



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

Evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union

Thematic brief – Rights of persons with disabilities

Introduction

Background on links with Finland's development cooperation on disability inclusion



Non-discrimination with a focus on disability inclusion is a cross-cutting objective for Finnish development cooperation since 2020.¹

Realization of the rights of persons with disabilities is one of the Priority Area 1 outcomes (ToCs 2020).

Twin-track approach to achieve this goal: **mainstreaming and targeted action**.

Finland also aims to promote the **intersectionality of gender and disability** and the rights and inclusion of women and girls with disabilities, including SRHR and eliminating violence.

Rooted in analysis that disability and poverty are closely connected (e.g.: 80% of disabled live in developing countries, one-third of 58 million children out of school are disabled and the disabled have 50-75% lower rates of employment).²

EU key events in the context of disability inclusion



The Finnish EU Presidency in 2019 included a discussion and approval of Council Conclusions on the GAPII Annual Report. This provided an opportunity for the Finns to put forward their intersectional approach to gender equality and disability inclusion and their impact on poverty.

The 2017 *European Consensus on Development* lists disability inclusion as a priority, reflecting the SDG10 commitment to reduce inequalities based on disability as well as other issues.

The EU is a signatory to the UN Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities – CPRD, 2006.

¹ MFA, 2020d, *Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy 2020*.

² MFA powerpoint November 2020, *Cross-cutting Objectives for Finland's development policy and cooperation*.

Finland's influencing objectives on disability inclusion



In influencing the EU development cooperation on disability Finland seeks to:

1. **Non-discrimination** towards persons with disabilities is systematically referred to, (non-discrimination is at the heart of the rights-based approach; it is rooted in UN CPRD, 2006).
2. The **Twin-track Approach** is pursued by:
 - **Track 1: Mainstreaming disability inclusion**
 - Minimum standard for mainstreaming: Do No Harm.
 - Implies: risks assessed, avoided and mitigated; barriers identified and addressed; impacts continuously assessed and monitored; data is disaggregated, systematically collected, analysed and used.
 - **Track 2: Targeted action.** While the minimum standard of identifying risk is important, Finland should also try and make a positive contribution on rights for persons with disabilities; this can be addressed in all development policy.
3. In *Priority Area 1: Rights of Women & Girls*. (ToCs 2020) one of three specific **Policy Influencing Outcomes** that Finland seeks to push with the EU is on:

Disability inclusive strategies, policies and programmers and corporate-level accountability mechanisms.

Indicators for this are: Corporate level commitments, policies, strategies and accountability frameworks for gender equality and disability-inclusive development are in place and implemented.

Finland's influencing activities and achievements

Activities and Outputs



Overall:

Finnish CODEV representative pushed language as suggested by disability inclusion and gender equality focal points in MFA, KEO-10 was also involved:

- Worked with a like-minded group of MS working on gender equality.
- The Finns took advantage of their Presidency of the EU.
- Gender equality was an important policy debate in Council. In addition, based on the intersectional approach being followed on gender equality, the Finns demonstrated the relevance of disability inclusion as an important part of the analysis and persuaded the like-minded MS to support this additional element.

Stakeholders' perceptions:

Finland's stance on inclusiveness and disability inclusion is known, though EU officials do not see it as one of Finland's high-level priorities at least not in development cooperation (stronger in the humanitarian aid field).

Finland's expertise on inclusiveness and disability is acknowledged by officials from EU and EU Member States (MS).

Finland's image as a trusted professional and effective development actor in the area of disability inclusion is widely recognised in interviews with EU officials and MS officials in HQ and the field.

Emerging from the country case studies:

Nepal

- Embassy Strategic Plan 2019-2022 does not mention disability inclusion, though it does refer to women and girls' rights and to influencing EU policy in-country.
- The EU MIP2021-2027 cites 'disability status' as an indicator in both the EU-funded WASH and Education programmes.

Tanzania

The EU NIP 2014, the MIP 2021-2027 and Finland's Country Strategy 2014-2017 mention disability only briefly. However, explicit references are made in the 2021-2024 Country Strategy and Country Programme.

Ukraine

No specific mention of disability inclusion on the MFA webpage on Finland's bilateral cooperation (2021–2024, EUR 29 million) in Ukraine.

Outcomes



Overall:

Enabling language on disability inclusion in EU GAP II Council Conclusions 2019:

During Finnish Presidency it was managed to get some progressive enabling language on disability inclusion into a Council Conclusion:

Para 8: *"It also recalls that the ambitious gender equality targets should include other dimensions, such as age and disability in order to ensure positive compounding effect."*

Para 12: *"Specific attention should be paid to women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, women and girls with disabilities."*

Emerging from the country case studies:

Nepal: Disability inclusion is addressed in various EU/Finland projects and cooperation and regularly features in their joint policies and programmes.

Tanzania: EU and Finnish policies are now aligned on addressing disability inclusion in their country programmes. In practice, support for the disability inclusion agenda appears as linked to the gender equality and human rights agenda.

Conclusions on Finland's effective influencing

Significance of verified outcomes



Not a very significant outcome. Given that disability inclusion was already a priority for the EU, its significance lies in that it maintains the level of the language and updates it in a more recent policy statement.

Moreover, no non-MFA sources were found to validate Finnish officials' claim specifically on disability inclusion, but the Council Conclusions on the 2019 Gender Action Plan II passed during the Finnish Presidency do indeed contain wording on disability inclusion.

The specific mention of disability inclusion has in effect 'piggy-backed' on wider language on inclusiveness and gender equality, a strategy that was confirmed by the MFA Disability Inclusion Adviser from 2019 and follows Finland's intersectional approach.

Contribution of other external factors



MFA officials worked with other like-minded states on this and with the DG DEVCO Gender Unit to achieve this outcome in the 2019 Council Conclusions.

The EU already supported disability inclusion as a priority as clearly stated in the 2017 *European Consensus*. Restating this commitment in these Council Conclusions would therefore be generally supported by other MS.

Conclusions on Finland contribution



Finland has successfully pushed for explicit intersectional language on gender and disability in the 2019 EU Council Conclusions on GAP II. As a standing policy of the EU accepted by all MS this renews a long-term policy commitment which should have an important effect on all EU and MS programming.

The main action around the Council Conclusions was clearly to introduce strong language on gender equality. But the language chosen refers to intersectionality and specifically lists disability as another area of discrimination. The push for intersectional language on gender equality has thus had the additional effect of enabling references to disability inclusion.

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