





Towards equal pay

The aim is to bridge the gender pay gap

The main objective of the Finnish government's and central labour market organisations' joint Equal Pay Programme is to narrow the gender pay gap to 15 per cent by the year 2015. Furthermore, the programme seeks to implement the equal pay principle according to the Act on Equality between Women and Men.

Gender pay gap in Finland

In Finland the average earnings of women are approximately 83 per cent of those of men measured by pay for regular working hours. This pay gap reflects the disparity in women's and men's average earnings in the entire labour market. The gender pay gap has evolved over decades, and it is not easy to remove it. The pay gap is a significant obstacle for realisation of gender equality in Finland – and therefore it must be tackled.

The Finnish labour market is highly gender-segregated. Gender stereotypes often affect the educational and career choices people make. Female-dominated fields of employment often have a lower pay level than male-dominated ones. Furthermore, gender pay gaps can be found within employment sectors.

A wartime construction site in Helsinki.
Source: The Finnish Labour Archives.

Career development is faster for men than women, and there are more men than women in leadership positions. Women use the major part of all family leaves, and women also more often have fixed-term contracts. Also these factors influence the level of pay.

Equal pay for work of equal value

Equal pay means that the same wage is paid for equal work and work of equal value. The pay for a job must not depend on the employee's gender or occupational title. Jobs are of equal value if the requirements for the work, such as responsibility, work load, skills and working conditions, are of same level. Jobs that are very different in nature but equally demanding may deserve equal pay. A factor influencing the pay is, in addition to the competence requirements, the employee's individual performance.

Equal pay is worth it

Much effort is needed to reduce the gender pay gap. Doing so will, however, benefit the employers, employees, workplaces and the entire society. Fair pay encourages employees to perform their tasks well. An employee who feels that his or her contribution is valued is motivated and committed. Paying fair wages and salaries also helps the employer to compete for skilled labour.

Equal pay can be promoted in many ways, e.g.:

- by means of collective bargaining, social partners can conclude agreements promoting gender equality and further the use of fair and incentive pay systems;
- by drawing up gender equality plans and making pay surveys, workplaces further the equality of women and men in terms of pay;
- by introducing pay systems based on job evaluation and employees' job performance;
- by encouraging people to cross the traditional gender roles in choosing their educational and professional paths;
- by supporting women's career development;
- by a more equal sharing of family leaves; and
- by developing the relevant legislation and monitoring compliance with it.

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Equal pay should be paid for equal work and work of equal value. It is possible to tackle the pay gap between women and men. The government and central labour market organisations are committed to cooperation to achieve equal pay.

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