



Tool No. 15: National Committee for UNICEF Finland – Building Block 2: Equality and Non-discrimination (2014)

Non-discrimination is one of the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This means that all rights recognized in the Convention belong to every child. This should be a guiding principle during all stages of building a child-friendly municipality. The realization of non-discrimination requires constant and determined work against prejudices. There need to be commonly agreed upon ways to identify, intervene and prevent discrimination. This is why the promotion of equality and intervention in discrimination forms its own goal, in addition to being a general guiding principle, in any child-friendly municipality.

Equality and non-discrimination must be realized in terms of every goal. The right to participate, for example, must also be realized for the children of immigrants and children with disabilities. The peer relations of children placed in foster care, as well as their involvement in civic activities must also be promoted. Furthermore, the national Non-Discrimination Act obliges public authorities to assess and foster the realization of equality in all their activities. Statutory equality plans must also account for children and teenagers as a diverse group.

Many children face discrimination and prejudice for many reasons, such as origin, disability, illness or poverty. Studies have shown that discrimination takes place everywhere in the lives of children and youth – in schools, on the streets, and in public spaces. It often goes unnoticed by adults. It is important to be aware that discrimination is perpetrated by children, young people and adults alike. It takes place in both peer relations as well as in relations between adults and children.

At a structural level, those working with and for children need to assess whether a particular way of working or a decision promotes equality. Or does it (perhaps unintentionally) exclude some groups of children and youth from accessing activities and services? The identification of discrimination and the advancement of equality require systematic education within the municipal organization. The advancement of equality also requires information on the grounds of discrimination and of groups at risk of, or affected by, discrimination. In its comments issued in 2011, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed its concern as to whether Finland has an adequate amount of information about the living conditions of poor children, children with disabilities, children from minority and immigrant backgrounds and children in foster care.

It is of particular importance that children's experiences and definitions of discrimination are the starting point for the advancement of non-discrimination. Various organizations and associations possess ample knowledge and skills related to the promotion of equality. A child-friendly municipality can benefit from their experience in promoting equality and non-discrimination.

Checklist: Equality and Non-discrimination

- Do the municipality's strategy, policy programmes and other regulatory documents account for the diversity of children?
 - Have children or groups of children at-risk of being discriminated against been identified?
 - Is the achievement of the goals set in the above-mentioned documents reviewed particularly from the perspective of children in danger of being discriminated against?
- Are there methods for collecting information on the realization of the rights of children at risk of discrimination?
- Has the municipality drawn up an equality plan?
 - Does the plan take into account children and teenagers and the diversity of children and teenagers?
- Do the strategies, plans, and practices ensure that there is no discrimination based on the following reasons related to the child, youth or their families:
 - age;
 - origin;
 - nationality;
 - language;
 - skin colour;
 - gender;
 - sexual orientation;
 - religion;
 - beliefs;
 - political or other opinions;
 - wealth;
 - health;
 - disability;
 - place of residence;
 - any other reason.
- What kinds of measures has the municipality undertaken to promote equality and remove discrimination:
 - at administrative and structural levels?
 - in children's environments and in the services provided for children?
 - in the attitudes and actions of the general public?





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- Is the municipality working against discrimination in cooperation with civil society actors?
- Is everyone working with or for children adequately aware of issues concerning discrimination?
 - the ban on discrimination;
 - the identification of discrimination;
 - the groups at risk of being discriminated against;*Is this the case throughout the municipal organization in its different sectors?
- Is equality respected and realized in the everyday interaction and communication (talk, acts, words, gestures) between:
 - adults?
 - adults and children?
 - children?
- Are there commonly agreed upon procedures to intervene when discrimination is occurring?
 - Is everyone who works with or for children and youth aware of these?
- Is the principle of non-discrimination taken into account in children's rights education?
- Is information on discrimination experienced by children and youth collected systematically?
- Is a child who has experienced discrimination supported?
 - Is there room for discussing experiences of discrimination?
 - Is a child who has experienced discrimination provided with support in defending his or her rights?
- When planning measures to combat discrimination, are children and young people's experiences and viewpoints incorporated?
- Are the measures for combating discrimination and their effectiveness evaluated?
 - Have the measures been evaluated by children and teenagers?

