



# GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN FOR GENDER EQUALITY 2016–2019



# GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN FOR GENDER EQUALITY 2016–2019



GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN FOR GENDER EQUALITY 2016–2019

Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2017:3

ISBN 978-952-00-3951-6 (PDF)

ISSN 1797-9854 (online)

URN:ISBN:978-952-00-3951-6

<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-3951-6>

[stm.en/publications](http://stm.en/publications)

Kansikuva: Antero Aaltonen / Vastavalo.fi

Publisher: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

Layout: Government Administration Department /

Information Support and Publications Unit / Anja Järvinen

# SUMMARY

## GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN FOR GENDER EQUALITY 2016–2019

■ The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016–2019 collates the objectives and measures by which Prime Minister Juha Sipilä’s Government promotes equality between women and men. The Action Plan is an instrument for coordinating gender equality policy in the Government. It incorporates measures that all ministries bear responsibility for in their respective administrative branches. The measures included support the attainment of the objectives of the Government Programme.

The Action Plan consists of approximately thirty measures concerning working life, equal pay, economic decision-making, immigrant reception and integration services, reconciliation of work and family, parenthood, gender segregation in education and labour market, education, sports resources and library services, violence against women and intimate partner violence, and men’s health and wellbeing. The Action Plan also includes other measures to ensure that all ministries assess the gender impacts of their activities and take them into account in their decision-making.

The preparation of the Action Plan for Gender Equality is based on, among other things, the results of a hearing of the key stakeholders and on negotiations between ministries. The definitions of policy outlined in the Government Report on Gender Equality, and on the other hand, responding to international obligations have both underlaid the preparation. The implementation of the Action Plan requires extensive inter-ministerial cooperation and commitment. The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016–2019 was adopted as a Government resolution on 4 May 2016. A working group will be appointed to support and monitor the implementation of the measures of the Action Plan and to report to the Government. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health coordinates the work in relation to the Action Plan and its follow-up.

Key words:

**decision-making, economy, education, gender, gender equality, gender impact assessment, gender mainstreaming, gender pay gap, gender segregation, health, integration of immigrants, intimate partner violence, power, reconciliation of work and family, wellbeing, working life**



# CONTENTS

SUMMARY .....	3
FOREWORD .....	7
1 INTRODUCTION .....	8
2 STRENGTHENING EQUALITY IN THE LABOUR MARKET .....	9
3 SUPPORTING THE RECONCILIATION OF WORK, FAMILY AND PARENTHOOD .....	11
4 PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION AND SPORTS .....	13
5 REDUCING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN .....	15
6 IMPROVING MEN'S WELLBEING AND HEALTH .....	17
7 SOCIETAL DECISION-MAKING PROMOTES GENDER EQUALITY .....	18



# FOREWORD

■ Finland shares the values of European and Nordic communities. Gender equality is commonly valued in our country. It should not be taken for granted, however, and the strengthening and preserving of equality requires that we work for it in a methodical and determined manner.

Especially in these times marked by societal debate that veers towards the extremes, we must keep in mind and bolster the values that Finnish society is built upon. Equality is one of the key values for our country, which will soon celebrate the 100th anniversary of its independence.

Finland is one of the best countries in the world to live in. Measured by a number of criteria, Finland ranks quite high in international comparisons; we can be proud of the nearly equal participation of women and men in the labour market and political decision-making as well as the increased representation of women on the boards of corporations. This has required committed effort.

Some of the biggest issues for equality in Finland are the gender pay gap, gender segregation in education and the labour market, intimate partner violence and the great wellbeing gap of men.

The measures included in the Action Plan for Gender Equality support the attainment of the objectives of the Government Programme. Utilising the skills, participation and contribution of all citizens is important for democracy and for creating the Finland of our visions.

The Government Programme declares that women and men are equal. This is the goal that the Government is striving for. In keeping with the spirit of the Government Programme, we have aimed to formulate a succinct Action Plan for Gender Equality that focuses on concrete actions and whose goals can be realistically achieved.

Every Government minister and all the ministries have a role in promoting equality in general and achieving the goals of the Action Plan for Gender Equality. Many decisions have direct and indirect impacts on the status of men and women in society. If these impacts are not anticipated, the risks of undermining equality increase. Achieving the objectives of the Action Plan requires broad-based collaboration between the ministries.

In an equal country, everyone should feel that they matter. This is the Finland that we want to build, together.

Juha Sipilä  
Prime Minister

Juha Rehula  
Minister responsible for gender  
equality affairs

# I INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is a key societal value and objective in Finland. Strengthening equality is a prerequisite for achieving the central goals of the Government Programme of increasing employment, skills and competence and wellbeing. The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality collates the objectives and measures of Prime Minister Sipilä's Government related to promoting gender equality and preventing discrimination. The Action Plan is a tool for coordinating gender equality policy in the government and it incorporates measures that all ministries bear the responsibility for in their respective administrative branches. It was put together to ensure that, in addition to the measures that improve the position of women and men, equality is also incorporated in significant societal reforms and key projects.

The preparation of the Action Plan for Gender Equality was based on research on gender equality and the policy definitions outlined in the Government Report on Gender Equality<sup>1</sup>. It contributes to meeting the obligations imposed in the United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>2</sup> and the European Council's Istanbul Convention<sup>3</sup>. The preparation of the Action Plan included consultations with experts and various stakeholders. The measures were finalised in collaboration with the ministries. The Resolution on the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality was adopted on 4 May 2016. A working group will be appointed to support and monitor the implementation of the measures of the Action Plan and to report to the Government. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health coordinates the Action Plan and the follow-up. The measures in the Action Plan may be reviewed as necessary.

## 2 STRENGTHENING EQUALITY IN THE LABOUR MARKET

### Long-term objectives

The employment rates of women and men will have improved, and there will be less unemployment. The pay gap between women and men will have been reduced significantly. The numbers of women and men working in all professions and fields will be increasingly equal. The employment of women and men of ethnic and other minorities will have improved and discrimination will have decreased. By 2020, women and men will be equally represented (40–60%) on the boards of listed and state-owned companies.<sup>4</sup>

### Government term objectives

In cooperation with the social partners, the Government aims to reduce the pay gap between women and men, for example by implementing the Equal Pay Programme. Other objectives include decreasing gender segregation in the labour market. The Government aims to improve the possibilities of migrant women and men to enter the labour market and integrate into the Finnish society. The goal of the Government is to ensure development that will lead into equal representation of women and men on the boards of large and medium-sized listed companies. The Government will continue the on going programme to ensure the equal representation of women and men on state-owned company executive boards. The programme will also be extended to include other publicly owned companies.

### Measures

- 2.1 In 2016–2019, implementing the tripartite Equal Pay Programme whose objective is to decrease the average pay gap between women and men. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)
- 2.2 Reducing gender segregation in the labour market by integrating better this objective into the efforts to develop employment and business services and by providing service providers training in how to reduce gender segregation. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment)
- 2.3 Improving the employment opportunities of women and men with a foreign background from gender and equality prespective. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment)

- 2.4 Increasing equality-related content and reinforcing the gender perspective in the reception services for those seeking international protection and in the intergration services of immigrants and those who have been granted international protection. (Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of the Interior)
- 2.5 Supporting the equal sharing of childcare responsibilities in families with a foreign background in order to promote equality in accessing education and employment. (Implemented as part of the Government Integration Programme, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment)
- 2.6 The Government aims to increase equal representation of women and men on listed company boards. It will monitor the achievement of this target and the actions of companies in accordance with the Government Resolution (19 February 2015). Listed companies are expected to decide their own objectives and actions as well as to report on their progress. The Government will monitor the progress and evaluate the need for legislation in autumn 2018. The Government's goal is to achieve equal representation in accordance with the recommendations of the Finnish Corporate Governance Code formulated by the Securities Market Association and through listed companies' own actions.<sup>5</sup> (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)
- 2.7 Where possible, regularising the production of leadership position statistics disaggregated by gender. (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)
- 2.8 The Government will continue pursuing its programme aiming to increase women's representation on the boards and management groups in state-owned companies in keeping with its earlier goals<sup>6</sup> and the Government Resolution on state ownership policy<sup>7</sup>. All ministries will report on the representation numbers of women and men on the boards and management groups of state-owned companies in the Annual Report of the Finnish Government. The possible expansion of the programme from state-owned companies to the municipal sector and other companies that are under public control will be investigated. (Prime Minister's Office, all ministries)

# 3 SUPPORTING THE RECONCILIATION OF WORK, FAMILY AND PARENTHOOD

## Long-term objectives

The reconciliation of work and family in different stages of life will have made good headway. Caring responsibilities and hands-on parenting will be shared more equally, and both parents will preserve strong ties with their children even after divorce. Employees can flexibly return back to work from a family leave, and having a family will not undermine the labour market position of a parent. The family leave system will also meet the needs of diverse families. The wellbeing of families will have improved.

## Government term objectives

The Government will improve the possibilities of women and men to reconcile their working and family life in different stages of life and reduce the employer costs arising from family leave. The Government will support parenthood by improving services intended for parents facing divorce and by reforming the legislation on child custody and right of access.

## Measures

- 3.1 Promoting the equal treatment and employment of women by reducing the family leave costs to employers with a lump sum of EUR 2,500. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment)
- 3.2 The possibility of introducing more flexibility into the starting date of the maternity allowance period will be assessed by the end of 2016. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment)
- 3.3 Promoting the reconciliation of work and family life by fostering family-friendly practices in the workplace. (Implemented as part of the key project 'Programme to address child and family services',

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment)

- 3.4 Improving the possibilities of working-age men and women to take care of their relatives, taking the gender perspective into account. (Implemented as part of the key project 'Home care for older people will be developed and informal care enhanced in all age groups', Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)
- 3.5 Taking the gender perspective into account when developing support services for parents going through a divorce. The aim is to pilot the divorce support service in a few municipalities, later expanding it to cover the entire country by 2018 based on an evaluation and -feedback received. (Implemented as part of the key project 'Programme to address child and family services', Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)
- 3.6 Taking the gender perspective into account when reforming the legislation on child custody and right of access. The focus will be on the best interests of the child and ensuring that both parents will maintain close ties with their children even after a divorce. (Ministry of Justice)

# 4 PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION AND SPORTS

## Long-term objectives

Education and early childhood education and care will support the realisation of gender equality in society. Gender segregation in education sectors and paths will have diminished. Equal opportunities for self-development, individual learning and growth will be ensured for all boys and girls. Gender differences in learning outcomes and completion of education will have decreased, even taking the students' socioeconomic backgrounds and diversity into account.

## Government term objectives

The objective of the Government is to strengthen awareness of gender equality in education and early childhood education and, as well as to support gender equality planning in comprehensive schools and upper secondary educational institutions. The Government will strive to ensure that the training provided for teachers, educators and student counsellors gives them tools for practical work related gender equality issues. The goal is to develop cooperation between educational institutions and different actors in the labour market so that in the future, students will have versatile opportunities for getting to know various sectors and professions. The Government will promote gender equality in resource allocation for sports facilities and in library services.

## Measures

- 4.1 Updating the core curriculum for early childhood education and care, taking into account the equality perspective. The new core curriculum will enter into force on 1 August 2017. Its implementation will be monitored and evaluated. (Ministry of Education and Culture)
- 4.2 Including gender- and equality-aware contents and methods in the basic and continuing education of teachers, educators and student counsellors. The Teacher Education Forum will introduce key principles into the basic and continuing education of teachers by August 2016. The Forum will continue its work and monitor the implementation until the end of 2018. (Ministry of Education and Culture)

- 4.3 Supporting gender equality planning in comprehensive schools and upper secondary educational institutions with up-to-date handbooks, training and monitoring. The Finnish National Board of Education will support educational institutions in promotion of gender equality and evaluate the implementation of gender equality planning. (Ministry of Education and Culture)
- 4.4 Launching a municipal experiment to develop student counselling and introduction to working life periods, allowing both girls and boys to familiarise themselves with female and male sectors and professions. The experiment will focus, amongst other things, on supporting girls with immigrant background in orientation to diverse career paths. (Ministry of Education and Culture)
- 4.5 Steering the construction of sports facilities so that the needs of both genders are taken into account. Taking gender equality better into account in the grounds for discretion when awarding general government grants to sports organisations and in the criteria for awarding other government grants to sports activities. The National Sports Council will evaluate the implementation of gender equality and non-discrimination issues. (Ministry of Education and Culture)
- 4.6 Supporting library activities that reduce gender gaps in skills and promote gender equality by funding projects that motivate girls to take an interest in pursuits related to mathematics and natural sciences and improve boys' reading skills. Including the objective of promoting gender equality as part of the drafting of the Library Act and the information steering of libraries. (Ministry of Education and Culture)

# 5 REDUCING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## Long-term objectives

A zero-tolerance policy towards violence will prevail in society. Violence against women and intimate partner violence will have decreased. Prevention of violence against women and domestic violence will have been implemented according to the obligations of the Istanbul Convention. Health and social services will respond to the needs of those who face intimate partner violence. Help will also be available for perpetrators of violence. The feeling of safety in intimate relationships and within families will be stronger. Mediation will be undertaken in cases of violence against women and intimate partner violence only after careful consideration in accordance with international conventions and obligations. There will be less prostitution.

## Government term objectives

The Government will ensure that the Istanbul Convention is implemented and that services for victims of violence against women and intimate partner violence are integrated into health and social services. The goal is to create an integrated service pathway for victims of sexual violence. More specific criteria for referring clients to mediation will be created and restrictions will be introduced on mediation in cases of violence against women and intimate partner violence.

## Measures

- 5.1 Ensuring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, strengthening the network of shelters, and launching a 24-hour helpline service. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry for Foreign Affairs)

- 5.2 Establishing as part health and social services the practice of care pathways for victims of sexual violence, including both acute medical and psychosocial support and long-term support. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)
  
- 5.3 Investigating the criteria applied when referring and approving cases involving violence against women and intimate partner violence for mediation and the way in which the mediation process is proceeding. Based on the investigation and taking into account any international obligations, a working group will evaluate and clarify the guidelines for referring cases to mediation and the mediation process, and also assess any needs for legislative amendments. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice)

# 6 IMPROVING MEN'S WELLBEING AND HEALTH

## Long-term objectives

Gender equality will have improved in society, also from the perspective of men and boys. Inequalities in health and wellbeing between men and women will have decreased. Perceptions of masculinity will have become more diverse.

## Government term objectives

The Government's objective is to ensure that the situation and needs of men and boys in different life stages are taken into account better in health and social services.

## Measures

- 6.1 When promoting healthy lifestyles, focusing on those men and boys whose health risks are the greatest. (Implemented as part of the key project 'Health and wellbeing will be fostered and inequalities reduced', Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)
- 6.2 Improving the father's position as an equal parent in services in prenatal and child health clinic, for example by publishing a gender equality handbook and arranging training for service providers. (Part of the Key Project for the Programme to Address Reform in Child and Family Services, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)
- 6.3 Improving the skills of service providers who work with children, young people and families with regard to men and boys. (Implemented as part of the key project 'Programme to address child and family services, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)

# 7 SOCIETAL DECISION- MAKING PROMOTES GENDER EQUALITY

## Long-term objectives

The Government's decision-making will promote gender equality. Key government processes, including budgeting and the drafting of government proposals, will support the promotion of equality. Gender impact assessments of government proposals will be made more often and more thoroughly. Gender impact assessment of the Budget will be developed further and integrated into the budget planning process.

## Government term objectives

The Government will support the promotion of equality in the ministries. All ministries will promote gender equality as part of their activities. The gender perspective will be mainstreamed in key societal and administrative reforms, such as the Government's key projects.

## Measures

- 7.1 In connection with the central societal reforms and key projects listed below, the ministries will ensure that an effort is made to define equality objectives, that gender impacts are assessed in different project phases, and that the impacts on gender equality will be reported on. In addition, sufficient skills in gender equality promotion will be ensured.

Knowledge and education, key project 1: New learning environments and digital materials for comprehensive schools. (Ministry of Education and Culture)

Knowledge and education, key project 3: Acceleration of transition to working life. (Ministry of Education and Culture)

Wellbeing and health, key project 2: Health and wellbeing will be fostered and inequalities reduced. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)

Wellbeing and health, key project 3: Programme to address child and family services will be implemented. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health)

Promotion of gender equality will be taken into account in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the Government's Integration Programme. Women who stay at home to care for their children will be a particular focus group. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment)

Gender impact assessment will be included in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the health and social services reform and the county government reform. A particular goal is to ensure that gender equality is part of changes that affect the status of employees. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Finance)

- 7.2 All ministries will work on gender equality and investigate key challenges to equality in their policy areas. The ministries will ensure that their operative working groups on gender equality have adequate resources to carry out their work. Gender impact assessment will be part of legislative drafting. The ministries will continue to jointly develop gender mainstreaming in their network of operative working groups on gender equality, for example. (All ministries)
- 7.3 All ministries will ensure that every branch of administration produces data disaggregated by gender and that this data is used as a basis for drafting and decision-making. (All ministries)
- 7.4 A project to assess the impacts of the 2016 budget on gender equality will be implemented in connection with the mid-term review of the Government in 2017. On this basis, gender impact assessment of the Budget will be developed further. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Finance)

## Acronyms

Ministry of Transport and Communications	LVM
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	MMM
Ministry of Justice	OM
Ministry of Education and Culture	OKM
Ministry of Defence	PLM
Ministry of the Interior	SM
Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	STM
Ministry of Employment and the Economy	TEM
Ministry for Foreign Affairs	UM
Prime Minister's Office	VNK
Ministry of Finance	VM
Ministry of the Environment	YM

## References

- <sup>1</sup> VNS 7/2010 vp.
- <sup>2</sup> The United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (SopS 67–68/1986).
- <sup>2</sup> The European Council Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), which was ratified by Finland in August 2015. The agreement also applies to boys and men who face intimate partner and domestic violence.
- <sup>4</sup> A 2015 comparison of European Union Member States shows that the share of women on the boards of large listed companies in Finland was higher than average in 2015 (based on the European Commission's classification of large listed companies, the share of women was 30% in Finland, while the EU average was 21%. If we look at all listed Finnish companies, the share of women was 24% on average).
- <sup>5</sup> The Securities Market Association recommends in its Finnish Corporate Governance Code, which entered into force on 1 January 2016, that companies establish principles concerning the diversity of their board of directors (Recommendation 9). Companies' corporate governance reporting should at least include an account of the gender representation objectives for their board of directors, the means to achieve the objectives and the progress made in this regard.
- <sup>6</sup> The European Union is currently reviewing a proposal for a directive on equal gender representation in the governing bodies of listed companies (European Commission proposal for a directive 2012). Finland is prepared to accept the proposal.
- <sup>7</sup> The Government Action Plans for Gender Equality have included equality objectives for state-owned companies since 2004. The contents of these objectives have changed little and are as follows:
  - The boards of companies wholly owned by the State must have at least a 40 per cent representation of both women and men.
  - The 40 per cent requirement also applies to companies in which the government has a majority holding and which are not listed companies, unless there are specific reasons preventing this (clauses in the articles of association, partnership agreements or other similar limitations).
  - In companies where the government has a direct or indirect minority holding, the government and its representatives in the company must promote gender equality by nominating candidates for board members in a manner that is consistent with gender equality objectives.
  - In all listed companies in which the government has a majority holding, the goal is to attain the minimum target of a 40 per cent representation of women and men.
  - The Government will promote equal gender representation in corporate management groups and nomination committees.



Gender equality is a key value and objective in Finland. The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016–2019 collates the objectives and measures by which Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government promotes equality between women and men. The Action Plan is a tool for coordinating gender equality policy in the government and it incorporates measures that all ministries bear the responsibility for in their respective administrative branches. In addition to the measures that improve the position of women and men, equality objectives are also incorporated in certain significant societal reforms and key projects. This Action Plan is the sixth Government Action Plan for Gender Equality in Finland.

[stm.en/publications](http://stm.en/publications)

■ MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH