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 is 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.

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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?

In a schooling policy and practice there are political efforts to mainstream disabled pupils. The employment policy has not gained the goals of mainstreaming enough and so disability pensions has an important role to protect and make possible social inclusion alternatives. Perhaps the biggest disadvantage of all disability services is their system-oriented approach in everyday practices. So there is a lack of the own opportunities of 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.   Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (FAIDD) carried out in 2002-2004 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 at 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 -based, easy-to-use, Finnish-language information search service into 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 within the project will in the long range also be useful to many other user groups, such as students with different learning styles, aging people and immigrants.

An easy-to-use information search service will be built in the project, based on domestic basic research on search technologies. A user interface will be designed which will be used in the implementation of a plain-language search service and a search service to the FAIDD websites, as well as a search service covering Wikipedia and Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) contents.
Project outputs:

- Accumulation of new data on ways in which special needs groups search for and use information; centralized compiling of these data at the Papunet Web Service Unit.
- Easy-to-use search user interface accommodating the needs of special users, which will be applied in the search services created in 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.

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The search services developed in 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 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 above mentioned example activities. Their have a mandate in the administration of project organisations i.e. the representatives in the projects boards. Also individual members of disability organisations have piloted and tested the outputs of projects. They have been as "critical friends" or tutors of Growing Together Project and tested new computer aided possibilities in 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 is questonising stereotypes of disabilities. Chapters are dealing with philosophy and social theories of disability, power relations in speech action with disabled people, process to diagnosis of disabled children, disability in developed countries and structural issues of 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 talks of professionals and authorities have studied in the field of diagnosis processes disabilities among children and their families. The method was a discourse analysis.

Marjo-Riitta Reinikainen (2007) Vammaisuuden sukupuolittuneet ja sortavat diskurssit. Yhteiskunnallis-diskursiivinen näkökulma vammaisuuteen. Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Reseach 304. (Gendered and oppressive discourses of disability: Social-discoursive perspective on Disability)
Non-disabled persons' essays on disability were studied and key research questions were gendered and oppressive discourses of disability.

Above mentioned publications are good examples of critical studies of disability, but most of research publications are service-oriented without disabled people's own voice. So the user-driven and action research is needed in this field more.

PART TWO: INCOMES, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

2.1 Research publications (key points)

Two recent publications of incomes, pensions and benefits of disabled people are worth to mention. First Linnakangas et al. (2006) are arguing based on their statistical study that disabled people's incomes are over 30 percent less than the average income. The paid work is the most important factor to gain average income. Sense-impaired persons have the worst situation in their livelihood. The sex comparison shows that disabled women's income is 78 percent of disabled men's income. The studied age group was 25-64. What are the most important publications?

Second Haarni (2006) shows in her report that there are gaps of more detailed information on disability. Facts of disabled people's situation and status is too incoherent.

There are needs to statistical data. Disability persons have equality deficits in education and employment and they often are living in the poverty. Also disability studies are not an interesting field of research in the academic world. Three types of studies are needed: follow-up studies about 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 (brutto). The criteria who can receive it is her/his incapacity to work. Persons who have a permanent mobility disability or blindness are receiving always the full amount of this pension. The full disability pension was received by 154 800 persons in 2006. About 25 000 persons are moving to disability pension yearly. The division between men and women are half and half. The most common reason for to receive a disability pension was a mental health (33 %) and average age to begin receiving the disability pension was 54 in 2006. (Statistical yearbook of Finnish Social Insurance Institution 2006).

Another type of disability benefits is a disability allowance. It is an alternative to disability pension and it is tax free. 27 100 person was receiving this benefit in 2006. It is divided in three levels based on the state of disability. The levels are as follows: 81,83 euros per month, 190,94 euros per month and 370,24 euros per month.

The amount of money paid all disability benefits were 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 the research reports are showing that disabled people are living in poverty. It is not an important issue, because it is not on the focus of the societal contract, where the most important thing is to ensure jobs and competitivity in globalised markets. Disability benefits as a social policy issue is not so important.

However some modernisation processes have been going on all the time. In the late 1980s the Act on Disability Services were renovated. The principle of criteria to get disability services is not the diagnosed disability, but the real need. But this fancy idea has not realised enough, because social workers have demanded doctors' certificates. Disability services are divided in transport services, interpreter services, personal assistant services, sheltered housing services and housing alterations, devices and facilites services. The following statistical data of all these services 2005-2007 is available.

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Table1. Statutory Services and Assistance for Disabled People

		2005	2006	2007
		Whole country	Whole country	Whole country
ⓘTransport services for seriously disabled people, recipients per 100 000 inhabitants (381)	combined	1540,0	1596,9	1636,2
ⓘTransport services for seriously disabled people, clients aged 0-17 in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3425)	combined		2448	2123
ⓘTransport services for seriously disabled people, clients aged 18-64 in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3426)	combined		27678	27341
ⓘTransport services for seriously disabled people, clients aged 65 and over in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3427)	combined		54143	57262
ⓘInterpreter services for seriously disabled people, clients per 100 000 inhabitants (382)	combined	67,2	71,8	74,7
ⓘInterpreter services for people with disabilities, clients aged 0-17 in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3428)	combined		534	555

ⓘInterpreter services for people with disabilities, clients aged 18-64 in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3429)	combined		2497	2589
ⓘInterpreter services for people with disabilities, clients aged 65 and over in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3430)	combined		760	817
ⓘSheltered housing for seriously disabled people, clients during year (1247)	combined	2775	3089	3375
ⓘSheltered housing for seriously disabled people, clients aged 0-17 in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3431)	combined		99	62
ⓘSheltered housing for seriously disabled people, clients aged 18-64 in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3432)	combined		2387	2688
ⓘSheltered housing for seriously disabled people, clients aged 65 and over in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3433)	combined		603	625
ⓘPersonal assistant services, clients in services per 100 000 inhabitants (385)	combined	82,2	86,8	95,0
ⓘPersonal assistant services, clients aged 0-17 in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3434)	combined		757	778
ⓘPersonal assistant services, clients aged 18-64 in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3435)	combined		3266	3623

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ⓘPersonal assistant services, clients aged 65 and over in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3436)	combined		560	633
ⓘHousing alterations, devices and facilities, clients in services funded by the municipality, during year (1551)	combined	7857	8125	8599
ⓘHousing alterations, devices and facilities, clients aged 0-17 in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3437)	combined		582	603
ⓘHousing alterations, devices and facilities, clients aged 18-64 in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3438)	combined		3607	3817
ⓘHousing alterations, devices and facilities, clients aged 65 and over, in services funded by the municipality, during year (from 2006-) (3439)	combined		3936	4179
ⓘCost of services and financial support provided pursuant to the Act on Services and Assistance for the Disabled, euro per client (1249)	combined	42,4	46,5	

source: SOTKAnet (www.sotkanet.fi)[1]

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[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.

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SECTION 3: CARE AND SUPPORT

3.1 Recent research publications (key points)

The most recent and important publication is Kehitysvammaisten yksilöllinen asuminen. Pitkäaikaisesta laitosasumisesta 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 housing concept regarding persons with intellectual disabilities should differentiate between the housing solution, flat and services needed in support of housing.
- The provision of housing for persons with disabilities should be planned carefully and the needs for housing and support should be examined in the long term. Service planning that gathers together different plans provides the basis for the needs assessments made 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 in the end they should be 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.
- The 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 taken under 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 mostly are people with intellectual disabilities. The service of individual housing is a municipal service and it is not connected to disability pensions, but practically everyone, who are diagnosed as intellectually disabled have a disability pension. The access to this service is based on the evaluation of municipal authorities and clients have to do application. It is an interactive process, where clients personal needs are the most important thing. Physical and communicational environments are accessible and this demand is based on the law (812/2000). The disability pension is diagnosed, allocated and paid by Finnish Social Insurance Institution that is a state institution.

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

The policy of care provided at home is increasing all the time. New institutions are not established any more and contemporary institutions have planned to distribute. Different schemes are needed at the same time and not just one model of personal assistance. Possible schemes: an application of Scottish system that includes needs of everyday life, special issues (e.g. communicational needs) and complicated issues (e.g. mental health). Finnish Social Insurance Institution is providing the rehabilitation services and transport services are provided by municipalities.

In spite of good individual practices deinstitutional services are not developed enough and there is a lack of personnel, a lack of vocational rehabilitation places, and financing and stocks of transport are under-estimated. To get disability services the personal service plan is done, but very often it is impossible to realise, because of the reasons mentioned above. The solution of the system to this dilemma is to give less services to one person and more services to the crowd of people. The problem is that no-one gets services enough. Also the quality of services is not considered enough, but in housing services after the tragical homicides in institutional housing. In Finland the idea of disabled people's budget has not been very prosperous. There have several piloting project of this issue, but in a system-oriented ideology and practice they have not been very successful.

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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 comprehensive and slow process to improve disabled people's situation including attitudes, legislation, practices, and cultural and political atmosphere. However, individual housing services are getting better lately. People with intellectual disabilities have the worst situation and the service system has problems to provide services to people with multiple diisabilities. In the case of people with multiple disabilities the service system often has big difficulties to find provide the services that are needed. These people are often forgotten. There is also a lack of research like user-driven, action research and micro level structural studies about deinstitutionalisation.

4.2 One example of best practice (brief details)

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.

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 an important thing 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 communicational problems, immigrants, older people (especially with Alzheimer disease).

4.3 References

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