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Summary of the 2021–2023 operational gender equality and non-discrimination plan of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare

This is a summary of the operational gender equality and non-discrimination plan of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) for the years 2021–2023. THL's management group approved the plan in June 2021.

The objective and legal basis of the plan

The purpose of the operational gender equality and non-discrimination plan is to promote gender equality and non-discrimination of people in all research, steering and service activities of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. The plan is a management tool that implements the Institute's strategy and values. One of our strategic values is to be a pioneer in equality.

The preparation of the operational gender equality and non-discrimination plan is based on the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986, hereinafter the Equality Act) and the Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014).

- **The Equality Act** prohibits direct and indirect discrimination based on gender and contains a duty to promote gender equality. The Act also includes protection against discrimination of gender minorities and an obligation to pre-empt discrimination. According to the Act, in all their activities, authorities must promote equality between women and men purposefully and systematically, and must create and consolidate administrative and operating practices that ensure the advancement of equality between women and men in the preparatory work undertaken on different matters and in decision-making. In particular, circumstances which prevent the attainment of gender equality must be changed.
- **The Non-discrimination Act** contains provisions on promotion of equal opportunities and prohibition of discrimination on the basis of personal characteristics other than gender. Prohibited grounds for discrimination are age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics. The authorities shall evaluate the realisation of equality in their activities, draw up a plan and take necessary measures to promote the realisation of equality.

In addition to the operational plan, the duty of planning also applies to the authorities in their role as an employer. THL also has a personnel policy plan for gender equality and non-discrimination for the years 2021–2023.

Measures are based on activities of departments and on prioritised focus areas

THL's first 2018–2019 operational gender equality and non-discrimination plan was drawn up by the previous working group on gender equality and non-discrimination (2017–2019). The earlier plan has been used for support in preparing the new plan, taking into consideration [THL's changed organisational structure](#). The 2021–2023 operational gender equality and non-discrimination plan is based on THL's organisational structure that took effect on 1 January 2021.

The assessment report on the 2018–2019 operational gender equality and non-discrimination plan, and the recommendations included in it, were utilised in the preparation of the plan. The 2021–2023 operational gender equality and non-discrimination plan is more strongly integrated into [THL's strategy and values](#), and in the performance agreement between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and THL. One of our strategic values is to be a pioneer in equality.

The departments have assessed the current state of their operation from the perspective of gender equality and non-discrimination, and the shadow regions of data production. Each department has specified focus areas linked to the department's operation and horizontal activities, objectives, concrete measures and measurable outcome, and the responsible department(s) and schedule.

THL's working group on gender equality and non-discrimination regularly monitors and evaluates the progress of the measures in the plan. Personnel and management are regularly informed of the progress of the plan, and this progress is also reported in the Institute's interim reports. The intention is to have the plan assessed by an outside party at the end of 2023.

Objectives and measures in the plan

We respond to the needs for knowledge and data with high quality and at the right time

Our objective is that reporting of the information we produce is accessible. This means that the information we produce can be used by everyone in all situations. For instance, the information must be in such a format that it can be well accessed with a mere keyboard and assisting technology, and that the images and visual elements used are described. In order to reach this goal, we commission accessibility assessments on our pages and design further measures on their basis. We evaluate accessibility systematically.

We are expanding our data production to cover a number of significant but currently understudied areas

Our objective is that our knowledge base is enhanced and expanded to the essential areas of which we do not have enough information at present. For example, we increase researched information related to the health and welfare of people of foreign origin and their use of social and health services. We also survey the current status and need for development of health care services for prisoners from the perspective of female prisoners. We compile researched information about the health and welfare of disabled persons into an easily utilised format. We publish results in the Research in Brief series (Tutkimuksesta tiiviisti -sarja) and in the Handbook on Disability Services, among others. Together with our partners and stakeholders, we also draw up a systematic, population group-specific collection, reporting and financial plan for monitoring data for five years, so the status of different population groups' welfare, health and functional capacity can be monitored regularly and reliably.

We enhance our specialists' competence in intersectional review, so different population groups and their intersecting differences and, for instance, diverse families and gender diversity are better taken into account in our data production.

We maintain an up-to-date picture of the current situation and prepare for the future

We develop the monitoring system for health inequality and the knowledge base concerning discrimination. We prepare a proposal on indicators that can be used to monitor the state of health inequality in Finland. We are also preparing a discrimination indicator that produces information about the discrimination experienced by various population groups. We also develop the vaccination programme from the gender perspective. Expansion of vaccinations against the human papilloma virus (HPV) for boys was started in the autumn of 2020.

We summarise our views as a driver for change

We promote gender equality and non-discrimination through active dialogue with our various stakeholders and by making conclusions based on information, which we make available to members of the public, professionals and decision-makers. We support municipalities and regional actors in the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination by distributing information and tools, and by promoting networking and sharing of good practices between various actors. The equality of child welfare clients is promoted by developing child welfare in cooperation with experts by experience.

We also enhance the inclusion, equality and non-discrimination of disabled persons by implementing a pilot project on personal budgeting for disabled persons. The goal of the project is that disabled persons flexibly receive assistance and support with different life situations and needs, in the way that best suits each individual.

We produce clear operating models and recommendations for the use of the population, different agents and decision-makers

We support authorities and other specialist organisations in the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination by, for example, providing training and by producing information and recommendations. We train specialist organisations in private, public and third sector on gender-aware and diversity-promoting recruitment and personnel and operations practices. We also provide training to authorities working with prisoners on prevention of sexual violence in prisons and on helping victims of violence.

We also produce researched information, recommendations and handbooks in support of the work done by authorities and professionals. For instance, we maintain handbooks on services for the disabled people and child welfare, collect information about work in municipalities for the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination, and produce information about violence experienced by disabled children, youths and adults.

We support the reform of social welfare and the social and health care system

Our aim is that gender and non-discrimination perspectives are taken into account in our assessment activities and in steering of the implementation of the health and social services reform.

In the Future Health and Social Services Centres programme, our goal is that special needs of vulnerable people are taken into consideration in the various services. As we assess the quality of social welfare and health care services, we review as comprehensively as possible how well non-discrimination is realised for different population groups in the future wellbeing services counties. Another aim of ours is to integrate work ability support into the social and health centres of the future.

We also develop mental health services, promote mental health and prevent suicides. Together with various actors, we have established the national PALOMA centre of expertise that promotes the mental health of people with a refugee background and improves the availability of mental health services.

We accelerate a cycle for positive growth

We prevent violence against women by executing the Action plan for the Istanbul Convention and the Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women. We add sections on honour-based violence and digital violence, and on intervention in these, to the online training intended for professionals who encounter in their work clients who have experienced domestic violence. We also provide MARAK working groups that help victims of intimate partner violence with training on honour-based violence and digital violence. The MARAK working groups bring together authorities and organisational parties working in the region, and coordinate the support provided to victims of intimate partner violence.

We provide the regions and municipalities with instructions on organising coordination structures for preventing intimate partner violence and activity against intimate partner violence. We also publish the Domestic violence 2021 -statistical report that compiles statistical and research data on, e.g., the number of reports on domestic violence, frequency, and the number of clients of special services intended for victims. We develop services at shelters for victims of domestic violence and Nollalinja helpline that the state is responsible for.

Implementing the value of being a pioneer in equality

Our aim is to be a pioneer in equality. This means communication that is equal, gender-aware and accessible, and promotion of equality in our events and services. For instance, we provide our specialists with training on equal communication, and our Institute adopts means of gender-aware communications, such as gender-neutral titles. We apply principles of safer spaces to all of THL's external and internal events.

We pre-empt and reduce the inequality and stigma of substance abusers and gamblers by assembling and distributing a list of good concepts. We also prepare accessible language versions of websites for preventing infections.

Our objective is to enhance our employees' equality and non-discrimination competence by encouraging them to complete the basics of equality and non-discrimination training in e-Learning. We aim to ensure that by the end of 2023 at least 80 per cent of our employees have completed this training.