

# Knock knock—

## May I come in?

Guide to equality in sports and youth organisations



Equality



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**Abstract** All young people must have equal opportunities to participate in the sports and youth activities of their choice. This guide describes how your organisation can make this happen! This guide provides sports and youth organisations with concrete tools in order to promote equal opportunities in leisure time and recreational activities. The guide is aimed at all elected officials and other officers of organisations. The focus of this guide is on how elected officials and other officers may, through their decisions, contribute to equality in organisational structures and the organisation's common practices.

The elected officials and staff of organisations and associations play a key role in the realisation of equality in the organisation's basic activities. The efforts of individual volunteers or employees to promote equality must be complemented with organisational structures that support equality and non-discrimination. A single volunteer can do a quite a bit to foster equality by addressing bullying and discrimination, for example, but this alone does not guarantee that the others involved in the organisation will know how to do the same.

This guide aims to encourage an organisational culture in which everyone has the possibility to choose for themselves which leisure time and recreational pursuits or activities to participate in: Do the young Roma people in the area, for example, feel welcome when they participate in the activities of the youth organisation? Is the organisation's reputation and style of communication such that a local family with two mothers can feel comfortable about sending their eager child to play football in the organisation, without fear of bullying or discrimination?

It is good to keep in mind that not everything needs to be in place at once. The promotion of equality progresses step-by-step. Most important of all is that all the actors in the organisation at every level of activity are involved in and committed to the promotion of equality from the very beginning.

This guidebook is available in Finnish, Swedish and in English. The electronic versions are available on [www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi](http://www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi).

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# Purpose of the guide

All young people must have equal opportunities to participate in the sports and youth activities of their choice. This guide describes how your organisation can make this happen!

This guide provides sports and youth organisations with concrete tools in order to promote equal opportunities in leisure time and recreational activities. The guide is aimed at all elected officials and other officers of organisations. The focus of this guide is on how elected officials and other officers may, through their decisions, contribute to equality in organisational structures and the organisation's common practices.

The elected officials and staff of organisations and associations play a key role in the realisation of equality in the organisation's basic activities. The efforts of individual volunteers or employees to promote equality must be complemented with organisational structures that support equality and non-discrimination. A single volunteer can do a quite a bit to foster equality by addressing bullying and discrimination, for example, but this alone does not guarantee that the others involved in the organisation will know how to do the same.

This guide aims to encourage an organisational culture in which everyone has the possibility to choose for themselves which leisure time and recreational pursuits or activities to participate in: Do the young Roma people in the area, for example, feel welcome when they participate in the activities of the youth organisation? Is the organisation's reputation and style of communication such that a local family with two mothers can feel comfortable about sending their eager child to play football in the organisation, without fear of bullying or discrimination?

It is good to keep in mind that not everything needs to be in place at once. The promotion of equality progresses step-by-step. Most important of all is that all the actors in the organisation at every level of activity are involved in and committed to the promotion of equality from the very beginning.



# 1. What do equality and discrimination mean?

Equality means that all people are treated equally, irrespective of their gender, age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion or beliefs, opinions, disability, state of health, sexual orientation or other personal grounds. Equality in the Finnish context is most commonly used to refer to gender equality, in other words merely between men and women. In this guide, however, equality is meant in the broad sense of the term, as described above.

Discrimination is the unequal treatment of people on the basis that they belong to a particular group, for example, through professing a particular religion or belonging to a sexual minority. Discrimination may be manifested in a single individual act, or it may be the result of

practices or rules that produce injustice. Indirect discrimination refers to a situation where seemingly neutral treatment or practices leads to discriminatory outcomes.

More information on equality and concepts related to discrimination can be found at [www.equality.fi](http://www.equality.fi)

## 1.1 What do equality and non-discrimination have to do with organisational activity?

Equality is a core guiding value in our society. Organisations contribute to the principles according to which society functions, as well as how both individuals various population groups participate in or are able to participate in and influence our society.

Organisations are not exempt from the legislation concerning equality and discrimination. Sports and youth organisations are also governed by the Sports Act and the Youth Act, both of which highlight the realisation of equality support for diversity.

The prohibition of discrimination in the laws on equality also applies to organisations

- a) as an employer,
- b) when the organisation performs a public function or provides a service to the general public.

In addition, organisations are funded by many public bodies, which have conditioned the funding on adherence to equality and non-discrimination within the funded activity.

### LEGISLATION RELATED TO ORGANISATIONAL ACTIVITY

The Finnish Youth Act (72/2006) is founded on equality, multi-culturalism and internationalism. Based on these principles, youth work is implemented in order to support the growth and active citizenship of young people.

The purpose of the Finnish Sports Act (1054/1998) is to promote equality and tolerance through sports as well as to support cultural diversity and sustainable environmental development.

The Finnish Non-Discrimination Act (21/2004) prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, conviction, opinion, state of health, disability, sexual orientation, or personal grounds. The law stipulates that commissioners of work or training providers must make reasonable arrangements, if necessary, to enable a person with disabilities to have access to work and training, and to be able to perform their work. In addition, the Non-Discrimination Act allows for positive discrimination (affirmative action) if the purpose is to achieve actual equality.

The Finnish Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986) prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. The Act defines the obligations of an employer to promote equality in the workplace. The Act can be considered, in many cases, to also encompass protection of sexual minorities.

## 1.2 Examples of equality in organisational activity

Basing organisational activity on the principles of equality and non-discrimination is not just about words written in the principles, but also about actual acts in practice:

### **Equal treatment does not always guarantee equality**

*Organisation N treats everyone involved in its activities in the same manner. This is called “formally equal.” The same treatment for all, however, does not always guarantee equality in reality. Inequality can be eliminated via active measures which aim at implementing equality in practice.*

The promotion of equality in practice is manifested in situations such as when a sports organisation chooses to use premises where its member can be provided with changing rooms that ensure privacy. There are many groups of people, such as sexual minorities (transgender and intersex people, cross-dressers, for instance; see [www.equality.fi](http://www.equality.fi)) and Romani people, for whom this can be a prerequisite for participation in sports activities. Members of many other groups may also view such changing rooms as necessary.

### **Opportunities for involvement for people at risk of discrimination can be improved**

The nature organisation for young people O has noticed that the local immigrants and young people with disabilities are not participating in their activities. In such a situation, the organisation can develop actions to support, for example, the involvement of young people with disabilities by arranging for a general assistant to be involved in the activities. To reach young immigrants, the organisation can cooperate with the local immigrant organisations in order to spread information on its activities to a broader audience.

### **Equality in recruitment for the organisation**

*Organisation P wishes to hire an employee whose skills and experience match the personnel needs of the organisation. The best qualified applicant is a visually impaired person, and the organisation has no prior experience of making accommodations for the needs of an individual with disabilities in the work community and in the adjustments, or adaptation, required of the working environment.*

According to the Non-Discrimination Act, the employer must, if necessary, make reasonable arrangements to ensure that a person with disabilities has access to work and can perform the work tasks. In assessing what is reasonable, particular attention is to be paid to the costs incurred due to the arrangements and the financial situation of the employer, and whether it is possible to obtain support from public funds or elsewhere for implementing the arrangements. An organisation can receive financial support for employing a person with disabilities and for the acquisition of assistive devices to facilitate the work, such as screen reading software. If it turns out that the person would not be able to perform his or her essential work tasks even with the support of reasonable adaptive measures, his or her formal qualifications do not obligate the employer to hire them.

For more information, see the Vammoista viis guide (Regardless of disabilities, in Finnish): Link: [http://www.tem.fi/files/28006/WWW\\_vammaiset\\_vajaakuntoiset\\_kuntoutujat.pdf](http://www.tem.fi/files/28006/WWW_vammaiset_vajaakuntoiset_kuntoutujat.pdf)

### **There's no discrimination here – or is there?**

Many organisations have established principles concerning equal and non-discriminatory treatment, such as the Fair Play ideals and targets developed for sports associations. Without common principles and practices for non-discrimination, it may be difficult to recognise the existence of discrimination and address it. Does your organisation have clear guidelines for how to deal with discrimination? And one has to consider, is discrimination recognised even in cases where it is latent in the structure or general climate of the organisation?

According to the Non-Discrimination Act, prohibited discrimination includes direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, and a guideline or order to discriminate. Harassment is the deliberate or de facto infringement of the dignity of a person or group of people by the creation of an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. As an example of harassment in organisational activity, this could be derogatory name-calling, or belittlement on the basis of gender. Anyone can be a victim of harassment, and the victim does not necessarily have to be a member of the group towards which the harassment is directed. For example, jokes about sexual orientation may be experienced as harassment even if the listener does not consider themselves to be a member of a sexual minority. The organisation must ensure that a welcoming climate prevails where even those who are part of a minority feel that they are welcome to participate in the activities, on an equal basis with everyone else.





## 2. Why should equality be promoted in organisations?

In the previous section, we highlighted the obligations established by legislation and imposed on organisations for the promotion of equality. There are additional reasons for organisations to foster equality in their activities: there are benefits to be obtained for the organisation itself from guaranteeing equality, and, for many organisations in general, ethical and moral grounds alone are a sufficient reason to promote equality.

## 2.1 So that we represent those who we believe we represent

The names of many organisations refer to a specific locality. For example, it is natural for an organisation called Pihtijoen Palloveikot to act as the top-level association for ball players in the Pihtijoki region. For it to truly take this role, the organisation must take account of the fact that the people in the area where it operates have different needs and capabilities.

The definition of a non-profit organisation in Section 22 of the Finnish Income Tax Act stipulates that the activities of such an organisation are not targeted at a restricted group of people. The broader the scope of the organisation, the more diverse its potential participant and target group is.

## 2.2 To involve new people

The aim of organisations is to attract new members and volunteers and involve them in the activities. At the same time, as the existing, long-time supporters and active participants age, it is becoming more difficult to find young people committing themselves to long-term, membership-based activities. There is a lot of competition for members and their time, and organisations cannot afford to give the impression that they are not open and willing to accept diverse and wide variety of people in their activities.

## 2.3 So that our organisation functions smoothly

And organisation requires many different kinds of skills in order to function smoothly. Physical limitations, other disabilities or inadequate skills in the main national languages of Finland may exclude some individuals from tasks availed for volunteers or employees, but these same people may have other talents and skills that can be of value in many other areas. A wheelchair bound father of a junior football player may have valuable organisational skills to offer to the football club. Similarly, a Russian-speaking member may attract other local Russians to become involved. Language requirements should not be set higher than what is actually required for participating in the activities. Neither should it be assumed that immigrants are not competent Finnish speakers. Both volunteers and remunerated employees are happier and more committed in their work if they can act in the organisation as themselves, without having to hide any aspect of their identity.

## 2.4 So that our organisation's image and finances rest on a solid value foundation

Equality is also about credibility and external image. Hence, an organisation's profile with respect to non-discrimination and the promotion of equality also has financial implications, as the public authorities who grant funding are likewise committed to these values. Organisations also have their own rules and values, whose implementation in a changed operational environment requires different methods than, say, twenty years ago. Equality means organisational activity that is genuinely fair and open for all; this is in the interests of everyone, not just those belonging to a particular group.

## 2.5 So that everyone can feel proud of their organisation

The activity of an organisation is more meaningful, credible and effective when its values, rules and actions are aligned, and everyone<sup>11</sup> can be openly proud of their organisation, its values and its work. An organisation that implements equality in its activities can, for this reason alone, be attractive and provide a sufficient reason for volunteers to be involved in the activities of this particular organisation.

## 2.6. So that our organisation operates in an ethical manner

Equality and non-discrimination are considered, as such, to be ethically right and to create a sustainable value basis and meaning for the civil society. It is a value per se if an organisation treats all people equally and actively seeks to act accordingly.



### 3. How to promote equality through administration

## 3.1 Checklist

The promotion of equality and non-discrimination progresses step by step:

### Step 1: Involving and engaging members and volunteers

As in any organisational development, it is crucial that the members and volunteers are involved in the development of equality in the organisation. The board of the organisation must be able to justify the reasons for promoting equality and non-discrimination in order to create a common understanding of the organisation's new mode of operation. Such justifications are listed in the previous section of this guide.

### Step 2: Mapping out the current situation

One of the first steps in the promotion of equality and non-discrimination is to review how these principles are currently realised in the activities of the organisation. After mapping out the current situation, which aspects of the organisation's operation most urgently require corrective measures can be assessed. Mapping out the current situation can be implemented by using an easily accessible web survey targeted at members, volunteers and employees. For examples of templates for mapping out your current situation, see [www.equality.fi](http://www.equality.fi).

### Step 3: Deciding on the targets and measures to promote equality

In the survey used to map the current situation, you can ask the members and employees what actions could be taken to improve equality in the organisation. You can also establish a separate workgroup consisting of members, volunteers, board members and employees, with the task of discussing the targets to be set and actions to take to promote equality. The board of the organisation ultimately decides on the organisation's common practices for ensuring equality and non-discrimination in its activities. It is the task of the board to engage, encourage and guide the different actors in the organisation to adopt the common practices throughout the organisation in all its activities, and to ensure that the actions to advance equality are recorded in the annual action plans.

There is no one single best way or method to promote equality. You should scale the measures to your organisation's needs: an extensive equality plan is not necessarily required for the activities of the local section of a youth organisation or a sports team; instead, an open-minded attitude and a checklist on how accessibility is taken into consideration at events may suffice quite well. In national organisations, equality plans can be used to develop and deploy

equal practices effectively throughout the organisation. The equality planning guide is available at <http://www.equality.fi>.

## Step 4: Communication and implementation

It is crucial to inform all those involved in the organisation about the common practices. The common practices can be launched, for example, in connection with a joint organisational event, such as the annual meeting or a training event, or they can be included in a member organisation bulletin, etc. The board of the organisation must also make provisions for the promotion of equality in financial planning.

## Step 5: Follow-up

The implementation of equality and the common practices should be evaluated on a regular basis. Responsibility for follow-up with the board. Follow-up may take the form of, for example, membership surveys, annual reports or separate follow-up questionnaires.

## Step 6: Updates and setting new targets

The promotion of equality is a long-term effort. Once one issue has been set in order, you may realise that there is still room for improvement. The targets and actions of equal and non-discriminatory organisational activity should, therefore, be updated as needed. New goals should additionally be set to further improve transparency in sports and youth organisations.

## 3.2 Preconditions for the promotion of equality in organisational activity

It is important that the organisation's employees, members, and volunteers are committed to promoting equality and that they are supported in this effort. In addition, the organisation must commit to the promotion of equality on an organisational level, and certain preconditions must be met for development work within the organisation to be possible.

### ● Common understanding of the organisation's mission and basic task

Without a common understanding of the organisation's basic task and a commitment to shared values, the promotion of equality cannot succeed. Non-discrimination and equality are values often mentioned in organisational strategies, but the organisation's values as such do not ensure that its activities open to all. Few organisations have explained to its members how these values should be put into practice.

- **Opportunities for members and employees to effect changes**

The opportunity to influence development efforts at different stages increases the members' and employees' commitment to the promotion of equality. For more details, see section 4. How to promote equal practices

- **Supporting innovativeness, risk-taking and creativity**

It can be problematic for the promotion of equality if the organisation is content to remain at a level where only the minimum legal requirements are observed. The promotion of equality is, above all, about acting as a forerunner and creating and instilling new ways of operating.

- **Open communication and open and lively interaction**

It may happen that, in the promotion of equality, you will encounter unpleasant facts regarding the activities of your organisation. Mapping the current situation may, for example, reveal cases of harassment which would otherwise never have been discovered. It is an indication of the openness of the organisation whether such negative facts can be acknowledged within the organisation or externally. Without open interaction, the existing shortcomings will never be discovered, and without openly acknowledging the shortcomings, they cannot successfully be resolved.

- **A positive attitude to change**

There may be fears related to the promotion of equality. This may be expressed in thoughts such as "what am I even allowed to say anymore?" or "what am I even allowed to do?" It is a challenge to transform fears into a positive attitude. It is therefore important to highlight that the promotion of equality does not mean keeping a watch on or accusing anyone, or only advancing of the rights of particular minority groups. The promotion of equality is in the interests of everyone.

- **Transforming the knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals into shared competence**

The promotion of equality requires a wide range of competences: the right knowledge and skills to function in different situations as well as respect for diversity. One person alone cannot make an organisation respectful of equality; it is therefore important that the organisation has the means to disseminate the knowledge and skills of individuals throughout the organisation to become shared competence. A good way to do this is to share the organisation's equality actions in written form, for example in a plan for promoting equality.

# 4. How to promote equal practices

## 4.1 Communication

- Do our messages reach as many people as possible?
- Could we use new methods to disseminate information on our activities?
- Is our communication easy to understand?
- Is our communication accessible?
- Do we use non-discriminatory language in our communication?

The promotion of equality is closely linked to communication and openness. Inadequate communication may lead to an experience of inequality, which is why it is important to ensure that information reaches all those who need the information in their work or activities. The internal and external communication of an organisation can be viewed separately. The organisation's internal communication is equal when it is open and reaches all employees and members.

It is especially important to convey a positive message about equality and non-discrimination in the organisation through its external communication. If the organisation has drawn up strategies or policies regarding communication, it is important that equality is addressed in them.

Different types of media should be used for communication, as different people can be reached via different channels. The languages and tools traditionally used in the organisation's communication may prevent some people from receiving information on the organisation's activities equally. Simplified or at least clearer language improves communication with many people. This particularly benefits people with certain types of disabilities and members of language minorities. For further information on easy to read language, visit: [www.papunet.net/selkokeskus/in-english/](http://www.papunet.net/selkokeskus/in-english/)

Communication via the Internet may reach a different audience than via traditional media. In the case of the organisations in a major city, online recruitment significantly increased the proportion of young people among volunteers. As many, especially elderly, people are not active Internet users, traditional communication methods should not be neglected, either.

The accessibility of communication is related to the contents of the message and communication channels. Accessibility in the content of a message refers to the use of language that is as clear and easy to understand as possible. The accessibility of the communication channel means, for example, that the web pages of the organisation can be read with the screen

reading software used by visually impaired people. Files in image format, such as PDFs on the website, should also be available in text format. Video material should include subtitling or, alternatively, the content of the video should be available in text format. More information on accessible communication can be found, for example, in the Design for All network: <http://dfasuomi.stakes.fi/FI/DFA+tieto/Tyokalut/tyokalut.htm>

The language used in communication should reinforce the message of equality. The language in communication may reveal assumptions on, for example, the sexual orientation, family background, ethnicity, nationality, functional capacity and gender of the recipient of the message. As an example, a letter sent to a young person at home should not automatically refer to a mother and father but rather to the guardian(s) or the family collectively.

## 4.2 Member and volunteer recruitment

- Are we actively recruiting new members?
- Have we considered the obstacles there may be to participate in our activities?
- Are we cooperating with organisations that represent people at risk of discrimination?
- Do we offer different ways of involvement and different types of tasks?
- Is our organisational image unapproachable or attractive?
- Who are we here for?

Organisations should not think that the mere declaration of “we are open to all” is sufficient. Immigrants and sexual minorities, for example, can be actively approached and invited to join the activities via their own organisations. This also provides information for the organisation on any obstacles to participation which may thus far have hindered the involvement of such people. Cooperation networks formed of several organisations may also respond to the needs of a member or volunteer better than an individual organisation.

Volunteer involvement in organisations can take many forms: participating in the work of the board of directors, managing a canteen, other voluntary work within the organisation, or supervising or simply participating in a regular activity. There is room for a wide range of human diversity in this breadth of activities.

The identity and image of some organisations, developed over the years, may unintentionally hinder the involvement of new members from some sections of the population. The names of organisations may also carry ideological and historical echoes. Instead of changing a historic name, the company can foster equality in its communication by conveying that its activities are not merely aimed at, say, Christians or factory workers.

Organisations should openly review their activities from the perspective of who their intended audience is and what it has to offer them: what communication, training and support is provided for members and volunteers in the sphere of its activities. If these areas of activity are in order, it is easier for all locals and people interested in the organisation's basic activities to join.

## 4.3 Membership training

- Do we offer equality training for everyone?
- Can we target equality training according to need?
- Do we know what equality training should include?
- Does the content of the training correspond to the everyday activities of the organisation?

It is crucial to educate the members on aspects of equality in order to deploy equality in all layers of organisational activity. It is not enough that elected officials or coaches understand equality issues, if the actions of the rest of the organisation's membership are not based on equality.

The equality training for the membership, whether arranged by the organisation or another party, should contain certain basic elements. Its contents should be linked to the basic activity of the organisation, and it should take into account the members' different tasks and age levels. The goals and content of training aimed at elected officials should relate to the tasks required of them in their position, such as how to promote equality as an employer. Training aimed at ordinary members, on the other hand, can focus on a climate of equality or language use, and how such a climate can be jointly created. The training methods, such as lectures, exercises and level of activeness should also be selected with the needs of the target group in mind.

The training should convey information on the concrete measures to promote equality in the organisation. Information should also be provided on discrimination and different grounds for discrimination.

In training, all grounds for discrimination should be addressed without making any assumptions about the homogeneity of the membership. For example, the equality of sexual minorities (gays, lesbians and bisexuals) should be discussed regardless of whether persons belonging to sexual minorities are thought to be involved in the organisation or not.

In addition to providing information, the training should teach skills for, for example, on how to address the inappropriate use of language or abusive name-calling. Global education methods can be used in training to implement exercises related to attitudes. If the organisation has an equality plan or other tools to ensure equal practices, these should be discussed in training. For more information on global education methods: [www.keks.fi](http://www.keks.fi) (in Finnish) and [www.globaalikasvatus.fi/node/930](http://www.globaalikasvatus.fi/node/930)

Training in which participants have the opportunity for active interaction often produce the best results. Informal learning in the course of the activities of the organisation also promotes putting the learning objectives of equality training into practice. It is important that the messages conveyed by training and informal learning are aligned: if the importance of social accessibility is discussed in equality training, this principle should also be implemented in practical activities.

## 4.4 Accessibility

- Have we paid attention to physical accessibility?
- Do we know what social accessibility means and how it can be promoted?

Physical access guarantees everyone an opportunity to be involved with and alongside others, regardless of gender, age, state of health, disability, or functional capacity. Structural obstacles must not be allowed to divide people into active and passive, participants and bystanders. Accessibility enables: 1) the use of personal assistive devices (such as a guide dog, wheelchair, hearing device); 2) taking advantage of various features of the environment and methods (such as induction loop, lighting, lifts); and 3) help from others (e.g. an assistant, interpreter, guide).

Few sports or youth organisations have the possibility to build their premises themselves. This does not, however, remove their responsibility to try to acquire barrier-free premises. For sports organisations, this means that the premises should be mapped for accessibility, for example in connection with a sports event that is open to the general public. Youth organisations should map the accessibility of their premises already before the first young persons with disabilities are involved in activities. In either case, the promotion of accessibility is a sound investment in the future. It is often argued that accessibility is expensive to arrange, but an environment with barriers also generates direct and indirect costs for the users and for society. Accessibility benefits everyone, but there are people for whom accessibility is a necessity to ensure the realisation of equal opportunities for participation. There are a number of links at the end of this guide that provide further information on physical accessibility and accessibility mapping.

Social accessibility is a question of climate. In a socially accessible organisation, everyone can safely be who they are, without fear of discrimination. Those involved in the activities are allowed to act and contribute on the basis of their different starting points while respecting their privacy. For example, those belonging to minorities generally do not want to profile themselves exclusively as representatives of the minority group. The implementation of social accessibility is the responsibility of all actors at all levels of the organisation. The attitudes of the organisation's members, volunteers and staff have a major impact on how social accessibility is realised in the everyday activity of the organisation. Discrimination is not a matter of opinion: no one can justify discriminatory behaviour on the basis of their beliefs or opinions. Rules for non-discriminatory operation that arise from the organisation's own values and have been jointly developed, as well as declaring itself a Discrimination-free Zone are ways to promote social accessibility in an organisation. For more information on Discrimination-free zones: <http://www.equality.fi>

The accessibility of communication is discussed in chapter 4.1 of this guide.

## 4.5 Organisation of events

- Do we believe that everyone can participate in our events in the same way?
- What could we take into account when organising events?

It is often claimed that the activities of sports and youth organisations are open to all. The openness of an organisation or the lack of it often becomes evident when events are organised. It is important to be able to view the operation of your organisation critically and to identify any normative practices applied in organising events, for example.

Normativeness in the organisation of events means that everyone is believed to be equally able to participate in the event. The physical and social accessibility of the event and its venue should, however, be ensured. A PowerPoint presentation with fancy visual effects at a training event, for example, may constitute an obstacle to learning for a visually impaired person. If the venue is not wheelchair accessible, this shuts out a group of people in a very concrete way.

We have gathered some examples below of how equality and accessibility can be taken into account in the organisation of events:

- **Event communication:** Be sure to already indicate at this stage whether the venue is accessible. Accessibility can be advertised with an ‘accessibility clause’, which indicates, for example, whether it is possible to freely move around the venue, including the toilets, by wheelchair, and whether the help of a general assistant is available.
- **The participants’ needs:** Map out the needs of the participants already at the sign-up stage for the event. You can use the following clause: “Please inform the event organiser in advance of your individual needs (for example, the need for interpretation, dietary needs).”
- **Induction loop:** If the premises have an induction loop, ensure that all speakers use a microphone.
- **Special visual effects:** Anything presented visually, such as PowerPoint presentations, should also be described orally. This is especially important when the participants include people who cannot see or have impaired vision. The text-format materials distributed to the participants before and after the event (Word, RTF documents) should be accessible by screen-reading software.
- **Gender:** If you need to know the participant’s gender for some reason (for example, for housing accommodations), take into account gender diversity and allow participants to declare it themselves. For example, in the registration form: Gender:  
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- **Language:** Depending on the target group of the event, consider the need for conference interpreters. Indicate in advance the language of the event and the languages for which interpretation is provided. Deliver any materials to the interpreters in advance. You can agree at the start of the event which languages can be used (for example, Swedish and English).

- **Activities:** When planning active elements or events, take into account how people with different functional capacity can participate in the activities. Accessible exercises (in Finnish): [www.keks.fi/ideoita/harjoitteita](http://www.keks.fi/ideoita/harjoitteita)
- **Peaceful space:** In events of long duration, some participants may need a closed and peaceful space, for example for prayers. You can inform participants of the peaceful room before the event, and you can also request participants to tell about any other needs or wishes in advance.
- **Personal assistants:** At events with a charge, personal assistants required by participants as a rule should not be required to pay a participation fee. The special needs of the assistant (diet, etc.) should also be taken into account.
- **Atmosphere:** In addition to ensuring physical accessibility, you should ensure that the climate at the event is respectful of diversity. The event can, for example, be declared a Discrimination-free Zone, and Discrimination-free Zone signs can be visibly displayed at the event location. Further information: [www.equality.fi](http://www.equality.fi)
- **Expense items:** Accessibility should be provided in advance, and any expense items should be taken into account when planning for the event.

Other checklists to ensure the accessibility of events can be found at the Culture for All website

[http://www.kulttuuriakaikille.info/accessibility\\_checklists](http://www.kulttuuriakaikille.info/accessibility_checklists)

## 4.6 Election of members of the Board

- **How can we ensure that equality is realised in the selection of the board members of our organisation?**

An organisation is easily driven by the “principle of normality” or an assumption of the majority population. However, people working in organisations have different levels of functional capacity, personal characteristics and backgrounds. The board of the organisation should be at least as diverse as its members.

It is not necessary to know how many persons belonging to minorities are among the members of the organisation in order to take into account their different needs. Neither is anyone obliged to publicise their personal qualities, if they do not wish to do so. It is therefore not necessary to set quotas for people with different characteristics when selecting a board for the organisation. However, it is necessary to consider whether there are thresholds in the activities of the board that might limit equal opportunities for acting as a board member. These thresholds may include disparaging attitudes on the part of the board members regarding the ability of young or elderly people to act as members of the board; always arranging meetings in the same geographical area; the prejudices of board members towards sexual minorities, immigrants, women, or men; or the inaccessibility of meeting locations and meeting documents, etc.

The organisation can encourage its diverse members to apply for a seat on the board of directors by using the following type of equality statement: “We would like to encourage candidates for the board from all over the organisation’s sphere of activity, representing different ages and genders, as well as language, cultural and other minorities. The election committee can promote gender equality can be promoted by requesting members to nominate both male and female candidates for the board election, so that the election committee can prepare a balanced initial proposal for board seats. With respect to the selection of board members, a clause can be added to the rules of an election committee according to which positive discrimination can be applied in the case of two equally strong candidates. This means that the candidate who represents a group that is currently under-represented on the board is nominated (e.g. a man to a female-dominated board or a member of an ethnic minority to a board where people of Finnish origin are in the majority).

## 4.7 HR policy

- Does our recruitment reach all potential employees?
- Does gender, age or any other factor restrict the kinds of tasks someone is suitable for in the organisation?
- Are we utilising the skills of every employee in our organisation?
- Does our entire personnel have equal opportunities with regard to salaries, access to training and career advancement?

Organisations are bound in their HR policy by legislation. The board of an organisation carries a major responsibility for the implementation of the HR policy. Equality must be taken into account in all personnel-related decisions, and equality must be assessed, for example, in regard to leadership, recruitment, salaries, staff training, career advancement and induction. It is important that everyone is familiar with the organisation’s HR policy documents and knows who is responsible for personnel issues.

It is important to observe equality in recruitment. Those at risk of discrimination face particular difficulties in obtaining a job because of prejudices. For example, the young as well as the elderly may feel that their skills are not appreciated when applying for a job. A similar equality statement to that used for calling for board member (see section 4.6) can be used in recruitment. If you wish to apply positive discrimination in recruitment in the case of equally strong applicants, this must be recorded in advance in the official HR policy documents of the organisation. It is also important to ensure that the recruitment process itself does not discriminate against anyone. For example, interviews should be arranged in a place which is accessible by wheelchair and where the hearing environment is unobstructed.

The basic assumption of the organisation’s HR policy should be that its personnel already is diverse, so that the HR policy is not steered by the “principle of normality”. There are different types of families, gender diversity and people with different levels of functional capacity. The recognition of diversity is important in an organisation to ensure that access to training

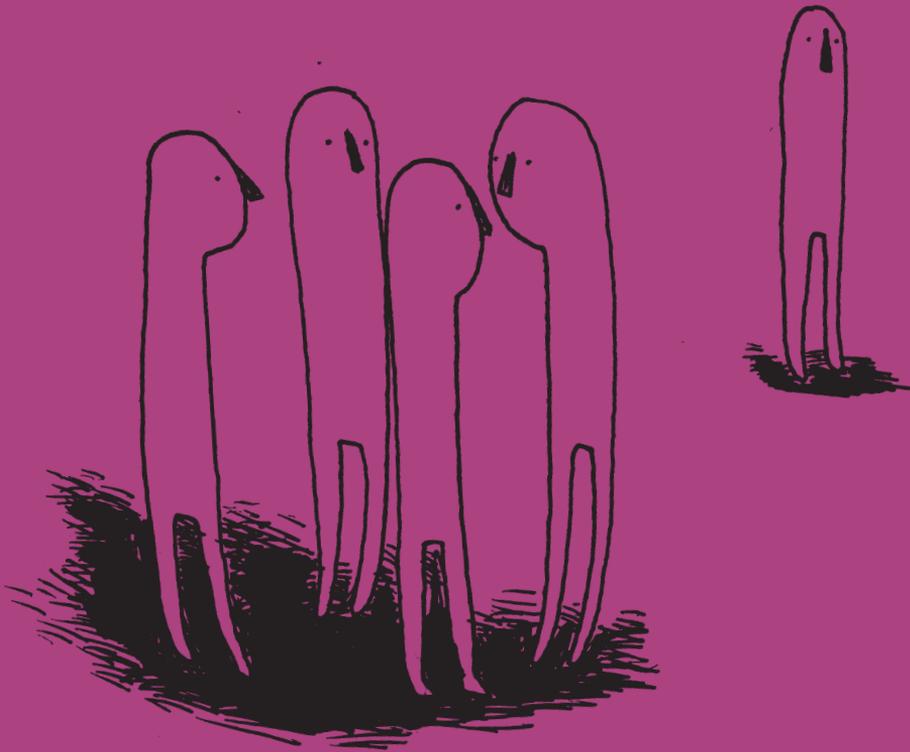
and career advancement are equally possible for every employee, regardless of their backgrounds or personal qualities. The practices related to access to induction and training, job appointments and career advancement should be transparent and well-grounded, so that everyone can feel themselves to be treated equally.

More information on positive discrimination and equality in working life:

Menestystä monimuotoisuudesta – elinvoimaa erilaisuudesta (Success from diversity – vitality from difference; English summary), MEE, [www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi/kirjasto](http://www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi/kirjasto)

If the number of personnel working for the organisation on a regular basis is at least thirty a gender equality plan must be made to address gender equality in the workplace: [http://www.tasa-arvo.fi/en/promoting\\_equality/workplace/planning](http://www.tasa-arvo.fi/en/promoting_equality/workplace/planning)

Although the preparation of an equality plan is currently only mandatory for the authorities, it can also be a good HR policy tool for organisations: [http://www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi/welcome\\_to\\_equality\\_fi/equality-planning/](http://www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi/welcome_to_equality_fi/equality-planning/)



## 5 How to combat discrimination in organisations

- Do we recognise discrimination in our organisation?
- What do we do if discrimination is discovered/suspected?
- Why do we need anti-discrimination or non-discrimination rules?

Non-discrimination is a principle to which every employer must be committed and which, furthermore, is stipulated by law. An organisation is not just an employer; the principle of non-discrimination also applies to the members and volunteers of the organisation.

Discrimination means different treatment of people on personal grounds. Discrimination is not always easy to recognise. It is important to discuss what is and what is not discrimination together with the organisation's employees, members and volunteers. Examples of discrimination are humiliating commands, verbal or physical threats, sexually suggestive insinuations and obscene language, as well as exclusion from the community. Fact-based de-

cisions and instructions regarding work or organisational activities and work distribution are not discrimination or inappropriate treatment, nor is the joint discussion of problems at work or in the organisation or community, even if these cause uncertainty, anxiety or other negative emotions. Neither is it a case of harassment if a person is given a justified warning or punishment or is directed to an evaluation of work capacity after the matter has been discussed with them. For more information on discrimination and inappropriate treatment in the workplace: <http://www.tyosuojelu.fi/fi/workingfinland/> (mostly in Finnish)

Discrimination requires intervention in any circumstances. Any reports and suspicions of discrimination must always be taken seriously. It is important to resolve the situation immediately between the parties by hearing each party instead of blaming them. An employee as well as a member or volunteer of the organisation may be a victim of discrimination, may witness discrimination, be guilty of discrimination, act as a support person in cases of discrimination, or be notified of a case of actual or alleged discrimination in the organisation. For example, if an employee is discriminated against, the first option is to take the matter up with the individual person who is suspected to be the guilty party causing the discrimination. If the situation is not resolved, the employee who was discriminated against should notify his or her supervisor, or if the supervisor is a party to the matter, the supervisor above the supervisor. If this route is not possible, the case of suspected discrimination can be taken to the workplace shop steward, occupational safety representative, or occupational health and safety authority. If the victim of discrimination is a member or a volunteer, the same course of action applies as in the case of an employee: i.e. the matter should first be discussed with the person who may have been guilty of discrimination. If the situation is not resolved, he or she can turn to the shop stewards or an employee of the organisation. It is the task of the shop stewards and employees to address the matter and, if necessary, take it further.

A good way to bring together the principles of non-discrimination is to establish common ground rules. These rules should be developed through open discussion, which makes it possible to assess the risks arising from the operating environment and culture of that particular organisation and the appropriate models for addressing them. Open discussion also encourages a shared commitment to the rules. Especially with young people, the creation of common rules requires a safe and trusting environment. The presence and attentiveness of the adult actors is important to the young.

The basis for discussion should be the target state of non-discrimination, in which all parties understand the content of the concept in the same way. The discussion can deal with issues such as the acceptable limits of humour, recognised prejudices, teamwork and challenges related to working in the community, stakeholder cooperation and the realisation of the organisation's values in everyday life. It can additionally be assessed what the organisation's degree of diversity is on the basis of the participants. The common rules should be public and also brought to the attention the organisation's new members, volunteers and employees, for example, during induction.

# 6. More information on equality

## Information on equality provided by the public authorities

Equality.fi website

<http://www.equality.fi>

Equality Planning Guide

<http://www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi/@Bin/174203/Equality+planning+guide.pdf>

Syrjinnän vastainen käsikirja (Anti-discrimination handbook; in Finnish) (Timo Makonen, IOM, 2003)

[http://yhdenvertaisuus-fi-bin.directo.fi/@Bin/6f4b2b8901437aeb15cdcf396ee910e7/1302783132/application/pdf/114953/finnish\\_anti-discrimination\\_handbook\\_full.pdf](http://yhdenvertaisuus-fi-bin.directo.fi/@Bin/6f4b2b8901437aeb15cdcf396ee910e7/1302783132/application/pdf/114953/finnish_anti-discrimination_handbook_full.pdf)

Menestystä monimuotoisuudesta – elinvoimaa erilaisuudesta (Success from diversity – vitality from difference; summary available in English) Hyviä käytäntöjä monimuotoisuuden johtamiseen (Success from diversity – vitality from difference; summary available in English)

[http://www.tem.fi/files/28376/TEM\\_saha\\_lr.pdf](http://www.tem.fi/files/28376/TEM_saha_lr.pdf)

RTF document [http://www.tem.fi/files/28406/Menestysta\\_monimuotoisuudesta.rtf](http://www.tem.fi/files/28406/Menestysta_monimuotoisuudesta.rtf)

Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities

[http://www.ofm.fi/en/front\\_page](http://www.ofm.fi/en/front_page)

Office of the Ombudsman for Equality

<http://www.tasa-arvo.fi/en>

## Information on equality provided by organisations:

Fair Play handbook for sports activities by the Finnish Sports Federation

[http://www.slu.fi/reilu\\_peli/reilun\\_pelin\\_tyokaluja/](http://www.slu.fi/reilu_peli/reilun_pelin_tyokaluja/)

Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi website on equality in youth work

<http://www.alli.fi/english/>

Finnish Red Cross Helsinki and Uusimaa district Diversity and non-discrimination programme

[http://www.redcross.fi/aktiivit/piirit/sivut/helsinki-uusimaa/monikulttuurinen\\_toiminta/fi\\_FI/1249464797993/](http://www.redcross.fi/aktiivit/piirit/sivut/helsinki-uusimaa/monikulttuurinen_toiminta/fi_FI/1249464797993/)

The Accessibility Project

<http://www.eesteeton.fi/portal/en/>

Survey forms and checklists for accessibility (in Finnish)  
[http://www.esteeton.fi/portal/fi/tieto-osio/rakennettu\\_ymparisto/tarkistuslistoja/](http://www.esteeton.fi/portal/fi/tieto-osio/rakennettu_ymparisto/tarkistuslistoja/)

Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired: Information on access to information by the visually impaired  
<http://www.nkl.fi/7>

Testing instructions for web pages and online services created by organisations for the visually impaired  
<http://www.nkl.fi/fi/etusivu/tietoa/esteettomyys/testohje>

Finnish Federation of Hard of Hearing Kuulokynnys website: Information on an accessible environment from the perspective of hard of hearing people (in Finnish)  
<http://www.kuulokynnys.fi/kuulokynnys/>

Papunet: Accessibility in web services, self-study material (in Finnish)  
[http://papunet.net/yksikko/fileadmin/tiedostot/muut/saavutettavuus\\_verkkopalvelu-issa.pdf](http://papunet.net/yksikko/fileadmin/tiedostot/muut/saavutettavuus_verkkopalvelu-issa.pdf)

Finnish Centre for Easy to read and information on Easy to read language:  
<http://papunet.net/selkokeskus/in-english/>

None of the above – Young Transgender and Intersex People’s Vision for 2020 (pdf)  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/l5z0bgkwu9u90rq/MuuMik%C3%A4-3.painos-verkko-English.pdf>

Rakkaus on rakkautta! Kärlek är kärlek! (Love is love!) Brochure for young people about sexual orientation and gender diversity (bilingual Finnish-Swedish, pdf)  
[http://www.seta.fi/doc/Seta\\_Rakkaus\\_on\\_rakkautta\\_esite.pdf](http://www.seta.fi/doc/Seta_Rakkaus_on_rakkautta_esite.pdf)

Moninaisuus mahtuu kouluun (Diversity in schools) brochure: tips for LHBTI-sensitive teaching (in Finnish) (pdf)  
[http://www.seta.fi/doc/materiaali/Microsoft\\_Word\\_-\\_Moninaisuus.pdf](http://www.seta.fi/doc/materiaali/Microsoft_Word_-_Moninaisuus.pdf)

## Other sources:

Culture for All Service: information and tools to improve the accessibility of culture services and inter-cultural knowledge  
<http://www.kulttuuriakaikille.info/en.php>

Muutu. Puutu. Oppilaitoksen yhdenvertaisuusopas (Change. Intervene. Equality guide for schools) (in Finnish and Swedish)  
>> <http://yhdenvertaisuus-fi-bin.directo.fi/@Bin/0355b231e4ba087167ed989385c2a1cb/1301043794/application/pdf/114855/Muutu.Puutu.pdf>





