

FINLAND

II Non-discrimination

In Finland, many good practices have been developed for improving the position and opportunities of elderly people at work. *The National Programme on Ageing Workers*, carried out mainly in 1998-2002, stimulated discussion on the position of aged employees in the labour market and resulted in many research and training programmes. The programme has led to concrete changes: employees have retired at a higher age than before and the employment rate among aged employees has risen. At the same time, the rate of long-term unemployment among aged employees has declined.

Specific programmes have been carried out to promote well-being at work. Their purpose has been, *e.g.*, to spread information and good practices, to boost new research and to promote better use of research results among employers. *The Finnish Workplace Development Programme (2004-2009)* aimed at improving productivity and, at the same time, the quality of working life in cooperation between employees and their leadership. The leading idea of the programme was that innovative solutions are most efficiently produced by building close interaction among employers, researchers, consultants, authorities and other parties of working life. At the end of the programme, many cities and enterprises introduced programmes of their own concerning aged employees. The purpose is to maintain the working capacity of these employees and to increase their well-being at work, which results, *e.g.*, in fewer absences from work, retirement at higher age and a higher profile of aged employees in companies.

Equality in terms of age has been fostered in both the public and the private sector, as part of diversity management strategies. In October 2012 Finland published a *Diversity Charter* and established a diversity network among employers. One of the objectives of the network is to develop tools for managing diversity and to exchange experience of good practices. Moreover, authorities have made an inventory of diversity practices in working life and highlighted, *e.g.*, the following:

a) Anonymous job applications

To improve equality in recruitment, a job application model has been introduced that emphasises the applicant's skills and endeavours to lessen the impacts of his or her personal properties, *e.g.*, name, nationality, age and gender.

b) Flexible working hours

For reconciliation between an employee's work and family life and for consideration of his or her physical working capacity, attention has been paid to work arrangements and work shifts. For instance, aged employees may do shorter working days or only weekend work. The work arrangements are to be agreed between the employer, the employee and a staff representative and the occupational health care service.

c) Promoting aged employees' well-being at work

Employers have implemented a programme on well-being at work for employees over 50 by preparing individual well-being plans together with these employees. The plans include recommendations on life management and physical condition.

d) Tool kit for good age management

Authorities have introduced a tool kit ("*Hyvä ikä*") consisting of easy-to-use tools for age management, a test on the level of knowledge about age management, and information about opportunities in age management and its benefits for employers. The tool kit also includes a guide book and other materials for both aged employees and their leadership.

e) Assessment of age impacts

Methods for taking account of age impacts and examining them are being developed as part of the assessment of equality impacts.

f) Age and gender equality

As to pay equality between the sexes, pay comparison between women and men can be expanded by including age as one of the comparison factors. Different trials have shown that pay equality between the sexes is better in some age groups than in others. It seems that the pay differentials between women and men are larger at the bottom and the top of the age scale than in the middle of it.

The *Occupy Your Own Age* movement is a co-operation network for good ageing, established between seven Finnish organisations of social work for the elderly. This movement, intended to change attitudes towards old age, started as a campaign in 2012 and will arrange a number of different seminars and events in 2013.

In 2010-2012 the Miina Sillanpää Foundation carried out a project ("*Meetings in the Neighbourhood*") in two districts of Helsinki to create a social community model for promoting the well-being of local elderly people, in particular, and to provide an opportunity for interaction between generations and for extensive civil activity. The project aimed at strengthening elderly people's own mental, social and physical resources, promoting their well-being, maintaining their functioning capacity and preventing exclusion and loneliness among them. The purpose was to cater especially for elderly people's needs for cultural, social and physical activities. The project promoted the inclusion of elderly in their own community by stimulating community engagement in caring for other people and by fostering the interest of different actors and inhabitants in activities for the benefit of the elderly. Schools, day care centres and children's play groups participated in meetings between people at different ages.

In 2012 The Central Union for the Welfare of the Aged carried out a challenge campaign ("*Meetings between four generations*") to highlight and increase activities connecting people at different ages. Approximately 140 forms of activities or events were announced for the campaign, and more than 1600 actors were challenged to it. The campaign encouraged people to forget age thresholds and age segregation, to get to know each other and to do things together. The campaign showed that joint activities are the most efficient means of fostering positive attitudes between different age groups. The campaign was part of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. The European Parliament awarded the campaign one of its 37 European Citizen's Prizes in 2012.

V Right to social protection

In 2011-2014, the *Avain* Foundation is administering and implementing a project "*Accessible communication – our common issues*". The purpose of accessible communication is to ensure that the knowledge, skills and attitudes of communities and their principal main operating models and practices promote smoothly everyone's equal participation and activity. "Accessible communication" takes account of the different needs of an individual. The smoothness and comprehensibility of communication may be improved by supporting and replacing speech by various means: by facial expressions, gestures, pictures, sign movements or drawings. The project will develop good practices in accessible communication jointly with co-operation partners, which currently include, *e.g.*, the *Manna Association*, providing service housing for the elderly in Nastola municipality. The project will produce guide books and DVDs about well-functioning communication and design training packages for transferring good practices and applying them in different operating environments.

A prime objective is to ensure all people at different stages of their life cycle an equal position in society, to reduce factors related to exclusion, and to change operating environments so as to reduce barriers to communication. Everyone, regardless of qualities, has the right to be heard and to receive the same

information as others. Accessible communication promotes the participation of community members both in their own communities and the entire society.

A right-of-occupancy association in Saarijärvi region in Central Finland is constructing a *community house for elderly* people living independently. The construction work will be completed in summer 2013. This four-storied block of flats with 35 apartments will not be a home for the elderly, a hospice or a service block, but not a mere residential house, either. The community house is intended for persons over 55 who are capable of functioning well and can manage everyday tasks in the house as agreed. The purpose is that the inhabitants will for instance have one meal together on weekdays. The house will have rooms needed for joint activities. The objective is to ensure the safety of the ageing inhabitants and to preserve their physical and mental health.

The Finnish Parkinson Association and the local Uusimaa Parkinson Association are carrying out a two-year project ("*Parkinson at Work*") to improve the well-being and coping at work of employees suffering from Parkinson's disease and to prolong their careers. Other objectives of the project are to increase employers' awareness about the disease, and to improve the working capacity of those suffering from the illness and their opportunities to continue working despite it. A service website will be introduced for Parkinson's patients at working age, their close persons and employers in order to offer information, interaction and opportunities to contribute to producing contents for the service. The website will make it possible to distribute information to the target groups and enable them to network with each other.

VI Protection from violence and abuse

One objective of the cross-administrative *Action plan to reduce violence against women 2010–2015* is to develop methods to identify and intervene in violence experienced by vulnerable persons. The action plan does not expressly focus on the elderly, but the envisaged measures concern both elderly women and elderly men.

The Finnish Association of the Shelters for the Aged is an organisation member of the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters and the Union for Senior Services. The mission of the association is to prevent violence against the elderly and abuse of them in close relations and to make the phenomenon of violence visible. The association maintains a helping telephone service and provides support persons and a peer support group for elderly people who have been abused or threatened and for those close to them.