

## Disability in figures

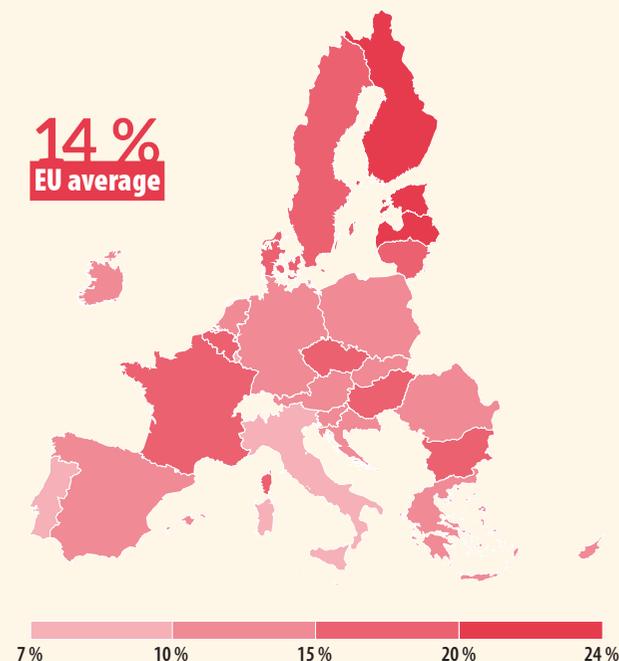
The International Day of Persons with Disabilities has been marked every 3 December since 1992 to promote awareness and mobilise support for critical issues relating to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development. According to the **United Nations**, a billion people in the world, 80 % of them in developing countries, live with disabilities today. Globally, an estimated 46 % of people aged 60 and over are among those with disabilities. Moreover, one in every five women and one in every 10 children are likely to experience disability in their lifetime. In the EU, there are over 70 million people with a disability, roughly equivalent to 17.5 % of the total population. This figure is set to rise rapidly over the next decade, given that the EU population is ageing and that more than a third of those over 75 have a disability. Worryingly, people with disabilities are among the hardest hit by Covid-19.



## International and EU policy framework

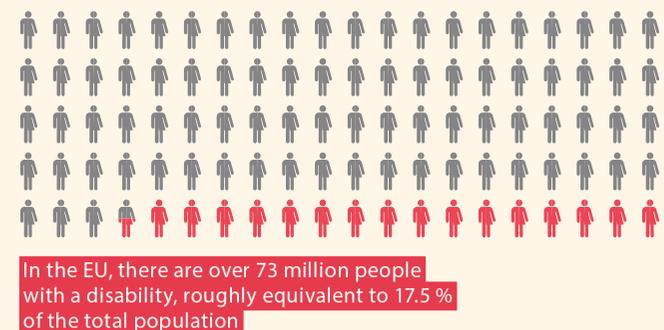
The 2006 **UN Convention** on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a key policy reference. As a signatory to the convention, the EU seeks to enable those with disabilities to participate on a par with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities. In 2010, the **European Council** concluded that sports should serve as a tool of active social inclusion. The importance of sports for people with disabilities is also recognised in the **European disability strategy 2010-2020**. A new EU strategy is due to be announced in early 2021.

### Disability or illness: The third most frequently mentioned reason for not practising sport more regularly



## Disability and sports in the EU

While sports opportunities for people with disabilities have improved significantly across the EU in the past 20 years, key barriers remain. According to a 2018 Eurobarometer **report**, having a disability or illness is the third most frequently mentioned reason – 14 % of respondents – for not practising sport more regularly. The highest percentage of people hampered by this type of barrier were living in Estonia (24 %), Latvia and Finland (both 21 %) and Sweden (20 %) (see map). The EU aims to remove these barriers facing people with disabilities and improve their participation in sports through the **Erasmus+** programme. Since 2014, 51 Erasmus+ **projects** have supported such activities. Of these, 33 projects have helped people with disabilities practise basketball, parachute jumping, athletics, water sports, snowboarding, kickboxing and boccia – a sport requiring the use of a wheelchair. The remaining projects have focused on building a network among sports organisations, publishing toolkits of good practice and creating sports events where disabled and non-disabled people can participate together.



Sources: United Nations; Eurostat, Population by sex, age and disability status, 2020; Special Eurobarometer 472, Sport and physical activity, 2018.