



# Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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## Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Consideration of reports submitted by parties to  
the Convention under article 35

## Replies of Finland to the list of issues in relation to its initial report<sup>\*</sup>, <sup>\*\*</sup>

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

\*\* The annexes to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



## **Replies to the list of issues (CRPD/C/FIN/Q/1)**

### **Reply to paragraph 1 (a) of the list of issues**

1. Amendments to the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014) entered into force on 1 June 2023, which strengthen the prevention of discrimination of persons with disabilities.
2. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health launched a project in 2021 to develop legislation on the right to self-determination, including the right of persons with disabilities. According to the Government program, this work will continue during the Government term. Legislation will be developed in an order of priority and urgency.

### **Reply to paragraph 1 (b) of the list of issues**

3. There is no single definition of disability or disability status. When applying for different services and benefits, individual assessment of service needs or certain criteria are used. Disability policy is based on defining disability in the environment a situation arising from interaction between obstacles and individuals.

### **Reply to paragraph 1 (c) of the list of issues**

4. The service-specific requirements for personal assistance have been specified and a special inclusion support service has been added to the new Disability Services Act (675/2023), which enters into force in 2025. A precondition for granting personal assistance is that the person with disabilities is able, independently or supported, to form and express his or her will for the content of the assistance. The legislation is and will be implemented appropriately, for example by using the electronic Handbook on Disability Services maintained by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. The Government has allocated additional funding for the implementation of the Act.
5. In Åland, new disabilities legislation and resources will be prepared during the term of the Government of Åland 2023–2027.

### **Reply to paragraph 1 (d) of the list of issues**

6. A follow-up report on the progress of the Action Plan (2023) estimated that 80 of the 110 measures were implemented fully, 24 were partly realised and six were not realised. Global crises affected the implementation of the Action Plan. The work will continue when the new Action Plan will be completed in 2024.
7. In Åland, the Action Plan adopted for 2022–2025 will be evaluated in 2026. A new action plan will be prepared during the current term of the Government of Åland.

### **Reply to paragraph 1 (e) of the list of issues**

8. Parliament's replies on the legislative amendments concerning social security benefits entering into force in 2024 contain several statements on the monitoring and ex post evaluation of the impacts of the legislation. A plan for the implementation of the monitoring is currently under preparation, and the intention is to make an impact assessment on different groups of people, for example persons with disabilities. Since the changes will be fully in force in 2025, the effects can be statistically detected and assessed in 2026 at the earliest.
9. In Åland, efforts will be made to protect the welfare of the most vulnerable groups while undertaking the necessary balancing of economy.

### **Reply to paragraph 1 (f) of the list of issues**

10. All well-being services counties have established councils for the persons with disabilities. With foundation Sitra, the use of citizen panels has been introduced to develop services and better co-operation of different organizations inside well-being services counties. There have been special encouragement sessions for disability councils to take their role inside the organization and to find ways to guarantee that all disability groups can have their say in these councils.

11. The Government of Åland ensures the operating conditions of the provincial Council of Persons with Disabilities.

### **Reply to paragraph 1 (g) of the list of issues**

12. Persons with disabilities are involved in all mechanisms referred to in Article 33 and in the preparation and monitoring of the Action Plan. An expert from the Sámi Parliament participates in the coordination mechanism. Funding for social and health organizations is organized through state-aids prepared, monitored and evaluated by the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organizations (STEA). The total amount of state-aids prepared by STEA and granted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in 2024 is 383 million euros, state-aids for organizations of and for persons with disabilities is over 50 million euros.

13. Disability organisations played an important role in the accessibility working group (2022-23) appointed by the Ministry of the Environment.

14. Actors by experience participated in the survey UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and accessibility in the built environment – Legislation and policy needs of the future (2021).

15. The Åland gaming company Paf has annually granted funds to the disability organisation Funktionsrätt Åland. In 2023, the grant amounted to 480 000 euros.

### **Reply to paragraph 2 (a) of the list of issues**

16. In the revised Non-Discrimination Act, the mandate of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman has been expanded to working life. The Ombudsman has the competence to supervise compliance with the Act also in individual cases of discrimination in working life. A reference to a group of people was added to the definition of harassment. Anyone who considers that they have been discriminated against or subjected to retaliatory measures may submit a matter concerning discrimination or retaliatory measures to the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal. With the consent of the injured party referred to above, such a matter may also be referred to the Tribunal by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman or an entity promoting equality. The Tribunal may also recommend paying a compensation to victims of discrimination.

17. The human resources of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman of Åland have been increased from 60% (2016) to 80% (November 2017) and to 100% (March 2019).

### **Reply to paragraph 2 (b) of the list of issues**

18. In the “An Equal Finland” Action Plan, multiple discrimination has been taken into account in a cross-cutting manner in several activities that have aimed to raise awareness of the concept, manifestations and impacts of multiple marginalization.

19. In 2019, the Ministry of Justice carried out a Fundamental Rights Barometer. It provides more information on the experiences of persons with disabilities on the realisation of different fundamental rights.

20. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman of Åland has taken a number of actions on the subject: studies, recommendations, statements, seminars, panel discussions, counselling, dialogue meetings and round table discussions.

**Reply to paragraph 2 (c) of the list of issues**

21. The section on reasonable accommodation has been specified in the revised Non-Discrimination Act. Reasonable accommodations now also apply to the *content* of the authority's service, in particular the way in which the *service is implemented*. Now when assessing reasonable accommodation, the needs of persons with disabilities need to be taken as the *primary starting point*.

**Reply to paragraph 2 (d) of the list of issues**

22. For statistics of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman for discrimination contacts, see Annex 1, Table 1.

23. In Åland, since there have been only few claims of discrimination, their details are not reported separately. Slightly less than a fifth of the slightly over 400 counselling cases have concerned disability issues, 51% males, 36% females and 13% other genders. The compilation of related statistics is being developed.

**Reply to paragraph 2 (e) of the list of issues**

24. No data available.

**Reply to paragraph 3 (a) of the list of issues**

25. The previous Government's Action Plan for Gender Equality relied on an intersectional approach where an individual's status in society is considered to be influenced simultaneously by multiple factors, such as disability. Women and girls with disabilities are mentioned especially in the context of working life, violence against women and development cooperation.

26. The Equality Agenda of Åland for 2019–2030, the Strategy of Åland for zero tolerance of violence in close relationships for 2020–2030, and the Accessibility Action Plan for Åland for 2022–2025 apply to persons with disabilities, women and girls. Gender equality and non-discrimination are fundamental to all activities and policy formulation.

**Reply to paragraph 3 (b) of the list of issues**

27. In the "An Equal Finland" Action Plan, multiple discrimination has been taken into account in a cross-cutting manner. Several projects targeting Roma women are ongoing and Roma women participate yearly in international meetings. Roma women are represented in the national Advisory Board on Romani Affairs and in the regional advisory boards. See also Q3a.

**Reply to paragraph 4 (a) of the list of issues**

28. First National Child Strategy was completed in 2021. One of the objectives include safeguarding the position of vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, and better identifying their needs. To ensure effective implementation of the strategy, a Child Strategy Unit was established in 2023 in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to coordinate child-focused policies.

29. One of the commitments under Open Government Action Plan 2023–2027 is creating better opportunities for young people on trust and participation, and strengthening the participation of children and young people. The implementation of the commitment will also be assessed from the perspective of children and young persons with disabilities.

30. The Government of Åland has appointed a Minister for the Rights of the Child. During its current term, the Government intends to prepare a comprehensive strategy for

implementing the rights of the child, including such issues as action for the benefit of children with disabilities.

### **Reply to paragraph 4 (b) of the list of issues**

31. One of the aims of the Child Strategy is to create permanent models for strengthening the participation and consultation of children, and to increase the participation of different groups of children from different backgrounds during the government term 2023–2027. The new legislation on disability services has strengthened the status, inclusion and special services for children.

32. In April 2022, the Ministry of Justice launched a new online platform [www.digiraati.fi](http://www.digiraati.fi) (“digital council”) to provide a reliable, secure and accessible channel for consulting children and young people in matters affecting them and for dialogue between children, young people and decision-makers.

33. The Ministry of Justice has produced a set of training and awareness-making materials, which highlight accessible and equal participation and consultation.

34. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman of Åland has published a report on a study of experiences of accessibility and encounters among children with disabilities in Åland and persons who have custody of them, including recommendations.

### **Reply to paragraph 4 (c) of the list of issues**

35. According to the new Disability Services Act, persons with disabilities have the right to receive training for learning the skills needed in independent living, such as learning sign language and using alternative means of communication. Regarding customer process, according to the new Act, a person has the right to use sign language or different means of communication that support and replace speech in his or her own matter.

36. The first Advisory Board on Sign Language Affairs was appointed for the period 2021–2025 to monitor and assess the realization of the Sign Language Act (359/2015) and non-discrimination, inclusion and other fundamental rights of sign language users.

### **Reply to paragraph 5 (a) of the list of issues**

37. One of the main objectives of the National Action Plan of the UNCRPD is to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities. A National Action Plan is adopted for each government period.

38. In 2019–2023, the Åland gaming company Paf granted the disability organisation Funktionsrätt Åland funds for training projects.

### **Reply to paragraph 5 (b) of the list of issues**

39. The Convention is an integral part of the training on international human rights obligations provided e.g. by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, among others.

40. The National Police Board has issued a Guideline on the recognition of suspected hate crimes (including disabilities). Its purpose is to assist and guide the police to recognize hate crimes and to provide advice in their classification. The Border and Coast Guard Academy of the Finnish Border Guard offers basic training for future border guards and trains officers, which contains elements discussing the rights of persons with disabilities.

41. Regarding Åland, see Q5a.

**Reply to paragraph 5 (c) of the list of issues**

42. Several relevant projects have been conducted by the Ministry of Justice in recent years:

- Against Hate project 1 December 2017–30 November 2019;
- Facts against Hate 1 December 2019–30 November 2021;
- Capable project 1 April 2021–31 March 2023;
- Peer Action against Hate 1 January 2023–31 December 2024;
- Project Well planned 1 January 2023–31 December 2024.

43. Other relevant actions include the truth and reconciliation process for deaf and sign language users at the Ministry of Justice (2023).

44. In the partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act, the definition of harassment was broadened from individuals to also include a group of people. The obligation to promote equality and draw up an equality plan was extended to include providers and service providers of early childhood education and care.

**Reply to paragraph 5 (d) of the list of issues**

45. For the early detection of foetal chromosome and growth defects during pregnancy, the national screening programme includes 22 diseases by blood spot screening. The principle of organising prenatal screening tests is that all pregnant women are offered voluntary, free-of-charge, uniform and high-quality screening tests. Åland applies the national screening programme.

**Reply to paragraph 6 (a) of the list of issues**

46. The section on reasonable accommodation has been specified in the revised Non-Discrimination Act. See Q2c.

47. In March 2023, the Limited Liability Housing Companies Act (1599/2009) was amended to include provisions allowing the shareholders of a housing company to make changes that improve accessibility also in the common areas at their own cost. The changes should not cause costs or other harm to other shareholders.

48. Report on universal design in the built environment is being prepared.

49. Finland has not implemented the Annex III (accessibility requirements for the built environment) to the European Accessibility Act (EU Directive 2019/882). Parliament considered it urgently necessary to continue the preparatory work on the accessibility of the built environment in connection with the consideration of implementation.

50. Reform of provisions on the implementation of land use plans and maintenance of streets and other public areas in the Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) has started. The goal is to have the legislative proposal ready during the spring 2026.

51. Regional State Administrative Agency is the authority enforcing compliance with accessibility requirements and promoting accessibility information is one of their tasks.

52. The service and premises network project of the Ministry of Finance aims to gather in-person services into joint customer service points of public authorities. The joint customer service points and offices are designed in compliance with the Government Decree on the Accessibility of Buildings (241/2017) and with more detailed accessibility regulations and instructions. An accessibility survey is also drawn up. The project is developing a system of remote service and remote interpretation, which may also contribute to responding to the interpretation needs of persons with disabilities.

53. The Equality and Non-discrimination Plan for the Police has been published for the period 2021–2023. According to their personnel policy principles, the functional objectives

include physical and digital accessibility and geographical equality. A new plan will be published in the spring of 2024.

### **Reply to paragraph 6 (b) of the list of issues**

54. Regional State Administrative Agency is the authority enforcing compliance with accessibility requirements and they do monitoring every year. If necessary, the supervisory authority may order the service provider to bring the digital service into compliance with the accessibility requirements.

55. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Government Degree on Accessibility of Building is being carried out. The application of the decree to each individual case is decided by the municipal building supervision authority responsible for building guidance and supervision.

### **Reply to paragraph 6 (c) of the list of issues**

56. The need to adopt legislation to enhance accessibility in built environment, including accessible visual and auditory environment for the existing building stock and built environment has been identified in surveys and reports. There is no special funding allocated to guarantee the accessibility of buildings open to the public.

57. In the fall of 2023, Finland released a vision for an accessible transport system, which serves as a national target for enhancing the accessibility of the transport system and digital transport services.

58. The Government of Åland intends to propose new legislation on community planning and construction as well as new building regulations. Since 2019, it has been possible to apply for an accessibility subsidy. The Åland gaming company Paf grants funds for the accessibility project “Ett Åland för alla”, launched by the disability organisation Funktionsrätt Åland.

59. See also Q6a and b.

### **Reply to paragraph 6 (d) of the list of issues**

60. Regional State Administrative Agency is the authority enforcing compliance with accessibility requirements. Monitoring activities are done annually according to the Commissions implementing decision (EU) 2018/1524. The Agency also handles notifications, i.e. complaints and requests for information on accessibility shortcomings.

61. The Police Accessibility Statement (2022) requires that all public digital services of the police are accessible. An administrative order to this effect is valid for 1 June 2022 –31 May 2027.

### **Reply to paragraph 6 (e) of the list of issues**

62. To implement the Directive there is a new Act on Accessibility Requirements for Certain Products (102/2023). Amendments to other acts, such as the Act on the Provision of Digital Services (306/2019), the Act on Electronic Communication Services (917/2014) and the Act on Transport services (320/2017) were also made.

### **Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues**

63. Under the Constitution (731/1999), no one may, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently for example, on the basis of disability. According to the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients (785/1992), every person permanently resident in Finland has the right to health and medical care required by his or her state of health without discrimination.

64. The basis for initiating intensive care, life-sustaining care and resuscitation or the decision to refrain from it is the patient's individual assessment made by a physician. Factors to be taken into account include age, the patient's previous functional capacity, basic illnesses, the severity of an acute illness and the patient's own wishes. It is essential that the treatment is assessed to have effectiveness and that it provides a sufficient prognosis of the patient's recovery. If intensive care is not expected to benefit the patient, or if death is evident despite the treatment, intensive care is unfounded and abstained from. Disability as such is not a categorical criterion for not initiating these treatments. Persons with disabilities are assessed on an equal basis with others.

### **Reply to paragraph 8 (a) of the list of issues**

65. The Ministry of the Interior has published *Instructions for planning and carrying out evacuations: Mandatory evacuations in emergency conditions* in January 2024. The instructions point out that in planning one needs to take into account also different kind of groups of people. The authorities must allocate resources to groups of people who might not be able to evacuate independently (for example persons with disabilities).

66. The Ministry of the Interior has set up a project (11 March 2024–31 December 2025) to renew guidance material related to independent preparedness. The project will be implemented in broad-based cooperation with various stakeholders, including persons with disabilities and other special groups.

### **Reply to paragraph 8 (b) of the list of issues**

67. The Emergency Powers Act (1552/2011) includes, among other things, the obligation for authorities to prepare for emergency situations, e.g., through the making of a preparedness plan. Taking the whole population, including persons with disabilities, into account falls within the scope of this obligation.

### **Reply to paragraph 8 (c) of the list of issues**

68. See Q8b.

### **Reply to paragraph 8 (d) of the list of issues**

69. The Act on Emergency Response Centre operations (692/2010) was amended in 2023. Amendments implemented the accessibility requirements of Directive (EU) No. 2019/882. The Emergency Response Centre Agency must respond to calls to the general emergency number made by using real-time speech or text, and may also respond to calls made using other possible means of interaction between the notifier and the Agency. The Agency shall respond to the general emergency number using the same means of communication as the number contacted. The obligation to register the users of emergency SMS messages will be removed.

70. In January 2024, the Ministry of the Interior published "Instructions for planning and carrying out evacuations: Mandatory evacuations in emergency conditions (2024:2)". The guidelines take into account, for example, vulnerable groups and sites that particularly require resilience to carry out evacuations.

### **Reply to paragraph 8 (e) of the list of issues**

71. Taking persons with disabilities into account in incidents has been one of the priorities that has received national attention. In 2023–2024, the Institute for Health and Welfare conducted a study on the mortality of persons with disabilities in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.



### **Reply to paragraph 8 (f) of the list of issues**

72. The Ministry of the Environment consulted several local Councils of Persons with Disabilities in 2021 in relation to the preparation of the Mid-Term Climate Plan. The Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of the Forestry and Agriculture consulted these Councils in 2022 in relation to the preparation of the National Adaptation Plan. These consultations have been part of the impact assessments of the plans.

The disability organisation Funktionsrätt Åland has taken an active part in the work on the development and sustainability agenda for Åland.

### **Reply to paragraph 9 (a) of the list of issues**

73. The Ministry of Justice has appointed a working group on the updating of guardianship legislation for the period 2023–2024. The task of the working group is, in particular, to review the provisions on guardianship supervision and continuing power of attorney.

### **Reply to paragraph 9 (b) of the list of issues**

74. The Ministry of Justice's Public Guardians Working Group published a handbook containing recommendations for public guardians in 2020. It contains guidelines on cooperation between the guardian and the client and on taking the client's views into account, also on the cooperation in the management of property.

75. On 20 November 2023, Parliament adopted the Act on the Legal Service Agency (1133/2023), which stipulates that the organisation of public guardianship services will be transferred to a new agency starting on 1 January 2025. Uniform practices respecting the client's right to self-determination are expected to improve further.

### **Reply to paragraph 9 (c) of the list of issues**

76. Up-to-date statistics are available on the Digital and Population Data Services Agency's website at <https://dvv.fi/mare>. The situation on 31 December 2023 was as follows:

- 19 931 continuing powers of attorney (confirmed to be in force);
- 51 761 adults under guardianship (524 persons' legal capacity partially restricted and 410 persons declared to lack legal capacity).

### **Reply to paragraph 10 (a) of the list of issues**

77. For information about the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal and the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, see Q2a.

78. The party may appeal to the Administrative Court against a decision made by the Tribunal, and further to the Supreme Administrative Court if it grants leave to appeal.

79. A party may use an attorney or counsel in his/her matter. A court may also, *ex officio*, in pending judicial proceedings, appoint a guardian for a party who is unable to oversee his/her interests. If the party has no legal capacity, the court may appoint for that person who is to be heard, a support person.

80. A court must ensure interpretation, for example when a person is being heard orally and cannot be understood without interpretation.

81. In the criminal process, the authorities assess whether the victim needs protection during the process. The authorities have been instructed to pay special attention to the rights of a person with a disability and to approach the aspects related to the victim's disability with special delicacy.

82. Victims must be provided with interpretation services during the pre-trial investigation if they use sign language or have a sensory or speech disability.

83. Code of Judicial Procedure provides for situations when a party to be heard for evidentiary purposes may be heard via video link.

84. Victim Support Finland (RIKU) offers support and advice to victims with disabilities during the criminal process. The police can forward the personal data of the victim to RIKU or another assistance provider with the victim's consent.

85. The Ministry of Justice has published informational material for victims of crime, which is available also in easy Finnish and easy Swedish and sign language. Information on rights of a crime victim is also available in easy Finnish and easy Swedish.

86. Physical accessibility has been taken into account in the court houses in many ways.

### **Reply to paragraph 10 (b) of the list of issues**

87. Appeals concerning special care services and involuntary special care services for persons with intellectual disabilities are categorized urgent in administrative courts.

88. The Act on the Status and Rights of Social Welfare Clients (812/2000) contains general provisions on the rights of clients in social welfare, including available legal remedies. More specific provisions on the right to appeal are included in the legislation concerning disability and welfare services.

89. See also Q22.

### **Reply to paragraph 10 (c) of the list of issues**

90. Specifically such training has not been given to judges or prosecutors, but judges and court employees have the opportunity to participate in international trainings.

91. Trainings on the Convention are arranged for public legal aid attorneys at legal aid offices. In 2024, two training events will be organised under the title "Persons with disabilities as clients of legal aid".

### **Reply to paragraph 11 (a) of the list of issues**

92. According to Mental Health Act (1116/1990), admitting a person to treatment in a psychiatric hospital against his or her will is used as a last resort and it requires that the person is diagnosed as mentally ill, that the person needs treatment for a mental illness which, if not treated, would become considerably worse or severely endanger the person's health or safety or the health or safety of others, and that all other mental health services are inapplicable or inadequate.

93. According to the Act on Special Care for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (519/1977), involuntary special care is used as a last resort if the person is unable to make decisions on their treatment and care or to understand the consequences of their behaviour and is likely to seriously endanger their health or safety or the health or safety of other persons.

94. The new Disability Services Act strengthens the client's participation in the client process and emphasizes the client's right to self-determination.

### **Reply to paragraph 11 (b) of the list of issues**

95. Cells for persons with reduced physical abilities, in which persons with disabilities are always placed, are available in most prisons. The principle is that persons with disabilities should be able to move around in other premises, activities and outdoor activities. However, in practice, it may be challenging to access all prison activities in older prison buildings.

96. Accessibility is automatically taken into account in new prisons in accordance with general building legislation. The implementation of these principles is monitored for example with prison inspections and reacting directly to feedback from the prison units. The services are also tailored to suit prisoners with reduced mobility.

97. A prisoner can apply for permission to use ICT services either from joint use workstations or from personal cell terminals and the staff offers guidance and support, considering the prisoners' needs.

### **Reply to paragraph 11 (c) of the list of issues**

98. Finland supports promoting autonomy in mental health care and developing good practices to promote voluntary measures in mental health services. Any involuntary measures should only be used as a last resort. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has an ongoing legislative project where the aim is to strengthen patient's self-determination.

### **Reply to paragraph 12 (a) of the list of issues**

99. According to the Constitution, everyone has the right to life, personal liberty, integrity and security. No one shall be sentenced to death, tortured or otherwise treated in a manner violating human dignity.

100. According to Imprisonment Act (767/2005), prisoners shall be treated with justice and respect for their human dignity. The Act contains a list of prohibitions of discrimination, including disability.

101. A project to reform the Imprisonment Act is currently under way. The accessibility issues will also be discussed in this context.

### **Reply to paragraph 12 (b) of the list of issues**

102. Amendments have been made to the Mental Health Act and to the Administrative Court Act (430/1999) with respect to provisions on the judicial review of the decisions on forcible administration of medication. From 1 April 2024, an administrative decision is required if the patient objects to the medication, if the patient's will cannot be clarified or if the patient so requests. A patient will have the right to appeal against the decision.

103. Several amendments and improvements have been made to the Act on Special Care of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, most recently on the measures to support the ability to cope independently and to support the self-determination in special care.

104. The Government will reform the national child welfare legislation to ensure the child's best interests, wellbeing and safety by defining the preconditions for the use of restrictive measures in child welfare services more clearly.

### **Reply to paragraph 12 (c) of the list of issues**

105. The Act on the Status and Rights of Patient contains provisions on the patient's right to self-determination and the right to information, including in a way to ensure that he/she understands it.

### **Reply to paragraph 13 (a) of the list of issues**

106. The Non-Violent Childhoods Action Plan was adopted in 2019. The National Child Strategy plays its own part in preventing violence against children. The contents also take into account children and young people in a particularly vulnerable position, such as children and young persons with disabilities and reduced functional capacity.

107. The first national Action Plan for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention included measures for improving the situation of persons with disabilities. “Help is available for persons with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence” (2021) brochure has been disseminated at numerous events for social and health care professionals. A campaign on persons with disabilities in shelters took place in November 2020.

108. A research project on the frequency of domestic violence among persons with disabilities was carried out in 2021–2022 under the Institute for Health and Welfare.

109. Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence organised a seminar on the topic of violence and persons with disabilities in 2023.

110. Åland’s new Disability Policy Action Plan for 2022–2025 includes measures for increasing knowledge of gender equality and of violence against persons with disabilities as well as to provide easy-to-read information about where victims of violence can turn to.

### **Reply to paragraph 13 (b) of the list of issues**

111. In principle, the complaint mechanisms are the same for anyone who have been subject to violence and abuse. However, accessibility has been improved for persons with disabilities.

112. According to the Criminal Procedure Act (689/1997), an adequately qualified support person may be appointed for the injured party, if certain conditions are met.

113. The Parliamentary Ombudsman protects, promotes and monitors CRPD implementation within the limits of his/her specific competence.

114. The Act on the Provision of Digital Services obliges the public sector and some private and third sector organisations to comply with accessibility requirements in their digital services.

115. Regarding Åland, see Q13a.

### **Reply to paragraph 13 (c) of the list of issues**

116. The Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women for 2020–2023 was a general action plan emphasising the prevention of violence, and was not specifically aimed at certain groups of victims. However, many of the measures were such that persons, and in particular women, with disabilities were taken into account. Disability organisations were consulted during the preparation of the action plan.

117. Regarding Åland, see Q13a.

### **Reply to paragraph 13 (d) of the list of issues**

118. See Q5c.

### **Reply to paragraph 13 (e) of the list of issues**

119. The Police University College publishes an annual report on hate crimes disaggregated per hate motive and type of crime.

120. In 2022, 60 principal crimes out of 1245 were motivated by the victim’s disability. This corresponds to 4,3 % of all hate crimes. There was a decrease of 12 % from the previous 2021 numbers. Most of the cases were defamations (47%). Next common crimes were assault crimes (25 %), threats (8%), trespassing (8 %) and damages (8 %).

121. See further statistics from Annex 2.

### **Reply to paragraph 14 (a) of the list of issues**

122. New Disability Services Act enters into force in 2025. It contains provisions on the right to receive supported decision-making services.

123. Finland passed some changes to the Act on the Termination of Pregnancy (239/1970) in 2022. When passing the legislation Parliament also passed a resolution calling for the Government immediately to begin drafting legislation on the overall reform of abortion legislation in a way that it further strengthens the pregnant person's right to self-determination. The legislation on abortion, or sterilization, is not currently under review.

### **Reply to paragraph 14 (b) of the list of issues**

124. According to the Healthcare Act (1326/2010) one of the duties of the well-being services counties is to provide their residents with family planning advice and other services to promote sexual and reproductive health.

### **Reply to paragraph 15 (a) of the list of issues**

125. The Aliens Act (301/2004) outdates the human rights model of disability, but the rights of persons with disabilities are taken into account. Authorities must provide interpretation or translation if the alien is not competent in Finnish or Swedish language, or if he/she, because of his/her disability or illness, cannot be understood in a matter that is processed.

126. On the basis of section 52, aliens residing in Finland are issued with a continuous residence permit if refusing a residence permit would be manifestly unreasonable with regard to their health, ties to Finland, or other compassionate grounds, particularly in consideration of the circumstances they would face in their home country or due to their vulnerable position. The application of section 52, made on a case-by-case basis, is based on the overall consideration of a case, which can include a person's disability.

127. The Aliens Act includes several sections that take into consideration family members and other relatives who are completely dependent on those in Finland. A disability can be seen as a factor that causes full dependence.

### **Reply to paragraph 15 (b) of the list of issues**

128. The dwelling is usually in the possession of the person with disabilities. The management is based on either ownership or tenancy. Therefore, forced relocations cannot be made; the decision of the authorities is always preceded by an assessment of service needs made together with the client and a plan for the implementation of the services.

### **Reply to paragraph 15 (c) of the list of issues**

129. If a refugee or migrant worker has a municipality of residence, he/she has the right to all public healthcare and social welfare services on the same grounds as other persons permanently resident in Finland or Finnish citizens. The municipal authorities are responsible for promoting integration and to direct all persons arriving as quota refugees to wellbeing services counties.

130. The reception center's health and social services are available to persons with disabilities easily and at a very low threshold. Services are practically available on a continuous basis, as nurses, social workers and social counselors work at the reception center and it is possible to utilize external services.

131. All new clients receive a free initial health check-up made by a nurse at the reception center within two weeks of registration. The specific needs of individuals are taken into account in accommodation, the accessibility of the apartment, the environment, the

availability of services, and the opportunity for relatives to participate in the care of the person. Typically, a doctor's appointment is also arranged at the initial stage.

132. The service need assessment is supplemented with a customer plan, unless it is obviously unnecessary or the customer's services and support activities are recorded in another plan. If necessary, a place can be arranged for the person in a care unit outside the reception center with its related services. The client's situation is followed if placed in a care unit.

### **Reply to paragraph 15 (d) of the list of issues**

133. The language proficiency requirement has been deviated from based on these grounds, either completely or partially, for example in the area of oral language proficiency. Deviations from the language skills are always considered on an individual basis and the applicant's situation as a whole is assessed. When applying for a deviation based on health, or a sensory or speech disability, a recent doctor's certificate needs to be attached to the application, which stipulates how the illness or disability permanently prevents language learning.

### **Reply to paragraph 16 (a) of the list of issues**

134. The Government provides grants to build various housing options for persons with disabilities needing housing. Housing constructed by the government support includes own dwelling for each person with disabilities also in the group housing alternative. Also dwellings for couples are available.

135. In 2023, Ministry of the Environment carried out a study of housing situation of persons with intellectual disabilities. It contains recommendations for the wellbeing services counties and the Government on how to improve housing conditions to provide more independent and individual living in communities for persons with disabilities.

136. Discontinuing institutional housing has been a long-term disability policy objective. Under section 19 of the new Disability Services Act, support for the housing of children with disabilities outside their homes can no longer be organized as institutional housing.

### **Reply to paragraph 16 (b) of the list of issues**

137. The new Disability Services Act includes a provision for special support for inclusion.

138. According to the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014), for tasks related to the implementation of social welfare, the wellbeing services county must have at its disposal a sufficient number of social welfare professionals and other personnel participating in customer work.

139. To ensure the adequate budget the current Government has allocated additional funding for the implementation of the new Disability Services Act.

140. The new Disability Services Act enhances the coordination of disability services by legislating disability services within one act.

141. The municipal federation of Åland for social services has organised apprenticeship and internal training.

### **Reply to paragraph 16 (c) of the list of issues**

142. Efforts have been made to arrange housing for persons with disabilities in increasingly individualized ways. The premise of the new Disability Services Act's provision on support for housing is to respond to individual needs. The new Act also includes provisions about personal assistance (see Q1c).

143. Regarding Åland, see Q1c.

**Reply to paragraph 16 (d) of the list of issues**

144. The wellbeing services counties are granted an overall finance for organizing health and social services. Funding is not earmarked for example for personal assistance. It is estimated that the costs of personal assistance in 2022 were around 237–250 Meuros.

145. Regarding Åland, see annex 1, table 2.

**Reply to paragraph 16 (e) of the list of issues**

146. See Q16a and Q6c.

**Reply to paragraph 16 (f) of the list of issues**

147. See Q1c concerning the eligibility criteria for personal assistance.

**Reply to paragraph 16 (g) of the list of issues**

148. According to the new Disability Services Act, the purpose of support for housing for a child with disabilities is to ensure that the child can live at home with their own family, for example by providing services regardless of the time of day. Support for housing for a child with disabilities can be organized as a disability service outside the home only if the child cannot live at home with his/her own family despite the individual assistance and support. It cannot be arranged as institutional housing but only as family care or in a group home with a maximum of seven children.

**Reply to paragraph 17 (a) of the list of issues**

149. Assistive device services are organized through wellbeing services counties. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health updated its guidelines on the criteria for the provision of assistive devices in 2023.

**Reply to paragraph 17 (b) of the list of issues**

150. The Social Welfare Act and the Disability Services Act ensure personalized transport services in cases when an individual is not able to use public transport. The reform of taxi legislation increased flexibility but in certain areas, the availability of taxi services has diminished due to lesser demand.

**Reply to paragraph 17 (c) of the list of issues**

151. According to the new Disability Services Act, persons with disabilities may also have a travel budget instead of a fixed amount of taxi rides per month.

**Reply to paragraph 17 (d) of the list of issues**

152. The new Disability Services Act includes provisions under which support for the mobility of persons with disabilities can also be implemented by providing them with a car or other suitable means of transport or by granting financial support for that purpose. Persons with disabilities are compensated for necessary and reasonable alterations necessitated by functional limitations that are made to a standard means of transport.

**Reply to paragraph 18 (a) of the list of issues**

153. According to the Act on Yleisradio Oy (Finnish Broadcasting Company) (1380/1993), the Finnish Broadcasting Company is responsible for the provision of comprehensive television and radio programming with the related additional and extra services for all citizens under equal conditions. The public service programming must, among other things, produce services in sign languages and provide programming for minority and special groups.

**Reply to paragraph 18 (b) of the list of issues**

154. The first Advisory Board on Sign Language Affairs has been appointed for the period 2021–2025, which task is to monitor and assess the realisation of the Sign Language Act.

155. The new Disability Services Act includes provisions on the linguistic rights of customers of disability services. Such rights have also been highlighted in the legislation concerning the recent social and health care reform and will be taken into consideration in the steering of the reform's implementation.

**Reply to paragraph 18 (c) of the list of issues**

156. Kela acquires interpretation services through a competitive bidding process governed by the Act on Public Procurement and Concession Contracts (1397/2016). Kela uses weighted scoring for bid evaluation, weighting quality at 60% and price at 40%.

157. Interpretation services for persons with disabilities are produced by 782 interpreters. In acquiring the service, special attention is paid to its availability around the country. For this purpose, Finland is divided into six procurement areas.

158. Due to changes in the service provider pool during transition to a new contract period, individual clients may be assigned a new interpreter. In such cases, Kela can set up an orientation meeting between the client and the new interpreter. Because Kela purchases more than 90% of all interpretation services, most interpreters are retained at changeover to a new contract period.

**Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues**

159. Respect for privacy is one of the key principles of social welfare listed in section 30 of the Social Welfare Act. In addition, according to the new Disability Services Act, services concerning support for housing must be implemented in such a way that the right to privacy of persons with disabilities is realized.

160. The Act on the Processing of Client Data in Healthcare and Social Welfare (703/2023) lays down the provisions on the processing of client data in healthcare and social welfare.

**Reply to paragraph 20 (a) of the list of issues**

161. Provisions on decisions on child custody are laid down in the Act on Child Custody and Right of Access (361/1983). A revision of the Act entered into force in December 2019. A matter concerning child custody and right of access shall, first and foremost, be decided in accordance with the best interests of the child.

162. When deciding child's custody, special attention shall be paid also to the parents' ability to give priority to the child's needs over the conflicts between the parents. When deciding on the child's residence and right of access, special attention shall be paid to the child's age and stage of development, character and inclinations, possible special needs, the distance between the parents' places of residence, and the parents' ability to bear joint responsibility for matters concerning the child and to protect the child from all forms of violence.



### **Reply to paragraph 20 (b) of the list of issues**

163. Persons with disabilities receive support related to parenting and family planning on the basis of general legislation as well as other persons. If necessary, the parenthood of persons with disabilities is supported by services provided at home, and by services for persons with disabilities in accordance with special legislation, such as personal assistance or support for mobility.

164. The new Disability Services Act emphasizes the possibility of children with disabilities to live in their childhood home by providing the necessary services regardless of the time of day. According to the new Act, the family members of a person with disabilities must be provided, if necessary, with sign language teaching and guidance on the use of alternative means of communication as well as training to support changes in the person's life. Other coaching may also be arranged for the families when this is necessary for the realization of the objectives of coaching for persons with disabilities.

165. In Åland, the municipal federation for social services provides statutory support.

### **Reply to paragraph 21 (a) of the list of issues**

166. In 2020–2022 the working group under the 'Right to Learn' programme prepared proposals for measures to promote child support, support for learning and school attendance and inclusion in early childhood education and care (ECEC), pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. The early childhood education and care legislation has been amended, and the financing systems made more effective in ECEC and in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. The Ministry of Education and Culture has allocated discretionary government grants to measures promoting educational equality and non-discrimination.

167. Legislation on support for learning is also under development in upper secondary education. The legislative amendments will enter into force in 2025.

168. The accessibility plan for higher education and higher education institutions was published in 2021. In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Culture instructed higher education institutions to draw up their own accessibility plans. Most of the plans include objectives and measures to improve access to higher education for under-represented groups. In the future, the achievement of the objectives of accessibility plans will be monitored as part of the steering process.

### **Reply to paragraph 21 (b) of the list of issues**

169. The accessibility of the physical environment in basic education is an essential part of the pupil's right to a safe learning environment. According to the Basic Education Act (628/1998), the education provider must adopt the regulations or issue other applicable regulations that promote the internal order of the school, the unhindered running of studies and the safety and comfort of the school community.

170. Higher education institutions are autonomous actors and they are responsible for the accessibility of their premises, information and communications. Higher education institutions have drawn up their own accessibility plans based on instructions issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

### **Reply to paragraph 21 (c) of the list of issues**

171. The pupils have the right to receive sufficient support for learning and school attendance as soon as the need for support arises. Pupils with disabilities and other pupils in need of special support also have the right to receive, free of charge, interpretation and assistant services required for participating in teaching, other teaching services and special aids.

172. Celia is a national library for accessible literature and publishing that serves school pupils and students with print disabilities. Celia offers books free of charge.

173. In Åland, a roadmap for extra resource schools will be prepared during the current term of the Government of Åland.

### **Reply to paragraph 21 (d) of the list of issues**

174. Higher education institutions are responsible for teacher education and have autonomy regarding the content of degrees and curricula.

175. The Teacher Education Forum has developed teacher education since 2016 through broad collaboration. The Teacher Education Development Programme of the Forum for 2022–2026 aims to meet the new needs of teacher education in the context of the 2020s.

176. The teachers' continuous learning is the responsibility of the education providers. Finnish National Agency for Education has provided grants every year for the staff training to support teachers' continuous learning. These grants were targeted 2020–2023 to themes related to promotion of equality and equality in education, the promotion of inclusion, well-being and safety, as well as the prevention of bullying and support for learning, among other things.

177. The Agency has a website for the prevention of bullying, violence, harassment and discrimination. It contains information, instructions and tools for identifying, preventing and intervening in such acts and situations in early childhood education and care, schools and educational institutions.

### **Reply to paragraph 21 (e) of the list of issues**

178. The purpose of the guidance system for basic education is to ensure equality and quality in education and to create good conditions for the growth, development and learning of all pupils. The provisions of the Basic Education Act on support for learning and school attendance are currently being reformed. Learning support must be available individually and in accordance with the pupil's needs. The revised legislation is scheduled to enter into force on 1 August 2025.

179. See Q21b.

### **Reply to paragraph 21 (f) of the list of issues**

180. According to the legislation on vocational education and training, an illness or disability must not be an obstacle to admission to education and training. Efforts have been made to develop guidance counselling and support so that everyone could apply for the field they are interested in.

181. The number of places in preparatory education for the most severely disabled has also been increased in vocational education and training, as the reform of compulsory education in 2020 raised compulsory education age to 18 years and access to free vocational education, along with upper secondary education.

### **Reply to paragraph 21 (g) of the list of issues**

182. No one is classified by the type of disability in statistics of special education. Data is available for pupils in extended compulsory education, destined mainly to those with the most severe disabilities, and is the only most accurate number. The total number of pupils in extended compulsory education during autumn 2023 was 11,670 that is 1.9% of all pupils.

### **Reply to paragraph 22 (a) of the list of issues**

183. Every person permanently resident in Finland has the right, without discrimination, to healthcare and medical treatment required by his or her state of health within the limits of the resources available to healthcare at any given time. Persons with disabilities are covered in the same public health care system as all other persons residing permanently in Finland.

### **Reply to paragraph 22 (b) of the list of issues**

184. Children and young persons, including with disabilities, are given age and development appropriate sexual education as part of their basic education in school (biology, health classes) and in other public services (such as student healthcare services).

185. The Action Plan for the Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014–2020 contains national policies and recommendations for the promotion of sexual health. The Action Plan discusses what needs to be taken into account when offering sexual education to special groups, including to persons with disabilities.

186. In Åland, this is done through family-planning clinics.

### **Reply to paragraph 22 (c) of the list of issues**

187. The principle is that public services are designed to be suitable for everyone and that the environment is accessible. When assistance from public services is not sufficient, special services, such as housing, assistive devices, transport and interpretation services will be organized. A personal service plan will be drawn up for persons with disabilities to determine the services and support measures they need.

188. In Åland, measures are taken under the accessibility action plans for 2017–2020 and 2022–2025, and for example the accessibility plan for the Health Care and Medical Care Services in Åland.

### **Reply to paragraph 22 (d) of the list of issues**

189. The Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services (612/2021) provides that the wellbeing services counties are responsible for ensuring the continuing education and continuous professional development of personnel. The wellbeing services county shall monitor the professional development of its healthcare and social welfare personnel, including those employed by the private service provider from which the wellbeing services county purchases services, and ensure that the personnel participate sufficiently in continuing education in their own field. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is preparing a decree aimed at strengthening systematic planning and monitoring in the provision of continuing education.

190. Regarding Åland, see Q5a.

### **Reply to paragraph 22 (e) of the list of issues**

191. Persons with disabilities have the same rights for the community mental health services as other residents.

192. The Government aims to strengthen and develop primary healthcare mental health services for children and young people and is drafting legislation that would guarantee quick access to psychosocial treatments for children and young people.

193. In Åland, low-threshold mental health service was opened for adults in autumn 2020 and for children and young people in autumn 2023. A project to improve children's and young people's health and well-being is going on in 2022–2026, with EUR 800 000 allocated for the project.

**Reply to paragraph 23 (a) of the list of issues**

194. The wellbeing services counties have improved the rehabilitation pathways of different client groups and increased low-threshold services. Rehabilitation, including assistive device services, has improved the availability and accessibility of services. A legislative amendment concerning new checkpoints for sickness allowance periods and changes to partial sickness allowance and rehabilitation allowance has been prepared on a tripartite basis. The rehabilitation reform will continue during this governmental period.

195. In Åland, medicinal rehabilitation is being developed; a post of rehabilitation coordinator was established recently, plans are being made to establish a centre for welfare technology (incl. aids) and to develop counselling during the current term of the Government of Åland.

**Reply to paragraph 23 (b) of the list of issues**

196. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published a National Criteria for Referring People to Medical Rehabilitation 2022 Guide for Healthcare and Social Welfare Professionals and Those Working in Rehabilitation Services. The publication contains separate sections on the special characteristics of the rehabilitation of different age groups. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs cooperates with the Ministry of Education and Culture on how the rehabilitation of children and young people can be supported at different stages of teaching.

197. Regarding Åland, see Q23a.

**Reply to paragraph 23 (c) of the list of issues**

198. Legislation requires an individual plan for rehabilitation in all areas of rehabilitation (health, employment, education and social services). Legislation also requires cooperation in organizing rehabilitation, taking into account the individual needs of the person and the environment.

199. Regarding Åland, see Q23a.

**Reply to paragraph 23 (d) of the list of issues**

200. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published a National Criteria for Referring People to Medical Rehabilitation 2022 Guide for Healthcare and Social Welfare Professionals and Those Working in Rehabilitation Services. These criteria highlight timely access to rehabilitation and assistive device services that is also underlined in the National Mental Health Strategy and Program for Suicide Prevention 2020–2030 and Quality recommendation to guarantee a good quality of life and improved services for older persons 2020–2023 (will be updated this spring).

201. Regarding Åland, see Q23a.

**Reply to paragraph 24 (a) of the list of issues**

202. According to the revised Non-Discrimination Act, employers must assess the equality situation with regard to recruitment and the workplace equality plan must include a report on the conclusions of the equality assessment.

203. The Åland labour market and study service authority provides support for employment in various forms. The Government of Åland has a project on employment for all (“Sysselsättning för alla”).

204. See also Q2a.

### **Reply to paragraph 24 (b) of the list of issues**

205. The preparation of the linear model was suspended during the previous government term due to the dissenting views of labor market organizations. The current Government Program states that a linear model for partial disability and full disability pension that is cost-effective for general government finances will be introduced.

### **Reply to paragraph 24 (c) of the list of issues**

206. According to the Act on Special Care for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (519/1977), an effort must be made to organize job coaching, work activities and other activities that inspire persons in need of special care. The Social Welfare Act lays down provisions on measures to promote employment for a person who, due to a disability, illness or other similar reason, has special long-term difficulties in coping with normal life functions and who, in addition to labor administration services, needs support measures to find employment in the open labor market. According to the final evaluation of the work ability program carried out in 2019-2023, the quality-based job coaching applied in the program was considered a functional and necessary service in supporting the employment of clients with partial work ability and long-term unemployment. The expansion and establishment of the model will be promoted.

207. Työkanava Ltd is a special assignment company owned by the State. The Act on Työkanava (242/2022) entered into force on 1 July 2022. Company's task is to employ persons with impaired capacity to work and who are in the most difficult labor market position. The company employs them directly in an employment relationship and sells their work input to its customers.

208. Pay subsidy may be granted to employ unemployed persons who have gaps in their professional skills or have a permanent disability or illness, or one of a permanent nature that reduces their opportunities to obtain a suitable job, or persons aged 60 or over who are long-term unemployed.

209. A job coach will guide and support personally in searching for a job and finding employment. Job applicant can participate in job coaching once she/he have registered as a job seeker with the TE Services and discussed about participation with an expert of a TE Office or a local government pilot.

210. See also Q24a.

### **Reply to paragraph 24 (d) of the list of issues**

211. Employers can apply for a subsidy for arranging working conditions when a person's disability or illness affects employment or keeping a job. Employer may be eligible for a subsidy for arranging working conditions if the disability or illness of the person to be hired or a person already in employment requires new tools or furniture, alteration work at the workplace or assistance from another employee to carry out work tasks.

### **Reply to paragraph 24 (e) of the list of issues**

212. The reform of digital public employment and business services improves encounters between employees and workplaces, digitizes employment services, and creates a service based on the partnership, close interaction, and the utilization of information of different actors. Accessibility has been taken into account in a broad sense when developing the service.

**Reply to paragraph 24 (f) of the list of issues**

213. Statistics Finland has collected statistical data on the employment of persons with disabilities as a part of Labor Force Survey in 2022. The data is collected every other year.

214. Regarding Åland, see Q28b.

**Reply to paragraph 25 (a) of the list of issues**

215. The parliamentary Social Security Committee's (2020–2027) task is to make proposals and initiatives on how to reform social security and examine the benefits and services covering disability and capacity for work. Disability organizations are represented in the Committee to ensure their participation.

216. The current Government Program includes several changes to social security legislation and freezes on index adjustments. Social assistance, disability benefits, front-veterans' supplements, pensions and child maintenance allowances are exempt from the indexation freeze. Disability organizations have been consulted during the preparation of the amendments. No changes have been made to old-age and disability pensions or to disability benefits.

217. Regarding Åland see Q1e.

**Reply to paragraph 25 (b) of the list of issues**

218. The guarantee pension as a minimum pension is EUR 976.59 per month in 2024. Pension application can also be made electronically. In 2022, the average processing time for disability pension applications was 39 days. The disability allowance for persons under 16 years and the disability allowance for persons aged 16 years or over are payable at three different rates: The disability allowance at the basic rate is EUR 108.89 per month, at the middle rate is EUR 254.10 per month and at the highest rate is EUR 492.71 per month in 2024. The care allowance for pensioners is also payable at three different rates: the care allowance at the basic rate is EUR 83.34 per month, at the middle rate is EUR 181.56 per month and at the highest rate is EUR 383.92 per month in 2024. The disability allowances can be applied online. The average processing time for disability allowances is currently 21 days.

**Reply to paragraph 25 (c) of the list of issues**

219. Transfer of responsibility of the organization of health, social and rescue services from municipalities to wellbeing services counties strengthens the organization of services for persons with disabilities. At the same time the needs of the services for persons with disabilities has come more visible on national level.

**Reply to paragraph 25 (d) of the list of issues**

220. See Annex 1, Table 3.

**Reply to paragraph 26 (a) of the list of issues**

221. According to section 14 of the Constitution, the Government has a duty to enhance civic participation and to offer adequate participation opportunities to people. According to the election instructions, all polling stations should be accessible. The Parliamentary Ombudsman monitors the accessibility of polling stations.

222. There are extensive possibilities to vote in institutions and to vote at home and automatic voter registration. The Ministry of Justice provides information on elections in

plain language, in more than 20 languages and in braille and sign language. The Ministry of Justice collaborates with NGOs in the field to spread information to persons with disabilities.

223. In Åland, there is the Election Act (2019:45) of Åland, the accessibility of electoral material is checked together with disability organisations, information leaflets on elections are published in plain Swedish, and the election training can be attended on the spot or via Teams or watched in a digital video afterwards.

### **Reply to paragraph 26 (b) of the list of issues**

224. According to the Government Programme, the Government will ensure the accessibility of polling stations and council meeting rooms through legislation and enhanced guidance and training of local authorities. People entitled to transport services will be granted the right to transportation to a polling station to vote, and people holding political positions of trust and standing as candidates in elections will be granted the right to make a certain number of trips without this affecting their right to make other trips. The Government will improve the provision of information on the possibility for at-home voting. The Government has appointed a working group to prepare these issues in December 2023.

225. The Government of Åland and the disability organisation Funktionsrätt Åland have jointly arranged election training and debates before general elections.

### **Reply to paragraph 26 (c) of the list of issues**

226. No statistics are available.

### **Reply to paragraph 27 (a) of the list of issues**

227. The Ministry of Education and Culture grants subsidies for the improvement of cultural sites. Many subsidies are granted in order to rebuild the facilities more accessible for persons with disabilities.

228. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Sports Council have updated the guideline document for the construction of sports facilities, in which accessibility is emphasised. The Ministry of Education and Culture funds studies and guidelines on accessible solutions for the construction of sports facilities. Applications for government grants for projects for establishing or renovating sports facilities must be accompanied by a report on accessibility.

229. The Youth Act (1285/2016) promotes the equality, non-discrimination and realization of the rights of young people. According to the Act, the promotion of equality (including the rights of persons with disabilities) is taken into account in all promotion of youth work and activities as well as in central government funding.

230. In the Finnish model for leisure, a precondition for receiving a discretionary government grant for leisure activities is an accessibility plan that includes measures to promote the leisure activities of children and young people in need of special support.

231. In Åland, a strategy for cultural policy emphasising accessibility will be introduced in 2024–2027. An updated library regulation on the provision of, for instance, audio books and Braille books will be introduced in 2024, the Sports Act (390/2015) will be revised during the current term of the Government of Åland to enable everyone to move, exercise and practice sports, and accessibility and inclusion are priorities in investment grants for sports.

### **Reply to paragraph 27 (b) of the list of issues**

232. The Directive (EU) No. 2017/1564 was implemented in 2018 through amendments to the Copyright Act (404/1961). The relevant provisions are sections 17 a–d.

**Reply to paragraph 28 (a) of the list of issues**

233. The Government's Guidelines for Impact Assessment in Law Drafting (2022) include guidance on human rights impact assessments as well as impact assessments related to persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Justice has published a guide on human rights impact assessment in the law drafting process.

234. Basic trainings for law drafters working in the ministries, arranged annually by the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Justice, include information about human rights and non-discrimination impact assessments.

235. Regarding Åland, see Q1c.

**Reply to paragraph 28 (b) of the list of issues**

236. Institute for Health and Welfare published in 2017 a comprehensive review on information needs and existing information and data sources on disability. The primary sources are register data and population studies. Population studies, separate surveys and administrative registers are used to collect information on disability. The surveys have implemented the recommendations given by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics. Administrative data follows the national legislation on disabilities, health care services and social welfare services, and their comparisons in time or to other countries can be challenging. Institute for Health and Welfare is in charge of providing relevant information on disabilities to international collaborators. Institute for Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is currently negotiating on the future reporting forms and its funding.

237. In Åland, there are, for example the report on a study on experiences of discrimination in the Ålandic society in 2020, the statistical report on the economy and activities of municipalities and municipal federations in 2021, and the report on children, pupils and students with neuropsychiatric conditions. Statistics and Research Åland (ÅSU) gathers data for the databases of the Institute for Health and Welfare. Because of secrecy obligations, it is difficult to present detailed statistics on Åland, as the categories are very small.

**Reply to paragraph 28 (c) of the list of issues**

238. The Advisory Board for Rights of Persons with Disabilities has commissioned a study in autumn 2023 to examine experiences of persons with disabilities of realisation of their rights. Disability organisations were involved in the process.

239. Regarding Åland, see Q28b.

**Reply to paragraph 29 (a) of the list of issues**

240. Persons with disabilities are represented in the Finnish National Commission for Sustainable Development, a key multi-stakeholder forum in the implementation of Agenda2030 and sustainable development. One of the strategy's six systemic areas of transformation, Wellbeing, Health and Social Inclusion, includes elements related to the rights of persons with disabilities

241. The progress of the strategy is monitored every two years. Due to the systemic nature of the monitoring, issues related to the rights of persons with disabilities are to be taken into consideration when monitoring each one of the six areas of transformation.

242. Regarding Åland, see Q8f.

**Reply to paragraph 29 (b) of the list of issues**

243. Rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities are a long-standing priority in human rights-based foreign and security policy, including in development and humanitarian policies.



For decades, Finland has recognised disability as a human rights issue. Finland adopted her own disability marker in 2016 to monitor the use of development cooperation funding and is reporting also internationally using the OECD-DAC marker.

### **Reply to paragraph 29 (c) of the list of issues**

244. Finland has reaffirmed its commitment to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and made international commitments to this end, e.g., in Global Disability Summits.

245. Finland has a strong focus on supporting the capacity of the OPDs in developing countries. The majority of Finland's disability-specific funding is allocated to Finnish OPDs and to their partners in developing countries.

### **Reply to paragraph 30 (a) of the list of issues**

246. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health are the national focal points for implementation of the Convention. The Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities designates a representative of persons with disabilities to participate in the activities of the focal point. The focal point has its own meetings and both Ministries and the representative of persons with disabilities are involved in the Advisory Board. The cooperation and coordination is close and continuous.

### **Reply to paragraph 30 (b) of the list of issues**

247. No prior approval from any instance is required prior to the submitting of the budget proposal by the NHRI. The budget allocated to the National Human Rights Institution has increased in recent years, from 7 226 000 euros in 2020 (848 000 to the Human Rights Centre) to 9 455 000 euros in 2024 (HRC: 1 171 000).

248. A meeting was organised in spring 2023 between the Ministry of Justice and the National Human Rights Institution to identify and discuss the possible needs to revise and develop legislation to strengthen the National Human Rights Institution.

### **Reply to paragraph 30 (c) of the list of issues**

249. Representative organisations have been kept aware of the progress made in the monitoring of the Convention, e.g., through the MFA's coordination group for international policy on disability.

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