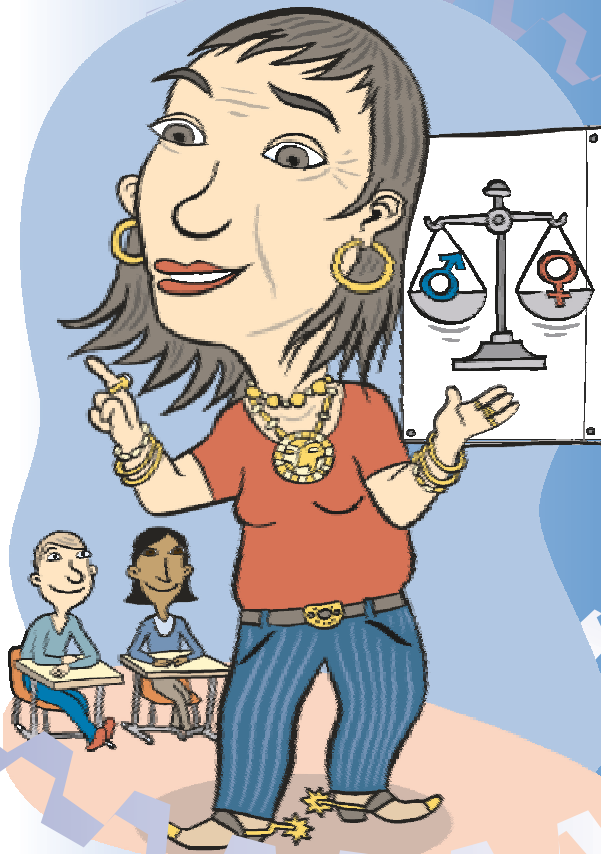


Equality to everyday life

Guide for enterprises and organisations



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WomenIT - Women in Industry and Technology

Funded through the European Social Fund's Equal initiative, the WomenIT project sought to desegregate the division of working life into traditionally gender-identified women's and men's jobs and professions. Women are especially underrepresented in the fields of industry and technology. The activities contained in the WomenIT project, which was underway in 2001–2006, successfully influenced the structures upholding this segregation and also causing inequality in other areas of society.

The WomenIT project was implemented in day care centres, schools, institutes of upper secondary level education, polytechnics, universities, enterprises and labour organisations. These organisations had in place more than 40 different clubs, courses, seminars, research or development operations aimed at encouraging girls and women to embrace technology and to enter fields of technology as well as to motivate them to advance in their careers. Almost 3,000 children, young persons and adults primarily from northern Finland participated in WomenIT activities in 2001–2006.

www.womenit.info

Why the guide?

Marja-Leena Haataja, Merja Korhonen and Marjo Riitta Tervonen

"Equality benefits the whole of society. The human potential of the nation is more effectively utilised for the common good and the needs of different people best taken into account when women and men can equally contribute to society's undertakings." (Act on Equality between Men and Women)

Finnish society is based on the premise of equality regardless of age, gender, religion or race. To this end, statutes have been enacted both at the national and international level. These include the EU Equality Directives, the Finnish Act on Equality between Men and Women, and the Finnish Non-Discrimination Act of 2004 that prohibits discrimination based on age, ethnic origin, language, religion, belief, disability or sexual orientation. It applies to working life, training and trade unions and labour organisations.

In Finland, as in other countries, equality took on the status of "super-ideology" in the 1960s. Equality was also built into social institutions. At the core of the "gender contract" were matters relating to the financial independence and gainful employment of women. However, the combination of paid work and motherhood was fraught with tensions involving the reconciliation of work and family life. Women had to lead a "double life", not only having gainful employment but also bearing the brunt of housework. Fortunately today, shared parenthood encourages men to take responsibility for children and caregiving. The State has also taken steps to promote shared parenting responsibilities. The enactment of the Act on Equality between Men and Women (Equality Act) in 1987 was a major step forward in this direction.

The 1987 Equality Act was amended in 1995 to include provisions on e.g. equality planning in workplaces with more than thirty employees. The most recent amendments to the Act, e.g. allowing shop stewards access to salary details in cases of suspected wage discrimination, came into force on 1 June 2005. Another new aspect of the Act is the expansion of equality planning from work communities only to educational institutes as well.

The guiding principle of the WomenIT (Women in Industry and Technology 2001–2006) project has been work on behalf of equality. Alongside the theme of women and technology, the project has focused on various problems relating to the reconciliation of work and other aspects of life.

One of the elements of the sub-project on working life was *Development of Equal Practices in Working Life*. The training arranged under the auspices of the sub-project focused on the development of company-specific equality plans, the reconciliation of work and family life, occupational safety and wellbeing at work, gender and work organisations, and the production of material for enterprises and organisations – the guide you are now holding.

Whenever speaking of reconciling work and family life, thoughts easily turn to families with small children and to mothers of small children in particular. Undoubtedly, the question of reconciling work and family life is especially topical in families with small children. Youth is a hectic time of life when parents not only care for their children, but also often study, train for a job and seek to establish themselves in the job market, pay off a mortgage and acquire the various trappings of life. However, these pressures are not the sole domain of parents of young children, but apply equally to single people as well.

The perspective of families with children proves inadequate when the question of reconciling the various sectors of life is examined from a life span perspective. The “ordinary script” of life consists of any number of events that one may expect to encounter; additionally, unexpected and unforeseeable events bringing crisis to the best-balanced life may also occur to anyone. This publication seeks to identify and gain broader insight into matters of reconciling work and other aspects of life from the perspective of people of different ages and at different stages in their life. Therefore, the analytical premise for the WomenIT Equality to Everyday Life guide is *the perspective of life span studies*.

What characteristics might be typical of a work community that allows its members a life outside the job? A work community that looks positively on life engages in long-ranging, determined efforts to safeguard both equality and the wellbeing of staff. The privacy of employees is respected while as a rule, the possibility of life outside work taking its toll as well is never forgotten. Individual employees in the workplace can safely bring up their personal needs and expectations. Every effort is made to accommodate wishes, within reason and fairness. In order for the scenario to become reality, structural decisions need to be taken. In other words, circumstances and practices that lower the threshold of open communication need to be put into place.

The *added value provided by this guide* comes through its presentation of information to aid in the preparation of equality plans and the examples it offers from good practices and experiences that apply whether in the public or private sector and small or large organisations. This guide furthermore seeks to provide help to those organisations with fewer

than thirty employees to which no mandatory obligations with regard to equality plans apply but that nevertheless wish to implement the equality principle in their operational policy and are feeling uncertain as to the types of matters that might need to be addressed.

The Equality to Everyday Life guide is a result of the joint efforts of partners and specialists participating in the Equal Practices for Working Life training provided by the WomenIT project. The training team consisted of Ms Ritva Jyrkkä from IT-Mind Ltd, Ms Liisa Kirveskari of the Finnish Metalworkers' Union, Merja Korhonen from the University of Joensuu, Ms Hilikka Poutanen from the University of Oulu Department of Information Processing Science (who also represented the Finnish Association for Human Resource Management – HENRY ry), Ms Helinä Pyykkönen from the Kainuu Forestry Centre, Ms Aila Leino from the Sotkamo employment office, Ms Sinikka Mustakallio of WoM Ltd, and Ms Marja-Leena Haataja, Ms Tiina Hurskainen, Ms Marjo Riitta Tervonen and Ms Johanna Matinmikko of WomenIT. Input in developing this guide was also obtained from the Union of Salaried Employees, the Union of Professional Engineers, Kainuu Telephone Company and Kainuu IT Pool. The guide was translated by Käännös-Aazet. Thank you all for your time and expertise!

IT-Mind and WomenIT have also jointly produced an electronic Equality Workbook. The two publications complement each other and are intended for parallel use. The Equality Workbook is available at www.womenit.info/equalityworkbook.php while this guide can be found at www.womenit.info/equalitytoeverydaylife.php

The *first part* of this guide presents a foundation for gender equality planning. The life span perspective has provided the framework in the WomenIT project for reconciling work and other aspects of life. We have gathered together equality guides published in Finland along with links to useful sites. Descriptions of real-life equality plans are also included.

The development work carried out within the WomenIT project is presented in the *second part* of the booklet. The work has been based on shortcomings observed in earlier plans as well as special issues, development needs and models that have arisen in the WomenIT project both nationally and internationally, which include


- a training model for developing equal practices in working life
- the added value of equality to enterprises and organisations
- the “ten commandments” of equality in the workplace
- fatherhood and work
- human resources work, gender-conscious management and supporting women in job-seeking situations
- interaction and policies in the workplace

- gender discrimination
- good practices in recruitment and human resources policy, along with two examples from international corporations
- “onlies” in the workplace, and
- equality planning in schools

The task of motivating enterprises to focus on equality planning has proved a challenging one. Doubts as to how promoting equality improves “the bottom line” have given rise to much deliberation. As several articles in this guide indicate, there is proof that job satisfaction as well as turnover can be increased through the introduction of a human resources policy that incorporates equality. Workplaces are also obliged under legislation to pay increasing attention to the question of equality.

Our work has also generated greater interest in equality in the workplace. We feel certain our work will bear fruit both in Finland and on the wider European stage.

Part I
POINT OF
DEPARTURE



Reconciliation of work and other aspects of life from a life span perspective

Ms Merja Korhonen

Ms Merja Korhonen PhD (Psych) is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Joensuu. Her research topics include life span and family studies, and she has served as a life span expert in many gender equality projects.

The traditional pattern of life consists of childhood followed by youth, adulthood and ultimately old age. This normative pattern has now come under criticism. Stages of life are less clearly defined and greater flexibility has been introduced to the timetable of life events. Today, many of the expectations and “developmental tasks” that formerly were linked to certain stages of life may occur at any age. Take, for example, the choice of profession and job, or relationships and family life. Linear progression has been replaced with greater choice and fluidity, which also lead to greater insecurity. The need for flexibility and reconciling work and other aspects of life applies to increasing numbers of employees regardless of age and gender. This modern fact of life must be taken into account in the labour market.

Stages of life are constructed socially and produced culturally. An example of this can be found in the recently introduced concept of a “third age” referring to the years between active working age and “genuine old age”, a time of vital maturity that allows people to lead an active life and pursue their personal interests free from the constraints of work. In life choices, individual preferences now play a larger role than the dictates of the normative life script. Persons of different ages may engage in the same activities regardless of age; for example, education, which used to be associated with youth alone, is now becoming a factor permeating life. The concept of life-long learning has made it possible for anyone to pursue further education regardless of age. However, this development is not always a matter of choice. Greater insecurity and fragmentation in the job market is also forcing people to alternate between work and studies.

Life course is determined by the interaction of several forces. Individual choices and decisions influence the course of life while society and institutions actively impact on individuals by setting and selecting normative expectations and ideals. From the perspective of life span

studies, the factors affecting the course of individual lives may be roughly divided into three categories.

1. Normative and regular age-related life events and life tasks common to all include tasks and situations brought about by biological development and age, such as starting and finishing school, qualifying for a profession and establishing a relationship. Not all expectations are shared; cultural scripts vary according to gender and social class. Although culture-related expectations have become less binding, a social clock of some kind ticks in all societies, indicating what is expected at various ages. A case in point is having children, which becomes a topical issue for many women – and increasing numbers of men as well – around the age of thirty at the latest.

Maturing also involves the ageing of one's own parents as one's children grow up. Ageing parents need more care than before, and in some countries children are even formally obliged to provide such care. In Finland, the transition from an agrarian to an urban society in the 1960s and 1970s entailed the allocation of such responsibility to the authorities. Regardless, relatives continue to bear a lion's share of responsibility when it comes to caring for the aged. The dream of a good old age includes the concept of interaction between close relatives – between children and parents. Many working adults wish to take part in caring for their parents and be available to their parents when they are ailing or otherwise in need of aid, even when official caregivers have primary responsibility for caring for an ageing mother or father. Even the best of institutional care cannot replace the emotional import of one's nearest and dearest.

The fact that employees are not only parents to their children but also the children of their parents is gaining more widespread understanding. Matters relating to care are also divided differently at various life stages. The most demanding situation arises when employees must commit to caregiving on two fronts. A "sandwich situation" typically arises in middle age when one's own children still need care and attention and one's ageing parents also require the aid and presence of their children to complement wellbeing services. In situations such as these, compromises in the workplace along with flexible service systems may provide decisive help to the sandwiched caregiver.

2. Normative life events relating to the course of history determine the wider framework for the development of individuals. Such events include war and developments in the economy and society that shape the generational experience. Changes in educational systems, relationships, gender roles and family structures are also reflected in the life situations of individuals. Take for example the changes in the gender system.

Earlier, men could in good conscience devote themselves to work in the role of breadwinner; today, men are expected to share parenting duties and take responsibility for raising children and managing everyday family duties. This development, which many men have welcomed, is examined in greater detail in the article by Mr Jouko Huttunen.

The expectations and pressures of working life nonetheless often seem to win out, as evidenced by statistics: the fathers of small children generally work long hours. Undoubtedly, the competition for jobs demands that men prove their worth, but might this also involve the question of men not being recognised as fathers in the workplace and thus not encouraged to prioritise the needs of their children and family? In job interviews and employee appraisals, are men usually asked about their plans and wishes regarding family?

3. *Unexpected non-normative life events* may be of great significance to the individual. Unforeseeable by nature, they may involve common occurrences such as divorce, unemployment or illness (one's own or that of a loved one). However, such events do not occur to all and are thus unpredictable. The import of unexpected events naturally also varies according to the psychological and social resources of the individual. In their very unforeseeability, these events impact on the whole of a person's life and cause pressures that range across the spectrum of life. Fortunately, such pressures are usually short-lived.

As human lives are intertwined, the effects of unforeseeable life events often ripple wider than merely to one person. How well people can cope with unexpected situations involving themselves or persons close to them depends in part on whether their work community understands that there is life outside the workplace. It is largely a question of allowing personal matters to be made visible for discussion and negotiation. In an atmosphere of caring and mutual trust, employees may be assured that in difficult life circumstances, it will be enough for them to do their best – at least for the time being. When persons in crisis can maintain their dignity and need not expend energy on saving face, they are probably more likely to perform better at the job than a colleague facing sullenness and competitiveness. The support of the work community may even give strength and motivation to getting one's personal life back on track.

The successful reconciliation of work and other aspects of life requires letting employees have a say in how their work is organised. An atmosphere of caring and mutual respect in the workplace is a bonus. The equal treatment of employees, so that flexibility shown to one does not result in an extra burden on others, is naturally also essential. A work community that values its employees presents demanding, albeit also rewarding, challenges to leadership and supervision. We are fortunate

in that we already have examples of investment in the development and wellbeing of employees being profitable in the long run. An excellent example of intra-company development can be found at Octel, which is also discussed in this guide.

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Current status of equality planning and available guides

Marja-Leena Haataja

Ms Marja-Leena Haataja, by training a kindergarten teacher and MA (Ed.), is project coordinator for the WomenIT project at Kajaani University Consortium. She has nearly 20 years' experience in equality work from the sectors of education, training and working life.

Under law, Finnish employers have a general obligation to foster equality in a purposeful and systematic manner. The obligation applies equally to the public and private sector. When the number of employees in a workplace exceeds thirty, employers must incorporate either into the personnel and training plan or in the occupational health and safety action plan measures to promote equality between men and women in the workplace. A separate gender equality plan that must be updated annually may also be prepared for the workplace.

Although the obligation to prepare gender equality plans has been included in the Equality Act since 1995, such plans have yet to become ubiquitous. The office of the Ombudsman for Equality conducted a survey on equality planning in 2002 among 200 workplaces with more than thirty employees. Equality planning was carried out at 36 of the workplaces responding; fifteen of these had prepared a separate equality plan (Ahponen, Paasikoski 2003).

Large enterprises had shown the greatest activity. The prime reason given for considering equality planning unnecessary was the differentiation of jobs into men's and women's work. Additionally, planning was considered difficult and plans were thought to lack any concrete dimensions.

At those enterprises that had a gender equality plan in place, 67% of respondents believed the plan had had beneficial impacts, especially in changing attitudes.

The Act on Equality between Men and Women was reformed in 2005 and now allows the disclosure of salary information in cases of suspected wage discrimination. The obligations on workplaces in regard of equality planning have been made more effective and specific. Under the new Act, the equality plan shall comprise a report on equality in the relevant workplace as well as a study on wages to determine the difference in wages for men and for women. The new Equality Act entered into force

on 1 June 2005 and takes further the provisions of the Acts enacted in 1987 and 1995.

Although small enterprises are exempt from certain provisions of the Act, they may nonetheless take steps in their operations and human resources policy to foster gender equality. The incorporation of equality in HR policy also provides a foundation for wellbeing in the workplace.

Useful links to information for equality planning:

- www.womenit.info/equalityworkbook.php
- www.womenit.info/equalitytoeverydaylife.php
(electronic version of this guide)
- www.stm.fi/Resource.phx/tasa-arvo/english/publications/brochures/toolkit.htm
- www.valt.helsinki.fi/sosio/tutkimus/equal
(Sexual and Gender Minorities at work/Jukka Lehtonen)

Source:

Ahponen, S. & Paasikoski, A. 2003. Suunnitelmista tekoihin. Tasa-arvovaltuutetun selvitys tasa-arvosuunnittelusta työpaikoilla. Tasa-arvovaltuutetun toimisto/STM. Tasa-arvojulkaisuja 2003:1.

How to prepare a gender equality plan

Sinikka Mustakallio

Ms Sinikka Mustakallio is a gender equality consultant with WoM, providing training and consultation on work-related gender equality matters. Focal areas of training and consultation by WoM include equality plans tailored for workplaces and equality in management.

The drafting of an equality plan in the workplace progresses through the following stages:

- setting up an equality team
- establishing the status quo with regard to equality
- compiling statistics, conducting surveys and interviews
- choosing focal areas of development
- planning concrete measures
- putting together the plan (including players and timetables)
- communicating the plan, and
- monitoring implementation and updating the plan as necessary.

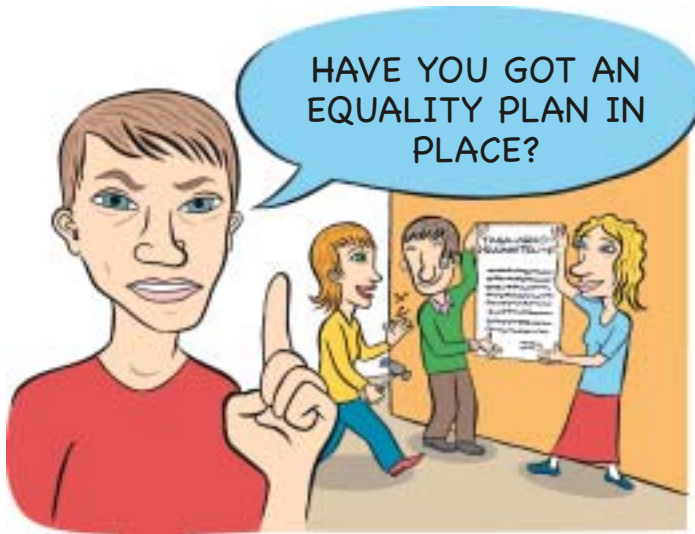
Successful gender equality plans reflect the values of the working place and contain tangible measures that can be and are implemented. The plan is a tool for realising equality in the workplace. It indicates goals, concrete measures, actors and timetables for action, and can be used as a basis for assessing the development of equality. Gender equality plans are mandatory for all workplaces with more than thirty employees.

No single person can prepare a gender equality plan, nor can the responsibility for planning one be allocated to a single person. The first step in preparing the plan is assembling an equality group consisting of management and representatives of various personnel groups. Attention should be paid to the diversity of the group, ensuring that it comprises women and men, persons of different ages and in different life situations, employed in different units of the business or organisation, performing different tasks and representing diverse professions. According to the Equality Act, the equality plan shall be prepared together with employee representatives. However, the responsibility for the plan being prepared lies with the employer.

The drafting of an equality plan also serves as a shared learning process. Initially, members of the group may be slightly puzzled. "We have no problems with equality, what are we expected to do?" New insight and perspective is gradually gained when the matter is studied together and information is sought out and examined from various points of view; what does the concept of gender equality entail in general and how does it relate to a particular workplace? Which factors may hinder or foster equality? At first, discussion must be open and allow all manner of questions.

The next step involves establishing the status quo with regard to equality in the workplace. According to the Equality Act, the equality plan shall include a report on the placement of men and women in different positions and on the classifications, pays and pay differentials between men's and women's jobs. The purpose of studying pay is to uncover whether men and women are paid equal wages for jobs requiring equal competence. Other statistics relating to personnel should also be compiled to determine e.g. how men and women exercise their right to family leave and whether men and women are given equal access to training.

In addition to statistical data, the experiences of employees with regard to the realisation of equality in the workplace should be studied through interviews or questionnaires. Do employees find the opportunities for career advancement equal? Is the workplace atmosphere one of equality? Have there been cases of sexual harassment? What measures to promote equality do employees desire? These are issues that can



only be determined by asking. Employee experiences are fundamental to deciding on measures to be included in a gender equality plan.

Measures to promote equality and bring about wage parity between men and women lie at the very core of a gender equality plan. Guidelines for planning action can be found in Section 6 of the Equality Act, which contains provisions on the obligation on the employer to promote equality.

In order to promote equality, employers shall

- act in a manner that encourages applications for open jobs from men and women alike
- promote an equitable recruitment of women and men in the various jobs
- create equal opportunities for promotion to men and to women
- promote equality in pay and other terms of employment
- develop working conditions to suit both women and men
- facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life for women and men, and
- prevent gender-based discrimination

The items listed above provide a good starting point. However, not all issues need to be addressed at once. The equality plan shall be a tangible plan of action indicating what steps will be taken. The plan need not cover all aspects of equality at once, nor may it be a mere

proclamation that sets out principles. The implementation of measures included in the plan is emphasised in the Equality Act: "The employer shall implement measures to promote equality in accordance with an equality plan that shall be prepared annually and concern pay and other terms of employment in particular."

The third element of the gender equality plan, alongside determining the status quo and measures, is including an evaluation of the implementation and results of measures previously contained in the plan. As a rule, the plan should be evaluated and updated annually; however, a three-year interval may also be agreed upon locally.

Equality plans may be prepared separately or included in a personnel and training plan or an occupational health and safety action plan.

Communicating the plan effectively to all employees and monitoring its implementation are vital matters that must be taken into consideration from the very outset. Responsibility for action shall be clearly allocated and equality training must be provided to the relevant persons. The realisation of equality in the workplace is a process of ongoing and long-ranging learning and action that improves the functioning and productivity of the working community in other aspects as well. At best, it also offers the planners a sense of learning and accomplishment.

Examples of gender equality plans: Octel and the City of Kajaani

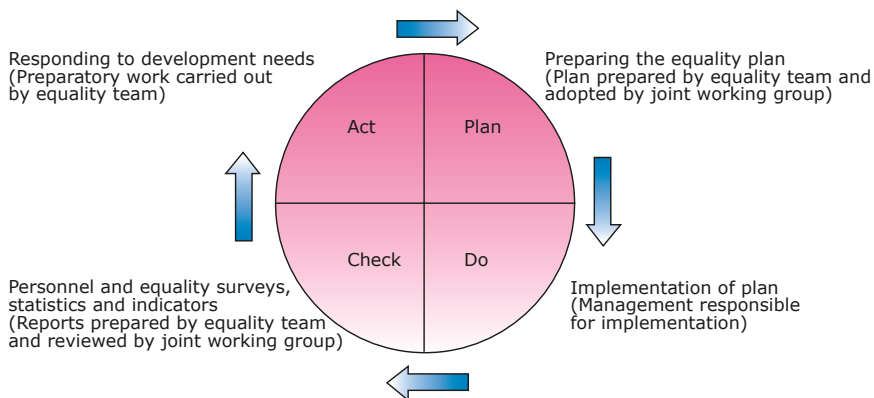
The following chapter describes the gender equality planning and plans of two very different organisations. One is a private business representing a very hands-on approach, while the other is representative of gender equality perspective and guidelines in a large municipal organisation.

A. Octel – awarded in 2004 for its efforts on behalf of equality

Vesa Pääkkönen

Mr Vesa Pääkkönen is Quality Manager and chief shop steward as well as Chairman of the assembly of delegates of the Union of Insurance Employees in Finland. Octel is currently the Pension Insurance Unit in the TietoEnator Group. Mr Pääkkönen has been involved in conceptualising and implementing the equality plan at Octel from the very outset. In 2003, The Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees STTK awarded him a prize for

Equality work at Octel



outstanding work in promoting equality, while Octel was the recipient of the Ministry of Social Services and Health gender equality award in 2004. Mr Pääkkönen has given several talks on gender equality work at Octel.

Octel started up in 1995 to provide IT hosting services to employment pension institutions. The company assumed responsibility for the functioning of its clients' information system and telecommunications network, offering its clients data processing, network and specialist services. Octel was held wholly by employment pension institutions until May 2004, at which time the entire capital stock was sold to TietoEnator.

Early on in the business, the company sought to intensely cut costs. The savings were achieved in the traditional manner of reducing personnel. Out of slightly over one hundred employees, 35 were dismissed for reasons of productivity or economy. Most of those fired were women. The violation of the Equality Act in the firing of one employee was subsequently resolved by the Ombudsman for Equality in favour of the employee. This investigation brought us up against our attitudes toward equality and we came to realise that Octel had not given the consideration required under law to equality between men and women. These facts led to Octel considering the inclusion of a gender equality plan as provided under law in its general human resources management principles. A team was established to draft the plan, which was completed in autumn 1995 as the first gender equality plan in the insurance sector.

Drafting of the first equality plan brought agreement on the common principles to be employed in its implementation and monitoring. The goal was to make the plan as simple and tangible as possible and to have management assume responsibility for its implementation. The equality team was tasked with monitoring realisation through statistics and with preparing a plan for the coming year.

Ultimately, the equality plan became a covenant between management and employees, as well as a template on how to introduce greater equality to staff and to the company. The equality plan has given rise to equality-conscious principles and employment processes that cover recruitment, questions asked of job seekers at interviews and the skills besides professional expertise required of a potential Octel employee.

The plan has been used to enhance the scope and quality of training provided by Octel. Training seeks to build on the professional expertise of employees and to provide all with equal career advancement opportunities regardless of gender. The plan also addresses wage parity and incorporates occupational health and quality management system aspects as well. Negative attitudes toward equality are combated with e.g. gender sensitivity training. Perhaps as a result of the plan – or perhaps because of the men employed at Octel – paternity leave and other types of family leave are looked upon favourably at Octel. Several men at the company have exercised their right to child care leave or job alternation leave to look after their children once their wife has returned to her own work.

The equality team monitors the implementation of the equality plan on an annual basis. The team is provided with statistical information on wages, training, family leaves and recruitment. The success of the plan is also monitored through an equality survey conducted together with an employee satisfaction survey that seeks to plumb e.g. employee attitudes toward equality. The survey results are used when setting equality objectives for the coming year.

The first equality plan to be drafted was widely publicised in the insurance industry. Octel was a prime example of how to successfully foster equality in a male-dominated company. The positive publicity also encouraged management to carry on and further build on equality efforts. It also served to dispel prejudices about equality. Octel has now been drafting an annual equality plan for almost a decade and they continue to generate popular interest. Hardly a day goes by without equality being discussed at Octel. Employees expect compliance with the equality plan and slip-ups in attitudes are quickly dealt with. In other words, equality is no longer a taboo subject at Octel – it is openly discussed and its realisation evaluated. This allows constant progress to be made in securing greater equality.

The following are the pivotal characteristics of successful equality plans at Octel:

- the plan is prepared for one year at a time.
- it supersedes mere rhetoric; it is concrete and target-oriented.
- it is designed specifically for the needs of the company and its employees.
- its realisation is monitored through indicators and a survey by an independent team that reports to a joint working group on findings and accomplishments.
- every year, new specific areas of focus and improvement are selected for the plan.
- the plan is linked to the quality management system, corporate strategy and the occupational safety and health plan.
- management is responsible for the realisation of the plan.
- human resources management perceives the plan as a shared tool and the plan thus also represents a covenant on the manners and terms on which activities are developed together with employees.
- the plan immediately allowed wage disparities to be remedied, resulting in a positive attitude on the part of employees.

B. City of Kajaani equality plan

Paula Tokkonen

Ms Paula Tokkonen is human resources secretary for the City of Kajaani and responsible, among other things, for employment and wellbeing at work issues. She was secretary to the working group preparing the city's gender equality plan.

At the end of 2003, the City of Kajaani had 2,424 employees of whom 1,780 (73.4%) were women and 644 (26.6%) men. In supervisory positions, there were 120 women (61%) and 77 men (39%). The median monthly salary of women acting as supervisors of profit centres was €2,752; men in similar positions earned €3,202. The median monthly salary of all female employees was €2,002 while that of male employees was €2,343. The median age of employees was 45.5 years, with the age group 40–49 being the largest with 38.2% of all employees. Only 6.7% of employees were under the age of thirty.

The current human resources strategy of the City of Kajaani was adopted by the City Board in May 2002. The strategy highlights the values of community, fairness and productivity. Under the vision extending to 2008, the City of Kajaani seeks to be a good and valued employer. All city employees should feel appreciated. It was decided to draft a gender equality plan to support the implementation of the human resources

strategy. The plan was prepared by a team consisting of representatives of the main contracting organisations (labour unions) in the municipal sector along with the human resources manager, City Council and human resources secretary representing the municipal employer. The City Council adopted the plan on 1 December 2003.

The city's equality plan approaches the concept of equality from a broad perspective. Equality is examined from the viewpoints of gender, age groups, different types of employment, management and wage policy. The plan starts from the premise of equal treatment in all regards. Fostering equality is not only the statutory obligation of the employer but also in its best interest. Successful and active equality measures contribute to positive employer image and help increase employee motivation and workplace satisfaction.

In Kajaani, the city organisation comprises four branches, 23 areas of responsibility and some 170 profit centres. Managers for areas of responsibility and supervisors of profit centres number 112 along with 22 other supervisory positions. The equal and fair treatment of employees in an organisation as extensive and dispersed as this presents the employer with a huge challenge. The equality plan provides the workplaces and supervisors with a set of uniform instructions and practical tools for promoting equality and fair wage policies among employees of different sexes and ages and with different terms of employment. The purpose of the equality plan is to guide the municipal organisation to act in the manner required of employers under legislation. While the realisation of equality is monitored by several authorities, awareness of personal rights has also increased among individuals. This further presents the employer with the challenge of paying particular attention to the realisation of equality.

In practice, the implementation of the city's equality plan falls on supervisors, as promoting equality is an integral element of management. Under the principles and rules of internal supervision, the entire work organisation is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the equality plan, with ultimate responsibility falling to the City Board. A report on the implementation of the equality plan is submitted annually to the City Council as well. The implementation of the plan is monitored through annual studies of the functioning of working groups and in the City's human resources statement as well as in workplace meetings and employee appraisals.

Additionally, it is desirable for City units to prepare concrete plans for promoting equality within their individual working communities. As part of the Kainuu administrative model experiment, 42% of City employees transferred to the employ of Kainuu Province on 1 January 2005. The City hopes the provincial employer will continue to invest in fostering equality among its employees.

Part II
DEVELOPMENT
WORK AND
PARTICULAR
ISSUES IN
THE WOMENIT
PROJECT

The *life course perspective* is one of the ways WomenIT brings added value to equality planning. We wish to expand the debate on work and family life to encompass work and life in general, thus better taking into consideration all members of work communities – from trainees to soon-to-be pensioners and from parents of small children to people living alone – and their different life situations.

Developing equal practices in working life

Marjo Riitta Tervonen

Based at the Kajaani University Consortium, Ms Marjo Riitta Tervonen, MA (Ed.), was project manager of the working life-oriented sub-project of the WomenIT project in 2002–2005.

The WomenIT training on developing equal practices in working life was organised as four two-day meetings between February 2003 and February 2004. The purpose of these seminars was to create new models for reconciling work and other aspects of life and to develop equal practices in working life by innovating support models and enhancing the ability of work communities to engage in equality planning. Four days of training were organised jointly with training on the subject of gender in career choice, careers guidance and recruitment provided to vocational guidance experts. Representatives of labour market organisations (Union of Salaried Employees, Union of Professional Engineers and the Finnish Metalworkers' Union) as well as enterprises and labour organisations participated in the training, which was provided by consultant, Pirkko-Liisa Ketolainen Lic.Ed. of *Psykologian Tieto-Taito Ltd*, Päivi-Katriina Juutilainen PhD of the University of Joensuu and Managing Director Sinikka Mustakallio of *WoM*.



Participants were not easy to recruit for training. Equality is yet to be perceived a major issue even in human resources planning despite workplaces with more than thirty employees having, under the Equality Act, been obligated to prepare equality plans since 1995. WomenIT has actively underscored themes relating to equality planning since the inception of the project. It could indeed be noted that the theme seminar held towards the end of the training schedule attracted new participants. The seminar resulted in the launch of the equality planning process in several work communities (e.g. Kainuu Forestry Centre, Kajaani University Consortium and the Department of Information Processing Science at the University of Oulu and initiated permanent processes in the minds of individuals and work communities. Training participants also contributed to preparation of this Equality to Everyday Life guide aimed at enterprises and organisations.

A recommended good practice

- is instituting similar training, especially to supervisors and management. The commitment of management is essential to an equal work community.

Added value to enterprises and organisations provided by equality

Inkeri Ruuska

Ms Inkeri Ruuska, LL.M., Lic.Tech., is Researcher at Helsinki University of Technology's Laboratory of Work Psychology and Leadership. She has also served as development consultant in various enterprises as well as director and HR development officer in the banking sector.

The successful reconciliation of all aspects of life benefits employers and employees alike. The human being is a whole and the various aspects of life must all be taken into consideration for a balance to be achieved. In future, those employers that are able to offer employees interesting jobs that also cater for the need to balance different areas of life will certainly fare best in the competition for skilled labour.

The balance of work and life can be examined on many levels. On the one hand, it involves the choices of *individuals* and their opportunities to make decisions about their own lives. Different needs rise to the fore at different stages of life. Families with children are certainly not the only ones needing to reconcile work and other life aspects; the same applies also to single people, or for example people caring for their ageing parents.

Reconciliation is a life-long process. The various stages of employees' lifecycles and the different needs arising should be acknowledged in the workplace. *Organisations* may empower or obstruct a balanced life while *society and legislation* provide a regulatory framework that applies to employers and employees alike.

Human resources strategies and equality planning should reflect a desire to balance work and life. HR strategies typically refer to enhancing the wellbeing of employees, but seldom specifically comment on the reconciliation of work and other aspects of life. Organisational values affect the balance attainable in workplaces and the practical implementation of values is decisive. This shows in the work community e.g. in the way that supervisors and colleagues make room for different life situations and in the types of matters that can be discussed in the workplace. Children are often only talked about when they are sick and someone must stay home to look after them, or when someone is about to take maternity leave. The organisational culture can allow the different life situations of employees to be taken into consideration. Work and other aspects of life need not be seen as opposites, but rather as complementary. Supervisors are key, as they must know their employees and listen to them if life situations are to enter the picture. Supervisory action can contribute to greater balance.

Various arrangements may be put into place to support the reconciliation of work and family life. In Finland, statutory family leave includes maternity and paternity leave, parental leave, childcare leave (full time and part-time) and temporary childcare leaves in cases of illness. Family leave is mostly taken by women; only three per cent of fathers take advantage of their opportunity to take childcare leave. The reconciliation of work and family life is very much an equality issue, especially since it is mainly women who take advantage of flexible work arrangements. Not all flexibility is voluntary. Traditionally, women play the key role in the everyday life of families. Finnish women today are fully involved in working life whilst also retaining their position as primary family caretaker. Shared parenting is thought to enhance equality in working life. Family-friendly policies may encourage more men to take family leave. This calls not only for the personal commitment of men, but also for organisational cultures to allow men to be absent for family reasons instead of considering family a concern for women only.

Various policies to support the reconciliation of work and family life can be created in the workplace. Flexibility cuts both ways. The flexibility of employees at peak times on project work or in customer service can be rewarded as time off at the time of their choosing. Often, arrangements of this type look good on paper while their practical implementation calls for much work with regard to both attitudes and day-to-day activities.

Flexible working hours enable different life tasks to be accommodated. Flexitime and “working hour banks” have been found useful, as they allow shorter day care for children and the flexible management of personal errands. There are, however, some negative aspects to flexitime as well, such as losing sense of community in the workplace when people spend less time together at work. In these cases, particular attention should be paid to workplace meetings and the dissemination of information to ensure that those working different hours also have an opportunity to meet and discuss their work.

Different ways of organising work can contribute to flexibility. In teamwork, responsibilities and duties are shared by team members, reducing dependence on any single employee. Project work also includes various stages that call for flexibility on the part of employer and employee alike.

Remote work makes working possible irrespective of time or place. When work is a constant presence in the home, however, the boundary between work and leisure may become blurred and the value of the home as a place of relaxation will suffer. In order to succeed, remote work calls for sufficient technical and emotional support. Remote workers may lose touch with the work community. Remote work is usually only an occasional way of working. Working hours may grow longer when work is brought home.

Some employers offer their employees home care for sick children. In effect, the employer pays for a nurse so that the employee can focus on his or her work. The practice has been criticised for aiming to safeguard productivity and efficiency instead of embodying any genuine family-friendly attitudes. However, if the practice is based on voluntary participation, it widens the range of options open to families.

Many practical events and actions also impact on the reconciliation of various aspects of life. These include e.g. family events that allow employees to get to know their colleagues’ families. Children value highly a chance to visit their parents’ workplace. Staff canteens may sell takeaway food to ease the burdens of everyday life. The list of examples could go on forever – creativity should know no bounds!

Since workplaces differ from one another, there are no universal answers. Different people also perceive different ways of reconciling work and family life differently. Some find one day of remote work each week a comfortable change of pace while others abhor working at home. Any arrangements also have real or perceived effects on personal finances. The real effects in particular include reduced financial benefits, such as lower salary or loss of pension benefits, while impacts on career prospects are often perceived as a threat.

What effect do reduced hours have on career prospects? What value is given to years spent at home? It is largely a question of the types of expertise and experience that the organisation values, and of what is permitted. Might staying at home with children offer an opportunity to learn organisational and conflict resolution skills that would come to great advantage in the workplace as well?

A balanced personal life has a beneficial impact on work as well. Studies have shown that various arrangements seeking to balance work and other aspects of life increase the sense of well-being within an organisation. Other factors impacting on wellbeing include workplace culture and personal coping strategies, which together contribute to balance and thus wellbeing.

The financial effects of a proper balance between work and other aspects of life are difficult to gauge. However, it is obvious that the wellbeing of employees reduces absence due to illness and cuts occupational healthcare costs. A good balance between the various aspects of life also brings greater motivation at work, which may reduce churn. Properly supported, the successful reconciliation of work and family life effectively safeguards the workplace's resources. Measures to promote such reconciliation also improve workplace atmosphere and interaction along with productivity and quality of job performance.

The much-talked-about labour shortage will force organisations to think about the types of employers that will prove attractive in the future. What kinds of organisations will people be ready to commit to – those that view people merely as employees and require endless over-achievement, or those that have a more comprehensive view of people and the different life roles they play, and offer them choices along with meaningful work? The latter kind of employer also understands that wellbeing arises from the various parts of life being in balance and that work is only a part of the wide spectrum of life. Practices that aim at balancing work and other aspects of life will prove valuable assets in the competition for skilled employees.

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The Ten Commandments of a work community of equals

Marjo Riitta Tervonen

Equal work communities

- have in place a gender equality plan as provided under law
- have management committed to promoting equality; good leadership is characterised by fairness, appreciation, encouragement and an understanding of diversity
- pay equal pay for equal work
- provide an opportunity to reconcile work with other aspects of life and encourage employees to take advantage of family leave
- do not tolerate bullying or sexual harassment
- have an open and friendly atmosphere that encourages conversation
- share the work equitably
- give members of the work community a say in all work-related matters;
- recruit the most qualified and suitable candidate for a job, and
- offer employees equal opportunities to build on their expertise.

Good fathers make good employees

Jouko Huttunen

Mr Jouko Huttunen, D.Ed, is a fixed-term professor of education at the Jyväskylä University Department of Education. For him, fatherhood and being a father has been a particular focus in family studies. Mr Huttunen has also been active in the research and men's divisions of the Council for Equality since the 1980s.

Finnish young men are among the top ranks in Europe in their dedication to fatherhood, even if the demands and pressures of work continue to constitute an obstacle to better fatherhood in Finland as well as in other countries. We know that fathers of small children work the longest hours, and men taking paternity leave or parental leave are still frowned upon at many workplaces. However, family-friendliness is quickly becoming one of the competitive advantages – or at the very least an image factor – for successful enterprises and organisations. Family-friendliness may be manifest in as little as men not having to hide the fact that they

are becoming fathers – instead, the work community finds fatherhood empowering – or go so far as to provide tangible support mechanisms to fathers-to-be. These may be motivated by a sense of reciprocity: when we help men grow into fatherhood, we also, over time, help make them better employees and driving forces in the work community.

Family-friendliness is most apparent in attitudes towards family leave taken by employees. In Finland, family leave refers to arrangements that allow the parents of small children to stay at home for a certain period of time. With the exception of maternity leave (105 working days), these leaves are also available to fathers. In chronological order from the time of birth, the leaves available to father are paternity leave, parental leave and childcare leave, which are briefly described below:

- paternity leave: 1–18 working days during the maternity allowance or parental allowance period and, if the father takes at least the last two weeks of parental leave, he is furthermore entitled to additional paternity leave of 1–12 working days that must be taken immediately following the parental leave
- full-time or partial parental allowance: 158 working days from the end of the period for which maternity allowance is paid
- full-time childcare leave: looking after a child under the age of three
- partial childcare leave: until the end of the second year of school
- temporary childcare leave: 1–4 working days to arrange or personally attend to the care of a sick child under the age of ten
- right to temporary absence due to pressing family reasons: absence to care for family member or other close relative when necessary because of illness, accident or other pressing circumstances

Further information: The Social Insurance Institution of Finland <http://www.kela.fi/in/internet/english.nsf>

The earnings-linked parenting allowance paid by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland during paternity and parental leave is equal in amount to sickness allowance. Childcare leave is only subsidised with a fixed-amount child home care allowance. Taxation effectively balances out any drop in income and the fall in family income on an annual level is not nearly as marked as it would first appear. Calculations show that a family of average income loses ca. €50–€150/month, depending on the parents' income, if the father exercises the right to parental leave instead of the mother (see e.g. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Fatherhood Committee Report 1999, Annex 1). Finally, one may ask whether the actual loss (for example €100/month) can fully be construed as a loss in terms of family and children.

Encouragement towards shared parenting leave is important in terms of



active fatherhood, as it allows fathers to grow together with their children while also realising the children's right to both parents in the deepest psychological sense of the concept. Work also benefits, since absences are distributed more evenly when both parents take advantage of family leave opportunities and participate equally in looking after a sick child. Additionally, family leaves allow both parents to maintain active ties with working life and the workplace and to keep up their professional skills. If parents shared family leave more equally, the cost to employers of such leave would be distributed more evenly between male and female dominated industries. In terms of the national economy, this might have a positive impact on employment in female-dominated sectors.

Workplaces could introduce special "daddy tracks", career paths geared to fathers of young children. A minimum requirement for a workplace could well be having an information folder on employee rights and opportunities available to new fathers. The daddy track might also comprise a personalised plan on how best to schedule parental leave or how the workplace might meet the new father halfway in terms of flexible working hours or lighter duties. The cost to the organisation of preparing and maintaining such a programme would be negligible, but receiving expert advice and support would be invaluable to the fathers. Fatherhood programmes tailored to specific industries and workplaces would give young and inexperienced fathers in particular "permission", in effect, to give of their time to their families.

As studies already indicate that fathers of small children make the best employees, investment in them is certainly worth the while. A fatherhood programme spanning a few years would pay back with interest the investment made in the father. In addition to increased loyalty to the workplace and a higher work ethic, successfully daddy-tracked men also bring their special contribution to the social environment of the workplace. Studies show that fathers who are involved in caring for their children grow to assume a wider sense of responsibility as well – responsibility for other people, responsibility for those weaker than themselves and responsibility for common causes. How many work communities are there that would benefit from male employees who are paternal (in the best sense of the word) and can support their younger colleagues – who do not feel any boyish need to pretend to be something bigger than they are, or bully others? Grown men who are aware of their responsibilities are also prime candidates for mentors, a commodity always in short supply in workplaces.

Men themselves would reap the greatest benefits of daddy tracking. The renowned American parenting expert Dr Benjamin Spock noted that not one of the hundreds or thousands of men he had met had ever regretted having spent too little time at work. Instead, he had seen too many men in tears for not having been able or willing to spend enough time with their children. It would be wise to consider how well a man carrying a deep burden of guilt over fatherhood can perform in the workplace. In this respect as well, the best employees are those who are at peace with themselves.

Good practices recommended by WomenIT:

- changing the grounds on which costs arising from parenthood are divided between men and women so that the employers of men assume part of the burden
- catering for the needs of single households in the HR strategy
- offering employees the opportunity to care for their elderly parents and take leave for that purpose when necessary
- family leave, study leave
- daddy tracks

Human resources, recruitment and management

A. Human resources work and gender-conscious management

Hilkka Poutanen

Ms Hilkka Poutanen, MA (Ed.), works in human resources and organisational planning at the University of Oulu Department of Information Processing Science. She also heads the Oulu division of The Finnish Association for Human Resource Management – HENRY ry. Ms Poutanen represented both the Department and HENRY in the WomenIT sub-project of reconciling work and other aspects of life.

I will approach the topic of this article – human resources work and gender-conscious management – from several perspectives. I intend to describe the development of organisations and HR management and use different eras to conduct contentual analyses on the subjects. On the other hand, I will also examine the development of gender consciousness in society and its prospects in HR management, largely because current HR practices by definition have evolved in the context of lengthy historical development. It is employee behaviour that holds a mirror up to old traditional roles and also reflects changes and progress in society. A clearer understanding of the historical background of being men and women and unmasking highly subconscious gender-oriented everyday activities can hopefully help us abandon mutual recrimination and find new and better chances of working together on behalf of equality and balance in working life.

The first formal organisations of supervisors and subordinates were created and developed in the church and army. Functional and strategic planning in organisations has largely been based on the structures of the aforementioned institutions, so much so in fact that the vocabulary of management continues to draw from the military – strategy, for example. The male culture of work and leadership is strongly rooted in the military tradition. In the 1960s, the work of Edgar Schein in psychology introduced the aspect of human behaviour to organisations. This gave rise to organisational psychology. Schein's thoughts and research are based on the premise that people can accomplish more in groups than alone. At the same time, they can reach their shared goals and objectives by reorganising and differentiating duties, thus creating the need for supervisory skills to control and bring together the functions of the various units of the organisation.

Western gender philosophy is based on the Aristotelian conception of man being a human being and woman being a mutilated man. Over the centuries, the division of tasks between men and women has been based on both physical strength and biology. Intellect has also been considered dependent on gender. For all of the above reasons, women have been relegated to caring duties both in the home and subsequently in paid work outside the home, while men have taken into hand financial and political duties and leadership. The hierarchies between and within social classes have been intense and self-evident. Today, many older practices that were based on gender have disappeared or evolved. Nonetheless, such an immensely long period of gender-specific human history continues to exert an influence in the new millennium through our social and educational philosophies. How are work and the fruits of labour appreciated when the worker is male or female? This encapsulates the single greatest developmental challenge facing modern human resources management.

According to literature on HR management, the first official HR management function and department was started in 1920. HR management has seen considerable changes over the years. In time, it has developed from a system of gathering and keeping records on employees to a strategic partner to finance and marketing in enterprises. In recent years, wellbeing at work, meaningful duties and management by coaching have all played important roles in HR work at all levels of the organisation.

Research into HR management has analysed HR efforts from the viewpoints of employee selection, compensation and performance. Strategic HR management first started to develop in the 1980s. Its four traditional elements are personnel selection, compensation, evaluation and development. The term "knowledge management" is often brought up in this context. Since the turn of the millennium, HR management has been examined more widely and the term "knowledge leadership" has been introduced.

The sectors of HR strategy – recruitment, induction, development, motivation and HR administration – are the tangible cornerstones of HR management that can be used to benchmark gender-conscious human resources work. Job descriptions for recruitment purposes and job advertisements can be prepared in a manner that favours one gender above the other. In such a case, hidden gender conceptions as to competence may also impact on the selection process. When new employees are inducted and tutored by employees who have been with the organisation longer, existing policies and procedures are often transferred as givens if time has not been taken to review them.

Personnel development – professional and vocational advancement – is

the most obvious reflection of equality in an organisation. It involves such concepts as skill profiles, employee appraisals, work evaluation, training, mentoring and cooperation with different units of the organisation. Woman leadership and women in management has been a popular subject in the press. Even today, the glass ceiling phenomenon is a prime example of how ancient conceptions of gender and its effect on skills and abilities come to the fore in considering matters of management and leadership in particular.

Motivation either serves to bolster traditional conceptions or create equality. It encompasses compensation, benefits, feedback and encouragement. The legal and financial aspects of human resources work, such as occupational healthcare, wages administration and various types of statutory matters relating to employment contracts and collective bargaining, are the purview of HR administration. Wages have dominated the debate on equality for quite some time. Disparate pay for the same job often involves job titles that control pay. The same financial duties can be performed by a male financial director and a female financial planner, who are paid differently. On the other hand, men and women performing the same work and having the same job title are often also paid different wages. Wage parity, which means equal pay for equal work, often stumbles on the issue of gender.



Human resources activities in an organisation are described both in the human resources plan and the quality manual. Equality plans are an integral element of human resources planning. The writers of quality handbooks should be particularly careful about the manner in which the various processes and operational methods are described. Awareness of the gender conceptions of the past and their impacts lasting to this day helps to instil equality in the quality function as well. Information descriptions, information contents and system usability in HR information systems have impacts similar to those of quality manuals. Careful planning of information systems takes equality in human resources work into consideration.

In Finland, the labour policy-related duties of organisations and the planning of these duties are governed by a number of acts, including the Equality Act. Under this Act, the human resources plan of an organisation shall also include an equality plan outlining the measures and functions that foster and maintain gender equality in that organisation. Equality matters pertaining to age, ethnicity, religion, nationality and health may also be included in the plan. Other statutory norms designed to foster equality include quotas for men and women in sectors of education and work where one or the other gender is heavily over-represented. Over time, such quotas have been abandoned in favour of the more important criterion of professional qualifications. Quotas remain in use in society's preparatory bodies. Family policy measures, such as various types of leave and day care, have also served to promote equality. In future, legislative reform and new legislation should take into even better consideration a more equitable balance between women and men in terms of labour policy and employer expenditure arising from family-related matters.

Antiquated conceptions make equality a women's issue alone. Equality, however, is a goal and way of acting for men and women alike. In society, we can discuss the significance and our understanding of equality but practical deeds in socialisation and education are quite a different matter. Much information and facts are available in literature and on websites that deal with equality. Good and fair human resources management is based on appreciating the differences between women and men and on understanding gained through similarities. Work communities where equality reigns are happy to prepare equality plans that demonstrate their equal practices.

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B. Supporting women in job-seeking

Aila Leino

Psychologist Aila Leino is a vocational guidance psychologist at the Sotkamo employment office with responsibility for individual and group guidance at the Sotkamo and Paltamo employment offices. She has studied women's career planning e.g. through her involvement in developing gender-sensitive guidance methods.

Identifying and highlighting one's personal strengths is key to career advancement today. The presentation of one's personal skills, one's trust in personal abilities and the impression made in recruitment interviews are put to the test in employee appraisals and discussions with supervisors relating to performance-based pay.

Women are often more critical of their skills and abilities than men. Modesty has traditionally been instilled into women, making it difficult for middle-aged women in particular to draw attention to their abilities.

Social skills are highlighted in job advertisements. Networked and team-oriented work calls for an ability to take into consideration the needs and emotions of others and to accommodate different points of view. For many women, this is familiar ground from family negotiations. Women are often responsible for the day-to-day routines in families. Multitasking is the woman's way of managing several jobs at once, but few women dare bring up in job interviews the excellent organisational and negotiating skills thus acquired.

Women often take such skills for granted. Many women would say, "It's not like I know whether I'm especially good at working together with others." Women may feel they are being forward and ignoring others if they call attention to their strengths.

Women would benefit from a positive and supportive atmosphere in job interviews and discussions in the workplace – as would the entire work community and the employer – since the expertise of even the more modest and self-deprecatory employees could thus be effectively utilised.

Good practices recommended by WomenIT:
■ establishing an equality group

Interaction skills and operational practices

In job interviews, applicants are asked how well they interact and work with others. Both skills are considered part of the overall description of professionalism.

Do the sexes differ with regard to such skills? It is said that women and men behave differently in job interviews. Men may haggle over the proposed salary, while women may be happy they are offered the job in the first place and settle for that. In their article "Nice girls don't ask", Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever discuss a study that indicated men take advantage of negotiations to further their own interests.

The negotiating skills described here are not inherent but learned. The lines are drawn from childhood: girls learn to wait their turn and speak only when spoken to, while boys are often allowed to raise their voices without permission. This inevitably leads us to think that boys and girls have always been a certain way.

A. Interaction skills in the work community

Tuula Honkanen

Tuula Honkanen, MA (Ed.) is Chief of Education at the Oulu University Kajaani University Consortium, where she is responsible for planning and providing supplementary training to early childhood and basic education staff. Ms Honkanen also chairs the WomenIT project steering group.

Working together in a workplace calls for employees and supervisors to respect, appreciate and trust one another as equals. The commitment of each employee to carrying out their duties is important to the wellbeing of the entire work community. Successful teamwork is only possible when all team members are aware of the goals, plans, activities and future visions of the work community. Adequate communication of organisational matters is key to successfully working together.

Working together also calls for interaction and communication skills. The levels of interaction in the workplace may be defined as the work-related, sociocultural and personal level. Of these, the work-related level of interaction must be given precedence in the workplace, as most of the daily interaction involves work. A separate time should be set aside for interaction on the personal and socio-cultural levels so that working hours are not wasted on chewing over personal matters or discussing the weather.

Various types of myths may present obstacles to interaction. According to psychologist Tony Dunderfelt (1998), such myths may include the myth of happiness, wherein a work community refuses to acknowledge any conflict; the myth of adulthood, in that everything happens consciously and rationally and involves no risk; the myth of disaster wherein nothing can be done once interaction fails; the myth of experts, believing that we cannot solve our problems alone but must always turn to an expert; and the myth of immutability, assuming that change is no longer possible for adults.

Mutual trust and respect are essential to interaction and communication. Other important principles include openness, clarity in communication, listening, and conversational and negotiating skills. Good workplaces appreciate everyone's professional skills, agree on development targets, discuss various alternatives, embrace different points of view and are also prepared to compromise.

Interaction in work communities gives rise to various roles that may focus on self, task or interaction. In self-centred roles, employees seek out roles that only support personal needs and ambitions. Task-centred roles support the prime goals of the unit while interaction-centred roles facilitate operations and increase a sense of togetherness.

Proper interaction is ensured by all employees freely speaking in the first person: "I feel that..." Employees are not afraid to speak up, take responsibility for their words and listen to others. Their expressions and gestures match their words, indicating that they respect their colleagues. We constantly interact with others, even when we say nothing; gestures, facial expressions, movement, dress, tone of voice, emotions and moods matter much more than is commonly understood.

The following list is loosely based on a book by Robert Fulghum (1999). The authors of this guide believe it to epitomise the basic skills of interaction and good conduct that should again be introduced to work communities.

All I really need to know about life and living I learned in kindergarten –fundamental interaction skills in a nutshell for work communities

**All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten.
These are the things I learned:**

Say thank you, good morning and goodbye.

Share everything.

Play fair.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.

Everybody has a name.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.

Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.

When you go out in the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together.

Be aware of wonder.

Sources:

Dunderfelt, T. 1998. Henkilökemia

Fulghum, R. 1999. All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten
Naisjärjestöjen keskusliitto ry. Tunnetko temput?

B. Signs of the invisible exercise of power in the workplace

Workplaces may exhibit practices and customs that are difficult to identify but are skilfully used e.g. as a tool for the exercise of power. Often the persons targeted feel guilty and blame themselves for the way they are treated.

These practices often become apparent in social interaction such as meetings. In her book "De fem hersketeknikkene" (The Five Master Suppression Techniques), the Norwegian Berit Ås has identified five methods of domination that are employed in workplaces either separately or in different combinations. The techniques target women more often than men.

1. Rendering invisible

Exclusion, disrespect, belittling and shutting up with silence

2. Ridicule

3. Withholding of information

A small group of decision-makers get together and agree on matters outside the official framework, e.g. at all-male sauna get-togethers.

4. Damned if you do – damned if you don't

A very typical situation for women; women cannot win no matter what they do. A good example comes from reconciling work and family life, deciding on who stays home to look after the children or rushes straight home after work.

5. Levying of shame and guilt

Shame and guilt are used to deride others.

Whenever an employee identifies practices such as these or other practices that may offend a fellow employee, the matter should be addressed and equal work practices in the workplace thus reinforced.

C. Gender-based discrimination

Ritva Jyrkkä

Ms Ritva Jyrkkä, LL.M with court training, is employed at IT-Mind Oy as a key expert. She has years of experience both with the women's movement and the practical implementation of gender equality legislation.

Gender-based discrimination is but one of the manifestations of a lack of equality, although many perceive equality matters narrowly as matters of discrimination. When assessing discrimination, it makes no difference whether the target of discrimination has opposed it or submitted to it. The rationale for this provision is that the ban on harassment must be enforceable also when a person has submitted to discriminatory treatment for fear of losing their job, or left a job because of such treatment. Discrimination on the basis of gender is prohibited, as is any instruction or order to discriminate.

Direct discrimination:

A person is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation because of their gender.

Indirect discrimination:

An apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice may in fact put persons at a particular disadvantage on the basis of gender.

Harassment is defined as unwanted behaviour relating to the gender of the target. Such behaviour deliberately or de facto seeks to devalue the target and create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment also falls into the category of unwanted behaviour. Sexual harassment may appear as verbal, non-verbal or physical and it deliberately or de facto infringes on the dignity and integrity of another human being by intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.



Good practices recommended by WomenIT:

- Basic interaction skills for the workplace that are written down and placed where everyone can see them
- Establishing and agreeing on practices to intervene in both sexual harassment and the invisible exercise of power

Good practices in recruitment and human resources policy: two examples from international corporations

Marja-Leena Haataja

WomenIT is also an international undertaking; partners include the JIVE project in the UK, Get a Life, Engineer! in Denmark, Fèminin Technique in France and Gender Mainstreaming in der Informationsgesellschaft in Germany.

The themes and goals of this international cooperation are:

- development of new mentoring methods
- guidance-related matters, creating models for careers guidance and recruitment that take gender into consideration
- reconciliation of work and family life, dissemination of best practices
- research

The themes were dealt with at one seminar and several visits to companies and organisations in different sectors. The value added may also be exploited in development work at the national level. Below are two different examples.

Example 1.

JIVE is the British partner of WomenIT. The project is administered by Bradford College through its Lets TWIST (Train Women in Science, Engineering, Construction and Technology) project that involves ten national players.

JIVE seeks to encourage women to qualify in fields where they are underrepresented. The intention is to change national and regional culture and politics so that women would have equal opportunities to work in all sectors of society. JIVE provides training and mentoring, organises various events and conducts research.

Regional coordinator Rihana B. Ishaq of the JIVE project has worked together with enterprises on the issue of reconciling work and family life. Many of the themes addressed are similar to those topical in Finland, such as attention to positive fatherhood in the work community, flextime and family responsibilities. Benefits of the welfare society in Finland, such as municipal day care, may elsewhere be available to only a lucky few, putting parents at the mercy of expensive private care.

Ms Ishaq worked with a small private building company of some thirty employees. Faced with intense competition, the company was forced to consider ways in which it might outperform its rivals. The answer was found in a highly skilled staff and a change in management attitudes. A study showed that long hours caused problems for employees both at work and at home.

The company started to implement a strategy to reconcile work and other aspects of life. It comprised the following measures:

- Daily working hours were cut so that no one was allowed to start work before 8.30am or stay past 5pm (4pm on Fridays).
- Employees were not allowed to take work home.
- A culture of teamwork was introduced in the company.
- Personal Development Reviews were held on a bi-weekly basis to discuss work as well as personal matters without time constraints or an agenda.

All employees had an opportunity to earn a bonus equal to two months' salary at the most, provided that the needs of the business and of employees converged.

Results:

- Sales volume doubled in 2002 and was expected to triple in 2003.
- Significant reductions were achieved in absences and sick leaves.
- The amount of waste material generated in construction decreased from 15 per cent to 1.5 per cent.
- Customer complaints became virtually a thing of the past.

Example 2.

In spring 2004, a group of WomenIT players went on a study trip to France. One of the companies visited was the large, Paris-based Schlumberger, whose recruitment and HR policy was of particular interest. The company's basic mission is to provide its clients with various types of surveys and research in the oil industry, from prospecting through to the launch of production. The focus, however, is on prospecting for oil and natural gas.

Schlumberger is a multinational corporation that worldwide has some 50,000 employees of more than 140 different nationalities. Annually, the company recruits some 3,500 persons.

Recruitment practices have been developed together with universities in the countries where the company operates. The company also recruits from countries producing oil and natural gas. Since the industry is male-dominated, particular attention has been paid to the recruitment of women. The following are observations of the best practices employed at the company:

Recruitment

- Half of the members on recruitment teams are women who transfer from engineering to recruitment

- Women who have been with the company for five years are released from their other duties and assigned to personnel recruitment
- Schlumberger has in place a quota for women. In the first year of operation, women made up 15% of staff. In the second year, the figure was 20% and in the third year 30%. In 2004, 45% of engineers brought into the company are women.
- The company only recruits recent graduates in order to allow employees to develop within the company.

Management

At present, 20% of top managers are women, all of whom have a background in engineering.

HR policy


- Multi-identity corporate culture and tolerance are core values.
- New employees are inducted into the job and inculcated with a sense of respect for colleagues. All employees are entitled to their place in the company.
- Generalisations about the life of women cannot be made due to the distinct cultural differences within Europe.

Reconciliation of work and family life

- At Schlumberger, one of the models of career advancement is to offer overseas postings to women as well, taking care that the spouse also finds employment in the location. Employees are always consulted before a post abroad is offered.
- Employees are offered an opportunity for remote work and a chance to take parenting leave.
- Developments in this sector in other countries are closely monitored.

Source:

Unpublished source: notes taken by Ms Irma Toivonen-Okuogume



"Onlies" in the work community – support models for those who have made non-traditional choices

The particular question of "onlies" in the workplace and measures to support them are examined in the following section. "Onlies" in this context refer to the sole representatives of a gender in a work community. The examples are taken from women working in the field of technology but the situation is similar e.g. for men in the nursing and care professions.

The situation must be identified and addressed regardless of whether men or women are involved.

TiNa – Women in ICT supports sole women in technology

Pirjo Putila

Ms Pirjo Putila, Lic.Tech., has been Chief of Education in the Department of Electrical and Communications Engineering at Helsinki University of Technology and also managed the Department's equality projects since 2001. The TiNa project has received funding from the ESF and the State Provincial Office of Southern Finland).

The Department of Electrical and Communications Engineering at Helsinki University of Technology (HUT) has engaged in two equality projects: "Education and Equality in the Information Industry – Strength from Women's Diversity" and "TiNA – Women in ICT" (http://tina.tkk.fi/tina_2004_eng/). Both have sought to increase the number of female students. When the first project was launched in spring 2001, women accounted for some 10% of all students in the Department. At the end of 2003, the figure stood at some 12%.

One of the focal areas of the project has been supporting the professional identity of women working in a non-traditional field. An equality study conducted at HUT revealed that few woman students were acquainted with female engineers while most male students knew one or more male engineers. In spring 2001, the Department surveyed first-year students on their experiences of tutoring by professors, the success of their studies and their certainty as to career choice. The only significant difference between women and men was that women were less certain of their career choice. Accordingly, the Department's equality projects have also sought to develop methods that would allow greater support to be given to the career choices of women.

One of the methods employed has been mentoring, giving female students a chance to make the acquaintance of female graduates of the Department who have already joined the workforce. As engineers are usually quite busy, the established mode of operating has been to arrange company visits for groups of 8–15 students. These visits are hosted by one or more women employed in the company who relate to the group their own experiences with studies, launching a career and climbing the corporate ladder. Informal discussion sessions usually round off the visits.



Feedback on the activities has been excellent and participants have found the opportunity beneficial. We feel activities such as these are a simple and easy way of supporting the career choices of women in a non-typical field. Company visits are commonly organised for students of technology. However, since the majority of students are male and most host engineers are also men, equality and equal opportunities are bolstered by giving female students an opportunity to meet women who are already actively employed in the field.

Female researchers

The TiNA project has also targeted female researchers at HUT research institutes, who are often the only representatives of their gender in their workplaces. Although women and men generally get along well, the women sometimes tire of the men's endless enthusiasm for ice hockey and prefer the company of women with whom they can share experiences.

We have arranged informal meetings for female researchers a few times a year. These usually consist of an expert presentation followed by conversation and recreation, a "girls' night out", as one participant

put it. It is a simple yet highly necessary activity that for many has become an important way of venting. In recent years, many of the regular participants have been on maternity leave and brought their babies along to the meetings, something made possible from the very outset of the project.

The discussions have also revolved around work-related issues, allowing the participants to share tips and information about matters such as employment agreements and parenting leave. Those on maternity leave have enjoyed the chance for grown-up company and keeping in touch with their work community.

Group mentoring

The group mentoring experiment was piloted at ABB. The idea was to give female engineers at a company dominated by men (women only make up 17% of employees, mostly on the clerical staff) a chance to meet and get to know each other, share tacit knowledge and gain support on their career path. Engineering students from HUT have also been invited to the meetings.

The pilot team met four times over a period of some six months. The ABB women's network comprised some fifteen graduate engineers of whom approximately ten attended any given meeting. Seven students also signed up for the project and the absentees were replaced with five other students at the last few meetings. After the initial session where group members got to know each other, themes have included launching a career, supervisory and project management duties, and international assignments.

Women representing other TiNA partners were also invited to the final evening meeting where discussion ranged from international experiences to corporate culture and values and their expression in practice. All other meetings had been held over lunch during working hours (ca. 2.5 hours for each meeting).

The feedback received on the activities indicates the project was considered necessary and the women found the opportunity to exchange experiences beneficial. The women employed by ABB are often the sole women in their units and work seldom brings them together. The students also thought the meetings very useful. The project garnered attention and the ABB web pages on it have also been translated into English.

Coaching for working life

Coaching for working life was also made available to woman students

close to completing their studies. This activity was grounded in a study commissioned by HUT's Equality Committee, according to which women students at HUT perceive their study environment as quite equal but find the situation changes in working life. On the other hand, recruiting officers at companies have noticed that woman applicants are far more reticent when it comes to describing their skills and experience. Women engineers' asking salaries are also clearly lower than men's. The goal of coaching is to make woman students appreciate their skills and stand firm in working life from the very start.

This activity has also been considered useful and it has received excellent feedback. In future, the goal is to integrate the working life coaching of women into the general career and recruitment services offered at HUT.

Equality planning in schools

Marja-Leena Haataja

Equality is noted as one of the underlying values of the national core curriculum in Finland. The matter is especially topical since the obligation of schools, with the exception of basic education, to engage in equality planning was included in the amendments to the Equality Act that came into force on 1 June 2005.

Equality planning and the realisation of equality in the work community are discussed in greater detail in chapter 3 of the first part of this guide, in the article by Ms Sinikka Mustakallio on preparing an equality plan.

Basic education was excluded from the legislative reform. However, it is advisable that schools also prepare equality plans or incorporate them in their human resources plans and apply instructions issued to other educational institutions to include equality matters in their curricula.

At the very least, curricula should address teaching and its contents, equal teaching methods, study materials and the grounds for evaluating students. Equality planning in schoolwork can be examined from two points of view: the human resources policy perspective and the functional perspective.

Since equality work and equal practices in schools have received much attention in the WomenIT project, we wished to devote a separate chapter to the matter in this guide. The article is based on a lecture given by Ms Sinikka Mustakallio, equality consultant for WoM, at a WomenIT training session on 19 February 2004.

A. Equality planning in human resources policy

Human resources plans in companies and organisations address future staff needs, required skills and the development of current employees. These plans are derived from corporate strategy, the company's vision. In their own HR plans, schools may also address matters of equality and record the measures designed to expedite the realisation of equality between women and men in the workplace.

Section 6 of the Equality Act concerns the employer's obligation to foster equality and states that all employers shall take focused efforts to foster equality between men and women. In this context, the following issues that promote equality in schools should be taken into account:

- acting in a manner that encourages both women and men to apply to vacant positions
- promoting the equal recruitment of women and men in the various jobs and creating equal career advancement opportunities (Editors' note: women are a minority in school management while few men teach grades 1-3);
- promoting equality between women and men with regard to terms of employment and remuneration in particular
- developing working conditions so that they are equally suitable for women and for men
- facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life for women and men by paying particular attention to working time arrangements
- acting in a manner that prevents gender-based discrimination.

Section 6a of the Act describes measures to foster equality. All employers with thirty employees or more are obligated to draft an equality plan. As schools are usually municipal organisations, the direct obligation is only



binding on the municipality that offers employment at schools. However, measures to promote equality can be included in the human resources plans of any work community, no matter how small.

B. Functional equality plans at schools

The Equality Act contains four Sections that may be construed as an obligation on schools to actively foster equality in schoolwork.

Section 4 notes that the authorities shall foster equality between men and women especially by changing circumstances that prevent the realisation of equality. This provision means that schools are obligated to foster equality in schoolwork.

Under Section 6b of the Act, schools shall annually draft an equality plan together with employees and student representatives. The plan shall contain a report on equality at the school and a study of the problematic issues therein as well as the necessary action to promote equality.

Particular attention should be paid to the realisation of equality in student selection, teaching arrangements and evaluation of study performance as well as measures to prevent and eliminate sexual harassment.

Equality planning may be incorporated into other planning carried out at schools, such as curriculum planning, or the equality plan may be drafted separately. Plans may be evaluated annually but schools may also agree on three-year planning periods.

Section 8b of the Act addresses discrimination in educational institutes while Section 10a governs the duty of schools to provide students with information on their actions in cases of e.g. possible discrimination in student selection.

C. Basic principles for equality in the classroom

Leena Teräs

Ms Leena Teräs is project designer with the WomenIT project. Her earlier responsibilities include serving as ICT coordinator for the "Women's crisis centre networks in the Barents region" project, as teacher of women's studies at Oulu University and as primary school teacher. Ms Teräs is enrolled in the degree programme of primary teacher with an emphasis on technology at Oulu University and also studies women's studies, ICT and information science.

Everyone has a name that should be used when addressing them.

Not addressing children as “boys and girls” can help eliminate stereotypes, generalised images such as “girls are industrious, boys are boisterous”. In reality, not all girls are industrious, nor are all boys boisterous. Both girls and boys are primarily individuals rather than poster children for a set of images associated with a group based purely on gender.

Everyone has a personal space whose boundaries are not crossed without permission.

Everyone is entitled to personal space, and its boundaries can easily be determined in practice through experimentation to determine the comfortable distance. Two people can simply start slowly walking towards each other and ask the other to stop when he/she starts to feel uncomfortable. This exercise also demonstrates how different the “comfort zones” of people can be.

A peaceful classroom may also be considered a part of personal space. Others are not to be disturbed by touching, talking, moving around, etc. Common space, including audio space, must be divided fairly.

Everyone is entitled to personal belongings. No one takes or borrows another’s personal belongings without permission.

Personal and shared belongings need to be looked after. Schools are diverse communities also when it comes to belongings. Both personal items and shared property can be found in schools. Belongings can be used as a practical tool to examine power and the wielding of power with children. Such exercises are significant in terms of equality since all inequality boils down to power. Everyone has power over their own belongings and children must learn to respect the power of others to dispose of their personal belongings.

Good practices recommended by WomenIT

In 2005, the WomenIT project published the Equal practices in education, careers guidance and working life booklet that describes in greater detail the phenomena found in schools and offers proposals for action. The booklet is available in English at www.womenit.info/equalpractices.php

Equality-related links on the internet:

www.womenit.info/english

www.womenit.info/equalitytoeverydaylife.php
An electronic version of this guide

www.womenit.info/equalityworkbook.php
The Equality Workbook produced jointly by IT-Mind and the WomenIT project is a practical guide to equality to be used alongside this booklet. It provides numerous links e.g. to the equality guides of various institutions.

www.womenit.info/equalpractices.php
WomenIT publication "Equal practices in education, careers guidance and working life"

www.eurofem.net
Information on equality, legislation and regulations

<http://www.stm.fi/Resource.phx/tasa-arvo/english/index.htx>
Equality information about Finland, equality pages of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

Equality projects at STAKES, the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health:
<http://www.stakes.fi/hyvinvointi/english/lape/index.html>

http://www.tasa-arvotietopankki.fi/EN_index.html
Finnish gender statistics website

http://www.hel.fi/kkans1/heos/tasu/tasu_e.html
City of Helsinki equality plan

<http://www.helsinki.fi/tasa-arvo/english/>
University of Helsinki equality plan



www.womenit.info