

Finnish Youth Research Network's Equality and Equity Plan 2022–2024



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Introduction

The obligation to promote equality and equity is linked not only to legislation, but also to the need for social responsibility and justice. The aim is to guarantee equal opportunities for all, regardless of background or group membership. The purpose of this document and its guidelines is to promote equality and equity in the activities of the Finnish Youth Research Network.

In the following, we aim to cover the issues of equality and equity in the Finnish Youth Research Network in the broadest possible way, considering the many areas in which the Network operates. The plan covers research activities, accessibility, communication, recruitment, equality within the working community and preventing and tackling discrimination/harassment. It also specifies how the implementation of the plan will be monitored.

The plan itself sets out the equality and non-discrimination objectives for each policy area and the practices that ensure that these objectives are achieved. A more detailed justification of the guidelines is set out in Annex 1.

Promoting equality and equity in the research activities of the Finnish Youth Research Network

Objective: Integration of the gender and equality perspective in all research activities of the Finnish Youth Research Network

Practices in line with this objective:

- The promotion of equality and equity in society is an important objective of the Finnish Youth Research Network's research activities, which is also addressed in individual research projects
- Established data collection instruments collect information on minority positions and identities of young people
- To consider, as far as possible, the views of young people from different social backgrounds in the research processes of the Finnish Youth Research Network
- Collecting data from young people from different regions and social backgrounds
- The Finnish Youth Research Network studies young people as members of diverse groups and from different social positions at the same time
- Research cooperation with NGOs representing different minority groups
- The Finnish Youth Research Network's publishing activities aim to promote equality and equity and avoid slanderous, racist, sexist or otherwise discriminatory or stigmatising language

Promoting equality and equity in the physical and digital accessibility of the Finnish Youth Research Network

Objective 1: The Finnish Youth Research Network's premises, seminars and other events are accessible to as many people as possible

Practices in line with this objective:

- Ensuring that all office space, seminar rooms and other events' facilities used by the Youth Research Network are as physically accessible as possible
- Systematic communication on physical accessibility of events
- Inviting speakers/performers from different backgrounds to seminars and other events
- Regularly organizing events in English and, when possible, in other languages and providing sign language interpretation when possible
- Organizing regular events in different parts of Finland
- Providing the possibility to follow public events organised by the network virtually and to record them at a later stage, if resources allow
- Considering public transport connections and timetables when organising events
- Combining, where possible, different events to improve accessibility

Objective 2: The online content produced by the Finnish Youth Research Network is accessible to as many people as possible

- Practices in line with this objective:
- Ensuring the accessibility, clarity and user-friendliness of the website
- Ensuring multilingual accessibility and accessibility of the website
- Regularly evaluating the accessibility of the web content of the Finnish Youth Research Network and test it with different user groups
- Abstracts of publications published by the Finnish Youth Research Network are published in both official national languages and in English

Promoting equality and equity in the communication of the Finnish Youth Research Network

Objective: The Finnish Youth Research Network's communication reaches a wide range of groups and individuals from different backgrounds and is technically compliant with accessibility criteria

Practices in line with this objective:

- Using a variety of communication channels (email/newsletter, website, social media, media releases, seminars and launch events)
- Using a variety of communication methods (image, sound and video) and, where possible, different languages
- Ensuring that all communication is as clear as possible
- Communication will be accessible through all established channels (website, social media, newsletter).
- The Finnish Youth Research Society's website has been audited by an external expert and meets the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 level A (partially meets the requirements, which is sufficient for organisations)
- The Finnish Youth Research Network's web publications published since 23 September 2019 have been produced in an accessible format.
- Guidance and training are provided to staff on how to produce accessible content
- Targeting communication to underserved groups where appropriate and according to resources
- Actively promote/promoting social equality and equity emphases in the communication of the Youth Research Network

Promoting equality and equity in the recruitment and career development policies of the YEN Finnish Youth Research Network

Objective 1: The Youth Research Network staff includes people of different ages and backgrounds

Practices in line with this objective:

- Vacancies are advertised in the most multichannel way possible
- Ensuring an open and expert process for recruitment and research funding, with a fair and equitable assessment of the merits of diverse applicants
- When recruiting temporary researchers, attention should be paid to the competencies in the content areas of the research project. In addition, efforts should be made to recruit researchers at

different stages of their careers, to ensure continuity in their careers and to promote the principles of interdisciplinary research within the Finnish Youth Research Network.

- Positive discrimination in the recruitment of temporary project researchers may be applied where it is considered appropriate
- An anonymous application procedure may be used for the recruitment of staff
- Depending on the tasks to be carried out, teleworking contracts with the Finnish Youth Research Network may be possible

Objective 2: Gender, age or other factors do not affect employment opportunities, salary levels or other employment benefits within the Finnish Youth Research Network

Practices in line with this objective:

- It is possible to work part-time, or with a reduced working day or week. Part-time retirement and reduced working hours for social and health reasons can be negotiated separately with the supervisor. The Finnish Youth Research Network applies good practices for a smooth reconciliation of work and family life as far as possible. Avoid off-duty meetings and, where appropriate, assist staff in arranging childcare for off-duty events.
- Reasonable adjustments may be made to work premises, equipment and other arrangements where necessary, for example, to enable a person with a disability to carry out his or her work.
- Family leave or periods of absence due to health reasons will not be considered as a disqualification in the recruitment process.
- The aim is to support employees, who are returning to work after a period of absence due to health issues and to ensure that they receive adequate support.
- As far as possible, efforts will be made to ensure continued funding for the temporary worker on family leave beyond the period of family leave.
- Staff salaries are determined based on merit and job requirements (basic component and individual bonus according to the salary scale)

Promoting equality and equity in the Youth Research Network's working community

Objective: all employees, regardless of their position or background, feel comfortable and secure working in the Finnish Youth Research Network

Practices in line with the objective:

- Ensuring that the atmosphere of discussion in the workplace is respectful of both individuals and groups of people
- The Principles for a Respectful Working Environment and the Guidelines for the Prevention and Handling of Harassment, Misconduct and Inappropriate Behavior in the Youth Research Network have been developed in consultation with staff and are available on the organisation's intranet.
- Fixed-term employees are guaranteed the same employment benefits as those with open-ended contracts

- As far as possible, the same employment benefits are guaranteed to those on grant contracts as to those on salaried contracts. The organisation has established a policy on the status of grant holders, which can be found on the Intranet.
- For those working outside the Capital Region, where appropriate, remote access to discussions concerning the working community and internal communication are/is provided.
- Employees' views on equality and equity in the work community are regularly consulted
- The Finnish Youth Research Network has declared itself a non-discrimination area with a commitment to non-discrimination
- The equality and non-discrimination perspective are taken into account in front-line work and attention is paid to a culture of fairness in the workplace

Tackling discrimination and harassment in the Youth Research Network

Objective: Discrimination observed or perceived in the activities of the Finnish Youth Research Network is addressed and the reporting threshold is low

Practices in line with the objective:

- All members of the Finnish Youth Research Network community are expected to address perceived discrimination or harassment
- Where appropriate, observed/perceived discrimination/harassment between colleagues is reported to the Head of Health and Safety, the Research Director or the Health and Safety Officer.
- Discrimination/harassment experienced or perceived by the employer can also be reported to the Chair of the Board of the Finnish Youth Research Society
- All parties concerned will be consulted by the body dealing with the matter and informed without delay of the actions to be taken in the case
- As a matter of priority, cases of harassment and discrimination will be settled between the parties concerned, with the support of the employer, if necessary, with the help of external counselling or mediation. Other possible sanctions include a warning and a reprimand. Ultimately, it is the employer's responsibility to provide adequate support measures to resolve discrimination situations.
- Serious cases of discrimination or harassment may constitute grounds for dismissal, particularly where the exhortations, reprimands and warnings have not led to an end to the discrimination or harassment.
- Ways of dealing with discrimination/harassment are also regularly raised in development discussions and at community development days
- Clear guidelines on preventing and dealing with harassment situations can be found on the Finnish Youth Research Network's intranet.
- Discrimination/harassment at the workplace, for example by a supervisor or more generally in the activities of the Finnish Youth Research Society or the Youth Research Network, can also be reported to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (<https://www.tyosuojelu.fi/web/en/working-conditions/unfair-treatment>). In addition, you can

contact the Equality Ombudsman (<https://syrjinta.fi/en>) in cases of discrimination and the Equality Ombudsman (<https://tasa-arvo.fi/en/>) in cases of sexual harassment.

Implementation, monitoring and updating of the plan

The employer is responsible for ensuring that all employees of the Finnish Youth Research Network are aware of the equality and non-discrimination policy. New employees will be familiarised with the records of the plan. At organisational level, the orientation will be provided by the Research Director, the Financial Manager, the Research Manager and the Health and Safety Officer. The induction will also be part of the tasks of the potential project manager.

The implementation of the equality and equity plan will be regularly monitored through community meetings and development days. The main responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the plan lies with the Equality and Equal Opportunities Working Group, together with the Health and Safety Manager, the Health and Safety Officer and the Research Director. The Equality and Equal Opportunities Working Group is the Health and Safety Committee if no separate Equality Working Group has been appointed. In practice, monitoring is carried out by means of the following methods:

- The implementation of the equality and non-discrimination plan is monitored every three years, alongside other aspects of well-being at work, by means of a survey of the work community.
- The implementation of the equality and equity plan is assessed annually in staff development discussions between the Director of Research and staff.
- The Equality and Equal Opportunities Working Group evaluates the implementation of the plan annually (e.g., at the Finnish Youth Research Network Development Days) and reports any shortcomings identified to the Head of Health and Safety, the Research Director and the rest of the work community.

The Equality and Equal Opportunities Plan is updated at least every three years. This will be done in consultation with the whole work community.

Annex 1: Justification of the Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan

The Finnish Youth Research Society as a scientific society and the Finnish Youth Research Network as a working community have been characterised by the pursuit of equality and equity. Nevertheless, there is a particular need for concrete and consolidated records on equality. This document sets out the objectives and measures to promote equality and equity in the activities of the Finnish Youth Research Network.

A key objective of equality and equity planning is that the YEN/ Finnish Youth Research Network treats people equally regardless of their age, gender, colour, religion, ethnicity, disability, health status, sexual orientation, gender expression, political affiliation or trade union activities.

The Finnish Youth Research Network's Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan is the product of a collective effort. The background work for the plan was carried out in 2016-2017, during which data was collected (survey, development interviews and mapping of previous policies) and discussions were held in the workplace. The plan was last updated in 2022.

Equality and equity in law

Equality and non-discrimination planning in organisations is regulated by both the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986) and the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014), which are based on the Finnish Constitution, EU directives and several international agreements. According to the Non-Discrimination Act, no one may be discriminated against based on age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activities, family relations, health, disability, sexual orientation or any other personal grounds. The Gender Equality Act aims to promote equality between men and women and to prevent discrimination on grounds of sex, gender identity and gender expression.

The new Equality Act, which entered into force in 2015, is central to this plan, as it introduces a new element in the obligation for employers who regularly employ more than 30 people to draw up an equality plan. The plan can be linked to other planning work in the organisation, such as equality planning. This document therefore links the existing equality planning of the Finnish Youth Research Society and the Finnish Youth Research Network to the more recent equality policy.

Another important legal element is the spirit of the legislation, which has shifted the focus from combating discrimination to promoting equality and non-discrimination. This refers to measures aimed at putting equality into practice and improving the situation of disadvantaged people. For employers, this can mean, for example, positive discrimination and reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. Thus, the emphasis in this plan is also on promoting equality and non-discrimination, not just on tackling discrimination and harassment.

Promoting equality and equity in the research activities of the Finnish Youth Research Network

The Finnish Youth Research Network's research activities are inherently age-sensitive, since virtually all research is based on data collected either from young people themselves or from professionals who meet them. This is based on the perception that young people have less political, economic, legal and discursive power than adults.

Alongside this, the Finnish Youth Research Network has, throughout its life, emphasised gender-sensitive and multicultural/ethnicity-sensitive research approaches. In addition, in recent years, research activities have increasingly focused on young people who identify with gender and sexual minorities. At the same time, however, it is clear that many of the vulnerable groups of young people mentioned in the Equality Act have received less attention. For example, there has been little research on young people with disabilities or young people belonging to/identifying with religious minorities.

A key ethical concern is to avoid characterising the young people under study and reinforcing stereotypes about them. This applies throughout the research process, from the design phase to the reporting of results. The role of research is not only to provide scientifically tested data or enlightened information for decision-makers, but also to diversify the social debate on young people. In this context, an important dimension of the research produced by the Youth Research Network is ethical sustainability.

Digital and physical accessibility

Accessibility generally refers to factors related to the physical environment, such as accessibility for people with reduced mobility to buildings and their various parts, or the existence of an induction loop for the hearing impaired, for example. It is important that information on the accessibility of premises is available in advance. Accessibility, on the other hand, refers to "intangible" accessibility, such as information, online services or attitudes.

The Act on the Provision of Digital Services (306/2019) entered into force in Finland on 1 April 2019, based on the European Union Accessibility Directive. The Act obliged all public sector operators to make their websites compliant with accessibility requirements by 23 September 2020. In addition to public authorities, accessibility requirements apply to public institutions and some organisations. In addition, part of the private sector is also covered by accessibility requirements. The Finnish Youth Research Society is also obliged by law.

The online services and content of organisations covered by the accessibility requirements must meet the accessibility requirements. These are the A and AA level criteria of the 49 international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1. The requirements have been considered on the Finnish Youth Research Society's website (level A, partially met) and the document bases have been updated to comply with the criteria. The Finnish Youth Research Association's communication is carried out through the website, social media platforms and newsletter in an accessible format.

Accessible communication requires both technically correct solutions and an accessible form of content production (e.g., provision of alternative descriptions, correct use of text structures and plain language). Therefore, producing accessible content requires skills at all levels of the organisation. Staff have been

trained in accessibility and guidelines have been developed on how to incorporate accessibility into intranet content.

Ultimately, accessibility is not just about functional ability or language skills. It is important for the Finnish Youth Research Association and the Finnish Youth Research Network to work to ensure that office spaces and events are accessible to all, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, etc.

Promoting equality and equity in the communication of the Finnish Youth Research Network

The Finnish Youth Research Network and society's communication has become more multichannel and sometimes multilingual in recent years. This is a desirable trend from the point of view of equality. The main target and interaction groups for communication are the members of the JRN, the research communities, the professional communities, public authorities, politicians and, finally, all those interested in youth issues.

The main aim of the Finnish Youth Research Society and Finnish Youth Research Network's communication is to communicate research findings in an attractive and understandable way. This does not, of course, mean compromising on focus or equality and equity.

Promoting equality and equity in the recruitment and career development policies of the Finnish Youth Research Network

The previous policies of the Finnish Youth Research Society and the Finnish Youth Research Network have already paid a lot of attention to gender equality, both in recruitment policy and in career development. Previous policies have paid particular attention to the reconciliation of work and family life and to equal pay.

In addition to gender equality, the aim is for the Finnish Youth Research Society and the Finnish Youth Research Network to be multidisciplinary communities. Thus, the visibility of different disciplines in the working community should be consciously considered. In addition to interdisciplinarity, one of the tasks of the JRC is to promote intergenerational dialogue and career paths for researchers at different stages of their careers. Recruiting researchers at different career stages has therefore been considered important.

Partly guided by practice, researchers who have already worked for the Finnish Youth Research Network are recruited, especially for short-term research projects. On the one hand, this may be good personnel policy, but on the other hand it can lead to the formation of a homogeneous research community, where new openings are not created and where it is difficult to enter. Recruitment processes should pay increasing attention to this point.

It can also be noted that many groups at risk of discrimination identified in the Equality Act have been neglected, especially at the level of written documentation. The future recruitment policy and career development of the Finnish Youth Research Society and the Finnish Youth Research Network will seek to take these criteria into account more systematically - both for researchers and for office staff.

A key practical tool mentioned in the legislation to promote equality for groups at risk of discrimination is so-called positive discrimination. The term refers to differences in treatment of people which are intended to promote de facto equality or to prevent or eliminate disadvantages resulting from discrimination. In the Finnish Youth Research Network, positive discrimination may be considered, for example, when recruiting researchers for temporary projects where the researcher's discipline or background may be useful for the successful implementation of the project. In practice, the benefit may relate to reaching or communicating with the target group of the research.

Promoting equality and equity in the Finnish Youth Research Network community

Equality and equity should also be addressed as an internal issue within the working community. This is where the links with safety and security at work and well-being at work more generally become strong (see the document Guidelines for preventing and dealing with harassment, inappropriate treatment and inappropriate behaviour in the Finnish Youth Research Network). From the perspective of equality and equity, it is essential that all employees, regardless of their background, abilities, formal attitudes and political views, are able to participate equally in the daily life, discussions and development activities of the workplace. From the point of view of equality and equity in everyday life, it is essential to pay attention to the atmosphere of discussion, the common culture and rules within the workplace.

An essential dimension of equality and equity in the workplace is the fair treatment of employees in different positions. The Finnish Youth Research Network employs people on permanent and temporary salaried contracts and on grants. In addition, different positions may exist depending on whether you are a researcher or an office worker, or whether you are based in Helsinki or elsewhere.

Tackling discrimination and harassment in the Finnish Youth Research Network

While the promotion of equality and equity is the primary starting point for this plan, it is important to establish policies to address possible discrimination and harassment. Perceived or perceived discrimination and harassment should be addressed in the Finnish Youth Research Network's working community, research activities and events. Possible harassment and inappropriate treatment are regularly identified in staff surveys addressed to the Finnish Youth Research Network's employees.

There are five forms of discrimination in the legislation: direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, refusal of reasonable accommodation and instructions or orders to discriminate. There is also a provision in the legislation prohibiting retaliation. In this case, a person may not be subjected to negative consequences because he or she has participated in a complaint of discrimination and in a procedure to prohibit discrimination. You can find out more about the forms and definitions of discrimination through the legislation or by consulting the book *Yhdenvertaisuus työelämässä* (2015) by Katja Leppänen.