

Diversity, equality and non-discrimination in the work community



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Introduction

The purpose of the publication is to support workplaces in promoting equality and non-discrimination as well as in managing and taking diversity into account in occupational safety and health. The publication also supports in compliance with the legal obligations related to these topics. The focus is particularly on the obligations under the Act on Equality between Women and Men and the Non-Discrimination Act. The publication also presents good practices and procedures. Workplaces are encouraged to adopt these.

Diversity refers to the differences between various people in regard to characteristics such as age, gender, ethnic or national background, nationality, language, beliefs, family situation, health, work ability, neurodiversity, educational background and values. Diversity also refers to this variety overall.

The publication examines diversity and the way it is taken into account from different perspectives. The first part deals with the management of diversity and the meaning and building of psychological safety and trust. The second part focuses on taking diversity in the work community into account in occupational safety and health. The following two parts deal with

equality and non-discrimination and their promotion in the workplace. The fifth part describes the different forms of discrimination and provides instructions for those who feel that they have been discriminated against in working life. The publication ends with a brief description of the legislation and key concepts related to the topic.

The publication includes checklists, which are aimed at drawing the attention of employers, supervisors, employees representatives and the employees to key characteristics in the workplace and work communities. The publication is aimed at the management, supervisors, occupational safety and health personnel, shop stewards and people engaged in HR development.

The issues contained in this publication should be discussed in work communities on a regular basis. Training in the subject matter is also important – especially for management, supervisors and employee representatives.

There are many good reasons for promoting diversity. Diversity has a positive effect on factors such as well-being at work, profitability and service ability, capacity for renewal, the creation of networks, employee satisfaction and the employer image.

1. Diversity management



Diversity refers to the differences between various people in regard to characteristics such as age, gender, ethnic or national background, nationality, language, beliefs, family situation, health, work ability, neurodiversity, educational background and values. In addition to mutual differences, diversity also refers to this variety overall.

Diversity in the work community has several benefits. When managed well, diversity has a positive effect on factors such as occupational safety, well-being at work, profitability and service ability, capacity for renewal, the creation of networks, employee satisfaction, employer image and the attractiveness of the workplace.

Managing diversity or variety is a key part of good personnel management and part of the activities of every supervisor. The promotion of diversity, equality and non-discrimination must be reflected in the goals and strategy of the workplace. It must also be part of personnel solutions and all development activities.

Making good use of diversity requires understanding and appreciating the differences between people. It is the responsibility of the supervisor and each employee to ensure that a culture that respects and makes use of diversity emerges in the group. The supervisor plays a key role in this.

Checklist for diversity management

- Use versatile recruitment channels to reach a wide range of jobseeker groups.
- Include an easily understandable description of the job and its content in the job advertisement.
- Utilise diversity clauses in job advertisements, such as encouraging people of different ages, genders, languages, cultures, or other minorities to apply for the vacancy.
- In a recruitment situation, evaluate the job applicant based on their skills. The competence requirements must be based on the requirements of the work. In accordance with the Act on Equality between Women and Men, the employer must always carry out a comparison of merits when the applicants are both men and women. The comparison of merits takes into account the candidates' education, previous work experience and such qualities, knowledge and skills of the candidate that can be objectively assessed.
- Treat job seekers and employees equally.
- Prepare the work community in advance to welcome a new employee. Orientation is a two-way, interactive process.
- Plan work tasks and related arrangements together with the employee, according to their competence, functional capacity and work ability.
- View the workplace from the perspective of accessibility considering both employees and customers. Often, even small changes can achieve an accessible working environment and services.
- In appraisal discussions and other work-related encounters, bring up issues related to non-discrimination and equality in the work community, such as attitudes and experiences of discrimination.



- Enable participation in the development of work.
- Identify employees' strengths and provide opportunities to make use of them at work.
- Stop occasionally to identify any preconceptions and biases you may have.
- If necessary, get additional training on topics related to diversity.

Psychological safety

Psychological safety is both an individual and a shared experience. In a psychologically safe work community, everyone feels that they are a valued part of the work community and can share their own views, ideas and concerns, regardless of their job or position. They do not have to worry that raising issues will lead to negative consequences.

The work community encourages work-related discussions. Everyone shares observations, information and experiences. Different perspectives are appreciated and even difficult issues can be raised. Unfinished thoughts or ideas are not immediately rejected, but are examined and further developed together. Management and supervisors play a significant role in this.





Everyone can also talk about their own insecurity or mistakes without fear of belittling, invalidation, exclusion or punishment. Failures and mistakes are viewed from the perspective of learning.

Psychological safety has been shown to have many benefits. It has a positive impact on interactions and communication, learning, renewal, job satisfaction, workplace engagement and operational efficiency, among other factors.

Trust in the work community


Trust is an essential part of the activities of a work community. It constitutes social capital: networks, good relationships, reciprocity and sharing knowledge. Trust can also be defined as an emotion directed at something, such as another's competence, benevolence and work performance.

The experiences of trust impact how safe the employee feels that the work community is and what kind of role they dare to take in the work community. When there is trust in the work community, it is better prepared to face difficulties and crises, but also to anticipate and solve problems.

Building trust is not only the responsibility of the individual, but it is based on the culture of the workplace and the work community. Building and maintaining trust requires

- shared time
- clear and transparent structures, for activities such as information sharing, participation and competence development
- a common understanding of goals, tasks and their significance
- functional and predictable practices
- providing support and practical assistance
- admitting errors
- presence, listening and hearing
- getting to know others and a feeling of cohesion.

Supervisor's checklist for building trust

- Get to know the people working in your area of responsibility as individuals. Create conditions for them to get to know each other. 
- Be present in daily work.
- Aim to make plans and goals realistic.
- Only promise things that you can carry out.
- Enable genuine participation and influence. Also safeguard the benefits of those who are not present.
- Communicate actively.
- Listen, hear and show compassion.
- Dare to make decisions, even if they do not always please everyone.
- Have fairness, authenticity, honesty, and tact guide your actions.

2. Diversity in occupational safety and health



According to the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the employer is obligated to ensure the safety and health of employees at work. The aim must also be to ensure safety already when planning the work and designing the workspaces. When identifying and assessing risks, consideration must be given to the circumstances related to the work, working conditions and other aspects of the working environment as well as the employees' personal characteristics, such as age, gender and language.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires an employer to provide sufficient orientation to its employees to their work, duties and working conditions and to ensure

that the employee has understood the instructions. It is very important that the materials related to occupational safety and health can also be understood by those learning the working language of the workplace. This reduces misunderstandings and incidents caused by lack of information, as well as disruptions to the operations and work flow of the work community. Issues related to equality and non-discrimination can also be included in the occupational safety and health policy. In this case, it must be ensured that the entirety also meets the requirements of the Act on Equality between Women and Men and the Non-Discrimination Act.



The objective of occupational safety and health co-operation is to promote co-operation between the employer and employees in matters related to health and safety. Occupational safety and health is co-operation and it applies to everyone working in the workplace. Everyone must be aware of the hazards in related to their own work and working environment and know how to protect against them. Everyone is required to follow the safety instructions drawn up at the workplace, take into account the hazards and report any faults and defects in their working environment to their supervisor and occupational safety representative.

The role of the supervisor is to ensure that information about occupational safety and health and the available occupational health care services reaches all employees equally. The employer should also ensure that occupational health care is aware of the personnel structure of the workplace so that they are able to serve employees of different ages and cultures, for example.

It is important that the workplace has procedures in place for disturbance and problematic situations, such as

- reporting incidents, malfunctions and safety observations
- reporting occupational accidents
- what to do in case of discrimination, harassment and other inappropriate treatment
- what to do in case of harmful workload.

The orientation should include the main points of the instructions and information on where to find them. It is therefore advisable to draw up the instructions in writing.

Employees should know who they can turn to. In work-related matters, one can always turn to their own supervisor.

Employees' potential learning difficulties should be identified and taken into account at the workplace. They are quite common, as 10–20% of the population has some form of learning difficulties. Practical means of support include measures such

as suitable work arrangements, orientation material and instructions available in many forms, and the use of applications and aids that support learning and work.


Orientation

The objective of orientation to the work community and work is that the new employee is able to work independently in the correct and safe manner and become part of the work community. The employee must also be provided orientation for their tasks when they change from one task to another at the workplace or return to work, for example, after family leave or long sick leave.

Orientation refers to measures with which the employee is guided to their duties and familiarised with the workplace and the working environment. During the orientation, the employee learns the goals and operating principles of the work community and the workplace, while also getting to know colleagues, the supervisor and the key actors of the workplace. Orientation is mandatory in accordance with the Employment Contracts Act and the Occupational Safety and Health



Act, for example. The supervisor is responsible for the orientation. The importance of orientation is emphasised when the employees' backgrounds differ, for example, in terms of culture, language or previous work experience and training.

- All employees need careful orientation. The importance of orientation is highlighted in a diverse work community. 
- When planning the orientation, you should consider which work arrangements will best support learning the work tasks and becoming part of the work community. Especially in a larger work community, the importance of the team is emphasised.
- When drawing up the orientation programme, the requirements of the work and the personal characteristics of the employee, such as age and possible limitations, must be taken into account. Separate orientation programmes can also be prepared for different groups.
- The supervisor is responsible for the orientation. When designating a person to carry out the orientation, it is a good idea to make use of the diversity of the work community.
- Pictures, videos, as well as symbols and other signs can be used to support orientation, work guidance and on-the-job learning.
- It should be ensured that the topics covered in the orientation have been understood. It is especially important in matters related to occupational safety and the rights and obligations of the employee.
- Regular conversations with new employees help to monitor the progress of the orientation. It is also possible to discuss and clarify expectations related to work and thus support the development of work management.



- Orientation is two-way process, during which both the person being orientated and the work community learn. The work community can receive valuable feedback from the person receiving orientation. Sometimes the orientation is targeted to the entire work community.
- The majority of learning takes place in interaction with others, by working and developing. Members of the work community should stop and consider together what employees can learn from each other and how the sharing of competencies could be supported.

Make responsibilities, obligations, rights and expectations clear

The rights, obligations and practices related to working life vary from country to country. During the orientation, it is necessary to review the shared ground rules and procedures of the workplace, such as the leave system, calling in sick and obtaining a medical certificate. At the beginning of the employment relationship, it is also good to highlight the work community's practices, such as giving and receiving feedback, making mistakes, asking for support, taking initiative, communicating and interacting. It is also a good idea to discuss expecta-

tations related to the relationship between the supervisor and the employee.

It is essential for orientation that the employee

- knows the expectations for their work
- understands their own responsibility in the work community as a whole
- learns their work tasks
- understands the safety instructions and procedures related to their work
- feels like a part of the work community.

The terms and conditions of employment, as well as occupational safety and health matters, must be examined with special care

At the beginning of the employment relationship, each new employee must be informed in practical terms

- sufficient background information about the workplace




- rules and procedures, such as arrangements related shifts, breaks, work clothes, protective clothing and equipment
- the provisions of the collective labour agreement and the employment contract, like grounds for salary and the continuation of the employment relationship and a possible probation period
- procedures concerning issues like
 - the occurrence of discrimination, harassment or other inappropriate treatment
 - workload management
 - reporting incidents, malfunctions and safety observations
- reporting occupational accidents
- acceptable reasons for absences and related procedures
- practices regarding holidays
- matters related to occupational safety and health, such as the legal obligations of the employer and employee, occupational health care and activities that maintain work ability
- practices for promoting equality and non-discrimination in the workplace
- information about the occupational safety and health organisation and occupational health care
- rights of the employee.





Checklist for conducting orientation

- Plan and implement the orientation and work guidance according to the situation, needs and the person receiving the orientation. 
- Set aside sufficient time for the orientation.
- Use several communication methods to ensure that the message is understood if there is no strong shared language. Videos, images, drawings and recordings that describe work tasks in practice can help.
- Adapt oral and written communication to the level of the employee's language skills. Avoid slang words and excessive professional vocabulary.
- As a rule of thumb, use the language used in the work community also in the orientation. Use several languages, if necessary.
- Make especially sure that the employee understands the occupational safety instructions. If necessary, you can use an interpreter if you are unsure whether some important matter has been understood.
- Make sure that there is a clear summary available of the orientation material with all the key information.
- Check from time to time if matters have been understood. Remember that the answer "yes" does not always mean that the person has understood what they should do.
- You can ask the employee to review the key points of the orientation session or discussion.
- Support the sense of belonging to the work community and work networks by the person receiving the orientation. A partner or mentor can provide support during the orientation.
- Follow up that the orientation has been sufficient and complement it, if necessary.

3. Non-discrimination and its promotion

Non-discrimination means that all people are equal regardless of their gender, age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, opinions, political activity, trade union activity, family situation, disability, health, sexual orientation or other reasons related to their person.

Employer's role and obligations

All employers must actively promote non-discrimination between their employees and prevent discrimination in the workplace. The objective is that the workplace would have genuinely non-discriminatory procedures in

- recruitment
- career advancement
- distribution of work tasks
- decisions on salaries and benefits
- provision of training
- development of the work community.

The obligation to promote equality applies to all discrimination grounds mentioned in the Non-Discrimination Act. Promotion measures and their effectiveness must be discussed with employees and their representatives. On request, the employees' representative has the right to know what measures the employer has taken to promote non-discrimination in the workplace.

The employer ensures that non-discrimination at the workplace is assessed in such a way that different grounds for discrimination are taken into account and working conditions and that practices for selecting personnel and making decisions regarding them are developed. The employer's task is



to promote non-discrimination by means of measures that are justified by the identified development areas and possible problems. The type and extent of the activities is influenced by the needs of the workplace and the available resources. The goal is that the promotion of non-discrimination becomes part of the regular development activities of the workplace.

Promotion measures refer to concrete measures that effect the actual situation in relation to non-discrimination in the workplace. For example, the aim is to work in a way that takes into account the special needs of employees at risk of discrimination better. The measures can also comprise supporting people in disadvantaged positions. Special support, meaning positive special treatment, can be offered, for example, to the elderly or those with partial work ability.

Non-discrimination is also promoted by measures that prevent discrimination and harassment. Such measures include, for example, workplace procedures for dealing with allegations of discrimination, as well as non-discrimination training for employees, supervisors and employee representatives.

Identification and assessment of non-discrimination

The purpose of identifying and assessing non-discrimination is to identify discrimination and find ways to promote non-discrimination. Recruitment situations must also be assessed, for example, by reviewing workplace recruitment practices and identifying factors that limit the realisation of non-discrimination, such as unnecessary language requirements.

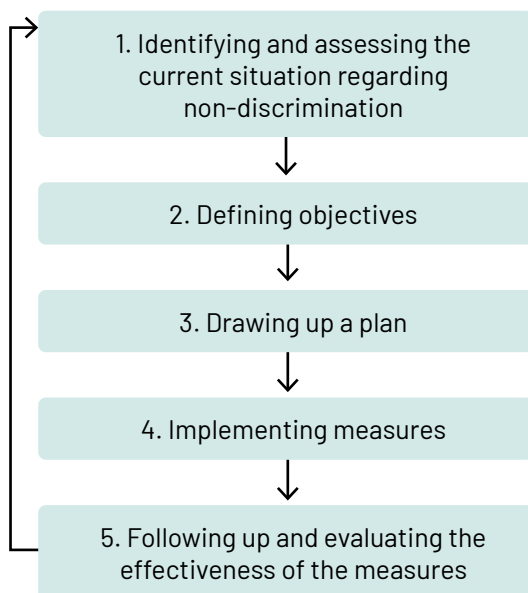
Based on the assessment, the employer can take measures to prevent discrimination, intervene in it and improve non-discrimination between various groups. Questions related to non-discrimination can also be included in employee surveys and customer feedback systems (see information collected from job seekers and employees, p. 35). A third party can also be utilised to help in the assessment.

The assessment aims to answer the following questions, among others:



- What is the employees' experience of the implementation of non-discrimination?
- Has discrimination been experienced or observed in the workplace? How was the potential discrimination observed? What kind of groups are affected? What are the situations associated with it?
- What kind of guidelines and procedures are in place to intervene in situations of discrimination? Are they functional and effective? How has their functionality and effectiveness been assessed?
- What kind of information is available on the subject and where?
- What other methods does the workplace have to prevent discrimination?
- How is non-discrimination taken into account in job advertisements and at different stages of the recruitment process?

Measures for promoting non-discrimination in the workplace



Materials produced in connection with equality work can also be utilised in the non-discrimination assessment. Experiences of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or gender expression may reveal, for example, discrimination based on multiple characteristics or other factors that impact non-discrimination. Measures to promote equality can also positively affect non-discrimination in the workplace.



Non-discrimination plan

If the employer regularly employs at least 30 employees, the workplace must have a non-discrimination plan, meaning a plan of the concrete measures used to promote non-discrimination. There is no prescribed format for the plan, but it must be verifiable and auditable.

The non-discrimination plan can be drawn up separately or as part of some other plan, such as the personnel plan, the gender equality plan or the occupational safety and health policy. The grounds for positive action referred to in the Non-Discrimination Act may also be recorded in the plan. Starting in June 2025, the plan must also include the conclusions of the workplace non-discrimination assessment.

The promotion measures of the non-discrimination plan and their effectiveness must be discussed together with the employees and their representatives. On

request, the employees' representative has the right to know what measures the employer has taken to promote non-discrimination in the workplace.


All aboard

When everyone can feel that they are an accepted and valued part of the work community, this positively affects co-operation, the capacity for renewal and the ability to provide service, as well as the productivity of work.

People tend to form in-groups and out-groups at the workplace. An in-group refers to a group that a person feels connected to and identifies with. An out-group, in turn, is a group of people the person themselves does not belong to. Conflicts may arise between the groups in the work community.

People see themselves and judge others based on their own cultural, social and personal values. One's own views and those of others are not always in harmony with each other, which can give rise to friction. They are often based on misunderstandings that arise from assuming that the interpretations and actions of someone else is more similar to our own than they actually are.

Problems caused by different values and backgrounds are reduced when co-operation in the workplace is based on respect for others. It is important for everyone to stop to identify and work on their possible preconceptions and even unconscious ideas. It is also worth considering in the work community how to take into account the customs of different cultures and religions, including in matters related to dressing, food and holidays. Different work tasks and workplaces allow adhering to different customs.

- Co-operation and interaction are facilitated by openness, genuine listening and members of the work community knowing each other. 
- Getting to know others reduces possible prejudices and stereotypes.
- It is important that the management and supervisors of the workplace commit to creating a culture that respects diversity and promote it through their own actions.


Cultural diversity

It is increasingly common for people with different cultural backgrounds to work in Finnish workplaces. This means that the characteristics of the culture of the local environment, the workplace and the employees meet at the workplace. Questions related to this are reflected in immediate leadership and can be reflected in the daily life of the workplace.

Different people bring with them different ways of thinking. A culturally diverse work community is often richer and more creative than other work communities in terms of ideas, perspectives and skills. For example, diversity can improve services and increase customer satisfaction when the employee is familiar with the needs and habits of customers belonging to their own culture with regard to products and services.

Employees are more committed to the work community in workplaces where cultural diversity is appreciated. This requires that the entire workplace is committed to promoting cultural diversity. The appreciation of differences must also be reflected as clearly as possible in internal and external communications, as these can be used, for example, to increase awareness of different cultures and promote the appreciation of diversity.

Orientation, regular feedback and interaction between supervisor and employee are particularly important when the employee starting a new job comes from another culture.

- Sensitivity to culture and language along with a sense of community and networking are highlighted in a culturally diverse work community. 
- When managed well, cultural diversity expands the competencies of the work community.
- Comprehensive orientation, shared ground rules and mutual trust are the key to smooth co-operation. The supervisor plays a key role in enabling interaction.
- The rights and obligations of Finnish working life and the ground rules of the workplace must be thoroughly covered during the orientation.

- The employee's language skills must be taken into account in work-related written and oral communication. The employer should consider translating essential occupational safety material into the employees' native languages.
- When discussing with the supervisor, the employee can express their wishes in relation to work, such as prayer time.
- Ways for the employer to take cultural diversity into account include training management and supervisors, offering mentoring programmes, and utilising support provided for employers (such as public employment and business services).
- There is support available to employers and supervisor for managing culturally diverse work communities. A list of key parties can be found at the end of this publication.

Language awareness

The employer should survey and make use of the employees' language skills. If necessary, employees are steered to language training provided by the employer. It is a good idea to also offer language and cultural training to all employees. The objective is to support interaction, appreciate and respect others and foster global citizenship.

The work community has many ways to enable and support the development of spoken and written language. It is of key importance to use language flexibly in interaction and communications, according to the needs and situation of the participants. You should also aim to not be in a rush.

- In work situations, either use a shared language that everyone understands or utilise several languages, if necessary. Ensure equal participation in the discussion in shared social situations.



- Collaboratively discuss the principles and practices of language awareness, such as the languages used in orientation, communication and personnel surveys.
- Take into account that employees' ability to adopt professional vocabulary in a foreign language or to switch from one working language to another will vary.
- Practise pronouncing everyone's name correctly. If necessary, ask for help from the person concerned.
- In meetings and other interaction situations, when an employee speaks a language other than their native language, allow them sufficient time.
- Avoid complex sentence structures, especially when language skills are only starting to develop.
- If necessary, explain what an expression or concept means. Repeat key concepts.
- Be aware that typos do not automatically mean negligence.
- Be aware that proverbs, sayings and puns cannot be translated directly into another language.
- Provide information on the language training offered by educational institutions. For example, liberal adult education institutions organise teaching of Finnish, Swedish and English comprehensively across Finland.



Anti-racist work community

Racism can manifest itself in working life as conscious action or as unintentional, offensive acts or comments. An anti-racist work community has established common anti-racist principles and practices, such as how to address observing or experiencing racist speech or action. In daily work, care is taken to ensure that everyone is included. Discriminatory structures and practices are identified and there is readiness to change these. The work community discusses different manifestations of racism and what antiracism means in practice.

In an anti-racist work community, everyone reflects on their own assumptions and thought patterns and how these affect or can affect their actions. Everyone also actively intervenes in situations where, for example, hate speech, racist speech or discriminatory behaviour occurs.

Practical tools for an anti-racist workplace include

- non-discrimination plan
- principles for a safer space
- guidelines for dealing with discrimination, harassment and other inappropriate treatment
- employee training
- work community communications
- anonymous recruitment.



People of different ages in the work community

At best, a work community includes employees of different ages, which is an asset for the work community. A good workplace takes into account that people of different ages, at different stages of their careers and at different stages of their lives have their own strengths and need different kinds of support.



Work, the work environment, work community, management and supervisors' activities are developed in a way that takes into account employees of different ages.

- People of all ages have their own strengths. It is important that they are identified and utilised.
- Work ability is promoted comprehensively at the workplace.
- The management of workload factors related to different stages of life is improved.
- Work-life balance in different life situations is promoted.
- A framework is created for the continuous development of competence and professional skills, as well as the sharing of competence.
- Age management is linked to already existing personnel activities, such as the personnel development plan, the non-discrimination plan and the continuous dialogue referred to in the Co-operation Act.



Age management refers to the organisation and management of work from the perspective of a person's stage of life and resources. Early and mid-career measures have an impact on the late stages of a career. Good age management is in the interests of both the employer and the employees. It pays dividends in terms of well-being at work, better productivity and reduced sickness absences, inability to work and medical care costs.

In an age-friendly work community, the transfer of hidden knowledge is ensured using practices such as mentoring. Responsible management makes it possible to utilise the experience and knowledge accrued with age. On the other hand, the work community values the skills its younger members bring with them and gives space to it, too. Different ages are seen as a resource.

Example contents of a workplace programme on ageing

- career planning and extension
- ensuring work management: competence and professional skills
- working hours arrangements
- adapting work
- taking into account individual changes in functional capacity due to ageing
- health checks
- promoting a healthy lifestyle and life management

Age-based discrimination

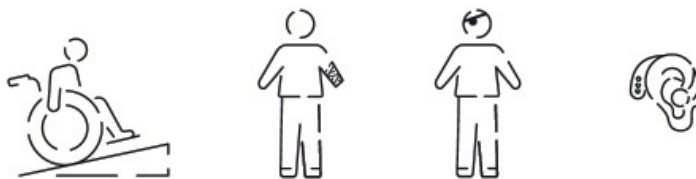
Age-based discrimination refers to prejudice, negative attitudes and unequal treatment based on someone's age. This is also referred to as ageism. It can also mean discrimination against non-elderly people and manifest itself as dismissive speech or discriminatory practices. In working life, ageism may lead to premature retirement or marginalisation in working life. Positive ageism is the accentuation of strengths of people of different ages.



Employee with disability or partial work ability

- Disabled refers to a person who may need support measures to cope with work or workplace conditions (for example, assistive devices). Being disabled does not necessarily mean having partial work ability.
- A person with partial work ability is someone who has access to part of their work ability and the desire to use it. Often adapting the work can result in the reduced work ability not affect the person's work input.

The change in working capacity does not always look like this:



It can also look like this:



By adapting the working environment and methods, an employee with disability or partial work ability can work according to their work ability. Even small changes in working conditions can provide great benefits. Work ability management promotes employees' work ability and allows them to continue to work despite challenges and limitations.

The Non-Discrimination Act requires employers to make reasonable adjustments in order for a person with a disability can get a job, perform the work tasks and advance in their careers. The employer must identify the appropriate adjustments that are necessary in order for a disabled person to be employed or continue to work. The needs of the disabled person are the primary priority in assessing whether the adaptations are appropriate. In addition, the size and financial position of the employer, the nature and scope of their operations as well as the cost of adjustments and the available support are all taken into account.

Companies that employ people with disabilities or partial work ability can receive support not only financially, but also in the form of subsidy for arranging working conditions, wage subsidy and with support provided by a job coach. A job coach can support the employer in tailoring work tasks to suit those with partial work ability and in applying for subsidies.

There is also a wide range of vocational rehabilitation services available. Pension institutions organise and support vocational rehabilitation, which leads to a work placement quite often. Similarly, Kela's vocational rehabilitation services are one way to safeguard work ability.

Adapting working conditions

Solutions for adapting working conditions and taking into account individual needs



can be used to compensate for a person's functional limitations. The solutions are also positively reflected in the psychosocial work environment. Typical adaptation solutions include:

- working hours
- commute
- work premises, lighting, acoustics
- technology, equipment
- the content and organisation of work.

Examples of reasonable accommodations

- flexible working hours and option for remote days
- tailoring work tasks
- additional rest breaks, arranging a place to rest, a bed in the break room
- moving the workstation to a more peaceful place
- arranging a parking space near the workplace or its front door
- improving accessibility
- accessible toilet near the workspace
- procuring work equipment and necessary assistive devices to facilitate work
- induction loop
- change in lighting
- wheelchair ramp, electric doors
- screen reader, speech synthesiser.





When adapting the working environment and methods, an employee with a disability or partial work ability can work according to their actual work ability. Non-discrimination does not mean treating everyone in the same way.

Sexual and gender minorities

In working life, the promotion of non-discrimination also covers the status and rights of people that belong to sexual and gender minorities. Belonging to a minority is within the scope of privacy protection.

Sexual minority refers to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and pansexuals, among others. Gender minority refers to, for example, transgender, intergender, transvestites, intersex and gender-neutral people.

Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are part of a person's identity. Everyone's privacy must be respected because people who belong to minorities experience a lot of discrimination. Awareness of how gender identity and gender expression are personal should be increased, as lack of information and related prejudices can lead to discrimination. From the perspective of well-being at work, openness and psychological safety of the work community are important.

Sexuality and gender and related diversity are intertwined in many ways in working life interaction situations. You do not need to disclose your sexual orientation in the workplace. However, family and interpersonal relationships are an important part of informal discussions in the workplace.

- An equal and non-discriminatory atmosphere is based on effective co-operation between management and personnel.
- Include in the gender equality plan a statement that the employer is committed to preventing and combating harassment and other forms of discrimination against members of gender minorities.
- Survey attitudes towards gender minorities and the occurrence of different forms of harassment.
- Respect different forms of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Pay attention to expressions, such as using the word spouse when talking about family relationships.
- Ensure that the work equipment, uniforms and premises are suitable also from the perspective of members of gender minorities.



- Provide gender-neutral toilets. Establish policies for practices such as the use of showers and dressing rooms.
- Establishing procedures for situations where discrimination is most common.
- Establish procedures related to gender correction and name change, such as issuing a new certificate of employment.
- Highlight family diversity.
- Support joining workplace networks.
- Discuss together about participating in events promoting non-discrimination.



4. Equality and its promotion

The Act on Equality between Women and Men requires that every employer, regardless of the number of employees, purposefully and systematically promotes gender equality. In this, attention should be paid to issues such as attracting both women and men to apply for open positions. The employer must also promote the equal placement of women and men in different positions, create equal career advancement opportunities for them, and promote equality when it comes to the terms of employment, especially with regard to pay.

The obligation to promote equality includes the development of working conditions suitable for both women and men. This can mean the development of working methods and equipment, for example. The employer must also strive to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life in various situations, paying particular attention to work arrangements, such as working hours and arrangements of business trips.

Preventing discrimination based on gender is part of the employer's obligation to promote equality. The grounds for discrimination prohibited by the Act on Equality between Women and Men are as follows:

- sex, including pregnancy and childbirth
- parenthood and family care obligations
- gender identity, that is, each person's own experience of their gender
- gender expression, that is, expressing gender through dress, behaviour, or other similar means.



The Act on Equality between Women and Men also prohibits discrimination based on a person's physical gender defining characteristics not being unambiguously female or male.

Employer's role and obligations

In a good workplace, the employer and work communities together ensure that they take concrete measures to promote gender equality. Different genders must have the same rights, obligations and opportunities to work in all areas and at all levels of working life.

An atmosphere that values diversity and a sense of community are important factors for productivity and equality. Promoting gender equality is part of HR policy, management and the development of personnel well-being. In HR policy, equality is related to the following, among other factors

- salary
- management practices and opportunities to influence
- recruitment
- career development
- diversity and equal distribution of work tasks
- length of employment relationships
- working conditions
- family leave practices.



Supporting gender equality provides an opportunity to

- make equal and effective use of the knowledge, skills and experience of people of different genders



- support the personnel's well-being at work and workplace performance
- improve the employer image
- secure the availability of skilled workforce.

The Act on Equality between Women and Men obliges employers to promote equality in working life and to prevent discrimination based on gender, gender identity or gender expression. The law also defines sexual and gender-based harassment as discrimination if the employer does not take the necessary measures to stop the harassment.

Gender equality plan

The Act on Equality between Women and Men requires the preparation of a gender equality plan if the employer regularly employs at least 30 employees. The gender equality plan concerns equality between women and men. The prevention of discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression must also be taken into account in the plan.

A gender equality plan must be drawn up at least every other year, and personnel must be informed of the plan and updating it. The plan is prepared in co-operation with an employee representative, such as a shop steward or occupational safety and health representative. The plan can be included in the personnel and training plan, the work community development plan or the occupational safety and health programme and it can be drawn up together with the non-discrimination (equality) plan.

The gender equality plan must include

- a report on the equality situation in the workplace, including a wage survey and a breakdown of the number of women and men in different positions
- measures for promoting equality and achieving equality in terms of salaries
- an assessment of the implementation of the measures previously included in the gender equality plan and their results.





The pay survey is used to determine whether there are unjustified pay differences between women and men performing the same or equal work tasks for the same employer. If the review reveals clear differences between the salaries of women and men, the reasons and grounds for the pay gap must be clarified. If there are pay systems in place at the workplace where wages consist of wage components, the main pay components are examined to determine the reasons for the differences that have

emerged. If there is no acceptable reason for the pay gap, the employer must take appropriate corrective measures.

Examples of good practice in gender equality promotion and planning

There are many ways to promote equality in the workplace.

Increasing diversity in organisations

- Set the goal of having a gender-diverse personnel.
- Avoid job advertisements that impose requirements or conditions or that highlight qualities that are perceived to be specific to only one gender.
- Add a mention to job advertisements that applications from both women and men are welcome.
- Encourage women to take up managerial and supervisory positions and advance in their careers.



- Encourage both employers and employees to make choices that do not conform to stereotypes.
- In recruitment, the minority gender in the position can be favoured, if the persons are equal in terms of qualifications and suitability and the choice is based on the plan of the workplace.
- Implement gender-neutral job titles.
- Train management and supervisors to promote and take into account equality in different situations and to intervene in harassment.
- Highlight career development and the perspective of work-life balance and possible solutions in development discussions and other regular conversations.
- Encourage people to highlight any experiences of harassment or other inappropriate treatment.
- Draw up written guidelines on preventing and investigating sexual and gender-based harassment.
- Support flexibility that promotes well-being, such as various leaves and flexible working time solutions.
- Take into account people on family and other leave when making personnel arrangements.


Family-friendly work culture

- The management is aware of the needs of employees at different stages of their lives and views these positively.
- Arrange flexible working hours suitable for different stages of life.
- Parents are encouraged to share family leave and care responsibilities.
- Hire a substitute for a person on family leave.
- Inform employees about possible flexibility and leave and make this information easily available.
- The management and supervisors are aware of the importance of their own actions as role models.




- Take into account the diversity of families, for example, in working hours and commuting arrangements.
- Agree on communicating with a person taking the family leave during the leave.

Training and career

- The work community prepares for the return of an employee from family leave or other long-term leave, for example, by arranging sufficient orientation, updating of skills and providing the necessary flexibility. 
- Strengthen the competence of management and supervisors in promoting equality and taking it into account in various situations.
- Offer equal opportunities for competence development to everyone.
- Ensure that the use of flexibility and leave does not have unreasonable consequences for career, professional development or the permanence of the employment relationship.

Sexual and gender-based harassment

- Make it clear that actions such as speaking in ways that diminish or belittle others and sexually suggestive comments, suggestions, messages, gestures or touching is not allowed at work. 
- Prohibit the display of sexually explicit and pornographic material.
- Ensure that supervisors have the skills to address sexual or gender-based harassment.
- Draw up written guidelines on preventing and investigating sexual and gender-based harassment. Provide information on the guidelines. Ensure that everyone acts in accordance with the guidelines.
- Consider sexual and gender-based harassment in the workplace risk assessment.
- Instruct employees on what to do if a customer behaves in a disturbing manner.
- Include questions on the occurrence of harassment in the workplace in the personnel surveys (see information collected from jobseekers and employees, p. 35).

**No means
No.**

5. Discrimination

Discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of people on any of the grounds of discrimination prohibited by the Non-Discrimination Act, the Act on Equality between Women and Men, the Constitution or the Employment Contracts Act. Discrimination is forbidden in working life. See prohibited grounds for discrimination on p. 37.

- Discrimination may be indirect, direct, harassment, an instruction or order to discriminate against someone, discrimination by association, discrimination by assumption, multiple discrimination or denial of reasonable accommodation to a person with a disability.
- Discrimination is forbidden when hiring someone, during the employment relationship and when ending an employment relationship.
- The employer may also be guilty of discrimination even before hiring in defining the selection criteria or in posting job advertisements.
- The employer must be able to demonstrate that the selection of persons for the position has acceptable criteria related to the quality of the work and that the selection has not been made in a discriminatory manner.
- The job applicant must not be required to have qualities that are not necessary for carrying out the work.
- The employer may not increase the monitoring of the employee's work performance after the employee has contacted the Occupational safety and health authority, the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for



Equality or the trade union due to a suspicion of discrimination (prohibition of countermeasures).

The employer must be aware of the grounds for discrimination. Considering the matter objectively, there must be a connection between the employer's procedure and the grounds for discrimination. However, there may be discrimination, even if the employer did not have a discriminatory intent. The reason for the employer's actions may be financial reasons, for example. An employer guilty of discrimination in working life or their representative may be sentenced to a fine or imprisonment according to the Criminal Code (work discrimination, Chapter 47, Section 3 of the Criminal Code).

A case of discrimination should usually be settled where the suspected situation or action took place. It is advisable to first discuss the matter with the party responsible for the suspected discrimination. If necessary, you should ask for support and help in settling the matter. At the workplace, you can turn to a supervisor, shop steward or occupational safety and health representative.

According to the Act on Equality between Women and Men (Section 10), the employer must provide a written explanation to a jobseeker or employee who considers that they have been discriminated against. As a rule, there is no corresponding obligation in the Non-Discrimination Act, but a written statement is also desirable in this case.



A situation cannot be considered discrimination as referred to in the Non-Discrimination Act and the Act on Equality between Women and Men if none of the grounds for discrimination listed in the acts applies to the jobseeker or employee.

Different forms of discrimination

Discrimination can be

- **direct**, when a person is treated less favourably on the basis of a discriminatory ground than someone else is, has been or would be treated in a similar situation. For example, a foreigner is paid a lower salary than a Finnish employee without an acceptable reason, or dismissal is based solely on age.
- **indirect**, in which case a rule, criterion or practice that appears to be equitable will result in the person being placed at a disadvantage compared to others. For example, an immigrant is not hired for work because jobseekers are required to have a perfect command of Finnish, even though the work performance does not require it.
- **harassment**, such as jokes or name-calling that is racist or refers to sexual minorities and that are made with the intent to offend, or other degrading or humiliating behaviour. Harassment must be relatively serious in such a way as to create a threatening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment can be committed by both the employer and an employee, but official supervision is only directed at the employer's activities.
- **instruction or order to discriminate against someone**
The Employer prohibits hiring a person with a disability, for example.
- **discrimination by association**, where a person is placed at a disadvantage on the basis of a fact or assumption about their close ones. An employee is put in a different position because, for example, their child is disabled or a close friend professes a particular religion.

- **discrimination by assumption**, in which case the discrimination is based on a presumption that may not be true. For example, a person is put in a different position because they are presumed to belong to a sexual minority or to profess a particular religion. In this case, the discrimination is based on a presumption that may not be true.
- **multiple discrimination**, in which a person is discriminated against on the basis of several grounds of discrimination at the same time or in different situations on different grounds of discrimination.
- **denial of reasonable accommodation** for persons with disabilities.

Labour exploitation

All employees have the right to terms and conditions of employment and occupational safety in accordance with the law and collective agreements. If the employer does not comply with the minimum terms of the law or the collective agreement in the employment relationship, this may constitute labour exploitation or human trafficking. Labour exploitation occurs in different sectors, but especially in those that use a lot of subcontracting or foreign labour. The victims of work-related human trafficking are often foreigners.

Labour exploitation refers to exploiting for financial gain an employee who is in a subordinate position in relation to the employer and cannot defend himself or herself. Exploitation can be, for example, underpayment or commissioning work without pay, excessively long hours without breaks or days off, neglecting occupational safety or harassment and intimidation.



Human trafficking is a serious crime, in which exploitation involves the employee having been subject to conditions that violate human dignity by exploiting a dependent position or insecurity. It often involves restriction of freedom, coercion, pressure, intimidation, deception or violence.

Labour exploitation includes offences such as occupational discrimination, extortionate work discrimination, extortion and trafficking in human beings.

Different treatment may also be acceptable

The assessment of discrimination is accompanied by provisions on when a differential treatment is acceptable. Differential treatment is not considered discrimination if the employer can present a legal basis for it. In this case, the differential treatment must be based on the actual requirements concerning the quality of the work tasks and their performance. In addition, it is required that the objective justifying the difference in treatment and the means by which the difference in treatment is implemented are proportionate to the objective. Examples:

- The municipality can hire young people from its own municipality for summer jobs.



- Due to the intimate nature of the work, either a woman or a man can be hired as a personal assistant.

Any procedure in accordance with the gender equality plan or the non-discrimination plan, which aims to implement the objectives of the Non-Discrimination Act or the Act on Equality between Women and Men in practice is also not considered discrimination.

Positive differential treatment may also be permissible if the objective is to achieve effective equality. For example, offering people with disabilities a benefit in the workplace in order to achieve effective equality does not constitute discrimination against other employees. Upon request, the employer shall, without delay, provide a written explanation of the reasons for its procedure to a person with a disability who considers that, due to a denial of reasonable accommodation, they have been discriminated against when applying for a job or position.

Recruitment

Jobseekers must be treated equally. The employer must be able to demonstrate that the selection has acceptable criteria relat-

ed to the quality of the work and that the selection has not been made in a discriminatory manner. The applicant must not be required to have qualities that, in light of an objective assessment, are not necessary for carrying out the work. The recruitment process as a whole should be as open and transparent as possible. It is good practice to use people of different genders and different people in job interviews.

The Non-Discrimination Act requires that the employer assesses the implementation of non-discrimination in recruitment, taking into account different grounds for discrimination.

Job advertisement

The recruitment process starts when drawing up a job advertisement, see p. 7.

The content of the job advertisement may put a job applicant at a disadvantage if it imposes unjustified or discriminatory requirements on the applicant.

The job description and assessment criteria must be defined clearly and in detail so that they can be used to justify the choice made.

Job interview

Only work-related and reasonably justifiable questions should be asked during the job interview. The questions may not infringe on the privacy of the applicant or put the applicant in an unequal position due to factors such as their family situation or ethnicity.

It is forbidden to ask questions regarding matters such as

- social, political or religious beliefs
- trade union membership
- criminal act or other criminal sanction



- health, illness or disability
- sexual orientation or behaviour
- need for or received social welfare services, support measures or other social welfare benefits
- questions that violate gender equality. Therefore, the interview may not include questions about pregnancy, starting a family, family size, child care or care responsibilities, for example.

Data collected on jobseekers and employees

The employer may only process information directly necessary for the employment relationship, which is related to the management of the rights and obligations related to the employer's relationship with the employee or to the benefits provided by the employer to the employees or the specific nature of the duties. Exceptions to this may not be made, even with the consent of the job applicant or the employee. The matter is regulated by the Act on the Protection of Privacy in Working Life (Section 3).

The data must be collected primarily from the job applicant or the employee them-

selves. If the employer collects personal data from elsewhere, the job applicant or employee must give their consent.


In recruitment situations, the employer must assess the necessity of the personal data on the basis of the position that the person has applied for. This applies mainly to data demonstrating the applicant's competence and suitability, and to health data concerning the jobseeker, which are of direct relevance to the management of the employment relationship. In the recruitment process, the anonymity of job applications and the lack of background information (anonymous recruitment) can help the recruiter pay attention to the competencies and work experience relevant to the job.

When preparing employee surveys at the workplace, such as a well-being at work survey, careful consideration should be given to what background information on the respondents is needed and can be collected, as well as what kind of background information is used for grouping together different responses. It may not be possible to connect an individual response to the respondent.




If you suspect that you have been discriminated against at work, follow these steps

Discuss the discriminatory conduct with the employer. Request a report on the matter from the employer. The Act on Equality between Women and Men obliges the employer to submit a report in writing. As a rule, there is no corresponding obligation in the Non-Discrimination Act.

- If necessary, ask your shop steward or the occupational safety and health representative for help. 
- Please remember that if the situation involves harassment or other inappropriate treatment that causes health hazards or other hazards, the employer must take measures to stop it (Occupational Safety and Health Act, Section 28).

If, after discussing with the employer, you still suspect that you have been discriminated against on any grounds prohibited by law or if you do not receive a report on the matter from your employer, you can contact the authorities or your trade union to clarify the matter. If you belong to a trade union, discuss the matter with your shop steward before contacting the union.

- If the suspicion of discrimination concerns a ground for discrimination prohibited by the Act on Equality between Women and Men, contact the Ombudsman for Equality or your trade union. 
- If the suspicion of discrimination concerns a ground for discrimination prohibited by the Non-Discrimination Act, contact the Occupational safety and health authority, the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman or your trade union.
- If the suspicion of discrimination concerns a ground for discrimination pro-


hibited by the Employment Contracts Act, contact the Occupational safety and health authority or your trade union.

- If the situation involves harassment or other inappropriate treatment that causes health hazards or other inappropriate treatment, contact the Occupational safety and health authority or your trade union.
- If necessary, the authorities will direct you to the right party. So do not worry about contacting the wrong authority.
- You can also contact the authorities anonymously.
- Please be aware that the documents you submit to the authority are, as a rule, public.

When reporting work discrimination to the authorities, be prepared to provide the following information:

- What actions or negligence of the employer do you consider to be discrimination?
- On what grounds, mentioned in the law, do you consider that you have been discriminated against?
- Has the employer been aware of the grounds for discrimination against you before making a decision that concerns you?
- Why do you consider that the employer has discriminated against you on this ground?
- How has the employer justified what you consider to be discrimination?

A violation of the prohibition of discrimination may result in the payment of compensation.

- The compensation claim is brought to the district court. 
- In order to bring a possible compensation claim, you should contact your trade union or a lawyer or advocate familiar with labour law.
- Please note that a discrimination case will expire in 1–2 years depending on the case. So act sufficiently quickly.

The grounds for discrimination prohibited by the Act on Equality between Women and Men:

- gender
- pregnancy, childbirth, parenthood and family care obligations
- gender identity
- gender expression

The grounds for discrimination prohibited by the Non-Discrimination Act:

- age
- origin
- nationality
- language
- religion, belief
- opinion, political activity, trade union activity
- family situation
- disability, state of health
- sexual orientation
- other personal reason

The grounds for discrimination prohibited by the Employment Contracts Act:

- fixed-term employment
- part-time employment



Burden of proof

The burden of proof refers to the parties' obligation to substantiate their claims. The party who suspects discrimination must demonstrate that the prohibition of discrimination is likely to have been violated. In order to rebut the presumption of discrimination, the employer must, in turn, prove that there has been no discrimination and that there was an acceptable reason for the procedure. If a person who has experienced discrimination suspects a crime, they can report it to the police.

Prohibition of countermeasures

It is prohibited to target unfavourable treatment or consequences against a person who takes or participates in measures to ensure non-discrimination and equality. This so-called prohibition of countermeasures means, for example, that the employer may not increase the monitoring of the employee's work performance after the employee has contacted the Occupational safety and health authority, the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman or the Ombudsman for Equality due to a suspicion of discrimination.

6. Legislation and glossary

Key legislation

The following laws, among others, include stipulations regarding non-discrimination, equality, equal treatment and the prohibition of discrimination:

[The Constitution of Finland \(731/1999\)](#)

The Constitution (Section 6) prohibits discrimination in general, that is, people are equal before the law. No one may, without justifiable grounds, be placed in an unequal position on the basis of gender, age, background, language, religion, belief, opinion, health, disability or any other personal reason.

[Employment Contracts Act \(55/2001\)](#)

The Employment Contracts Act requires the employer to ensure equal treatment of employees and a good atmosphere at the workplace. The terms and conditions of employment for fixed-term and part-time employment relationships may not be less favourable solely because of the duration of the employment contract or the length of working hours, unless it is justified for appropriate reasons. Employees may not otherwise be placed in a different position without an acceptable reason.

[Non-Discrimination Act \(1325/2014\)](#)

The purpose of the Non-Discrimination Act is to promote non-discrimination and prevent discrimination, as well as to enhance the legal protection of victims of discrimination. The Non-Discrimination Act (Section 8) prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relations,

health, disability, sexual orientation or any other personal grounds. Discrimination is forbidden regardless of whether it is based on a fact or assumption about the person themselves or someone else.

The law requires the employer to evaluate and promote equality in its own operations. The obligation to promote equality applies to all discrimination grounds mentioned in the law. If the employer regularly employs at least 30 people, the employer must draw up a plan for the necessary measures to promote non-discrimination. Starting in June 2025, the plan must also include a report on the conclusions of the workplace non-discrimination assessment.

[Act on Equality between Women and Men \(609/1986; Equality Act\)](#)

The purpose of the Equality Act is to prevent discrimination based on gender, gender identity or gender expression and to promote equality between women and men in a goal-oriented and planned manner, and for this purpose to especially improve the position of women in working life. The law also prohibits sexual and gender-based harassment.

If the employer regularly employs at least 30 employees, the employer must draw up a gender equality plan at least every two years, especially regarding pay and other terms and conditions of employment, according to which measures to promote equality are implemented.

Occupational Safety and Health Act (738/2002)

The Occupational Safety and Health Act defines the obligations of the employer and employees in implementing occupational safety and the basics of occupational safety and health co-operation. It also addresses workplace hazards and their management. Taking into account the nature of the work and activities, the employer must systematically and adequately analyse and identify the risk factors and hazards caused by the work, the working hours, the workspaces, other aspects of the working environment. If they cannot be eliminated, the employer must assess their consequences to the employees' safety and health. In doing so, the employee's age, ageing, gender, professional skills and other personal prerequisites must be taken into account, among other factors.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires the employer to provide sufficient orientation to its employees to their work, duties and working conditions and to ensure that the employee has understood the instructions.

The employer is required to investigate all reports related to inappropriate treatment that causes harm or danger to health. The employer must use the means at their disposal to ensure that the identified harassment or other inappropriate treatment ceases.

The authorities advise and oversee Ombudsman for Equality

The Ombudsman for Equality monitors compliance with the Act on Equality between Women and Men, in particular the prohibition of discrimination and the prohibition of discriminatory advertising. The Ombudsman issues guidance and advice on matters related to the Equality Act, discrim-

ination based on gender, gender identity and gender expression, and the promotion of gender equality.

The Ombudsman for Equality provides instructions and advice to people who suspect that they have been the victim of discrimination prohibited by the Act on Equality between Women and Men. The Ombudsman for Equality also provides information on the content and practical application of the Act. If the Ombudsman for Equality notices that the obligations of the Equality Act are not complied with or that regulations are violated, they must try to prevent it by issuing instructions.

If the Ombudsman for Equality finds that an employer does not draw up a gender equality plan despite being provided instructions and advice, the Ombudsman may demand that the plan be drawn up within a reasonable period of time.

The Ombudsman for Equality has the right to carry out an inspection at a workplace if there is reason to suspect that there has been a violation of the Equality Act or that the equality obligations provided for in the Act have not otherwise been complied with.

Learn more about the topic.

Non-Discrimination Ombudsman

The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman monitors compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act, promotes the implementation of equality and addresses discrimination. The Ombudsman also issues guidance and advice on matters related to the Non-Discrimination Act, the prevention of discrimination and the promotion of non-discrimination.

You can turn to the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman if you have experienced or witnessed discrimination based on age,

origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relations, health, disability, sexual orientation or any other personal grounds.

The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman may issue general recommendations in relation to the Non-Discrimination Act in order to prevent discrimination and promote equality in the workplace. The Ombudsman has the right to carry out an inspection at a location if it is necessary to ensure compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act. The Ombudsman is also authorised to monitor compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act in individual cases of discrimination in working life.

[Learn more about the topic.](#)

Occupational safety and health authority

The Occupational safety and health authority supervises employers' activities. The purpose of the supervision is to determine whether the employer has complied with the prohibition of discrimination under the Non-Discrimination Act and the prohibition of discriminatory job advertising, as well as to assess and promote non-discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination cases may also involve employment questions and experiences of harassment and other inappropriate treatment or harmful workload. In addition to supervision, the occupational safety and health authority issues instructions and advice.

The Occupational safety and health authority also oversees compliance with occupational safety and health regulations and issues instructions and advice on matters related to the health and safety of work and the terms of employment.

[Learn more about the topic.](#)

Key concepts

Ableism describes an attitude in which the lack of disability is considered normal and taken for granted. It also constitutes discrimination based on disability. (source: Vamla)

Adapting working conditions means taking into account individual needs and functional limitations and related solutions at the workplace.

Age-based discrimination refers to prejudice, negative attitudes and unequal treatment based on someone's age.

Ageism is discrimination based on age.

Age-friendliness refers to practices that increase the utilisation of the resources and abilities of employees of different ages at work, as well as taking their needs into account. The experience of age-friendliness is influenced by both communal and individual factors.

Age management refers to the organisation and management of work from the perspective of a person's stage of life and resources.

Anti-racism is active and conscious action against all forms of racism. Anti-racist activity is work that reduces ethnic discrimination, the effects of discriminatory practices and negative prejudices. (source: yhdenvertaisuus.fi)

Anonymous recruitment refers to processing applications without using the job seekers personal data, such as name, photo, date of birth, gender, contact information or native language.

Cultural awareness is knowledge of different cultures, which also includes knowing and understanding one's own culture.

Cumulative discrimination refers to a situation in which a person faces discrimination in the same situation on several grounds, for example on the basis of age and health.

Disabled refers to a person who may need support measures to cope with work or workplace conditions.

Disadvantageous position means that an employee has been objectively disadvantaged in relation to some benefit, obligation, measure, selection criterion or similar compared to other employees or to what is generally accepted and usual procedure on the labour market in similar situations.

Discrimination on multiple grounds refers to a situation in which a person is discriminated against because of two or more of their characteristics. Forms of discrimination on multiple grounds include cumulative, multiple and intersecting discrimination.

Diversity characteristics include e.g. age, gender, disability, health, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, belief, sexual orientation and different levels of training, experience, skills, work style, personality, and values of employees.

Equality at work means equality related to gender, gender identity and gender expression.

A **gender equality plan** is a plan of concrete measures to promote equality and prevent discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or gender expression.

Gender expression refers to expressing gender through dress, behaviour, or other similar means.

Gender identity refers to a person's experience of their own gender.

Gender minority refers to transgender, intergender, transvestite, intersex and gender-neutral people.

Hate speech is an expression that spreads, incites, promotes or justifies racial hatred, xenophobia or any other form of hatred based on intolerance. (source: yhdenvertaisuus.fi)

Intersectional discrimination is a situation in which different grounds intersect and overlap each other, thus together forming a ground for discrimination. For example, a 60-year-old with partial work ability can face discrimination that would not be faced by a younger person with partial work ability or a person of the same age whose work ability is not limited.

Intersex refers to a set of various natural (biological) variations in which innate sex characteristics of the body, such as chromosomes, genitals, or endocrine system, are not unambiguously female or male. (source: Seta)

A **job coach** can support the employer in tailoring work tasks to suit those with partial work ability and in applying for subsidies.

Justifying grounds are related to the definition of discrimination in relation to what kind of differential treatment is acceptable.

Language awareness refers to consciously and actively paying attention and taking into consideration features related to language and vocabulary. (source: Finnish Institute of Occupational Health)

Microaggression is an unintentional or intentional word or act that maintains or reinforces preconceptions or stereotypes and creates a sense of separation, for example, "Where are you really from?" (Sara Salman's example in the Koodarikuiskaaja podcast on 29 May 2022)

Minority stress is a psychological phenomenon that describes a chronic state of stress due to minority status, which is caused by experienced, accumulated experiences of discrimination, along with the anxiety and fear they cause, feelings of being different and experiences of otherness. (source: yhdenvertaisuus.fi)

Multiple discrimination means that a person faces discrimination in more than one situation on different grounds, for example at work due to disability and in the rental market due to ethnicity.

Neurodiversity refers to neurological diversity, the brain's different ways of acting and processing information.

Non-discrimination means that all people are equal regardless of their gender, age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, opinions, disability, health, sexual orientation or other reasons related to their person.

The **Non-Discrimination Ombudsman** monitors compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act, promotes the implementation of equality and addresses discrimination.

The **non-discrimination plan** is a plan of concrete measures to promote non-discrimination.

The task of the **Ombudsman for Equality** is to monitor compliance with the Act on Equality between Women and Men and to provide instructions and advice on issues related to the Act, gender discrimination and the promotion of gender equality.

Orientation refers to measures with which a new employee is guided to their duties and familiarised with the working environment.

Pansexual people are sexually or emotionally attracted to people of all genders. The gender of the interest is irrelevant to them.

A person with **partial work ability** is someone who has access to part of their work ability and the desire to use it.

Positive differential treatment (positive action) is special support that can be provided to ensure effective non-discrimination for people in a weaker or disadvantaged position, such as the elderly or those with partial work ability.

The **prohibition of countermeasures** means that the employer may not tighten the monitoring of an employees' work performance after the employee has taken measures to ensure equality or non-discrimination.

Racialisation is a process through which, for example, assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices related to people's abilities or customs are associated with people because of their skin colour or supposed ethnic background. (source: yhdenvertaisuus.fi)

Racism is a way of thinking in which groups of people are defined as inferior on the basis of characteristics such as ethnic origin, skin colour, nationality, culture, native language or religion.
(source: yhdenvertaisuus.fi)

Reasonable accommodation ensures the effective equality of a person with a disability in various situations.

The **requirement of necessity** means that the employer may only process personal data that is directly necessary for the employee's employment relationship.

The principles and practices of **safer space** aim to create a space in which everyone seeks to build an equal, respectful and open atmosphere and discussion through their own actions. (source: UN Association of Finland)

Sexual minority refers to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and pansexuals.

The **subsidy** for arranging working conditions is used to replace assistive devices. The TE Services may grant discretionary subsidy for arranging working conditions to promote the employment or retention of a person with a disability or partial work ability.

The Occupational safety and health authority oversees compliance with occupational safety and health regulations and issues instructions and advice on matters related to the health and safety of work and the terms of employment.

Wage subsidy is a subsidy that the TE Services may grant to an employer to cover the costs of hiring within the limits of the budgeted resources. It is a monetary compensation for an employer possible having to spend more time than usual on orientation and providing work guidance for an employee. The TE Services decides on the amount and duration of the support on a case-by-case basis.

Further information and sources

Further information

AKAVA, www.akava.fi

Centre for Occupational Safety, www.ttk.fi

Confederation of Finnish Industries EK, www.ek.fi

Diverse Families network, www.monimuotoisetperheet.fi

Family Federation of Finland, www.vaestoliitto.fi

Finlex Data Bank, www.finlex.fi

Finnish institute for health and welfare, www.thl.fi

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, www.ttl.fi

Kela (the Social Insurance Institution of Finland), www.kela.fi

Kirkon työmarkkinalaitos, www.evl.fi/kirkontyomarkkinalaitos

Local Government and County Employers KT, www.kt.fi

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, www.tem.fi

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, www.stm.fi

Multicultural network Moniheli, www.moniheli.fi

Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, www.syrjinta.fi

Occupational Safety and Health Administration, www.tyosuojelu.fi

Ombudsman for Equality, www.tasa-arvo.fi

Seta, www.seta.fi

The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK, www.sak.fi

The FIBS network, Diversity and inclusion selfassessment tool,

The Finnish Confederation of Professionals STTK, www.sttk.fi

The Finnish Diverse Learners' Association, www.eoliitto.fi

The non-discrimination website, www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi

Vates Foundation, www.vates.fi

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Diversity, equality and non-discrimination in the work community

The purpose of the publication is to support workplaces in promoting equality and non-discrimination as well as in managing and taking diversity into account in occupational safety and health. The publication also supports in compliance with the legal obligations related to these topics. The focus is particularly on the obligations under the Act on Equality between Women and Men and the Non-Discrimination Act. The publication also presents good practices and procedures. Workplaces are encouraged to adopt these.

The publication is aimed at the management, supervisors, occupational safety and health personnel, shop stewards and people engaged in HR development.

