



Report on the social inclusion and social protection of disabled people in European countries

Country: Finland
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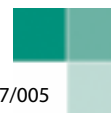
Background:

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the *Thematic report on the implementation of EU Social Inclusion and Social Protection Strategies in European countries with reference to equality for disabled people*.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation of the open method of coordination in Social inclusion and social protection, and in particular the National Strategic Reports of member states from a disability equality perspective, and to provide the Commission with useful evidence in supporting disability policy mainstreaming.

The first version of the report was published in 2008. This is the second version of the report updated with information available up to November 2009.



Summary of changes since 2008

Housing and homelessness:

Disabled people have protection with regard to housing and homelessness. This is defined as “Persons living in care homes or other housing units of social welfare authorities, rehabilitation homes or hospitals due to lack of housing”. (Answers to the Questionnaire of the EU Member States on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion: Finland)

However this definition of homelessness does not count permanent supported housing as homelessness among disabled people who are living in institutions (about 2700 persons in 2008). (SOTKANet-verkkopalvelu. <http://uusi.sotkanet.fi/portal/page/portal/etusivu>)

New strategies and actions for the inclusion of disabled people:

There are plans to build individual housing for disabled people. In practice it means that special care districts have established quality housing committees and have started to build new houses (in 2007 about 800 new houses were built, Ministry of Environment http://ymparisto.multiedition.fi/multimagazine/web/2008/asumisen_opas/2-2008/8.php), usually group homes financed by The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA).

The most significant development for the inclusion of disabled people is the Act on Personal Assistance as a subjective right to disabled persons, which has been in effect since September 1. 2009. The subjective right means that every disabled person has a right to have personal assistance service in his/her everyday life. New groups of disabled people are included, and assistance has been extended to work places. Hours are allocated according to requirements for studying, daily living in the home and outside, with 10 hours a month for pursuing hobbies. Family members cannot work as personal assistants, except where there are pressing reasons for this.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health launched the Masto project in November 2007 and it will run until spring 2011. Noting that over 200,000 (6% of all working aged people) experience depression each year, the project aims to reduce this number which at the end of 2008 represented 14% of all people receiving a disability pension. The focus of the project is on increasing well-being, reducing payments for disability pensions and increasing work productivity (<http://www.etk.fi/Binary.aspx?Section=42845&Item=58515>)

Change in incomes, benefits and pensions:

There has been an increase of disability benefits to 3282 persons in one year (2007-2008). The total number of people receiving disability benefits is currently 266814. (Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2009 <http://www.etk.fi/Page.aspx?Section=63970>).

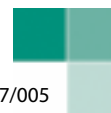
The government budget of 2010 proposes the removal of distinctions between institutional and non-institutional care, so that as of 1.1.10, people in institutions receiving disability benefits would receive pensioners' care allowance.

Change in long-term care and support:

There is a political will to stop institutional living in Finland. That is why action plans to build individual housing possibilities to disabled people are going on. Special care districts have established a quality housing committee and have started to build new houses. Also the Act on Personal Assistance could a clear improvement of care and support, but the first evaluation round of this act in practice is in August/September 2010.

Implications of the economic crisis:

Detailed data is not available yet.



PART ONE: SOCIAL INCLUSION PLANS (GENERAL)

1.1 Please describe how and where disabled people are included in your country's published plans for social inclusion and protection?

The most recent documented plan is the proposition of the Committee reforming social protection (SATA-komitea). The summary of the proposition is as follows:

"The Government set up the Committee on 14 June 2007 to prepare a total reform of social protection. The Committee shall submit a proposal for the total reform by the end of 2009, except that a proposal for the most important policy lines shall be given by the end of January 2009. The proposal for basic policy lines includes an evaluation of the adequacy of social protection and foreseeable challenges. In practice the proposals cover almost the whole range of social protection: the adequacy of basic protection, social protection supporting active alternatives and attaining longer working careers, incentives and simplification of social protection. Further examination of details and calculation of expenditures is needed. When determining the order of priority of its proposals and the time schedule for their implementation the Committee should take into account the limitations posed by the sustainability of the public economy.

In regard to basic protection the policy lines have dealt with guaranteed pension as a model for improving the income of persons living on the smallest pensions. Other issues that have been discussed include simplification of the housing allowance system, index-linkage of basic security benefits, and introduction of a new model for the regular assessment of the adequacy of basic security benefits. In its further work the Committee will further examine possibilities to transfer the handling of the calculated part of social assistance to the Social Insurance Institution.

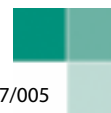
The objective of reforming the unemployment insurance benefits included in the policy lines is the stability of unemployment benefits and unemployment insurance contributions and shorter unemployment spells through intensified job seeking and continuous active measures in support of it. The complex of active measures includes measures to strengthen skills and to maintain and restore work ability and functional capacity. The reform of unemployment insurance involves several proposals for measures. It also includes a proposal for making the alternation leave system permanent.

With a view to improving the incentives involved in social protection the Committee examines ways to eliminate barriers to the employment of people with disabilities and partial work ability. In regard to labour market support the Committee considers abolishing means testing and transfer to using a model of one basic protection benefit in unemployment insurance.

The Committee considers that the growth conditions for young children should be improved by supporting in particular care in early life. It has also discussed coordination of the different rates of parents' allowance and ways to develop home care allowance.

Social protection should be developed to the effect that it is always profitable to accept work and to earn additional income. The Committee underlines the importance of measures to encourage accepting also short-term jobs. It has also discussed measures to underpin the achievement of this aim, such as determining maximum processing times for benefit applications, introduction of an electronic wage/salary certificate, and simplifying the processing of applications. Furthermore, it will be examined how to revise the structure of social protection legislation to the effect that it would support better than at present the objectives of an active social policy.

The policy lines outlined by the Committee reach far into the future and underline that measures for correcting the economic dependency ratio must further be intensified in order to secure the financing of social protection.



Key words

basic security, benefits, earnings-related income security, income security, social expenditure, social insurance, social protection”

(http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=39503&name=DLFE-7508.pdf)

This report makes references to disability over 120 times in 300 pages. The most important proposal for inclusion is to arrange employment for disabled people and others who may be considered as partially unable to work. The same points are included in the report of The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs 2008–2010 The Finnish National Reform Programme – Implementation Report 2009.

In policy and practice on education there are political efforts to mainstream disabled pupils. Employment policy has not sufficiently gained the goal of mainstreaming and so disability pensions have an important role in protecting and making possible social inclusion alternatives. Perhaps the biggest disadvantage of all disability services is their system-oriented approach in everyday practices, resulting in a lack of opportunities to people with disabilities and their families.

1.2 In reality, what major actions has your country taken and what are the positive or negative effects on disabled people? (Policy or practical examples)

Two examples:

1. In 2002-2004 the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (FAIDD) carried out a national development initiative titled “Growing Together”, for promoting inclusive practices in schools and local communities in cooperation with municipalities, schools and other partners. The project focused on the principle of inclusion, meaning every child’s right to participate as an equal member in the activities of her/his local community and schools. The project supported the development of inclusive practices in municipalities and schools.
2. Plain Language Search is a two-year project for implementing an information search service suited for special needs groups started by the Papunet Web Service Unit of the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities FAIDD in spring 2008.

The aim of the project is to improve the information society capacities and skills among special needs groups by developing an effective information search tool. The primary objective is to create an open source, easy-to-use, Finnish-language information search service for the Internet.

The target group of the project are people with speech impairments and/or intellectual and developmental disabilities who can read and have sufficient computer skills. The easy-to-use information search service developed by the project will in the long run also be useful to many other user groups, such as students with different learning styles, ageing people and immigrants.

Project outputs:

- Accumulation of new data on ways in which special needs groups search for and use information; centralized compiling of this data at the Papunet Web Service Unit.
- An easy-to-use search interface accommodating the needs of special users, which will be applied in the search services created by the project.
- A search service covering the plain-language material published on Finnish websites.
- A search service covering the material published on the FAIDD websites (www.papunet.net, www.verneri.net, www.kehitysvammaliitto.fi).

- A search service covering Wikipedia and Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) news material.

The search services developed by the project will continue to operate as part of the websites where they are published.

The data on users and results of the usability studies produced in the project with regard to information search among special needs groups will be published at the Papunet Web Service.

The project is being carried out in cooperation with the Complex Systems Computation (CoSCo) research group at the Helsinki Institute for Information Technology, the CIVI project of the Center for Knowledge and Innovation Research (CKIR) at the Helsinki School of Economics, the BitLips speech technology company, the Enter Association on information technology (Ikäihmisten tietotekniikkayhdistys) and the Eestinmetsä school (Espoon Eestinmetsän koulu). The project is financed by Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY).

Disabled people's organisations have a very influential role in the above mentioned activities. They have a mandate in the administration of project i.e. as representatives on the projects' boards. Individual members of disability organisations have also piloted and tested the outputs of projects. They have been "critical friends" or tutors of the Growing Together Project and have tested new computer-aided developments in the Plain Language Project.

1.3 What is the most recent research about disabled people's equality and social inclusion in your country?

Antti Teittinen (toim.) (2006) Vammaisuuden tutkimus. Yliopistopaino: Helsinki

This anthology questions stereotypes of disabilities. Chapters deal with philosophy and social theories of disability, power relations in talking with disabled people, the process of diagnosis of disabled children, disability in developed countries and structural issues in special education.

Tanja Vehkakoski (2006) Leimattu lapsuus? Vammaisuuden rakentuminen ammatti-ihmisten puheessa ja teksteissä. Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research 297. (Stigmatized Childhood? Constructing Disability in Professional Talk and Texts)

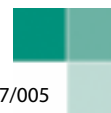
Documents and presentations by professionals and authorities in the field of diagnosis of disabilities among children and their families were studied. The method used was discourse analysis.

Marjo-Riitta Reinikainen (2007) Vammaisuuden sukupuolittuneet ja sortavat diskurssit. Yhteiskunnallisdiskursiivinen näkökulma vammaisuuteen. Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research 304. (Gendered and oppressive discourses of disability: Social-discursive perspective on Disability)

Non-disabled persons' essays on disability were studied. Key research questions concerned gendered and oppressive discourses of disability.

Elina Ekholm: Diversity and Accessibility – Work-Life Experiences of Visually Impaired Persons in Expert Jobs, Espoo: Ennora, 2009,
ISBN 978-952-92-6422-3

The above publications are good examples of critical studies of disability. However most research publications are service-oriented without disabled people's own voice. More user-driven and action research is needed in this field.



PART TWO: INCOMES, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

2.1 Research publications (key points)

Recent publications on incomes, pensions and benefits of disabled people are worth mentioning. First Linnakangas et al. (2006) argue, based on their statistical study, that disabled people's incomes are over 30 percent less than the average income. Paid work is the most important factor for gaining an average income. Sensory-impaired persons have the worst financial position. A sex comparison shows that disabled women's income is 78 percent of disabled men's. The age group studied was 25-64.

Second, Haarni (2006) shows in her report that there are gaps in detailed information on disability. Facts about disabled people's situations and status are too incoherent.

Third, Parrukoski & Karjalainen (2009) show in their report that only 15-20 % of disabled people have a paid job compared with 70% of the whole population. This disparity has been very stable for many years. Their gross incomes are 2/3 lower than that for the whole population.

Fourth, Asko Suikkanen's (2009) report on intermediate labour markets emphasises and suggests: companionship policy programmes, social policy reforms to identify and pre-empt risks, different kinds of contracts of employment and consideration of a conventional contract of employment as not a norm, a new policy of taxation, deeper social risk analysis, strengthening of adult education and life-long learning, better connection of rehabilitation activities to working life realities, more multidisciplinary research and follow-up of other EU countries.

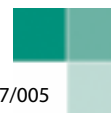
There is a need for further statistical data. Disabled persons have equality deficits in education and employment and they often are living in poverty. Disability Studies does not have a high priority in academia. Three types of studies are needed: follow-up research about the changing situations of disabled people in society, comparative studies and user-driven studies.

2.2 Type and level of benefits (key points and examples)

The ethos and practice of welfare is based on the idea that disabled people do not have to be at work and the welfare state attempts to compensate this handicap with the disability pension. The amount of money paid is 560 euros per month gross (584,13 euros in 2009, see www.kela.fi). The criteria for who can receive it are based on her/his incapacity to work. Persons who have a permanent mobility disability or blindness always receive the full amount of this pension. The full disability pension was received by 154 800 persons in 2006 and 157 400 persons in 2007. About 25 000 persons move to disability pensions yearly. In 2007 this number was 27 343 persons, with 50% each men and women. The most common reason for receiving a disability pension was a mental health condition (33 %) and the average age for beginning to receive the disability pension was 54 in 2006 and in 2007. (Statistical yearbook of Finnish Social Insurance Institution 2006 and 2007).

Another type of disability benefit is a disability allowance. It is an alternative to disability pension and it is tax free. 27 100 persons received this benefit in 2006 and 27 500 persons in 2007. It is divided into three levels based on the state of disability. The levels are: 81,83 euros, 190,94 euros and 370,24 euros per month. (Statistical yearbook of Finnish Social Insurance Institution 2006 and 2007).

The amount of money paid for all disability benefits was about 109 € million in 2007.



2.3 Policy and practice (summary)

There is not very much discussion about the sufficiency of disability benefits in Finnish politics although all research reports show that many disabled people are living in poverty. It is not seen as being as important ensuring jobs and competitiveness in globalised markets. Disability benefits is not so important as a social policy issue.

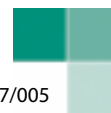
However some modernisation processes are continuing. In the late 1980s the Act on Disability Services was renovated, making real need the criteria for receiving disability services rather than diagnosed disability. . However implementation has been hampered because social workers have demanded doctors' certificates. Disability services are administratively divided into transport, interpreter, personal assistance , sheltered housing and housing alteration, and device and facilities services. Statistical data from 2006-2008 on all these services is available.

Table 1. Summary of disability services 2006-2008 : how many times these services have been used (combined)

	2006	2007	2008
Transport	84,269	86,726	88,538
Interpreter services	3791	3961	4,024
Sheltered housing	3089	3375	3,525
Personal assistant/100000 inhabitants	86.8	95.0	102.1
Housing alterations, devices and facilities	8,125	8,599	8,588

source: SOTKANet (www.sotkanet.fi)¹

¹ The SOTKANet Indicator Bank contains comprehensive statistical information on welfare and health in Finland. STAKES has also developed, together with other actors in social and health care, a number of indicator groups for example to support planning at the local level. Additionally, the Indicator Bank contains key data broken down by country on the status of health and the use of social and health services in Europe. The Indicator Bank is maintained by STAKES, and the aim is to produce a time series of municipality-based welfare and health data from 1990 onwards by gathering data on a yearly basis. Indicator data can be searched according to different geographical areas, and the results are presented in absolute numbers or in percentages. In addition, indicator descriptions provide information on data content, years covered, possible restrictions, as well as advice on data interpretation.



PART THREE: CARE AND SUPPORT

3.1 Recent research publications (key points)

The most recent and important publication is Kehitysvammaisten yksilöllinen asuminen. Pitkäaikaisesta laitostasumisesta kohti yksilöllisempiä asumisratkaisuja.

Toim. Markku Niemelä ja Krista Brandt. Helsinki, 2008. 159 s. (Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön selvityksiä, ISSN 1236-2115, 2007:73) ISBN 978-952-00-2514-4 (nid.), ISBN 978-952-00-2515-1 (PDF) (Individual Housing for Persons with Disabilities. From long-term residential care to individual housing. Eds. Markku Niemelä and Krista Brandt. Helsinki, 2008. 159pp.

(Reports of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland, ISSN 1236-2115; 2007:73) ISBN 978-952-00-2514-4 (pb), ISBN 978-952-00-2515-1 (PDF). Its key findings and recommendations are as follows:

- The concept of housing regarding persons with intellectual disabilities should differentiate between the housing solution, flat and services needed.
- The provision of housing for persons with disabilities should be planned carefully and needs for housing and support should be considered in the long term. Service planning that gathers together different plans provides the basis for the needs assessments by municipal authorities.
- The system of residential institutions should be abolished. There should be a shift from the institution-intensive service system to non-residential services over the next ten years. The few institutions that will remain in operation should focus on special issues and have a limited capacity, and they should be eventually integrated into the health care system.
- To replace residential care and to respond to other housing needs, 600 flats should be acquired per year in Finland.
- Services needed for housing should be provided from the perspective of individual assistance and support. Specific systems of assistance should be developed and introduced gradually.
- Issues regarding children with disabilities should be given particular consideration.
- The most essential thing in regard to the housing of children is to support their families.

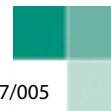
The target group of these findings and recommendations are mostly people with intellectual disabilities. Individual housing is a municipal service and it is not connected to disability pensions, but practically everyone who is diagnosed as intellectually disabled has a disability pension. The access to this service is based on an evaluation by municipal authorities and clients have to apply. This is an interactive process, where clients' personal needs are the most important consideration. Physical and communication environments are accessible as stipulated by law (812/2000). The disability pension is diagnosed, allocated and paid for by the Finnish Social Insurance Institution (a state organisation).

3.2 Types of care and support (key points and examples)

The policy of providing care at home is increasing over time. New institutions are no longer established and those that exist have planned to close. Different schemes are needed at the same time: not just one model of personal assistance. Possible schemes include: an application of a Scottish system that includes daily life needs, special issues (e.g. communication needs) and complicated issues (e.g. mental health). The Act on disability services also now includes a personal assistance service as a subjective right to disabled persons (see <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1987/19870380> especially § 8c)

The Finnish Social Insurance Institution provides rehabilitation services, and transport services are provided by municipalities.

In spite of good individual practices, deinstitutionalised services are not sufficiently developed and there is a lack of personnel, of vocational rehabilitation places finance and stocks of transport. To get disability services a personal service plan is drawn up, but very often it is impossible to put it into practice, for the reasons mentioned above. The solution of the system to this dilemma is to give less services to to a larger number of people. A problem with this is that no-one gets enough services. Also the quality of services is not given enough consideration, and there have been tragic homicides in institutional housing. In Finland the idea of disabled people's budgets has not prospered. There have several piloting projects on this issue, but faced with systems-oriented ideology and practice they have not been very successful.



PART FOUR: SUMMARY INFORMATION

4.1 Conclusions and recommendations (summary)

The current policy includes the most essential points to ensure social inclusion and social protection of disabled people, but there is a lack of resources. It is a slow process to improve disabled people's situation, and one that includes attitudes, legislation, practices, and the cultural and political atmosphere. However, individual housing services have recently improved. People with intellectual disabilities are in the worst situation and the service system has problems with providing services to people with multiple disabilities. In the case of people with multiple disabilities, the service system often has many difficulties providing the services that are needed. These people are often forgotten. There is also a lack of user-driven research, action research and micro-level structural studies about deinstitutionalisation.

4.2 One example of best practice (brief details)

FAIDD provides the following information about their plain language and interaction project²: The text here is reproduced from their website

'The Plain Language Centre at FAIDD launched a three-year project titled "Plain Language and Interaction" in spring 2007. Its aim is to acquire information on the use of plain language in situations of interaction and to develop operating models for these situations.

Plain language is language that is easier to understand than standard language. It is needed in verbal communication by many different groups, such as people with intellectual disabilities, immigrants learning Finnish, demented older people and other people who have problems with language or communication.

Plain language groups have commonly become a part of operations in care units for people with intellectual disabilities and homes for the aged. The groups read plain-language material and discuss the contents. The participants in the groups are given tools to formulate their thoughts and feelings. Plain language is also an instrument in everyday life: by using language that is easier to understand, the communication takes place according to the client's needs. The Plain Language and Interaction project examines how plain language should be used so that as many people as possible could partake in interaction. Plain language interaction is studied both in plain language groups and in one-on-one situations.

There is much practical knowledge and experience on speaking plain language, but very little researched data. Up until now the development and research of plain language has mainly centred on written plain language.

The project includes four partners in cooperation representing different user groups of plain language. The plain language groups are tried out for the first time in units for young people with dysphasia and people with different forms of autism. Three of the groups are in care units for people with intellectual disabilities, one of which is Swedish-speaking. The group instructors take part in developing the project work and receive support and training from the Plain Language Centre.

The results will be published as a practical handbook upon the conclusion of the project in autumn 2009. Training for all the instructors and persons interested in becoming instructors will be provided starting from autumn 2008.

² <http://kehitysvammaliitto.fi/en/koulutus/kehittamishankkeet/plain-language-and-interaction.html>

The project is implemented in cooperation with the Finnish Stroke and Dysphasia Federation, the Autism Foundation, Satakunta Special Welfare District Services for Mentally Handicapped People and FDUV (association for the care of Swedish-speaking persons with intellectual disability). The project is financed by Finland's Slot Machine Association.'

This project is a good example, since communication is always important to everyone.

This project covers several special groups and works at the fundamental level of everyday life. It benefits all marginalised groups, about 100 000 – 200 000 persons, people with communication problems, immigrants and older people (especially people with Alzheimer's disease).

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