Inschrijvingen Leerplicht](#). See also Tables 18 and 19.

⁸⁷ Statistics Flanders (2025), M. Vanweddungen, J. Noppe, D. Moons, Statistics Flanders report 2025/1, Social position and participation of persons with disabilities, January 2025, p. 32, [Maatschappelijke positie en participatie van personen met een handicap | Vlaanderen.be](#).

⁸⁸ Federation Wallonia-Brussels (2025), Education indicators 2024, update 28.04.2025, 19th edition, p. 14, [Enseignement.be - Les indicateurs de l'enseignement 2024](#). See also Table 20.

⁸⁹ Federation Wallonia-Brussels (2025), Education indicators 2024, update 28.04.2025, 19th edition, p. 14, [Enseignement.be - Les indicateurs de l'enseignement 2024](#), p. 14. For the school year 2021-2022, see: Federation Wallonia-Brussels (2024), Education indicators 2023, 18th edition, pp. 32-33, Table 9.1, <http://www.enseignement.be/public/docs/les-indicateurs-de-l-enseignement-2023-m-j-du-05-03-2024-.PDF>.

⁹⁰ Unia (2024), Parallel report to UN CRPD Committee, Update 2024, p. 27, para. 89.

⁹¹ East Belgium (2024), Pupil numbers 2024-2025, [Schülerzahlen 2024-2025](#), see slide 4, line 'Förderschule' (special school).

⁹² Statistics East Belgium (2024), Pupil numbers 2024-2025, [Ostbelgien Statistik - Schülerzahlen 2024-2025](#), see 'Entwicklung der Zahl der Förderschüler der letzten zehn Jahre' (Development of the number of special needs pupils over the last ten years), Annexe, Table 21.

⁹³ Statistics Flanders (2025), Education budget, [Onderwijsbegroting | Vlaanderen.be](#), see 'Meer budget per leerling in gewoon secundair dan per leerling in gewoon basisonderwijs' (Development of the number of special needs pupils over the last ten years).

⁹⁴ Federation Wallonia-Brussels (2024), Education indicators 2023, 18th edition, p. 21, Table 3.2, <http://www.enseignement.be/public/docs/les-indicateurs-de-l-enseignement-2023-m-j-du-05-03-2024-.PDF>.

secondary education (compared to 65 783 and 8 877 pupils in primary and secondary mainstream education).⁹⁵ In the French Community, in 2023 197 students obtained a basic education certificate in primary and 138 in secondary education (compared to 49 352 and 2 810 pupils in primary and secondary mainstream education).⁹⁶

Attending special education settings generally means moving away from the neighbourhood. On average home-to-school distances are three times greater for children from Bussels who attend special schools.⁹⁷

5.2 Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester

In the Flemish Community, the Decree on Learning Support (*Leersteundecreet*) has been in force since 2023.⁹⁸ The Decree created learning support centres in order to better develop support for pupils with disabilities in mainstream education. The decree mandated an independent inclusive education commission to produce a recommendation regarding 'the evolution towards inclusive education and the role of mainstream and special education'.⁹⁹ The commission issued a recommendation on 30 June 2024.¹⁰⁰ In a report dated September 2024, the Court of Audit found that Flanders had experienced no evolution towards inclusive education given the fact that the number of students in special education had increased by almost 13 % in four years.¹⁰¹ According to the Court, there is a capacity shortage in special education, although the Flemish government has insufficient knowledge about its extent. Furthermore, the guidance, drawn up by the centres for learning, giving pupils access to special education, do not sufficiently take into account a pupil's right to inclusive education.

On the basis of the recommendation of the inclusive education commission and of the Court of Audit's report, the Flemish government adopted a Vision paper entitled 'Roadmap towards more inclusive education' on 4 April 2025.¹⁰² The Flemish Government commits to launching a pathway to achieve a long-term vision to move towards a more inclusive education system by 2040 with a timeframe in three phases: a start-up phase (2024-2029), a transition phase (2029-2034) and an implementation phase (2034-2039).¹⁰³ As from September 2026, 20 pioneer schools will be launched.¹⁰⁴ This recent initiative from the Flemish government to develop a transition plan towards inclusive education is to be commended and represents an important step for pupils with disabilities. However, in the author's opinion, this plan is not compatible with the definition of inclusive education and the recommendations of the UN CRPD Committee. The aim of the plan is not to move towards one single qualitative, inclusive education system but to gradually move 'to an education system that transcends the strict distinction between ordinary and special education and in which access to a supply of special education is restricted to those who really need it'.¹⁰⁵ No specific budget has been set aside for this reform.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁵ Flemish Community (2023), Primary school certificates:

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fdata-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be%2Fdocumenten%2Fbestanden%2FSTJB-2223-studiebewijzen-BaO.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>.

⁹⁶ Federation Wallonia-Brussels (2025), Education indicators 2024, update 28.04.2025, 19th edition, p. 34, (3), [Enseignement.be - Les indicateurs de l'enseignement 2024](https://www.enseignement.be/les-indicateurs-de-l-enseignement-2024).

⁹⁷ Statistics Brussels (2025), 'What is the distance between the home of Brussels children and their school?', Focus No 72, April 2025, p. 3. [Perspective - Focus de l'IBSA n°72](https://www.statistik.brussel.be/perspectives-focus-de-l-ibsa-n-72).

⁹⁸ Learning Support Decree, <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1038566¶m=inhoud>.

⁹⁹ Learning Support Decree, art. 58, para. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Independent inclusive education commission (2024), Evolving towards schools for everyone, <https://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/documenten/bestanden/advies-commissie-inclusief-onderwijs.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ Court of Audit, Dutch speaking chamber, 10 September 2024, Special education: access and outflow, [Special education: access and outflow | Court of Audit](https://www.court-of-audit.be/special-education-access-and-outflow).

¹⁰² Flemish Government, Vision paper 'Roadmap towards more inclusive education', VR 2025 0404 DOC.0263/1, 4 April 2025, [Visienota 'Stappenplan richting een inclusiever onderwijs' | Vlaanderen.be](https://www.vlaanderen.be/visionnota-stappenplan-richting-een-inclusiever-onderwijs).

¹⁰³ Vision paper 'Roadmap towards more inclusive education', p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Vision paper 'Roadmap towards more inclusive education', pp. 8-9.

¹⁰⁵ Vision paper 'Roadmap towards more inclusive education', p. 8. See also p. 5, 4).

¹⁰⁶ Vision paper 'Roadmap towards more inclusive education', p. 12, 2) A.

In the French Community, 48 territorial centres (*pôles territoriaux*) have been in place since 2022 to support and assist mainstream schools in catering for pupils with disabilities. The government has not yet replaced the provisions of the decree establishing the territorial centres, which were annulled by the Constitutional Court in its ruling of 1 June 2023.¹⁰⁷ The Constitutional Court ruled that certain provisions of the decree were 'discriminatory in that they created a difference in treatment between pupils on the basis of their disability without justification'. The Court maintained the effects of the annulled provisions until the end of the 2025-2026 school year in order to give the legislature time to adopt new provisions. Some pupils, who are children with intellectual disabilities, are required to first attend special education for one year in order to be eligible for additional periods of support in mainstream education. As a result, the number of pupils in special nursery and primary schools is on the rise (see Section 5.2).

An evaluation of the functioning of the territorial centres is currently underway with the objective to 'make the system more effective and efficient, in particular by ensuring that the missions of the territorial centres are more closely aligned for the benefit of all pupils in mainstream education'.¹⁰⁸ The evaluation is expected in November 2025. To date, persons with disabilities have not been consulted on this evaluation.¹⁰⁹ It remains to be seen the extent to which the reform of the territorial centres that will follow their evaluation will take into account the lessons learned from the ruling of the Constitutional Court and the European Committee of Social Rights.¹¹⁰

For the rest, no measures have been taken to move towards one inclusive education system. On the contrary, the European Child Guarantee mid-term report for Belgium mentions new places dedicated to special education for children with intellectual disabilities and the demand for specific classes for children with autism spectrum disorders without proposing inclusive measures.¹¹¹

In the German-speaking Community, a far-reaching decree-based reform was initiated under the former education minister.¹¹² The reform is supposed to better equip regular schools to support pupils with disabilities. A first step in this reform has been achieved by merging all special schools from both systems (Catholic and community) into one 'Centre for inclusive pedagogy', thus reducing the complexity of the system. It was announced that in a further step, all special schools are to share a single campus with mainstream schools and that mainstream schools are to receive improved guidance on inclusion.¹¹³ This is an interesting approach. For its success, it is crucial that resources are not only concentrated in these shared campuses, but are also fairly distributed over the whole territory, so that children are not forced to leave their environment and community in order to benefit from adapted services. For instance, only one secondary school in Eupen (north) is specialised

¹⁰⁷ Constitutional Court, 1 June 2023, ruling No 85/2023, [2023-085f](#). See also Unia's website: <https://www.unia.be/fr/actua/eleves-situation-handicap-egalite-fwfb>.

¹⁰⁸ French Community Government, coalition agreement 2024-2029, 11 July 2024, [index.php](#), p. 17, last paragraph.

¹⁰⁹ Parliament of the French Community, Committee on Education, Social Promotion, Brussels Promotion and Research, CRIC No72-Educ.16 (2024-2025), 22 April 2025, questions 5.2 and 5.3, p. 27-31, [100000020dc042](#).

¹¹⁰ European Committee of Social Rights, Decision on the merits: International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Inclusion Europe v. Belgium, complaint no. 141/2017, 9 September 2020, [Decision on the merits: International Federation for Human Rights \(FIDH\) and Inclusion Europe v. Belgium: Complaint No. 141/2017](#). The Committee found against Belgium on the ground that children with intellectual disabilities do not have an effective right to inclusive education in the French Community. See also Federal Institute for the protection and promotion of Human Rights, Unia, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, and the Délégué général aux Droits de l'Enfant (2023), *Parallel report to the European Committee of Social Rights*, para. 7, pp. 30-39, [Rapport ECSR 2023 EN.pdf](#).

¹¹¹ Belgium (2024), Biennial report on the implementation of the Child Guarantee, 2024, [National action plans and progress reports - European Commission](#), p. 12.

¹¹² Special Decree for the establishment of an inclusive education centre, 22 April 2024, [100000020dc042https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/eli/decret/2024/04/22/2024203680/justel](#).

¹¹³ Parliament of the German Community (2025), 15.05.2025, <https://pdg.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4839/vid-36026/>, '1.4. Frage Nr. 205 von Herrn JERUSALEM (ECOLO) an Minister FRANSEN zum Stand der Planung der Fördersekundarschule im Süden der D' (Question concerning the progress of the project to establish a specialised secondary school in the south of the German-speaking Community).

in catering to the needs of pupils with disabilities. Pupils living in the south of the Community therefore do not have access to a nearby secondary school, which causes difficulties with school transport. For the moment, it is not clear in what way the new government that came into office in June 2024 will pursue or adapt the announced reform. In May 2025, the creation of a special secondary school in the south on a campus with mainstream schools, with the aim of developing a joint educational initiative was announced for 2026.¹¹⁴ To date, the parliamentary debates on this initiative have not been published.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Minister for Education for the German Community (2025, statement in a press article, Press, Grenz-Echo, 16.05 2025, [https://www.grenzecho.net/123364/artikel/2025-05-\)16/fordersekundarschule-der-eifel-erste-klassen-ab-september-2026](https://www.grenzecho.net/123364/artikel/2025-05-)16/fordersekundarschule-der-eifel-erste-klassen-ab-september-2026).

¹¹⁵ Parliament of the German Community (2025), 15.05.2025, <https://pdg.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4839/vid-36026/>, '1.4. Frage Nr. 205 von Herrn JERUSALEM (ECOLO) an Minister FRANSEN zum Stand der Planung der Fördersekundarschule im Süden der D' (Question concerning the progress of the project to establish a specialised secondary school in the south of the German-speaking Community).

6 Investment priorities in relation to disability

On 20 February 2025, Belgium submitted targeted amendments to its Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). Some investments concern persons with disabilities:

The Investment (I-3.09) 'Rail-Accessible and multimodal train stations' of the Federal State involves making at least 25 stations, out of the 28 stations identified, accessible, in accordance with the technical specifications for interoperability set out in Commission Regulation (EU) No 1300/2014 for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility. The investment will be fully implemented by 30 June 2026.¹¹⁶

The Belgian rail network (NMBS/SNCB) is still a long way from being independently accessible for persons with disabilities. Passengers with disabilities are still dependent on assistance. At the beginning of 2025, the NMBS/SNCB had 116 fully accessible stations out of 555. Regarding train stations, the objective set out in the Public Service Contract is to have 176 stations (out of 555) with independent access by 2032. In 2025, 440 stations (out of 555) will still not offer full assistance.¹¹⁷

Belgium's RRP contains several reforms and investments related to fairness and social policies. One of the measures is a deinstitutionalisation strategy for older people and persons with a disability, as part of the Walloon health policy.¹¹⁸

The investment 'Development of public utility housing and housing for vulnerable persons' of the Walloon Region (I-4.12) includes the construction and energy-efficient renovation of (i) low-rent housing, (ii) inclusive and solidarity-based housing, as well as (iii) accommodation for poorly housed groups. Moreover, the investment consists of (iv) equipping the homes of vulnerable people, that is people aged over 65 and/or persons with disabilities, with remote assistance boxes, in order to delay or avoid the institutionalisation of these persons with reduced autonomy, or to reduce the length of their hospitalisation. Prior to this investment, the Walloon government will adopt a deinstitutionalisation strategy for long-term care. The investment will be fully implemented by 30 June 2026.¹¹⁹

This type of investment must be continued and extended to other regions, as the lack of accessibility and adaptability of housing is a major obstacle to enabling persons with disabilities to remain in their own homes and to the deinstitutionalisation process. In its memorandum for the June 2024 elections,¹²⁰ Unia recommended that the authorities put in place an action plan to enable large-scale development of accessibility and adaptability in both public and private housing.

The agreement of the new Walloon government (2024) also provides, for example, for the launch of a new EUR 100 million plan to rehabilitate care and accommodation facilities for persons with disabilities, with a focus on autism.¹²¹

The investment 'E-inclusion for Belgium' of the Federal State (I-4.08) aims to foster the social and economic integration of vulnerable groups into society by improving their digital skills. The investment consists of a call for projects to support the digital inclusion of vulnerable groups.¹²²

¹¹⁶ ANNEX to the COUNCIL IMPLEMENTING DECISION amending Implementing Decision on the approval of the assessment of the recovery and resilience plan for Belgium, 4 March 2025, p. 73, [pdf](#).

¹¹⁷ See <https://www.belgiantrain.be/-/media/files/pdf/travel-info/assistance/pmr-liste-fr.ashx?v=10233a5a5cb7458abbfba4c9b93da81d>.

¹¹⁸ European Commission (2025), 2025 Country Report Belgium, p. 116, [db66340f-3711-4f6e-aadd-81528e029de8_en](#).

¹¹⁹ Country Report Belgium, p. 111.

¹²⁰ Unia, *Memorandum: 74 proposals from Unia for the 2024 elections*, June 2023. Available online at : <https://www.unia.be/fr/connaissances-recommandations/elections-2024-memorandum?lang=fr>.

¹²¹ Walloon regional policy statement, p. 57, <https://www.wallonie.be/fr/media/47>.

¹²² European Commission (2025), 2025 Country Report Belgium p. 103, [db66340f-3711-4f6e-aadd-81528e029de8_en](#).

In recent years, public and private services in Belgium have become increasingly digital and as a result many of the physical counters (e.g. for public services, in railway stations, at mutual insurance companies, in post offices and bank branches), which used to enable many persons with disabilities to complete administrative tasks and obtain answers to queries, have gradually disappeared. However, too little attention has been paid to the fact that digital access for persons with disabilities differs greatly from that of the general population. For example, while 6 % of the population aged 16-64 do not have internet access at home, this rate is three times higher for persons with disabilities.¹²³ The same applies to internet use: only 81 % of persons with disabilities have been online in the last three months, compared with 95 % of the total population.¹²⁴ While the Belgian authorities successfully transposed the European directive on digital accessibility in March 2024, an audit showed that of the 1 697 federal, regional and local authority websites, 53.4 % did not even have an accessibility declaration.¹²⁵ This declaration is compulsory and must explain clearly and in detail the extent to which the site meets the predefined standards. Regarding the private sector, there is no obligation in Belgium to make websites or applications accessible. These are therefore mostly inaccessible.

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) provides EUR 836 million to support overall access to the labour market, especially for long-term unemployed people, older people, persons with low education levels, with disabilities and inactive individuals. More specifically, interventions address youth unemployment and precarious work situations for young people, promote self-employment and foster the social economy.¹²⁶ Despite these measures, too few resources are directed towards job search and employment support in the mainstream labour market for persons with disabilities. Public funding is still mainly directed towards employment in sheltered workshops. Unia mentions that in Flanders and Brussels, there is three times as much budget going towards adapted work companies rather than towards inclusive employment as that in Wallonia, 67 % of the budget devoted to the employment and training of persons with disabilities is intended for adapted work companies.¹²⁷ The reintegration programmes that are provided by employers have also been thoroughly reformed so that the focus has again been placed on people returning to their own, familiar workplaces, with or without adjustments. But human and financial resources are insufficient for structural inclusive measures and for reasonable accommodations in public and private enterprises. There is a need to invest more in prevention to avoid people becoming inactive as well as to further promote and improve the accessibility of the available reintegration instruments.¹²⁸

The 2025 CR mentions that recent initiatives also involve a reform of the employment financial aid provided by the Brussels Capital Region's public employment service, with funding from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), to support the cost of equipment adaptations and to incentivise the recruitment of jobseekers with disabilities by employers and increase sustainable labour market integration.¹²⁹

¹²³ Statbel (2021), 3 December, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, available at <https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/nouvelles/3-decembre-journee-internationale-des-personnes-handicapees-0>.

¹²⁴ Statbel (2021), 3 December, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, available at <https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/nouvelles/3-decembre-journee-internationale-des-personnes-handicapees-0>.

¹²⁵ Eleven Ways (2024), More than half of Belgian government websites have no accessibility statement, <https://elevenways.be/en/articles/more-than-half-of-belgian-government-websites-have-no-accessibility-statement>.

¹²⁶ Eleven Ways (2024), More than half of Belgian government websites have no accessibility statement, <https://elevenways.be/en/articles/more-than-half-of-belgian-government-websites-have-no-accessibility-statement>, p. 114.

¹²⁷ Unia (2024), Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Second and third periodic reports of NHRI and 33.2 CRPD, Update 2024, p. 31, §110, <https://www.unia.be/en/knowledge-recommendations/second-evaluation-of-belgium-by-the-un-committee-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-report-and-recommendations-2024?lang=en>.

¹²⁸ High Council for Employment (2024), *Inability to work and the reintegration of workers into the labour market*. See also: Court of Audit. (2021), *Long-term sickness – Back-to-work measures*.

¹²⁹ European Commission (2025), 2025 Country Report Belgium, p. 96, [db66340f-3711-4f6e-aadd-81528e029de8_en](https://ec.europa.eu/economic-governance/db66340f-3711-4f6e-aadd-81528e029de8_en).

Concerning healthcare, the gap between people above and below the poverty threshold reporting unmet medical needs (defined as 60 % of the median equivalised income) is higher in Belgium than the EU average. However, Belgium has invested around EUR 30 million from the European Social Fund Plus to improve the accessibility, quality and resilience of the health system.¹³⁰

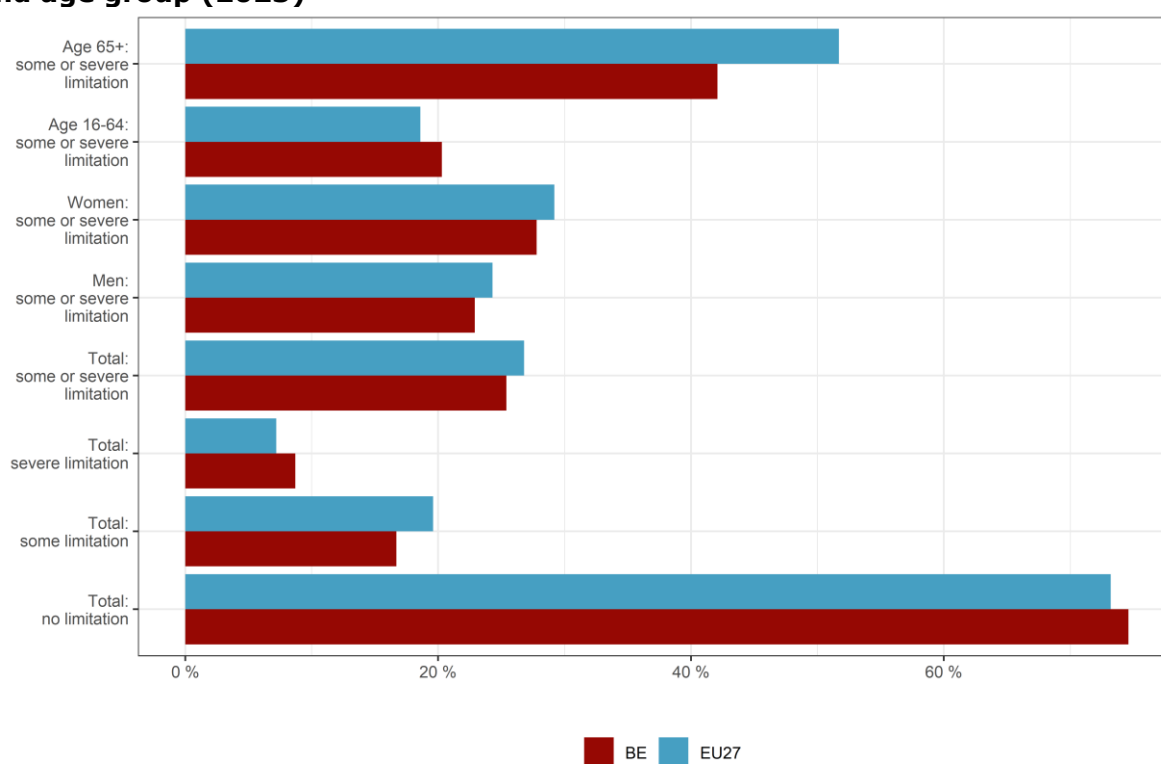
¹³⁰ Country Report Belgium, p. 109.

7 Annex I: disability data relevant to the Semester

See also disability data published in the Eurostat disability database¹³¹ and disability statistics¹³².

Unless specified, the summary statistics are drawn from the most recent EU-SILC data available to researchers from the Eurostat disability database (partly including 2024) and the latest EU-SILC scientific use files (2023)¹³³. 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 persons with disabilities is the Global Activity Limitation Instrument (GALI) assessing the presence of long-standing activity limitations. The respondents are classified as persons with disabilities if they report to have 'for at least the past six months' 'limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do' corresponding to Eurostat's classification of self-perceived 'some or severe' long-standing activity limitation¹³⁴.

Table 1: Disability prevalence (age 16+) by level of activity limitation, gender and age group (2023)



Source: Eurostat [h1th_silc_12], extracted on 2025-05-08

¹³¹ Eurostat Disability Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/disability/database>.

¹³² Eurostat (2025) Disability statistics: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability_statistics.

¹³³ With the corresponding income reference period of 2022.

¹³⁴ Eurostat (2021) Health variables in SILC - methodology: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Health_variables_in_SILC_-_methodology.

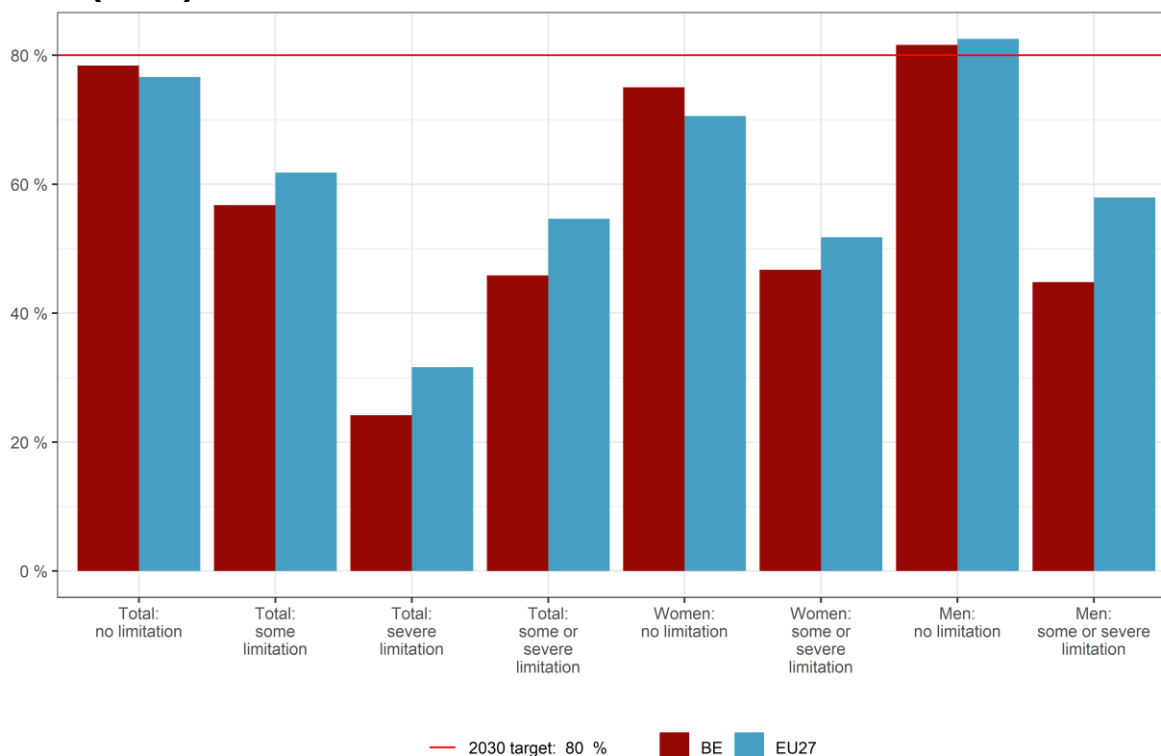
Disability prevalence (age 16+) by level of activity limitation, gender and age group (2023)								
	Total: no limitation	Total: some limitation	Total: severe limitation	Total: some or severe limitation	Men: some or severe limitation	Women: some or severe limitation	Age 16-64: some or severe limitation	Age 65+: some or severe limitation
BE	74.6 %	16.7 %	8.7 %	25.4 %	22.9 %	27.8 %	20.3 %	42.1 %
EU27	73.2 %	19.6 %	7.2 %	26.8 %	24.3 %	29.2 %	18.6 %	51.7 %
Note:								
Source: Eurostat [hlth_silc_12], extracted on 2025-05-08								

In subsequent tables, these data are used to indicate 'disability' equality gaps and trends that are 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 'some or severe activity limitations'¹³⁵. National estimates for Belgium are compared with EU27 averages for 2023 and if available for 2024.

¹³⁵ This methodology was developed in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at: <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>.

7.1 EU data relevant to disability and the labour market (2023)

Table 2a: Employment rate (age 20-64) by level of activity limitation and gender (2023)

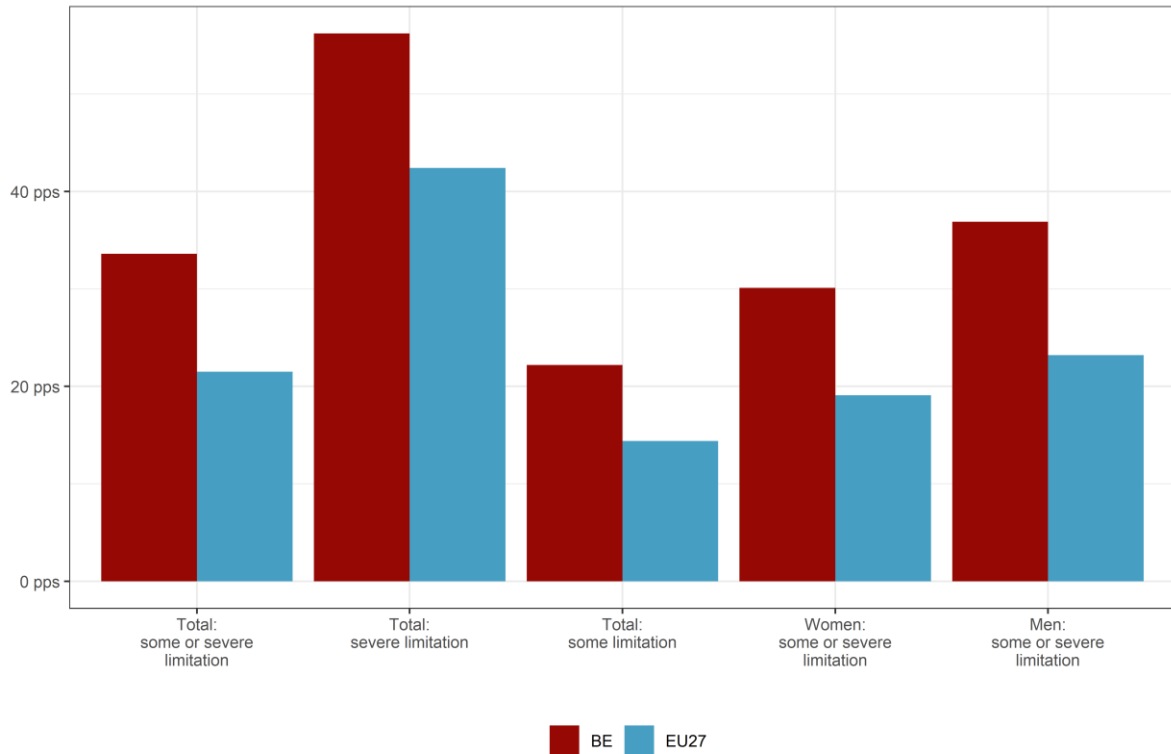


Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation

Employment rate (age 20-64) by level of activity limitation and gender (2023)								
	Total: no limitation	Total: some limitation	Total: severe limitation	Total: some or severe limitation	Women: no limitation	Women: some or severe limitation	Men: no limitation	Men: some or severe limitation
BE	78.4 %	56.7 %	24.2 %	45.9 %	75.0 %	46.7 %	81.6 %	44.8 %
EU27	76.6 %	61.8 %	31.6 %	54.6 %	70.6 %	51.8 %	82.6 %	57.9 %
Note:								

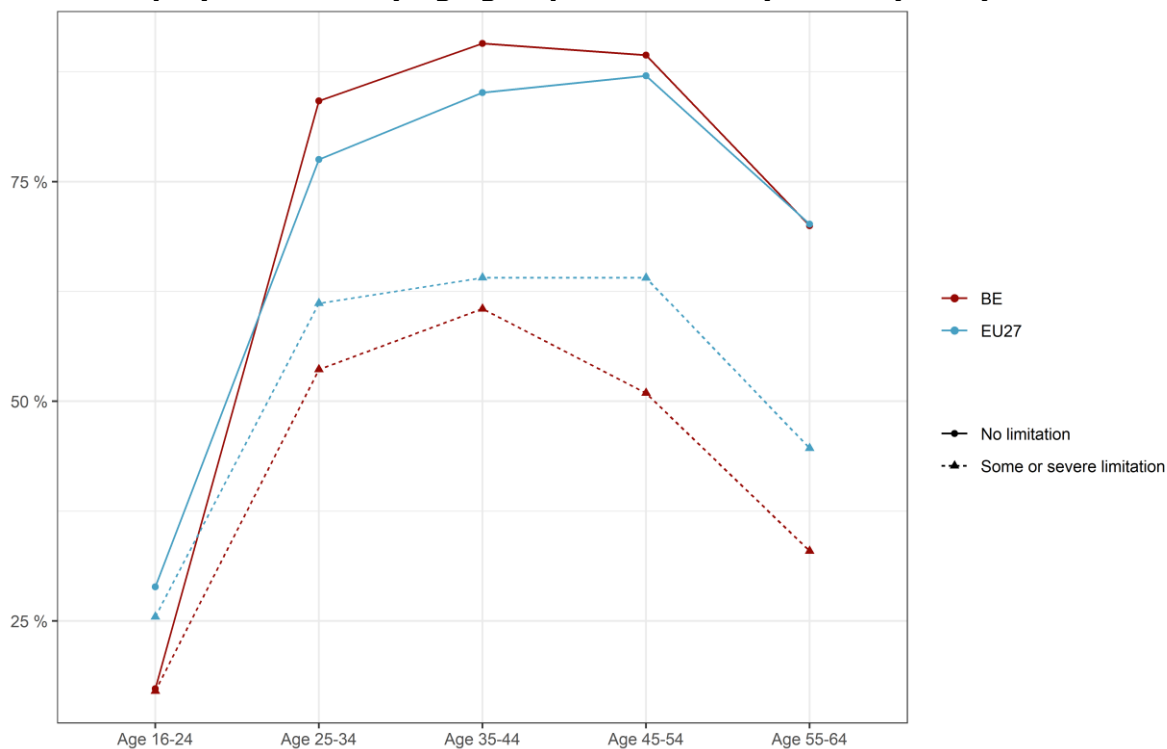
Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation

Table 2b: Disability employment gap (age 20-64) by level of activity limitation and gender (2023)



Source: Eurostat [tepsr_sp200], extracted on 2025-05-08

Disability employment gap (age 20-64) by level of activity limitation and gender (2023)					
	Total: some or severe limitation	Total: severe limitation	Total: some limitation	Women: some or severe limitation	Men: some or severe limitation
BE	33.6 pps	56.2 pps	22.2 pps	30.1 pps	36.9 pps
EU27	21.5 pps	42.4 pps	14.4 pps	19.1 pps	23.2 pps
Note:					
Source: Eurostat [tepsr_sp200], extracted on 2025-05-08					

Table 3: Employment rate by age group and disability status (2023)


Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation

Employment rate by age group and disability status (2023)						
	Activity limitation	Age 16-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64
BE	Some or severe limitation	17.0 %	53.6 %	60.5 %	50.9 %	33.0 %
BE	No limitation	17.3 %	84.2 %	90.7 %	89.4 %	70.0 %
EU27	Some or severe limitation	25.5 %	61.2 %	64.1 %	64.0 %	44.7 %
EU27	No limitation	28.9 %	77.5 %	85.1 %	87.0 %	70.2 %
Note:						
Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation						

Table 4a: Trend - Employment rate (age 20-64) by disability status and gender

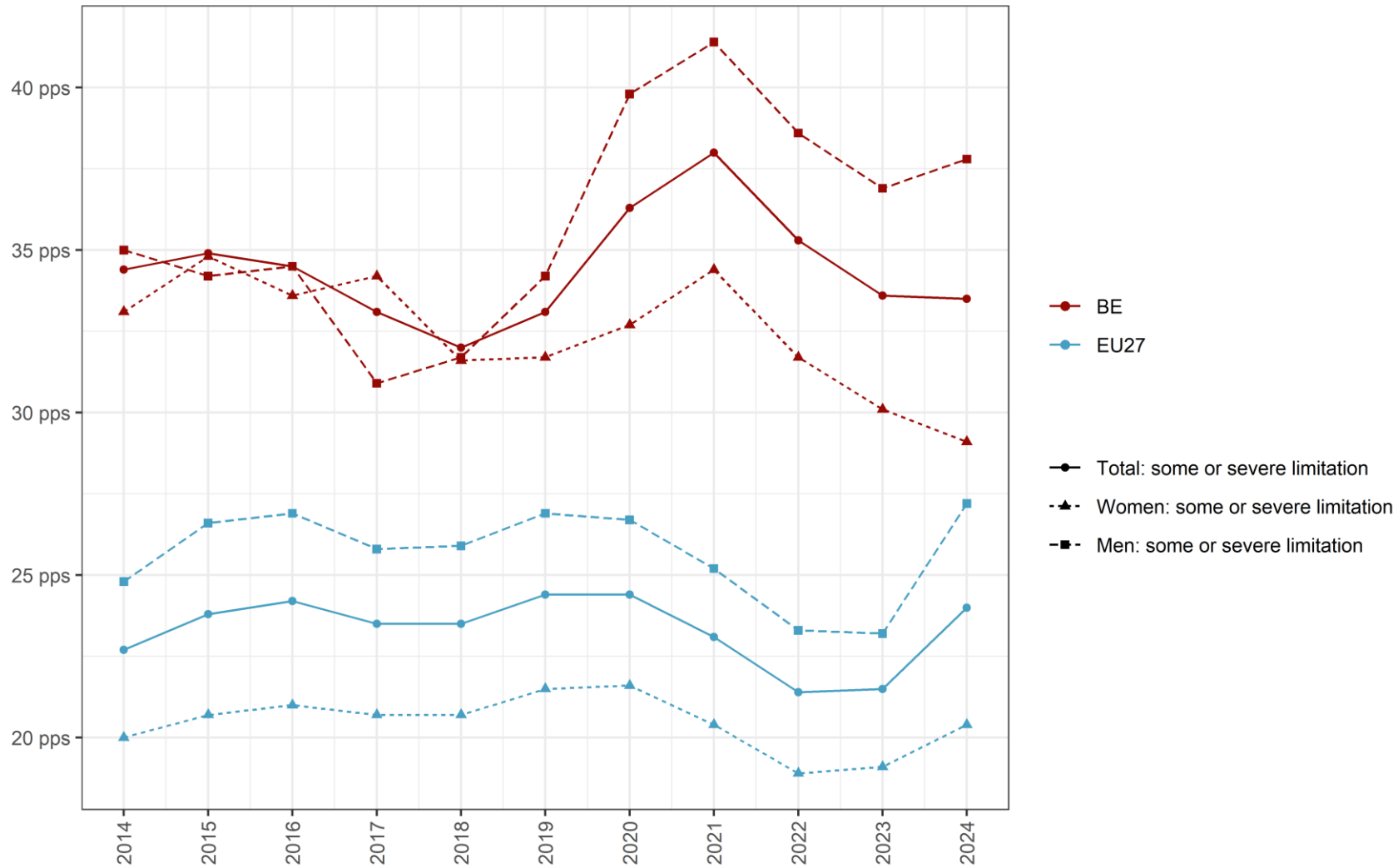


Source: EU-SILC, own calculation
 Note: changed wording of limitation in activities question in 2021

European Semester 2025 – 2026 country fiche on disability equality: Belgium

Trend - Employment rate (age 20-64) by disability status and gender												
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
BE	Total: no limitation	72.7 %	73.5 %	73.3 %	72.5 %	74.4 %	75.6 %	77.3 %	77.5 %	78.1 %	79.0 %	78.4 %
BE	Total: some or severe limitation	41.4 %	38.7 %	38.5 %	40.5 %	42.5 %	43.8 %	44.1 %	41.6 %	41.6 %	44.0 %	45.9 %
BE	Women: some or severe limitation	40.1 %	37.5 %	34.7 %	37.7 %	38.1 %	40.5 %	42.1 %	41.1 %	41.3 %	44.3 %	46.7 %
BE	Women: no limitation	69.3 %	70.4 %	69.4 %	68.3 %	71.5 %	72.3 %	73.8 %	74.1 %	74.9 %	75.5 %	75.0 %
BE	Men: some or severe limitation	42.9 %	40.2 %	43.0 %	43.8 %	47.8 %	47.6 %	46.2 %	42.2 %	41.8 %	43.6 %	44.8 %
BE	Men: no limitation	76.0 %	76.4 %	77.0 %	76.5 %	77.1 %	78.9 %	80.7 %	80.9 %	81.1 %	82.3 %	81.6 %
EU	Total: no limitation	71.4 %	72.5 %	73.1 %	73.9 %	74.8 %	76.2 %	75.6 %	75.3 %	74.8 %	76.3 %	76.6 %
EU	Total: some or severe limitation	48.5 %	48.7 %	47.4 %	48.1 %	50.6 %	52.0 %	51.3 %	50.3 %	50.9 %	54.3 %	54.6 %
EU	Women: some or severe limitation	45.4 %	45.7 %	44.7 %	45.9 %	48.3 %	49.3 %	49.0 %	48.2 %	47.8 %	51.0 %	51.8 %
EU	Women: no limitation	65.3 %	66.7 %	66.9 %	67.7 %	68.9 %	70.2 %	69.3 %	69.4 %	68.3 %	69.9 %	70.6 %
EU	Men: some or severe limitation	52.1 %	52.3 %	50.6 %	50.6 %	53.3 %	55.1 %	53.9 %	52.8 %	54.5 %	58.1 %	57.9 %
EU	Men: no limitation	77.4 %	78.3 %	79.4 %	80.0 %	80.7 %	82.2 %	82.0 %	81.1 %	81.2 %	82.5 %	82.6 %
Note:												
Source: EU-SILC, own calculation												
Note: changed wording of limitation in activities question in 2021												

Table 4b: Trend - Disability employment gap (age 20-64) by gender



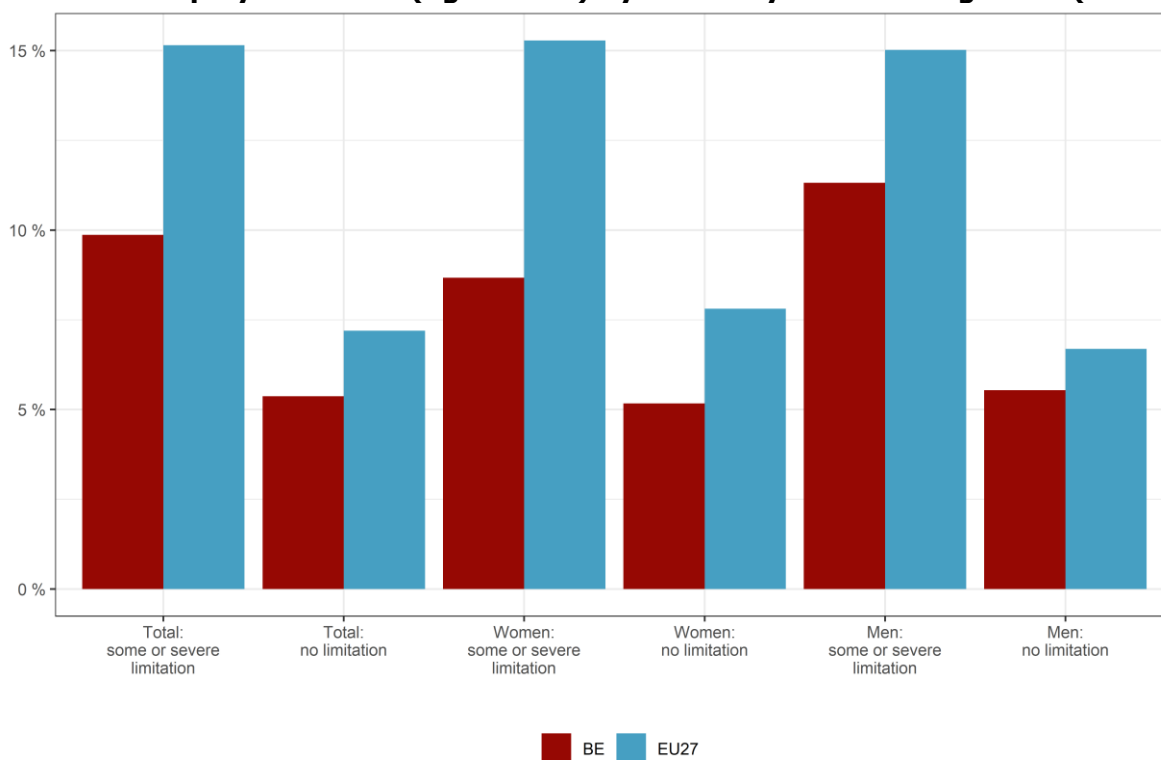
Source: Eurostat [hlth_dlm200], extracted on 2025-05-08
 Note: EU27 break in time series in 2019

European Semester 2025 – 2026 country fiche on disability equality: Belgium

Trend - Disability employment gap (age 20-64) by gender												
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
BE	Total: some or severe limitation	34.4 pps	34.9 pps	34.5 pps	33.1 pps	32.0 pps	33.1 pps	36.3 pps	38.0 pps	35.3 pps	33.6 pps	33.5 pps
BE	Women: some or severe limitation	33.1 pps	34.8 pps	33.6 pps	34.2 pps	31.6 pps	31.7 pps	32.7 pps	34.4 pps	31.7 pps	30.1 pps	29.1 pps
BE	Men: some or severe limitation	35.0 pps	34.2 pps	34.5 pps	30.9 pps	31.7 pps	34.2 pps	39.8 pps	41.4 pps	38.6 pps	36.9 pps	37.8 pps
EU27	Total: some or severe limitation	22.7 pps	23.8 pps	24.2 pps	23.5 pps	23.5 pps	24.4 pps	24.4 pps	23.1 pps	21.4 pps	21.5 pps	24.0 pps
EU27	Women: some or severe limitation	20.0 pps	20.7 pps	21.0 pps	20.7 pps	20.7 pps	21.5 pps	21.6 pps	20.4 pps	18.9 pps	19.1 pps	20.4 pps
EU27	Men: some or severe limitation	24.8 pps	26.6 pps	26.9 pps	25.8 pps	25.9 pps	26.9 pps	26.7 pps	25.2 pps	23.3 pps	23.2 pps	27.2 pps
Note:												
Source: Eurostat [hlth_dlm200], extracted on 2025-05-08												
Note: EU27 break in time series in 2019												

7.1.1 Unemployment

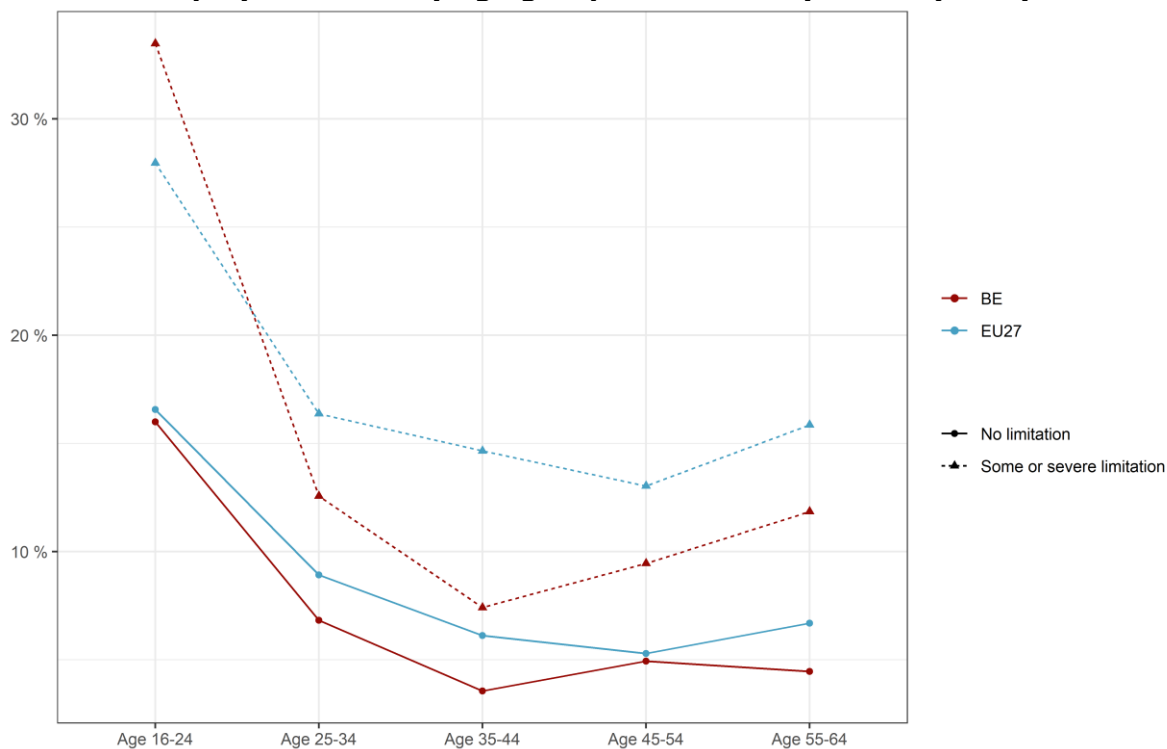
Table 5: Unemployment rate (age 20-64) by disability status and gender (2023)



Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation

Unemployment rate (age 20-64) by disability status and gender (2023)						
	Total: some or severe	Total: no limitation	Women: some or severe limitation	Women: no limitation	Men: some or severe limitation	Men: no limitation
BE	9.9 %	5.4 %	8.7 %	5.2 %	11.3 %	5.5 %
EU27	15.2 %	7.2 %	15.3 %	7.8 %	15.0 %	6.7 %
Note:						
Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation						

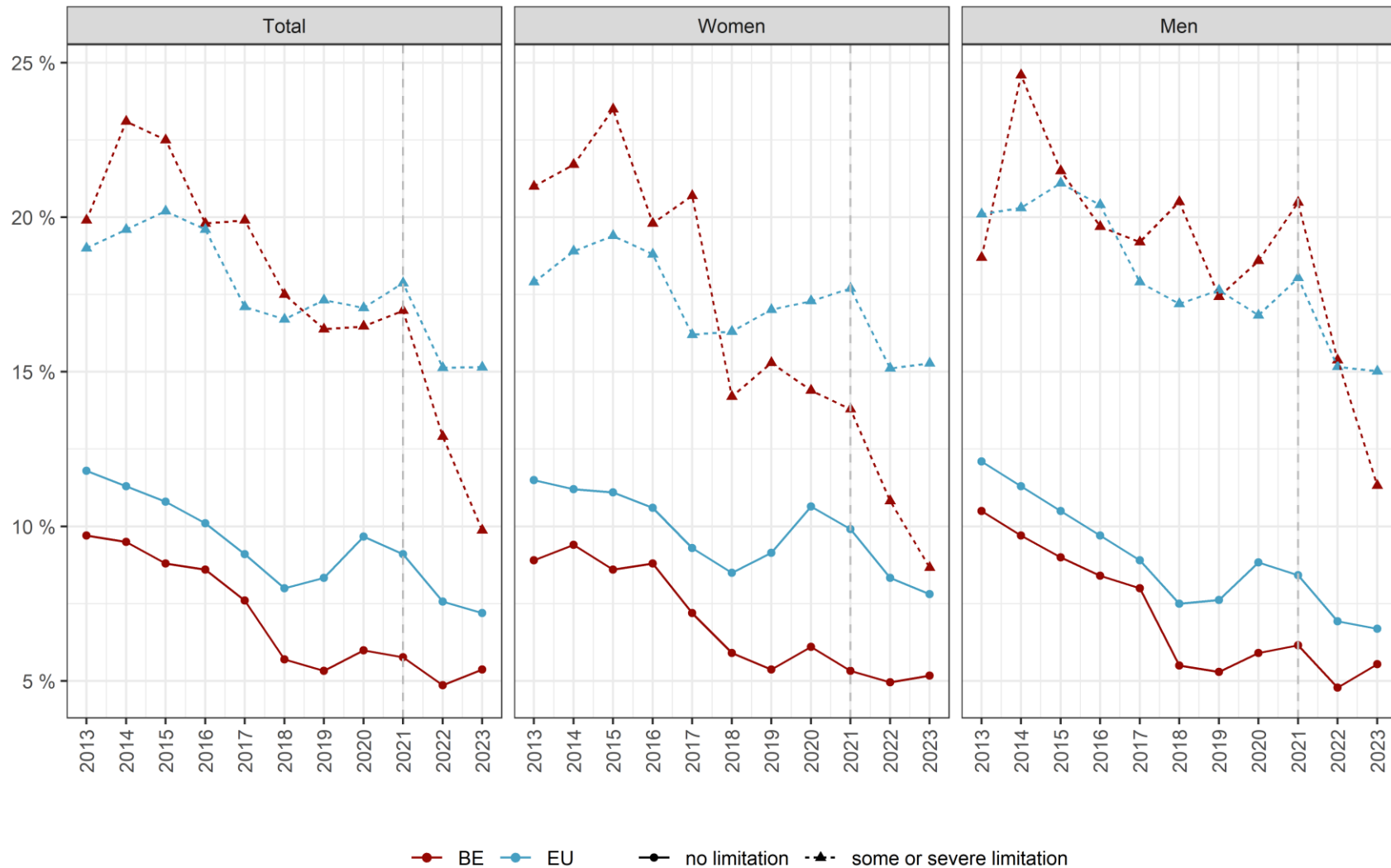
Table 6: Unemployment rate by age group and disability status (2023)



Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation

Unemployment rate by age group and disability status (2023)						
	Activity limitation	Age 16-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64
BE	Some or severe limitation	33.5 %	12.6 %	7.4 %	9.5 %	11.8 %
BE	No limitation	16.0 %	6.8 %	3.6 %	4.9 %	4.5 %
EU27	Some or severe limitation	28.0 %	16.4 %	14.7 %	13.0 %	15.9 %
EU27	No limitation	16.6 %	8.9 %	6.1 %	5.3 %	6.7 %
Note:						
Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation						

Table 7: Trend - Unemployment rate (age 20-64) by disability status and gender



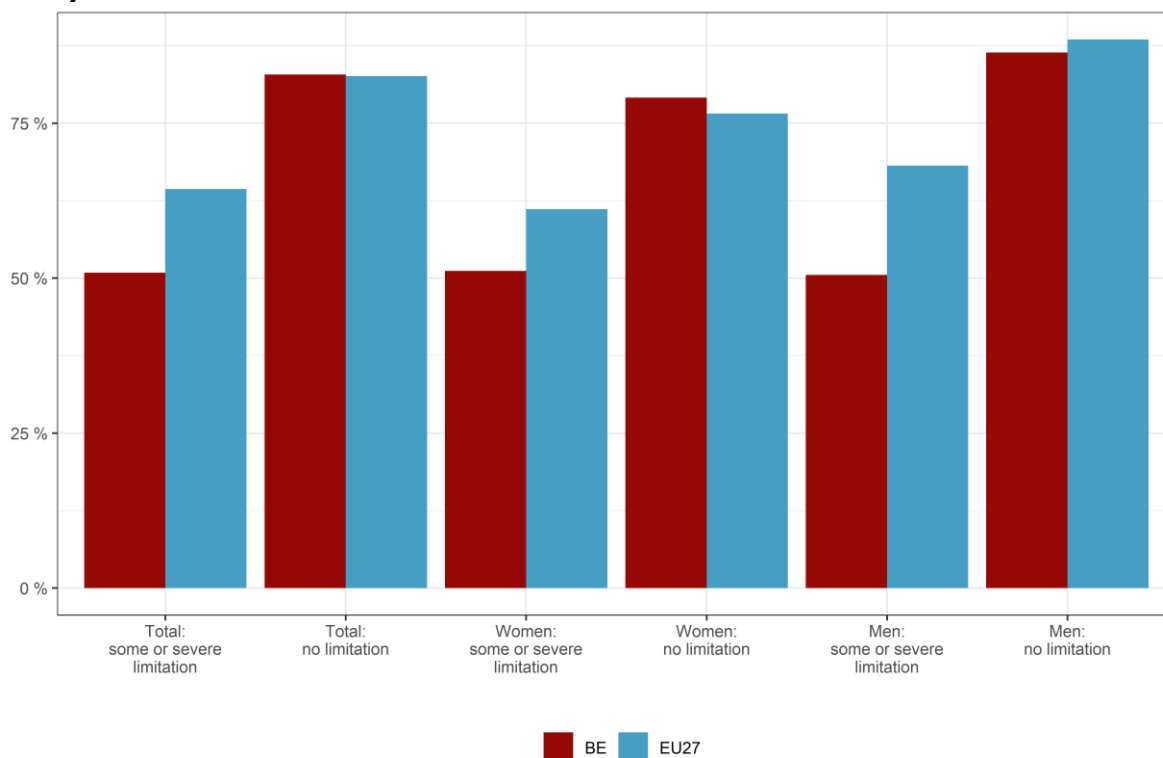
Source: EU-SILC, own calculation
 Note: changed wording of limitation in activities question in 2021

European Semester 2025 – 2026 country fiche on disability equality: Belgium

Trend - Unemployment rate (age 20-64) by disability status and gender												
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
BE	Total: no limitation	9.7 %	9.5 %	8.8 %	8.6 %	7.6 %	5.7 %	5.3 %	6.0 %	5.8 %	4.9 %	5.4 %
BE	Total: some or severe limitation	19.9 %	23.1 %	22.5 %	19.8 %	19.9 %	17.5 %	16.4 %	16.5 %	17.0 %	12.9 %	9.9 %
BE	Women: some or severe limitation	21.0 %	21.7 %	23.5 %	19.8 %	20.7 %	14.2 %	15.3 %	14.4 %	13.8 %	10.8 %	8.7 %
BE	Women: no limitation	8.9 %	9.4 %	8.6 %	8.8 %	7.2 %	5.9 %	5.4 %	6.1 %	5.3 %	5.0 %	5.2 %
BE	Men: some or severe limitation	18.7 %	24.6 %	21.5 %	19.7 %	19.2 %	20.5 %	17.4 %	18.6 %	20.5 %	15.4 %	11.3 %
BE	Men: no limitation	10.5 %	9.7 %	9.0 %	8.4 %	8.0 %	5.5 %	5.3 %	5.9 %	6.2 %	4.8 %	5.5 %
EU	Total: no limitation	11.8 %	11.3 %	10.8 %	10.1 %	9.1 %	8.0 %	8.3 %	9.7 %	9.1 %	7.6 %	7.2 %
EU	Total: some or severe limitation	19.0 %	19.6 %	20.2 %	19.6 %	17.1 %	16.7 %	17.3 %	17.1 %	17.9 %	15.1 %	15.2 %
EU	Women: some or severe limitation	17.9 %	18.9 %	19.4 %	18.8 %	16.2 %	16.3 %	17.0 %	17.3 %	17.7 %	15.1 %	15.3 %
EU	Women: no limitation	11.5 %	11.2 %	11.1 %	10.6 %	9.3 %	8.5 %	9.1 %	10.6 %	9.9 %	8.3 %	7.8 %
EU	Men: some or severe limitation	20.1 %	20.3 %	21.1 %	20.4 %	17.9 %	17.2 %	17.6 %	16.8 %	18.0 %	15.2 %	15.0 %
EU	Men: no limitation	12.1 %	11.3 %	10.5 %	9.7 %	8.9 %	7.5 %	7.6 %	8.8 %	8.4 %	6.9 %	6.7 %
Note:												
Source: EU-SILC, own calculation												
Note: changed wording of limitation in activities question in 2021												

7.1.2 Economic activity

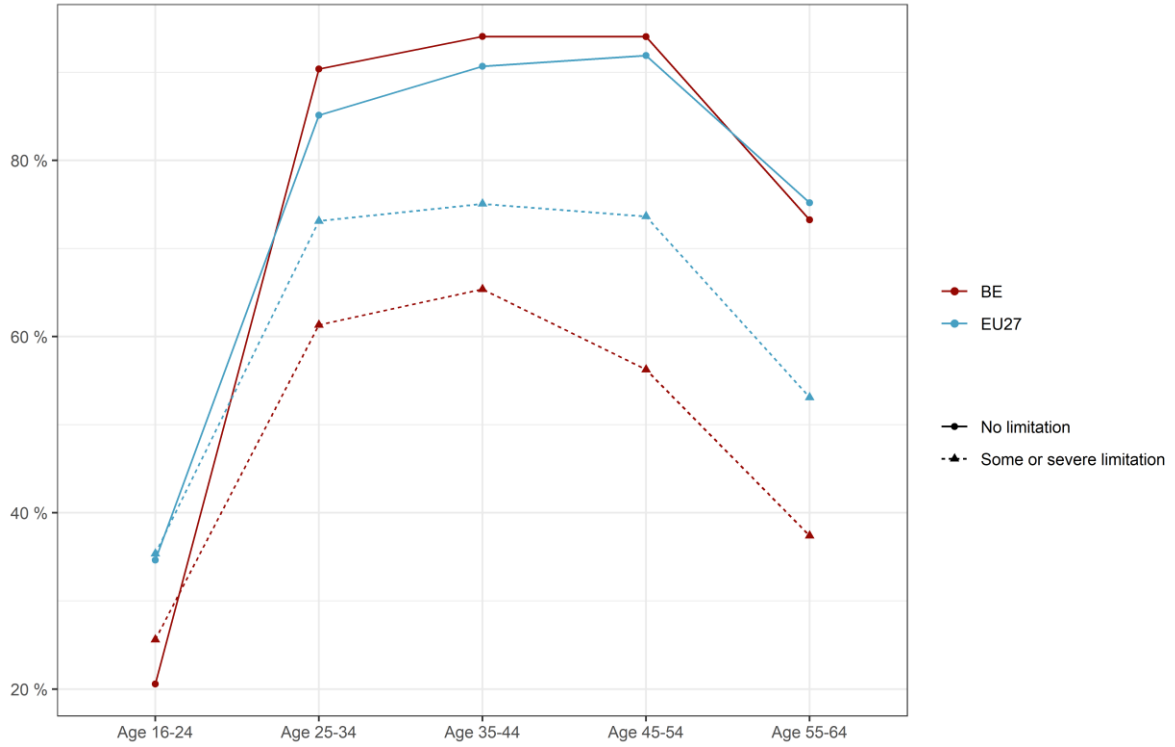
Table 8: Economic activity rate (age 20-64) by disability status and gender (2023)



Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation

Economic activity rate (age 20-64) by disability status and gender (2023)						
	Total: some or severe limitation	Total: no limitation	Women: some or severe limitation	Women: no limitation	Men: some or severe limitation	Men: no limitation
BE	50.9 %	82.9 %	51.2 %	79.1 %	50.5 %	86.4 %
EU27	64.4 %	82.6 %	61.1 %	76.6 %	68.2 %	88.5 %
Note:						
Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation						

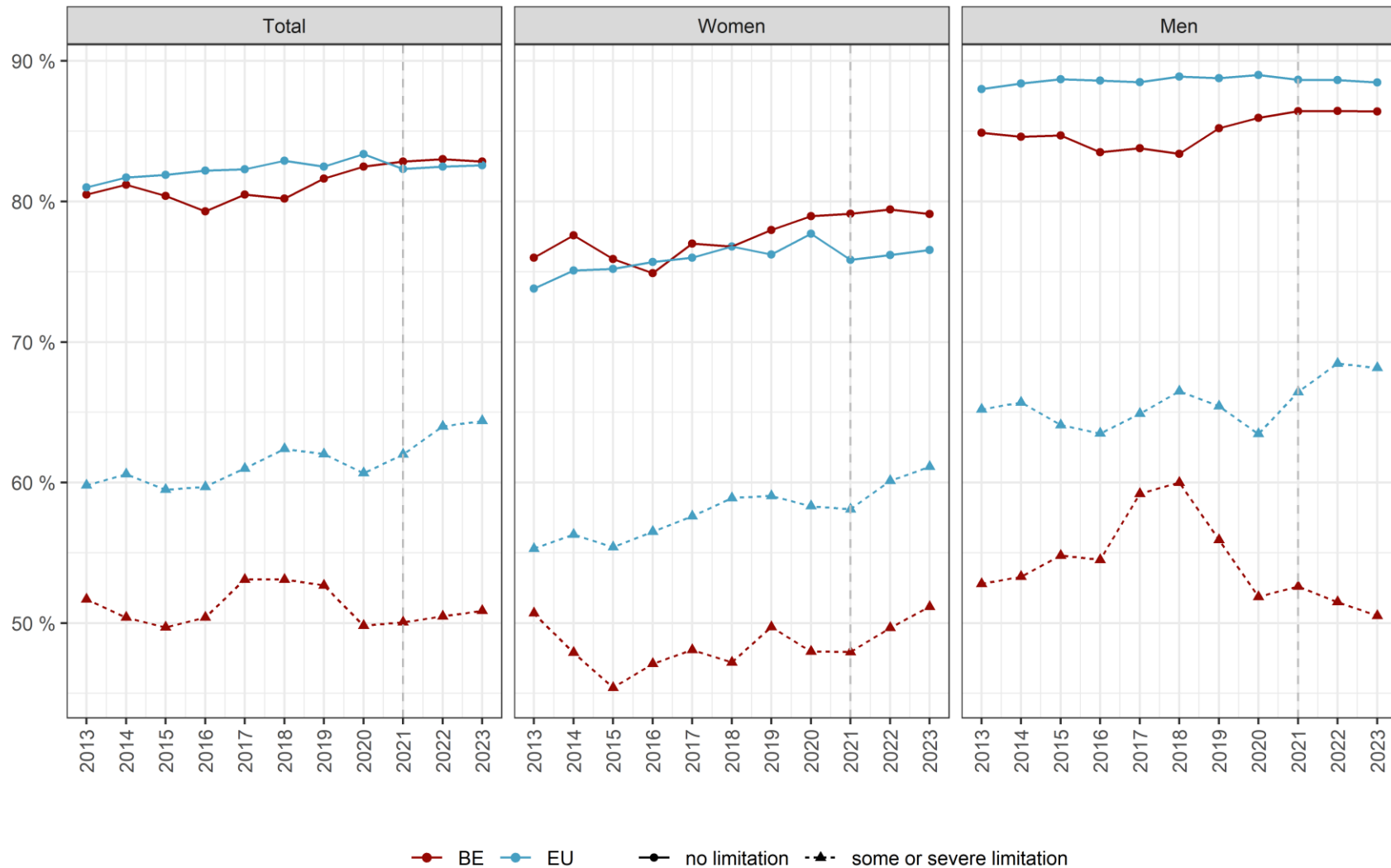
Table 9: Economic activity rate by age group and disability status (2023)



Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation

Economic activity rate by age group and disability status (2023)						
	Activity limitation	Age 16-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64
BE	Some or severe limitation	25.6 %	61.3 %	65.4 %	56.3 %	37.4 %
BE	No limitation	20.6 %	90.4 %	94.1 %	94.0 %	73.3 %
EU27	Some or severe limitation	35.4 %	73.1 %	75.1 %	73.6 %	53.1 %
EU27	No limitation	34.6 %	85.1 %	90.7 %	91.9 %	75.2 %
Note:						
Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation						

Table 10: Trend - Economic activity rate (age 20-64) by disability status and gender



Source: EU-SILC, own calculation
 Note: changed wording of limitation in activities question in 2021

European Semester 2025 – 2026 country fiche on disability equality: Belgium

Trend - Economic activity rate (age 20-64) by disability status and gender												
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
BE	Total: no limitation	80.5 %	81.2 %	80.4 %	79.3 %	80.5 %	80.2 %	81.6 %	82.5 %	82.8 %	83.0 %	82.9 %
BE	Total: some or severe limitation	51.7 %	50.4 %	49.7 %	50.4 %	53.1 %	53.1 %	52.7 %	49.8 %	50.1 %	50.5 %	50.9 %
BE	Women: some or severe limitation	50.7 %	47.9 %	45.4 %	47.1 %	48.1 %	47.2 %	49.7 %	48.0 %	47.9 %	49.7 %	51.2 %
BE	Women: no limitation	76.0 %	77.6 %	75.9 %	74.9 %	77.0 %	76.8 %	78.0 %	79.0 %	79.1 %	79.4 %	79.1 %
BE	Men: some or severe limitation	52.8 %	53.3 %	54.8 %	54.5 %	59.2 %	60.0 %	55.9 %	51.9 %	52.6 %	51.5 %	50.5 %
BE	Men: no limitation	84.9 %	84.6 %	84.7 %	83.5 %	83.8 %	83.4 %	85.2 %	86.0 %	86.4 %	86.4 %	86.4 %
EU	Total: no limitation	81.0 %	81.7 %	81.9 %	82.2 %	82.3 %	82.9 %	82.5 %	83.4 %	82.3 %	82.5 %	82.6 %
EU	Total: some or severe limitation	59.8 %	60.6 %	59.5 %	59.7 %	61.0 %	62.4 %	62.0 %	60.7 %	62.0 %	64.0 %	64.4 %
EU	Women: some or severe limitation	55.3 %	56.3 %	55.4 %	56.5 %	57.6 %	58.9 %	59.1 %	58.3 %	58.1 %	60.1 %	61.1 %
EU	Women: no limitation	73.8 %	75.1 %	75.2 %	75.7 %	76.0 %	76.8 %	76.2 %	77.7 %	75.8 %	76.2 %	76.6 %
EU	Men: some or severe limitation	65.2 %	65.7 %	64.1 %	63.5 %	64.9 %	66.5 %	65.4 %	63.5 %	66.4 %	68.5 %	68.2 %
EU	Men: no limitation	88.0 %	88.4 %	88.7 %	88.6 %	88.5 %	88.9 %	88.8 %	89.0 %	88.7 %	88.6 %	88.5 %
Note:												
Source: EU-SILC, own calculation												
Note: changed wording of limitation in activities question in 2021												

7.1.3 Alternative sources of labour market data in Belgium

Table 10a: 2024 Belgium employment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64)

Belgium		Men	Women	Total
	Severe limitation	23,2%	26,3%	24,9%
	Some limitation	62,8%	56,1%	59,0%
	No limitation	81,6%	73,8%	77,8%
	Total	76,4%	68,4%	72,4%

Source : LFS 2024 – Table T1.009Y_2024: [Employment and unemployment | Statbel](#)

Table 10b: 2024 Belgium unemployment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64)

Belgium		Men	Women	Total
	Severe limitation	13,1%	5,4%	8,9%
	Some limitation	8,5%	7,7%	8,1%
	No limitation	5,4%	4,7%	5,1%
	Total	5,8%	5,0%	5,4%

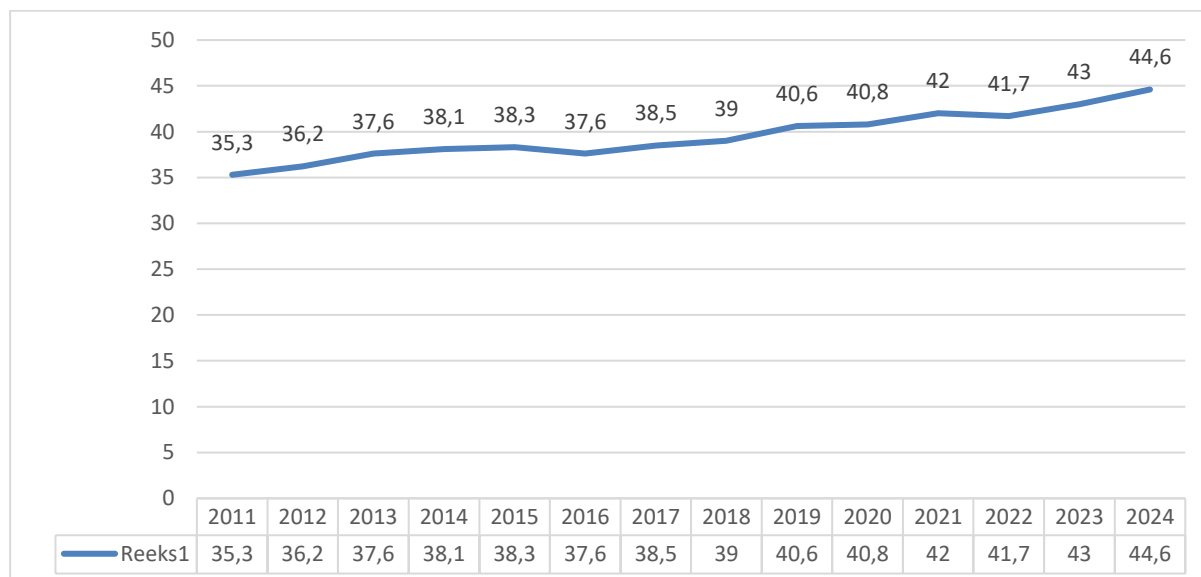
Source : LFS 2024 – Table T1.009Y_2024: [Employment and unemployment | Statbel](#)

Table 10c: 2024 Belgium activity rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64)

Belgium		Men	Women	Total
	Severe limitation	26,6%	27,8%	27,3%
	Some limitation	68,7%	60,8%	64,2%
	No limitation	86,3%	77,5%	82,0%
	Total	81,1%	72,0%	76,6%

Source : LFS 2024 – Table T1.009Y_2024: [Employment and unemployment | Statbel](#)

Table 10d: Belgium – Evolution 2011-2024 of the disability employment rate in percentages (aged 20-64)



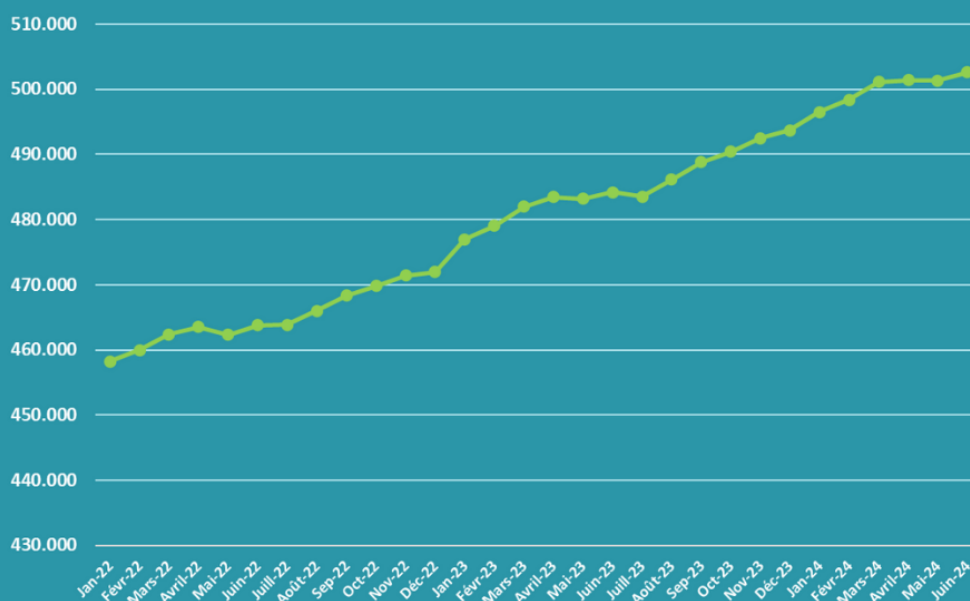
Source : Steunpunt Werk - Werkzaamheidsgraad personen met hinder door handicap, aandoening of ziekte naar leeftijd o.b.v. Statbel (Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium) - EAK: [Werkzaamheidsgraad personen met hinder door handicap, aandoening of ziekte naar leeftijd - Steunpunt Werk](#)

Table 10e: Belgium - Situation of the number of workers on long-term sick leave



BAROMETRE ReAT

Graphique 11 – Situation de l'invalidité



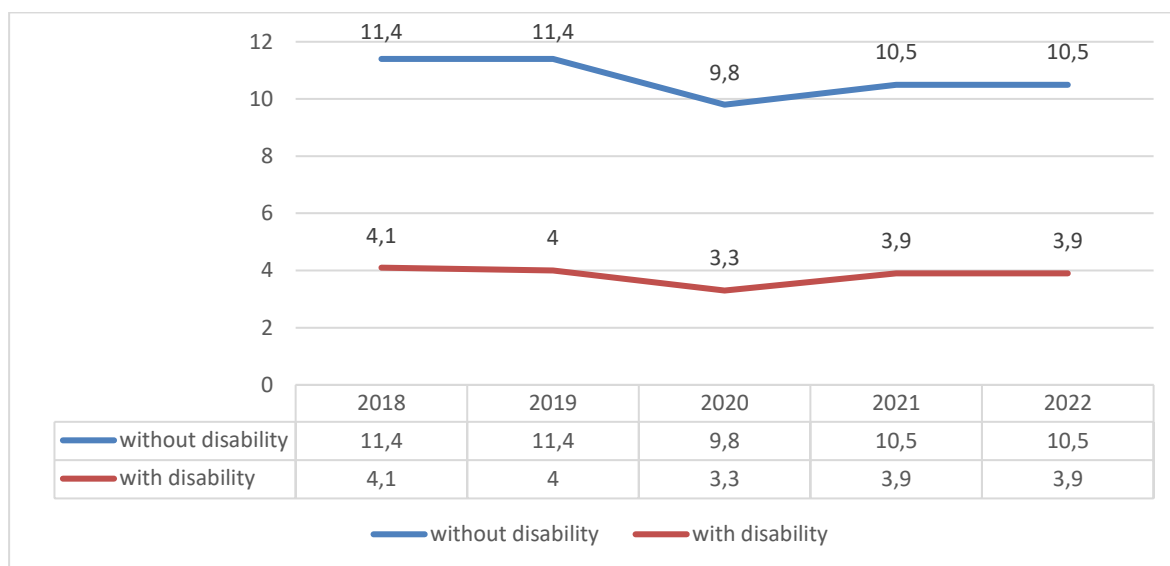
jan-22	févr-22	mars-22	avril-22	mai-22	juin-22	juill-22	août-22	sept-22	oct-22
458.252	459.948	462.409	463.547	462.281	463.757	463.884	465.982	468.315	469.807

nov-22	déc-22	jan-23	févr-23	mars-23	avril-23	mai-23	juin-23	juill-23	août-23
471.421	471.927	476.947	479.075	481.985	483.433	483.199	484.196	483.530	486.164

sept-23	oct-23	nov-23	déc-23	jan-24	févr-24	mars-24	avril-24	mai-24	juin-24
488.793	490.443	492.501	493.681	496.480	498.362	501.148	501.392	501.306	502.580

Source : National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI), Barometer "Return to work", Number of persons entering and leaving incapacity for work, <https://www.inami.fgov.be/fr/statistiques/statistiques-indemnitees/barometre-retour-au-travail/nombre-entrant-et-sortant-en-incapacite-de-travail>

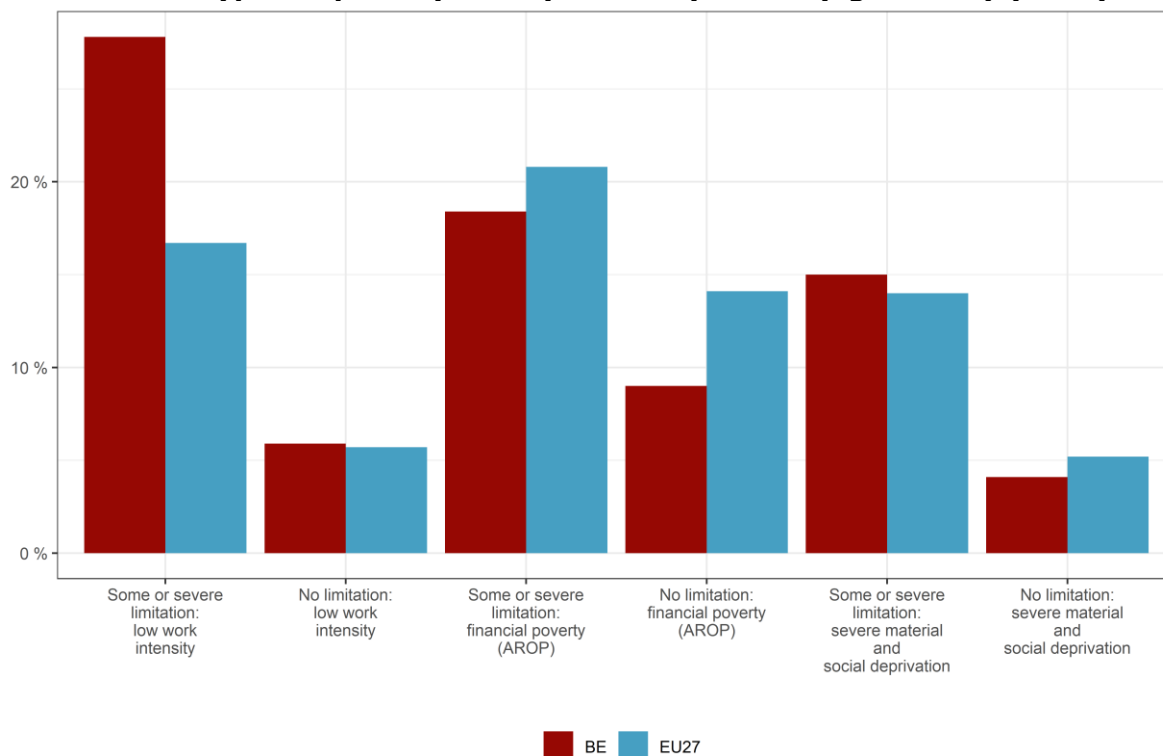
Table 10f: Flemish Region, 2018-2022 - Average monthly outflow of unemployed job seekers into employment (%)



Source : Steunpunt Werk/DWSE based on VDAB. [werk.rapport_2023_01.pdf](#)

7.2 EU data relevant to disability, social policies and healthcare (2023)

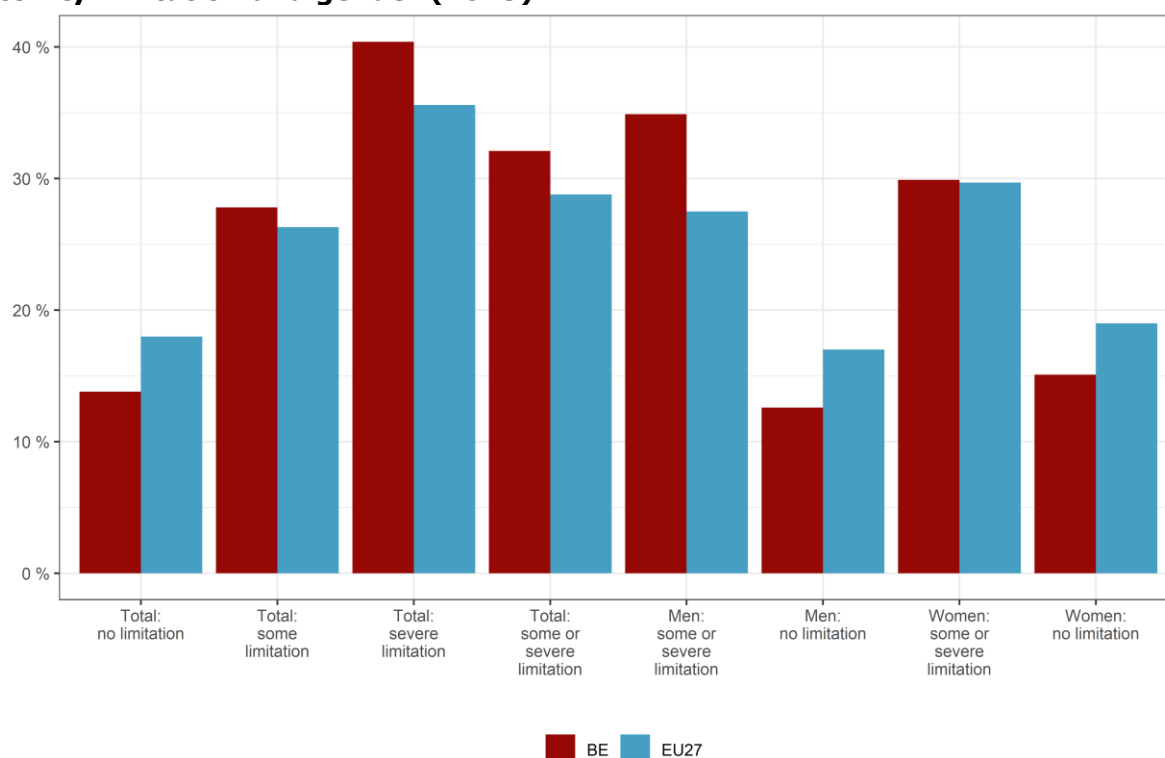
Table 11: Main types of poverty risk by disability status (age 16-64) (2023)



Source: Eurostat [hlth_dpe040], [hlth_dpe020] and [hlth_dm010], extracted on 2025-05-08

Main types of poverty risk by disability status (age 16-64) (2023)						
	Some or severe limitation: low work intensity	No limitation: low work intensity	Some or severe limitation: financial poverty (AROP)	No limitation: financial poverty (AROP)	Some or severe limitation: severe material and social deprivation	No limitation: severe material and social deprivation
BE	27.8 %	5.9 %	18.4 %	9.0 %	15.0 %	4.1 %
EU27	16.7 %	5.7 %	20.8 %	14.1 %	14.0 %	5.2 %
Note:						
Source: Eurostat [hlth_dpe040], [hlth_dpe020] and [hlth_dm010], extracted on 2025-05-08						

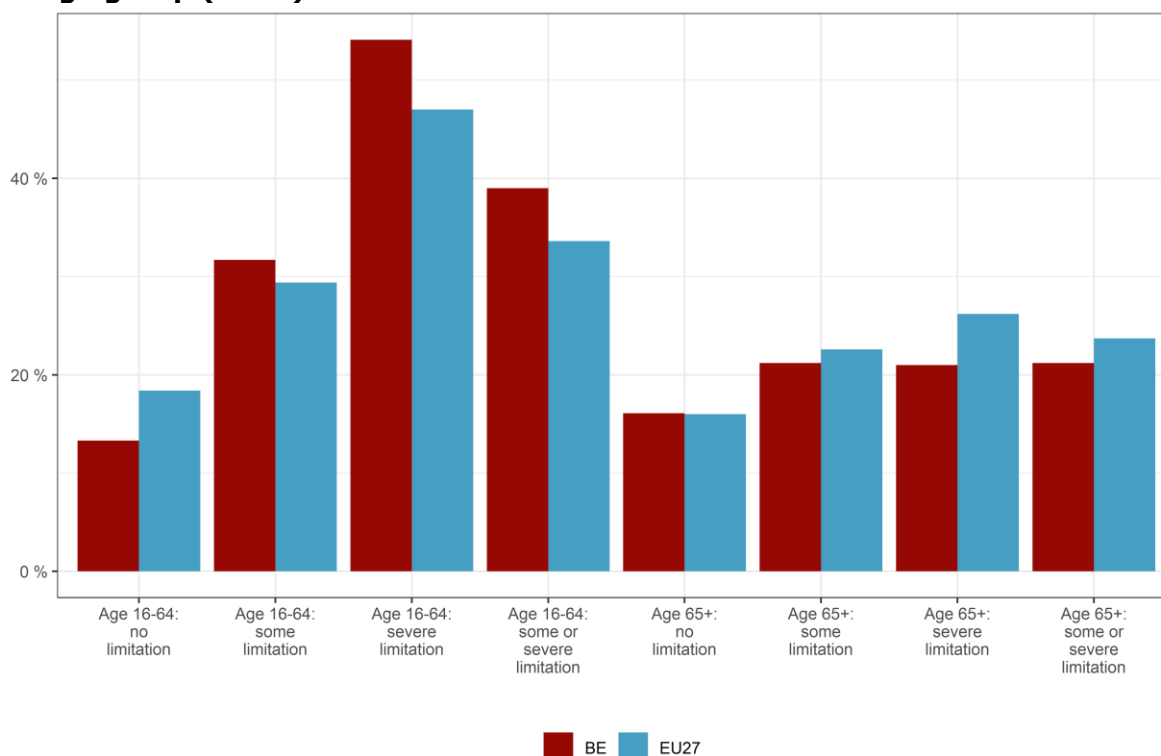
Table 12: At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate (age 16+) by level of activity limitation and gender (2023)



Source: Eurostat [hlth_dpe010], extracted on 2025-05-08

At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate (age 16+) by level of activity limitation and gender (2023)								
	Total: no limitation	Total: some limitation	Total: severe limitation	Total: some or severe limitation	Men: some or severe limitation	Men: no limitation	Women: some or severe limitation	Women: no limitation
BE	13.8 %	27.8 %	40.4 %	32.1 %	34.9 %	12.6 %	29.9 %	15.1 %
EU27	18.0 %	26.3 %	35.6 %	28.8 %	27.5 %	17.0 %	29.7 %	19.0 %
Note:								
Source: Eurostat [hlth_dpe010], extracted on 2025-05-08								

Table 13: At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate by level of activity limitation and age group (2023)

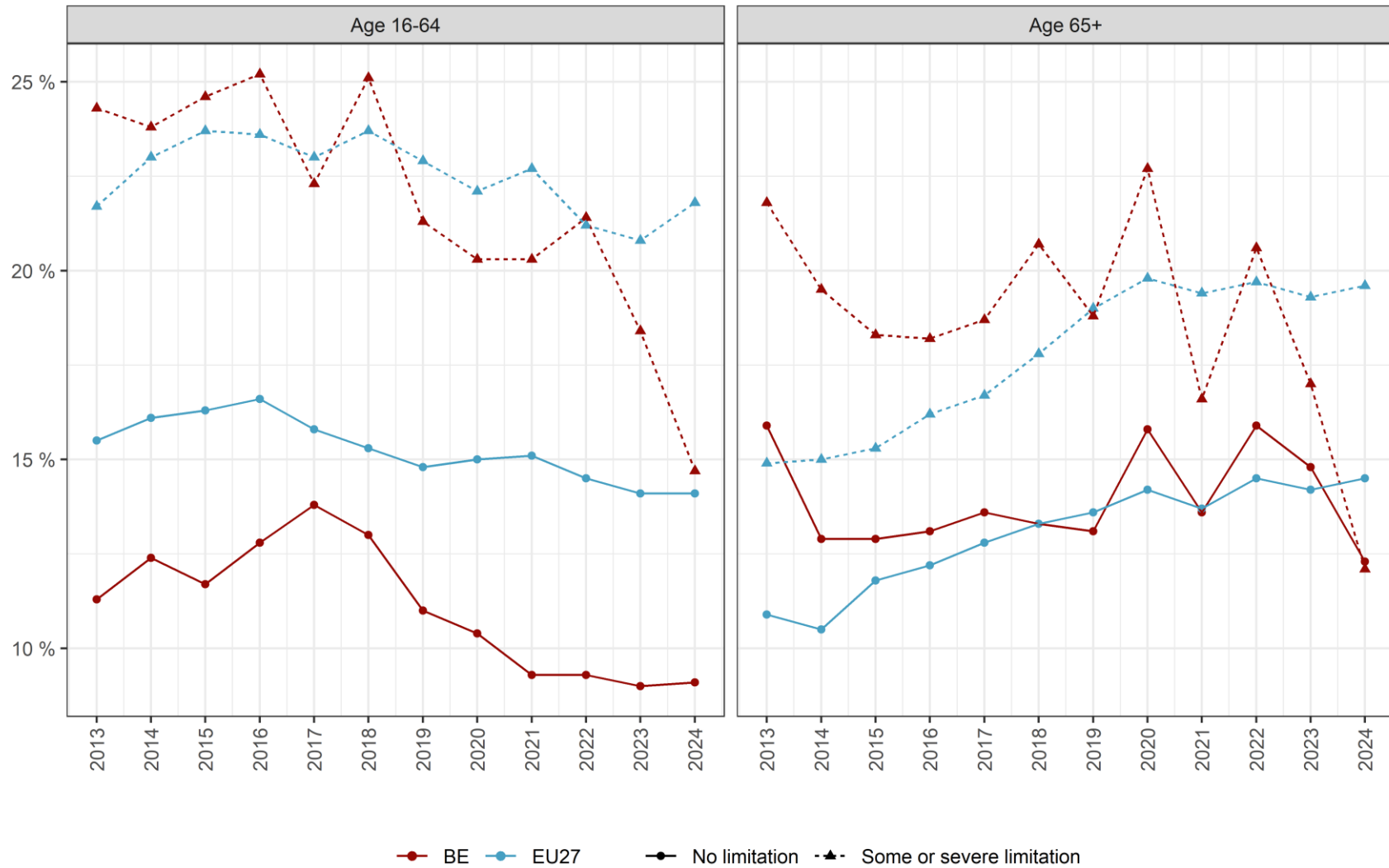


Source: Eurostat [hlth_dpe010], extracted on 2025-05-08

At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate by level of activity limitation and age group (2023)								
	Age 16-64: no limitation	Age 16-64: some limitation	Age 16-64: severe limitation	Age 16-64: some or severe limitation	Age 65+: no limitation	Age 65+: some limitation	Age 65+: severe limitation	Age 65+: some or severe limitation
BE	13.3 %	31.7 %	54.1 %	39.0 %	16.1 %	21.2 %	21.0 %	21.2 %
EU27	18.4 %	29.4 %	47.0 %	33.6 %	16.0 %	22.6 %	26.2 %	23.7 %
Note:								

Source: Eurostat [hlth_dpe010], extracted on 2025-05-08

Table 14: Trend - At risk of poverty rate by disability status and age group

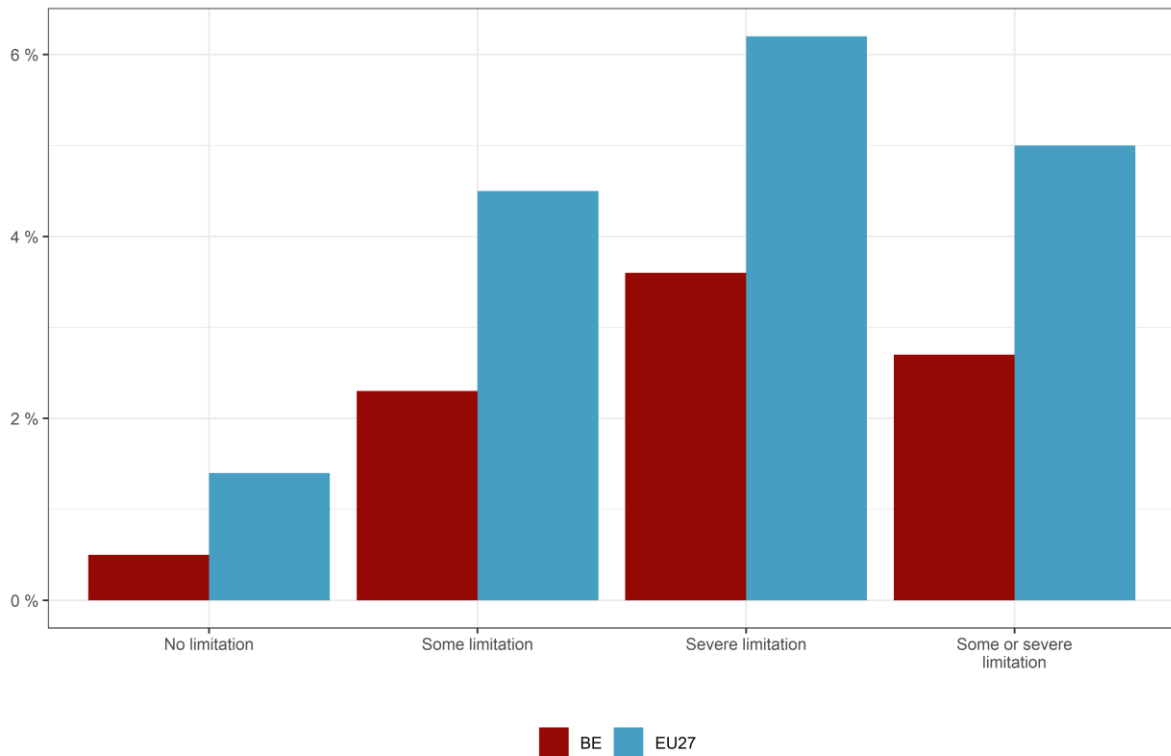


Source: Eurostat [hlth_dpe020], extracted on 2025-05-08
 Note for Belgium: break in time series in 2019

European Semester 2025 – 2026 country fiche on disability equality: Belgium

Trend - At risk of poverty rate by disability status and age group													
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
BE	Age 16-64: no limitation	11.3 %	12.4 %	11.7 %	12.8 %	13.8 %	13.0 %	11.0 %	10.4 %	9.3 %	9.3 %	9.0 %	9.1 %
BE	Age 16-64: some or severe limitation	24.3 %	23.8 %	24.6 %	25.2 %	22.3 %	25.1 %	21.3 %	20.3 %	20.3 %	21.4 %	18.4 %	14.7 %
BE	Age 65+: no limitation	15.9 %	12.9 %	12.9 %	13.1 %	13.6 %	13.3 %	13.1 %	15.8 %	13.6 %	15.9 %	14.8 %	12.3 %
BE	Age 65+: some or severe limitation	21.8 %	19.5 %	18.3 %	18.2 %	18.7 %	20.7 %	18.8 %	22.7 %	16.6 %	20.6 %	17.0 %	12.1 %
EU27	Age 16-64: no limitation	15.5 %	16.1 %	16.3 %	16.6 %	15.8 %	15.3 %	14.8 %	15.0 %	15.1 %	14.5 %	14.1 %	14.1 %
EU27	Age 16-64: some or severe limitation	21.7 %	23.0 %	23.7 %	23.6 %	23.0 %	23.7 %	22.9 %	22.1 %	22.7 %	21.2 %	20.8 %	21.8 %
EU27	Age 65+: no limitation	10.9 %	10.5 %	11.8 %	12.2 %	12.8 %	13.3 %	13.6 %	14.2 %	13.7 %	14.5 %	14.2 %	14.5 %
EU27	Age 65+: some or severe limitation	14.9 %	15.0 %	15.3 %	16.2 %	16.7 %	17.8 %	19.0 %	19.8 %	19.4 %	19.7 %	19.3 %	19.6 %
Note:													
Source: Eurostat [hlth_dpe020], extracted on 2025-05-08													
Note for Belgium: break in time series in 2019													

Table 15a: Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination (age 16+) by level of activity limitation (2023)



Source: Eurostat [hlth_dh030], extracted on 2025-05-08

Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination (age 16+) by level of activity limitation (2023)				
	No limitation	Some limitation	Severe limitation	Some or severe limitation
BE	0.5 %	2.3 %	3.6 %	2.7 %
EU27	1.4 %	4.5 %	6.2 %	5.0 %
Note:				
Source: Eurostat [hlth_dh030], extracted on 2025-05-08				

Table 15b: Trend - self-reported unmet needs for medical examination by disability status and age group



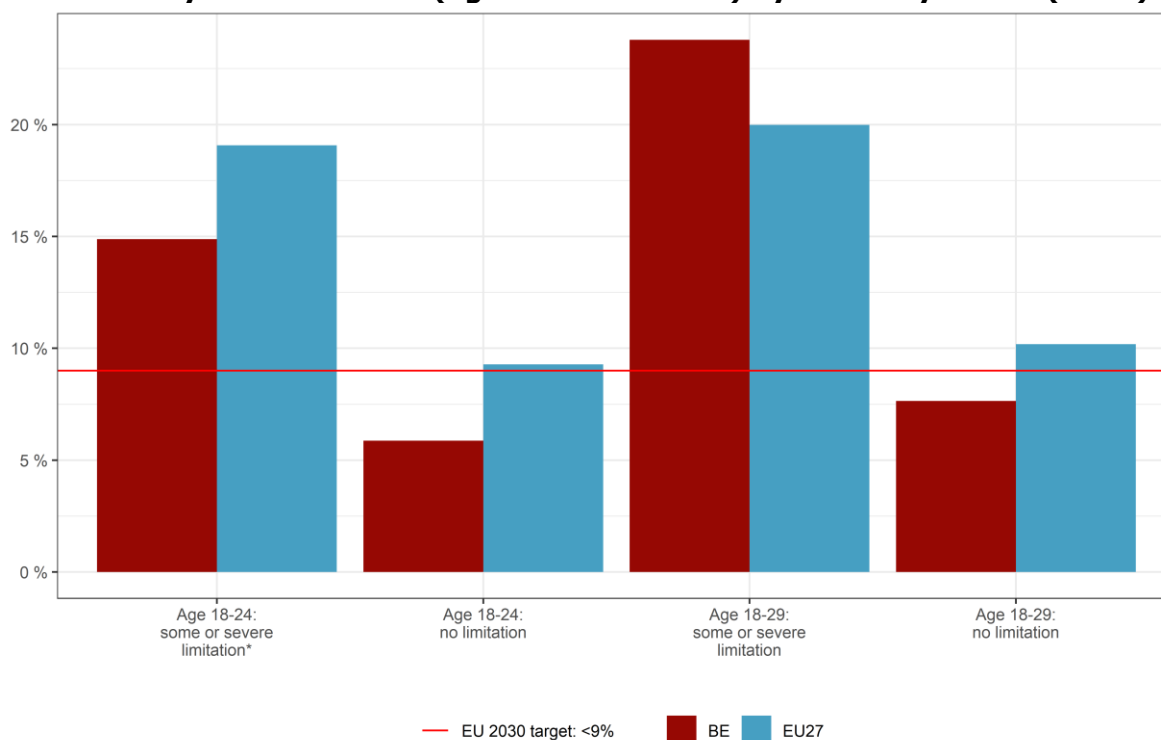
Source: Eurostat [hlth_dh030], extracted on 2025-05-08
 Note for Belgium: break in time series in 2019

European Semester 2025 – 2026 country fiche on disability equality: Belgium

Trend - self-reported unmet needs for medical examination by disability status and age group													
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
BE	Age 16-64: no limitation	1.2 %	1.9 %	1.8 %	1.4 %	1.3 %	1.1 %	1.0 %	0.8 %	0.9 %	0.5 %	0.6 %	0.8 %
BE	Age 16-64: some or severe limitation	6.3 %	7.1 %	7.3 %	8.0 %	7.6 %	6.0 %	5.4 %	5.2 %	5.8 %	3.8 %	3.9 %	4.0 %
BE	Age 65+: no limitation	0.4 %	0.5 %	0.3 %	0.5 %	0.7 %	0.2 %	0.6 %	0.1 %	0.4 %	0.3 %	0.1 %	0.3 %
BE	Age 65+: some or severe limitation	1.8 %	1.8 %	1.6 %	3.0 %	1.3 %	1.5 %	2.4 %	1.7 %	2.1 %	1.1 %	1.0 %	2.1 %
EU27	Age 16-64: no limitation	2.2 %	2.2 %	1.8 %	1.7 %	0.9 %	1.0 %	0.9 %	0.9 %	1.1 %	1.2 %	1.3 %	1.6 %
EU27	Age 16-64: some or severe limitation	8.8 %	9.0 %	7.6 %	5.9 %	3.9 %	4.0 %	4.0 %	4.6 %	4.8 %	4.8 %	5.1 %	5.4 %
EU27	Age 65+: no limitation	2.0 %	1.7 %	1.5 %	1.4 %	0.9 %	0.9 %	1.0 %	1.2 %	1.2 %	1.3 %	1.8 %	1.9 %
EU27	Age 65+: some or severe limitation	7.9 %	7.3 %	7.4 %	6.0 %	3.9 %	4.1 %	4.1 %	4.2 %	4.4 %	4.7 %	4.8 %	4.5 %
Note:													
Source: Eurostat [hith_dh030], extracted on 2025-05-08													
Note for Belgium: break in time series in 2019													

7.3 EU data relevant to disability and education (2023)

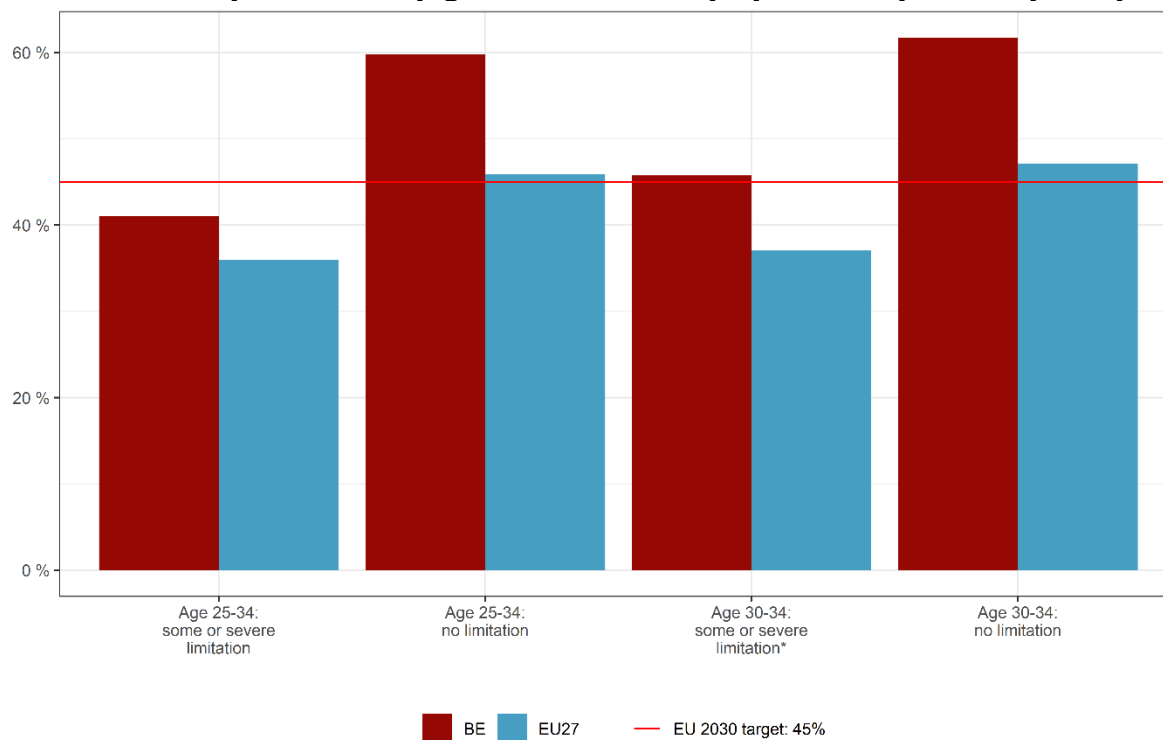
Table 16: Early school leavers (age 18-24 & 18-29) by disability status (2023)



Note: * indicative data
Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation

Early school leavers (age 18-24 & 18-29) by disability status (2023)				
	Age 18-24: some or severe limitation*	Age 18-24: no limitation	Age 18-29: some or severe limitation	Age 18-29: no limitation
BE	14.9 %	5.9 %	23.8 %	7.7 %
EU27	19.1 %	9.3 %	20.0 %	10.2 %
Note:				
Note: * indicative data				
Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation				

Table 17: Tertiary education (age 25-34 & 30-34) by disability status (2023)



Note: * indicative data
Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation

Tertiary education (age 25-34 & 30-34) by disability status (2023)				
	Age 25-34: some or severe limitation	Age 25-34: no limitation	Age 30-34: some or severe limitation*	Age 30-34: no limitation
BE	41.0 %	59.8 %	45.7 %	61.7 %
EU27	36.0 %	45.8 %	37.0 %	47.1 %
Note:				
Note: * indicative data				
Source: EU-SILC 2023 (release 2024 v1), own calculation				

7.3.1 Alternative sources of education data in Belgium

Table 18: Flanders – Pupils in special education by educational level, school years 2010-2011 to 2023-2024, in number and in % by educational level

	KLEUTER		LAGER		SECUNDAIR		TOTAAL	
	Aantal	%	Aantal	%	Aantal	%	Aantal	%
2010-2011	1.975	0,8	28.225	6,9	19.487	4,3	49.687	4,4
2011-2012	1.986	0,8	28.566	6,9	19.835	4,4	50.387	4,5
2012-2013	2.023	0,8	28.481	6,8	20.177	4,5	50.681	4,5
2013-2014	2.042	0,8	28.307	6,6	20.495	4,6	50.844	4,4
2014-2015	2.000	0,7	27.483	6,3	20.661	4,6	50.144	4,3
2015-2016	1.984	0,7	25.578	5,7	20.333	4,5	47.895	4,1
2016-2017	1.967	0,7	24.645	5,4	20.130	4,5	46.742	4,0
2017-2018	1.986	0,7	24.380	5,3	20.331	4,5	46.697	4,0
2018-2019	2.140	0,8	24.784	5,3	20.544	4,5	47.468	4,0
2019-2020	2.325	0,9	25.567	5,5	21.095	4,5	48.987	4,1
2020-2021	2.406	0,9	26.110	5,6	22.071	4,6	50.587	4,2
2021-2022	2.650	1,0	26.671	5,7	22.819	4,7	52.140	4,3
2022-2023	2.739	1,1	27.117	5,8	23.717	4,8	53.573	4,4
2023-2024	2.868	1,1	27.406	5,9	24.720	4,9	54.994	4,5

Source: Statistics Flanders (2025), M. Vanweddingen, J. Noppe, D. Moons, report statistics Flanders 2025/1, Social position and participation of persons with disabilities, january 2025, p.32, [Maatschappelijke positie en participatie van personen met een handicap | Vlaanderen.be/ 72100](https://www.vlaanderen.be/72100).

Table 19: Flanders – Pupils in special education 2024-2025

Schooljaar 2024-2025 - Teldatum 1 (1 oktober)

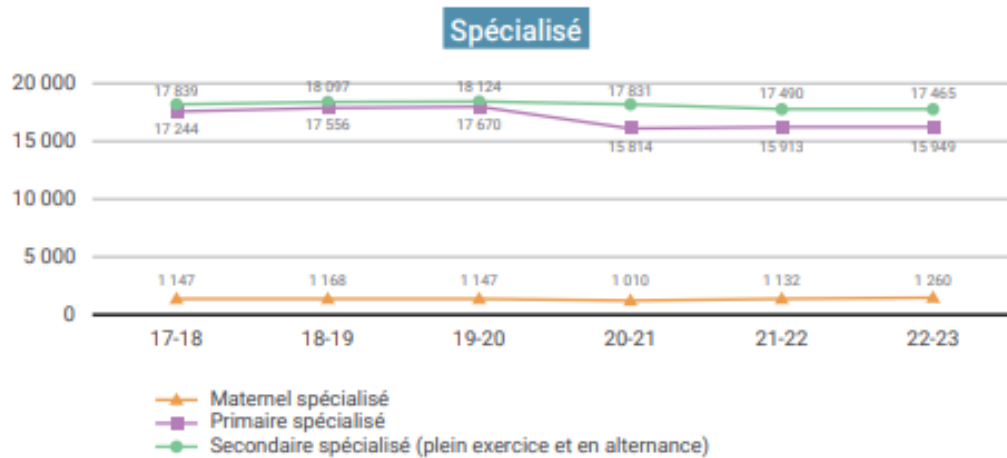
Weergave opties - Je kan de indeling van de grafiek en de tabel wijzigen met behulp van de onderstaande opties
 Toon cijfers , en

Verdeling naar provincie van de vestigingsplaats en splits daarna verder uit op geslacht
 Beweeg over de tabel om meer informatie te zien

		Mannelijk	Vrouwelijk	Totaal
Buitengewoon k leuteronderwijs	Antwerpen	511	186	697
	Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest	80	31	111
	Limburg	382	139	521
	Oost-Vlaanderen	433	179	612
	Vlaams-Brabant	162	70	232
	West-Vlaanderen	377	127	504
	Totaal	1.945	732	2.677
	Buitengewoon lager onderwijs	Antwerpen	4.857	2.461
Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest		411	216	627
Limburg		3.308	1.685	4.993
Oost-Vlaanderen		3.761	1.854	5.615
Vlaams-Brabant		1.916	1.039	2.955
West-Vlaanderen		3.522	1.841	5.363
Totaal		17.775	9.096	26.871
Buitengewoon secundair onderwijs		Antwerpen	4.506	2.304
	Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest	449	196	645
	Limburg	3.126	1.443	4.569
	Oost-Vlaanderen	3.939	1.863	5.802
	Vlaams-Brabant	1.438	757	2.195
	West-Vlaanderen	3.709	1.797	5.506
	Totaal	17.167	8.360	25.527
	Totaal	36.887	18.188	55.075

Source: [Workbook: Dataloep Inschrijvingen Leerplicht](#)

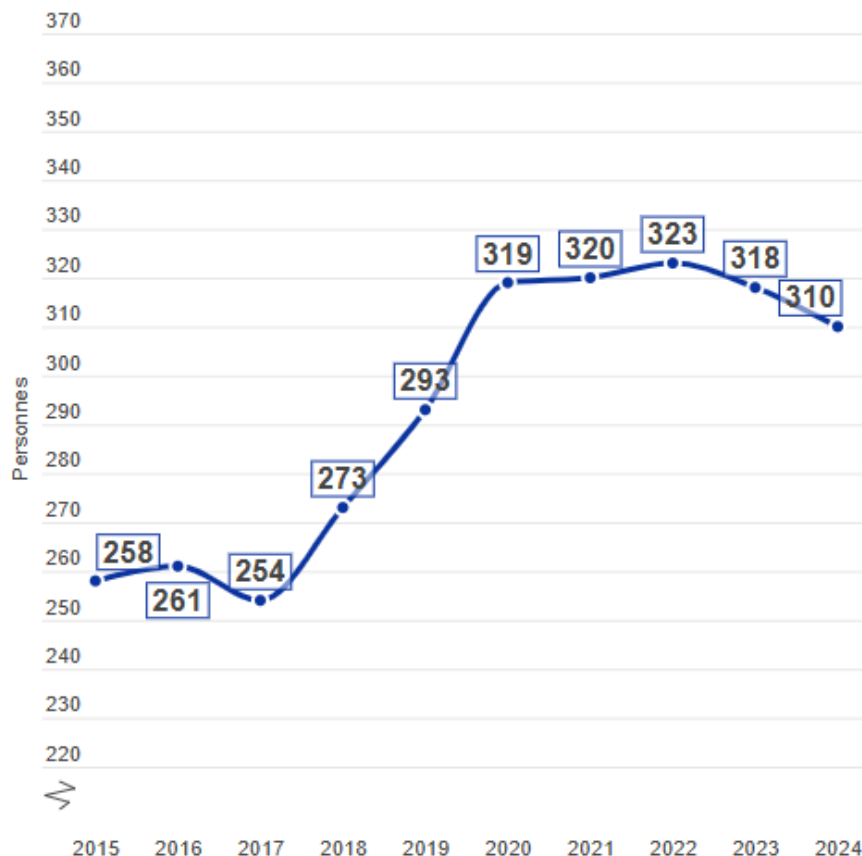
Table 20: French Community –Pupils in special education in nursery (orange line), primary schools (purple line) and secondary schools (green line)



Source: Federation Wallonia-Brussels (2024), Education indicators 2024, update 28.04.2025 19th edition, p. 14, [Les Indicateurs de l'enseignement 2024 \(mise à jour du 28-04-2025\) \(ressource 18768\).pdf](#).

Table 21: German speaking Community of Belgium (2024) –Pupils in special education between 2015 and 2024

Entwicklung der Zahl der Förderschüler der letzten zehn Jahre



Source: [Ostbelgien Statistik - Schülerzahlen 2024-2025](#)

8 Annex II: Historical overview of disability mentions in European Semester documents

Table 22: Mentions of disability in Country Report per year (number + topic)

Year	Number of mentions and topic
2014	0
2015	2 (3 occurrences): benefits and labour market.
2016	2 (4 occurrences): labour market.
2017	5 (6 occurrences): public finance and taxation , labour market, poverty risk and social exclusion, and investment (footnote).
2018	4 (5 occurrences): poverty risk and social exclusion, labour market, and tertiary education.
2019	12 (19 occurrences): poverty risk and social exclusion, labour market, employment, tertiary education and education, deinstitutionalisation, and investment-social inclusion.
2020	11 (18 occurrences): poverty risk and social exclusion, labour market, social protection, employment, tertiary education, and deinstitutionalisation.
2021	N/A
2022	6 (7 occurrences): labour market (footnote), education, employment, poverty risk and social exclusion, childcare and social housing, and deinstitutionalisation.
2023	6 (7 occurrences): labour market, education, and employment.
2024	6 (10 occurrences): employment, labour market, and poverty risk and social exclusion.
2025	9 (24 occurrences): labour market, employment, poverty risk and social exclusion, housing, and deinstitutionalisation.

Note: First numbers refer to thematic mentions and number in parenthesis refer to frequency of the term in the text, indicated as 'occurrences' by search that are mostly present in the same paragraph describing the same topic)

Table 23: Mentions of disability in Country Specific Recommendations per year (number + topic)

Year	Number of mentions and topic
2014	0
2015	0
2016	0
2017	0
2018	0
2019	2 (recitals): labour market.
2020	1 (recitals): labour market.
2021	N/A
2022	2 (Recitals): labour market and education.
2023	1 (Recitals): labour market.
2024	1 (Recitals): labour market.
2025	2 (1 in recitals+ 1 in recommendations).

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