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SOSIAALI- JA
TERVEYSMINISTERIÖ
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Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
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Starting points to your enquiry about equal pay and legislation in Finland

The pay survey

The purpose of the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986) is to prevent discrimination based on gender, to promote equality between women and men, and to improve the status of women, particularly in working life. The Act is also intended to prevent discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression. Act on equality between Women and Men, section 8§ tells that an employer cannot apply the pay or one or other terms of employment in such a way that one or more employees find themselves in a less favourable position than one or more other employees in the employer`s service performing the same work or work of equal value (so-called Equality Act, section 8).

Equality Act between was amended in the connection with the enactment of the new Non -Discrimination Act. The amendment entered into force on 1 January 2015. Provisions on gender equality plans at work were specified to make them more effective in the promotion of equality between men and women in working life (section 6a§, page 53). The content of pay survey included in every plan is now defined in more detail by the Equality Act, and there is a separate paragraph on pay surveys in the Act (section 6b§, page 54). Also personnel participation in drawing up a gender equality plan was strengthened so that the plan shall be prepared in cooperation with the shop steward, elected representative, occupational safety and health delegate or other personnel representative. Personnel representatives must get sufficient opportunities to participate in the drafting of the plan and influence it. A gender equality plan at work can be drafted at least every other year.

The Equality Act provides that when pay discrimination is suspected, the wages will be compared between employees working for the same employer. The employer usually means the legal entity who is the other party of the employment relationship. The comparison has however not been limited to the same work unit or operational unit. It is the employer who is responsible for undertaking pay surveys.

In the appendix you can read the Act on equality between Women and Men and also the official interpretation of the Equality Act (section 6b§). See page 20: Pay surveys: it tells the content of pay survey, job comparison etc.

The Equal Pay Programme 2016 -2019

In Finland the Government and the social partners have since 2006 been carrying out an Equal Pay Programme in order to bridge the pay gap. The objective was to reduce the pay gap to no more than 15 per cent by 2015 throughout the labour market. The aim seems modest, but it has turned out to be very challenging. The average difference between men`s and women`s pay in the whole labour market is now around 16 per cent (in the year 2016).

The Equal Pay Programme 2016 -2019 includes the most important factors pertaining to equal pay and measures to amend these issues. The Equal Pay Programme aims at narrowing the average pay gap between women and men. The purpose of the Programme is also to implement the principle of equal pay laid down in the Equality Act.



The pay and the formation of pay can be influenced by pay and agreement policies, payroll systems, company specific equality planning processes as well by carrying out pay surveys. The Programme also seeks to change the traditional gender division in education and the labour market by increasing a number of professions in which both women and men are equally represented and on the other hand, by increasing the share of women in management and leadership positions. The third theme on the agenda concerns reconciliation of work and family life. The measures of the labour market organisations are crucial to the implementation of equal pay.

