



# The 2030 Agenda and NGOs in Finland

## EAPN-Finland perspective

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## The 2030 Agenda is implemented in high profile ways

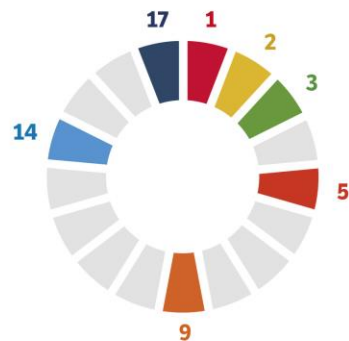
- The 2030 Agenda Implementation Plan (Government Report, which will be discussed in the Parliament Committees), national indicators coming soon
- The Sustainable Development Committee. PM Juha Sipilä as chair and 50 different organisations involved
- Finland is one of the first countries to have prepared a national interpretation of the programme and an action plan. Finland voluntarily reported on its progress at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2030 Agenda meeting in July 2016 (Finland's delegation also included civil society representatives).
- Read more about the 2030 Agenda implementation in Finland here [kestavakehitys.fi/en/agenda2030](https://kestavakehitys.fi/en/agenda2030)

**Still much more ambitious and "long-term view" implementation is needed!**



## NGOs have been very actively connected to the 2030 Agenda

- Some bigger NGOs have places in the Sustainable Development Committee
- [Kepa](#) (NGO platform on global development representing around 300 Finnish civil society organisations) is coordinating the network of almost 50 NGOs (including other umbrella NGOs like SOSTE, Allianssi, Valo and Central Trade Union SAK and the Finnish Church)  
-> The network has made [national and regional recommendations of each 17 Goals](#), is doing common advocacy, awareness raising (including happenings, seminars..) and shadow reporting
- The first shadow report of Finnish NGO's will be published in English at the HLPF in July 2017, as part of the international Social Watch network's Spotlight series of reports
- [Kehys](#) (Finnish NGDO Platform to the European Union, interested in the European Union's efforts to reduce poverty globally) is taking part of the SDG Watch Europe
- Check out [10 minutes video about Agenda 2030 and NGOs role in Finland](#)



### The first part of the civil society report covers the following goals:

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Goal 1: No poverty            | Goal 9: Sustainable industry, innovation and infrastructure |
| Goal 2: No hunger             | Goal 14: Oceans, seas and marine resources                  |
| Goal 3: Health and well-being | Goal 17: Cooperation and partnerships                       |
| Goal 5: Gender equality       |   |



# Finland and the 2030 Agenda

– A follow-up report by CSOs

2017

## Is Finland still the model country for sustainable development?

**FINLAND HAS A STRONG REPUTATION** as a leader in sustainable development. International comparisons show that Finland is doing well on many indicators. Our society is fairly equal, inequality is relatively rare, and most Finns are well educated. In addition, public healthcare and a wide range of cultural and sports services ensure our well-being in a manner that many countries cannot even dream about.

However, our relatively good situation is no reason for us to rest on our laurels. The world is changing, and Finland must keep up with the changes. Because of our good situation, we are well positioned to address the national challenges in sustainable development and take global responsibility. Global problems affect Finland, and our actions have international effects. We are closely connected with the earth's 7.5 billion people, 2 million animal species, five oceans and six continents.

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires all countries to take ambitious measures to improve social justice, the state of the environment and economic sustainability – nationally and internationally. An extensive international programme for ensuring conditions where all life can thrive is a great achievement in itself. The programme includes 17 goals, which makes it the most comprehensive endeavour of its kind in history. The purpose is to ensure that future generations have opportunities for a sustainable life. The 2030 Agenda offers an opportunity to change society and the international community significantly, provided that there is the political will to do so. »







# Goal 1: No poverty

– Everyone is entitled to a life of dignity

Save the Children Finland<sup>3</sup>

**GLOBAL RECOMMENDATION:** The development cooperation funding provided by Finland must be targeted at the poorest people. This is achieved by targeting at least 50 per cent of the funding at the least developed countries. Reducing extreme poverty and ensuring human rights are the main goals for Finland's development policy and must guide all operations. Finland must support an inclusive poverty-reduction policy, with a special focus on the most vulnerable people and social security in developing countries.

**CURRENT SITUATION:** Poverty is not only a lack of money or property. It means multidimensional scarcity with regard to basic needs and well-being. Dominant economic indicators do not measure the many dimensions of poverty.

Reducing poverty is the primary goal for Finland's development policy. Its high-quality implementation calls for stability and a long-term perspective. Some European countries have drawn up development cooperation laws or binding programmes that do not change according to the composition of the government.

In Finland, Prime Minister Sipilä's Government implemented significant cutbacks in the funding for development cooperation, which is now 0.39 per cent of gross national income. The proportion of funding targeted at the poorest countries has decreased to 0.15 per cent, which is clearly below the international goal of 0.2 per cent.

Finland has made a commitment to improve the rights and living conditions of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people.<sup>4</sup> Neither the targeting of development cooperation work at the poorest people nor the effects of this work have been evaluated extensively.

**THE FINLAND OF TOMORROW:** The global reduction of poverty and inequality is at the core of Finland's development policy.

3 Material was collected at a workshop with representatives from Save the Children Finland, the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities, The International Solidarity Association, Finnish Committee for UNICEF and Finland National Committee for UN Women.

4 Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (2016). Finland's Development Policy. One world, common future – Towards sustainable development. Government report to Parliament, 4 February 2016, p. 13.

## Finland must:

- ✓ Make reducing poverty the primary goal of its development policy. Finland must publicly commit to achieving the international goal of 0.7 per cent and prepare a schedule accordingly. At least 50 per cent of Finland's development funding must be targeted at the least developed countries, and ensure that the funding for the poorest countries represents at least 0.2 per cent of gross national income.
- ✓ Evaluate the results of all work supported by means of development cooperation funding, including private-sector projects, in terms of improvement in the standard of living of vulnerable groups and the poorest people and the availability of services for them.
- ✓ Increase its support for measuring well-being, developing social security systems and helping the poorest countries to produce information about inequality.
- ✓ Continue to develop the tax systems of its partner countries and make an international impact to increase the transparency of business operations, reduce capital flight and improve trust among members of the public.
- ✓ Reduce poverty, coherently. Consistency must be one of the principles guiding national decision-making and Finland's comments in the EU. When making trade policy decisions, Finland must assess their effects on the lives of the poorest people.

## Examples of the work carried out by organisations

Save the Children, the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities (Invaliidiliitto) and UNICEF are working together with local partners and governments to reduce poverty by supporting the development of social security systems in different parts of the world. Through its programme of child-friendly social security, Save the Children is developing existing forms of social security in cooperation with the local authorities, to include children more effectively and ensure that the support is used to benefit the child.

Invaliidiliitto is supporting livelihood and food-security groups for the disabled members of its partner organisation in Zambia, where most of the population is living in poverty. The disabled participants of the project have benefited from the new form of social security developed and supported by Finland for the poorest people.

UNICEF cooperates with governments and other operators by supporting the development of child-friendly and gender-sensitive social security systems. Inclusive, integrated social security systems are an effective way to reduce intergenerational poverty and promote equality.



# Goal 1: No poverty

– Everyone is entitled to a life of dignity

SOSTE Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health

**NATIONAL RECOMMENDATION:** For Finland to achieve its goal of reducing the number of people living in poverty by at least 50 per cent, the living conditions of the more than 900,000 people who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion must be improved significantly. **The reduction of poverty requires a systematic social policy: improving the employment rate and reducing long-term unemployment, increasing the production of reasonably priced housing for rent, ensuring strong social security and equal education, and improving the level of basic security.** The introduction of a sufficient basic income would reduce poverty. Poverty statistics must be presented in a gender-sensitive and an age-sensitive manner.

**CURRENT SITUATION:** Almost 17 per cent of people in Finland – or 904,000 people – were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2014. Through its goals for the Europe 2020 strategy, Finland is committed to reducing this number of people to 770,000 by 2020.<sup>5</sup>

Of the people living in Finland, 11.7 per cent – or 631,000 people – belonged to the low-income group in 2015. Their income was less than 60 per cent of the median, or average, income. In 2015, this meant an income of less than EUR 1,185 per month for single-person households. The low-income rate has decreased slightly over the past few years. It was at its highest in 2008, at 13.9 per cent.<sup>6</sup> The minimum budget standard indicates that 8 per cent of the population of Finland – or 440,000 people – are living in poverty. The minimum budget standard indicates a level of poverty that is deeper than relative poverty.<sup>7</sup> Even though the proportion of the population on a low income has decreased slightly, the number of people living on basic security has increased by 50,000 since 2010. Of the people living in Finland, 4.3 per cent – or 243,232 people – were part of a household where

basic security benefits constituted more than 90 per cent of the household's gross income in 2015.<sup>8</sup> Of the children living in Finland, 5 per cent lived in a family relying entirely on basic security in 2014.

In February 2017, the number of unemployed jobseekers was 332,200. Of this total, the number of the long-term unemployed was 117,300. The number of unemployed people has decreased recently, and long-term unemployment began to decrease in February 2017. However, the number of people who have been unemployed for more than two years has continued to increase. This group is considered to be the most difficult to employ.<sup>9</sup> In 2015, the number of people receiving income support was 400,225 – or 7.3 per cent of the population. This represents an increase of 1.8 per cent year-on-year. Nearly one-third of the people belonging to this group receive support over the long term.<sup>10</sup>

“ Even before the cutbacks were implemented, the European Committee of Social Rights stated in its decision that the level of basic security was too low in Finland. ”

The high cost of living is a key reason for difficulties to reach sufficient livelihood. Within the low-income group, housing expenses have increased more rapidly than prices in general, and the level of housing support is lagging behind.<sup>11</sup>

When evaluating the level of basic security, it has been found that, with the exception of pensioners, the current level is not sufficient to cover expenses arising from reasonable minimum consumption. Basic security for an unemployed person living alone currently covers 72 per cent

8 Official Statistics of Finland (2015). Total statistics on income distribution. Income inequality 2015, 4. A total of 243,000 people were relying entirely on basic security in 2015. Statistics Finland, Helsinki; Karvonen, Sakari & Minna Salmi (eds.) (2016). Lapsiköyhyys Suomessa. Työpaperi 30/2016. THL, Helsinki.

9 Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2017). There was a total of 332,200 unemployed jobseekers in February. Employment Bulletin, February 2017. Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Helsinki.

10 National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) (2016). Social Assistance 2015. Official Statistics of Finland. THL, Helsinki.

11 SOSTE Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health (2016). Sosiaalibarometri 2016. Erityiskatsaus toimeentulosta ja sote-uiduksista. SOSTE, Helsinki.

5 Official Statistics of Finland (2016). Income distribution statistics. Income, housing and housing expenditure 2014 (published on 25 May 2016). Statistics Finland, Helsinki.

6 Official Statistics of Finland (2016). Income distribution statistics. Income inequality (international comparison) 2015 (published on 21 December 2016). Statistics Finland, Helsinki.

7 National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) (2016). Perusturvan riittävyyttä ja köyhyys. Suomen sosiaalinen tila 3/2016. Tutkimuksesta tiivistä 23. October 2016. THL, Helsinki.

of the minimum budget standard.<sup>12</sup> The cutbacks on nearly all social security benefits that were implemented in 2016 and will continue to be implemented in 2017 are making the situation more difficult for the low-income group. The cutback was 0.4 per cent in 2016 and will be 0.85 per cent in 2017. In addition, the standard index increases to the benefits will not be made in 2018 or 2019. Even before the implementation of these cutbacks, the European Committee of Social Rights found the level of basic security to be too low in Finland.<sup>13</sup>

**THE FINLAND OF TOMORROW:** The employment rate has improved, unemployment among young people has decreased and the number of long term unemployed people has decreased. As a result of reformed employment services and an active employment policy, everyone has equal opportunities for employment, including people who are partially disabled. Organisations are playing a key role in providing employment and services that promote employment. The production of reasonably priced homes for rent has increased. The level of basic security benefits has improved, and the need for long-term income support has diminished. The number of poor people has decreased. The social security system has been adjusted to support employment, meaning that it is always profitable to accept all employment, including short-term work. The social security system has been streamlined to make it easier for people to receive the services and benefits that they are entitled to.

12 National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) (2016), Perusturvan riittävyyttä ja köyhyys. Suomen sosiaalinen tila 3/2016, Tutkimuksesta tiivistä 23, October 2016. THL, Helsinki.

13 On 12 February 2015, the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) issued its decision on the complaint filed by the Finnish Society of Social Rights (SSOS). According to the Committee, the level of basic security in Finland does not meet the requirements of the European Social Charter of the Council of Europe. See, e.g. <http://www.eapn.fi/sosiaalisten-oikeuksien-komitea-pitaa-suomen-valimmaisturvantasoa-riittamattomana/>

## Finland must:

- ✓ Increase the level of basic security. It is necessary to ensure that there is a sufficient level of primary benefits to reduce dependency on income support. Finland must invest in reducing poverty among families with children, in order to prevent intergenerational poverty. Basic security must be simplified and further develop to better consider the fragmentation of work and enable people who are partially disabled to find employment.
- ✓ Increase the level of investment in the production of reasonably priced homes for rent. In addition, a reasonable level of housing support must be ensured.
- ✓ Make employment the primary goal of macroeconomic policy. Employment services must be reformed in a customer-focused manner, and equal services for all ensured. Finland must invest in an active labour policy, and increase the employment appropriations significantly. The role of organisations as employers and providers of services that promote employment must be acknowledged.
- ✓ Expand the target group for the basic income experiment and increase the size of the sample. A more extensive experiment would allow for bolder solutions to remove welfare traps with regard to housing support, for example. Taxation must be included in the experiment.



## Goal 1: No poverty – Everyone is entitled to a life of dignity

SOSTE Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health

**LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Constitution of Finland ensures that everyone is entitled to a minimum income and sufficient social and health services. Municipalities and regions must ensure that high-quality social and health services are equally available to all. **Customer fees or reimbursements must not prevent or hinder the availability of services.**

**CURRENT SITUATION:** The basic principle of Finnish social and health policy is to provide everyone with sufficient, high-quality services, regardless of their socio-economic status, financial conditions or place of residence. However, the availability and quality of treatment vary according to socio-economic status, with higher social groups being in a more advantaged position. Vulnerable groups, in particular, are at risk of being left without the services they need.

Research has shown that healthcare operations do not necessarily reduce health inequalities. Instead, they may even increase them. Structural factors related to healthcare affect the availability and quality of services. Such factors include the decreasing ability of municipalities to provide outpatient services and the three-channel (healthcare centres, occupational healthcare units and private services) structure of outpatient services, which may also affect the use of hospital services through referral practices. There is room for improvement in the quality of treatment for the most disadvantaged people, in addition to advice and guidance for the elderly.<sup>14</sup>

The share of households of healthcare expenses is higher in Finland than in the other Nordic countries. In 2014, this share was 19.1 per cent in Finland, 15.5 per cent in Sweden, 14.5 per cent in Norway and 13.8 per cent in Denmark.<sup>15</sup> Customer fees have increased over the past two years. They were increased by 9.4 per cent in 2015 and nearly 30 per cent in 2016. Some municipalities considered these increases to be unreasonable and implemented them only partially or not at all. Around 60 per cent of municipalities implemented most of the increases in full.<sup>16</sup> Customer fees put Finns in an unequal position.

The reform of health and social services in Finland may add to pressures to increase fees. This is an unsustainable trend, which has a particularly strong effect on low-income households in need of services and support. The expenses arising from illness may multiply if people choose not to seek help in matters related to health and welfare because of high fees. The fees have caused many people to become indebted. A comprehensive examination of the legislation related to customer fees in social and healthcare services began in early 2017.

“ Customer fees put Finns in an unequal position. ”

**THE FINLAND OF TOMORROW:** The reform of health and social services has improved the availability, accessibility and quality of services. Inequalities in health and well-being have decreased, and the standard has increased. At the same time, services have become more cost-effective. Customer fees for health and social services are at a level that does not prevent people from accessing those services. The practices for not collecting customer fees and for making the fees more reasonable are clear and consistent.

## Municipalities and regions must:

- ✓ Implement the reform of health and social services through practical measures to decrease inequalities in health and well-being. High-quality services must be made available for all. Ensure services for disadvantaged special groups, enhance basic services and make investments in promoting well-being and health.
- ✓ Implement the free-choice system in a manner that promotes equality and accelerates access to treatment and care, particularly at the basic level.
- ✓ Determine customer fee levels in a manner that enables people to access services regardless of their financial position. The grounds for the fees must be consistent across the country. Ensure that the decree on, and practices for, not collecting customer fees and making them more reasonable are clear and consistent. Customers must be actively informed about this option.

14 THL, <https://www.thl.fi/fi/web/hyvinynto-ja-terveysseerat/eriarvoisuus/palvelujarjestelma/terveyspalvelut>

15 OECD Health Statistics

16 Differences in increases to customer fees are undermining equality (SOSTE), <https://www.soste.fi/ajankohtaista/erisuuruiset-asiakasmaksujen-korotukset-na-kerkaval-yhdenvertaisuutta.html?p42=15>. Municipalities have implemented increases to customer fees in social and health services (Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities), <https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/tiedotteet/2016/kunnat-korottaneet-sosiaali-ja-terveydenhuollon-asiakasmaksuja>







## EAPN-Fin actions so far

- **Planning**

The 2030 Agenda is mentioned in EAPN-Fin Strategy 2016-2018 and yearly Action Plans

- **Networking**

Taking part in the NGO network and workshops with member organisations (NGO recommendations, feeding input to the shadow report)

- **Awareness raising**

Sharing information about the 2030 Agenda and poverty reduction

- **Advocacy**

Adding the 2030 Agenda -messages fe. to the European Semester and national advocacy





# Thank you!

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