

Finland – ANED country profile

The information contained in this summary was compiled by the Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) in April 2009.

Academic networks and resources

[Finnish Society for Disability Research \(Suomen Vammaistutkimuksen Seura ry., Sällskapet för Handikappforskning i Finland rf\)](#) is the national academic network for disability research

[Finnish Society for Disability History \(Vammaishistorian Seura ry., Handikapphistoriska Sällskapet rf\)](#)

The [Nordic Network for Disability Research](#) provides networking resources for researchers from all of the Nordic countries

Policy and enforcement bodies

The key national bodies with responsibility for disability law and policy implementation include:

Key government Ministries are responsible for disability law and policy implementation in their respective areas, while the municipalities are required to provide health and social services locally (co-ordinated by the Provincial State Offices).

The [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#) takes the lead in policies concerned with social welfare and health care, as well as monitoring services. [National Institute for Health and Welfare](#) is a new combined research and development institute operating under the auspices of the Ministry (which will also develop disability statistics and information).

The [Ministry of Employment and the Economy](#) assumes responsibility in its key areas.

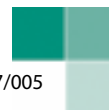
[The National Council on Disability](#) is a national co-operative body, which involves key government departments with organisations of disabled people and their families. There are also local municipal disability councils.

[The Social Insurance Institution of Finland](#) controls a range of relevant functions, including rehabilitation and vocational training.

Current strategy focuses on the development of a new government Disability Policy Programme ([VAMPO](#)) in 2010, based on human rights and the UN Convention..

Organisations of disabled people

The national organisation representing disabled people at the European level (European Disability Forum) is:



[Finnish Disability Forum](#) encourages disabled people's equality and participation and seeks to influence national and international policy. It has 27 member organisations.

Other significant national organisations of disabled people include:

[Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities](#) works for empowerment and equality. It has 165 organisational members with 34,000 members, controlled by a general council with 56 elected members. It is mainly financed by donation and by grants from the Finnish Slot Machine Association, as well as charges for services.

[The Threshold Association](#) is also based on human rights, as well as principles of independent living and culture. It includes 1,600 members with physical and sensory impairments.

[Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired](#) represents the interests of blind and partially sighted people and provides services, consultancy and training (including guide dog training). There are regional associations with 80 branches.

[The Finnish Association of the Deaf](#) seeks political, social and language rights for Deaf people. It has 43 member clubs with more than 4,000 members and around 100 employees. Almost half of the income comes from the Finnish Slot Machine Association.

[The Finnish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities](#) is run by persons with intellectual disabilities and their relatives, to provide support and to promote equality and quality of life. It includes more than 200 local support organisations and 18,000 members.

National law and strategy

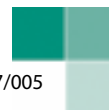
Finland has signed the [United Nations Convention](#) and the [Optional Protocol](#).

Important national laws, policies and strategies concerning disabled people include: [Summary of services and benefits](#)

[Services and Assistance for the Disabled Act](#) April 3, 1987 This is the most important Act to get disability services and defines responsibilities for the provision of support ([text also available in English](#)).

[Act on special services of people with intellectual disabilities](#) June 23, 1977 provides for special services and support for daily living for people with intellectual disability (e.g. in housing, employment, education and research).

[Account of the Finnish government for the disability policy \(2006\)](#) is a strategic government report on inclusive disability policy. The main objectives promote rights to equal treatment, inclusion and support (including mainstreaming policies in housing, employment and education).



Facts and figures

Data on population indicate that:

[Population statistics in Finland](#) include data on population by age-group (end 2007), population structure, population projection, area (population and GDP by region, largest municipalities, families (2007), families and children, vital statistics, foreigners in Finland and asylum-seekers and refugees. Disabled people are not classified in population statistics, because of legislation and its labelling characteristic.

Data on employment indicate that:

[Labour market statistics in Finland](#) include data on population by activity (preliminary data 2008) and unemployment (end 2007)

Disabled people at work 2002-2006

Eurostat data suggests that there was an increase in the estimated number of disabled people in work, from 17% in 2002 to 24% in 2006 (with a faster increase, from a lower base, for disabled women than for disabled men). According to Ministry of Labour and the Statistical Yearbook of Finnish Social Insurance Institute 20% of people with disabilities and 70% of all people had paid work.

Data on education indicate that:

[Data from Statistics Finland](#) suggest that transfer of pupils from comprehensive to special education has been increasing for more than a decade

Special education is increasingly organised in conjunction with comprehensive education In 2006-2007, 22% (128,600) of comprehensive school pupils attended special schools on a part time basis.

Pupils with learning difficulties are the largest group entering full time special education.

Data on accessibility indicate that:

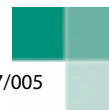
[Ministry of Transport and Communications' Research and Development Programme for Accessibility "ELSA"](#)

A number of projects have been developed in [Design for All studies within Finnish universities and polytechnics](#) (2006)

The Communication and Technology Centre Tikoteekki [Tikas](#) is a pedagogical ICT training model developed for teaching people who learn differently.

A national action programme Towards Barrier-Free Communication was published by the Ministry of Transport and Communications in 2005. Since then, new research has been completed and new objectives established.

Finland has a modern electronic communications infrastructure but, according to the [2007 MeAC e-Accessibility survey findings for Finland](#):



None of the selected public or commercial/sectoral websites passed the evaluation of accessibility (there is no legislation on web accessibility but the 2003 Act on Electronic Services and Communication in the Public Sector does require compatibility with assistive technologies).

The main emergency telephone number was accessible by text and a relay or video service was available. However, none the two main telephone operators provided accessibility information on their websites.

One of the public TV stations provided subtitling of around 20% of its Finnish language broadcasts (one provided a small number of signed programmes).

Neither of the two main banks had plans to install talking ATMs.

Data on poverty and incomes indicate that:
According to [the latest national study](#), poverty and low incomes of disabled people are permanent issues in Finland although historical data is not readily available.

22% of disabled people aged 25-64 have lower incomes than non-disabled people.

Disabled people have an employment rate of around 25-30% and a third of them have a disability pension (Linnakangas, Ritva, Suikkanen, Asko, Savtschenko, Viktor & Virta Lauri: [Uuden alussa vai umpikujassa? Vammaiset matkalla yhdenvertaiseen kansalaisuuteen](#). 2006).

Data on attitudes indicate that:
The [National Council on Disability \(VANE\)](#) reports that, although a basic positive attitude has been found in recent attitude research, disabled people are considered as objects and not subjects. The recession of the 1990s worsened attitudes.

The [2007 Special Eurobarometer on Discrimination in Europe](#), showed that 58% of people knew someone who was disabled) and 84% acknowledged that being disabled tended to be disadvantage in society (both slightly higher than the EU average).

However, disability discrimination was not viewed as particularly widespread (only 43% thought this compared to an EU average of 53%); Only 19% thought that disability discrimination was more widespread than five years ago.

78% thought that more disabled people should be in the workplace (higher than the EU average of 74%) and 86% thought specific measures on equal opportunities were needed in this field.

Data on public spending indicate that:
Social expenditure on disability was €5,570 million in 2007 and 12% of total social expenditure (€45,615 million) in Finland.(source: [Statistical yearbook of Finnish Social Insurance Institution 2007](#))



Social protection

Key features of the national system include (including adapted items from the [MISSOC](#) database December 2008):

Disability benefits

The ethos and practice of welfare is based on the idea that disabled people do not have to work and the welfare state attempts to compensate this handicap with the disability pension. (see Report on the employment of disabled people in Europe (Finland) 2008)

The disability pension is max. 560 euros per month (brutto) paid on the basis of incapacity to work. Persons who have a permanent mobility disability or blindness always receive the full amount of this pension.

In 2006, 154 800 persons received the full pension. About 25,000 persons move onto disability pensions yearly. The division between men and women is half and half.

In 2006, the most common reason for receiving a disability pension was a mental health condition (33 %) and the average age to begin receiving the disability pension was 54. (Statistical yearbook of Finnish Social Insurance Institution 2006).

The disability allowance is an alternative to disability pension and is tax free. 27,100 persons received this benefit in 2006. There are three levels based on the level of disability: 81,83 euros per month, 190,94 euros per month and 370,24 euros per month. The total amount of money paid in all disability benefits was about 109 € million in 2007.

Rehabilitation and re-training

In 2007, public paid rehabilitation and re-training services were used 87,846 times. ([Kelan kuntoutustilasto 2007](#), see specially page 48, table 6)

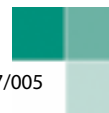
Preferential employment and quotas

There is no preferential employment quota scheme in Finland

Long-term support and care

The municipalities in Finland maintain primary responsibility for health and social care. There is a strong public system of support based on local taxation and some means-tested fees. However, there have also been concerns about pressures on the system arising from demographic ageing, declining birth rates and economic recessions.

A [national report on long-term support and care](#) has been published but not implemented. The report includes recommendations on the need for planning and co-ordination of housing and individual assistance and support; abolition of residential institutions to non-residential services; incorporation of remaining specialist institutions into the health system; acquisition of 600 flats per year; particular attention to housing for disabled children and their families.



Additional information

Useful sources of more detailed information about the situation of disabled people, and the policies and support available, include:

The 2008 research bulletin of the [Social Insurance Institution of Finland](#) reports that disability policies differ from other Nordic Countries

[A brief summary of disability services in Finland](#) (portal of general information in Finland)