

**Action plan by
women with
disabilities**

OlenNainen

“Accessibility of the environment must be ensured through legislation so that disabled women have full access to all buildings, such as training and cultural centres and other public spaces. New buildings must also be made accessible so that disabled women can move into all kinds of flats.”

excerpt from the European Disability Forum Manifesto of Disabled Women in Europe

”A pregnant mother, who was a wheelchair user, could not use the services of the community maternity centre, for it had many steps.”

Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities Women’s committee.

Human rights

Disabled woman must have and enjoy the same human rights as non-disabled woman.

- Disabled woman has the right to womanhood.
- Disabled woman must not be discriminated against on the ground of sex, age, origin, language, conviction, opinion, health, disability or other ground related to her person.

Participation in society and community affairs

- Disabled woman shall receive encouragement and necessary prerequisites shall be created for her participation and visible involvement in the decision-making of her society.
- Full participation shall be enabled through appropriate support services.

Control of one’s own life

- Disabled woman is entitled to receive information, guidance and support to manage activities of daily life.
- Disabled woman may also need external assistance. In the analysis of support needs, she must be considered as an active individual, rather than as an object to be cared for.

Access to information

- Disabled women and girls have a right to information about growing up into womanhood, as well as information about female sexuality and reproductive health.
- Disabled girls and their parents should receive realistic information about growing up into womanhood. Also, it is necessary to provide guidance on disability-related services, rehabilitation, and opportunities for training, leisure, study and work opportunities in view of the adult life.

- A woman who becomes disabled shall be offered information on services and assistance on how to continue her life as an independent woman in the changed circumstances.
- Access to information shall be ensured through necessary disability-specific methods. Material shall be available in easy-to-read format, in sign language, in support signage, and signed speech formats, velotype, supportive communication methods, large print and Braille as well as in electronic and audio tape format
- Professional personnel need education and materials on issues related to disability and womanhood
- Disabled woman's own voice must be seen and heard in the media

Rehabilitation, education and training, income support, and employment

- In rehabilitation, the female perspective must be fully taken into account, as well as individual needs that come over the course of a lifetime.
- In education and training, disabled women shall be guaranteed opportunities that are equal to those open to non-disabled women.
- While choosing a training course, the primary consideration must be the capacities and interests of the disabled woman or girl.
- Disabled woman shall have adequate income to enable her to lead an independent life.
- Equal opportunities to employment and equal pay shall be ensured.

“Access to information must be considered as a democratic right for each member of society. Disabled women shall have the right to receive all necessary information of their choice, so that they are able to exercise their civil and political rights.”

excerpt from the European

Disability Forum Manifesto

“The nurse started to become accustomed to the use of a sign language interpreter. Once, the interpreter failed to come, and the nurse finally understood the significance of a sign language interpreter. The interpreter is not just for me but for both of us!”

A deaf mother of two children, who uses sign-language

“Many disabled girls are raised in the belief that they should not think that they will find a partner, let alone to found a family and have children.”

Psychologist Katri Koskinen

“Pauliina, who has a severe mobility disability, did not consider motherhood as a possibility for her. She had convinced even herself that her sister’s children were enough for her. As she then, at over 30, found the man of her life, all this changed.”

*Tiina Notko, IT-magazine,
1-2/2005*

“A mother with a severe disability was refused additional trips as part of her transport service for her to pick up her 3-year old daughter at the day-care centre. Instead, an arrangement was made for the child to attend day-care timed in accordance with her father’s shifts; this meant that the mother was denied equal parenthood.”

*Administrative Court in Turku
district 30.9.2004 04/0654/2*

Sexuality

- Disabled woman is entitled to her sexuality.
- Sexuality-related health services shall be accessible.
- Disabled woman shall be ensured an equal right to choose her sexual orientation.

Family life and parenthood

- Disabled woman has the right to family and experience parenthood.
- Disabled woman shall not be coerced to an abortion or sterilisation.
- Disabled mother has the right to disability-specific services and assistance in support of her motherhood.
- In divorce and separation situations, disability must not be a factor in a refusal of guardianship.
- Existence of a disability shall not be a factor preventing adoption.
- Taking children into foster care must not be caused by lack of necessary support services.

Violence and abuse

- Disabled woman has the right to personal integrity.
- The society must be made aware of the heightened threat of abuse, mental, economical and physical, towards disabled women.
- Shelters shall be accessible.
- Organizations of disabled people must empower the identity of disabled women and girls, and must support them so that they can be able to pre-empt and recognise the signs of sexual harassment and abuse.
- Disabled women and girls need self-defence courses that are specifically designed to meet their needs.

Networks and peer support

- Disabled women shall be offered an opportunity to empowerment within a peer support group.
- Peer support networks of disabled women shall be a part of the women's movement.

Research and statistics

- Research about disability and womanhood shall be increased by offering topics to undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students.
- Research and statistics should take account of disabled women, too.

Members of the women's network of disability organisations

The Finnish Association of People with Mobility Disabilities

The Finnish Association of the Deaf

The Finnish Association on Mental Reardation

The Finnish Brain Injury Association

The Finnish Federation of the Hard of Hearing

The Threshold Association

Finnish Federation of Visually Impaired

The Finnish CP Association

The Finnish MS-Society

The Finnish Rheumatism Association

Finnish Disability Forum

National Council on Disability

Suomen Nivelyhdistys ry

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“Research shows that disabled girl and women are more likely than others to become victims of violence.”

Psychologist Katri Koskinen

“Once he broke my feet on two places.”

“He takes not only the support for family carers, but my pension, as well.”

Quotes from research by

Vappu Viemerö

“Leading a peer support group has given me self-confidence above all. Also, new perspectives on disability have opened to me: I have realized that disability can also be a source of strength, not just a cause of anxiety.”

Quote from the book

“Dive deeper”

Sources:

European Disability Forum 1997 Bryssel, Manifesto of disabled women in Europe

Viemerö, V. (2005). Violence against disabled women. In K.Kristiansen, R. Traustadóttir (Eds.), Gender and Disability Research in the Nordic Countries. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Koskinen K. Tynkkynen A. Auer P. Hahle L. Pelkonen M. Rekola H. Viemerö V. (2001) Sukella syvemmälle, Invalidiliitto ry, in English translation Dive deeper, National Association of People with Mobility Disabilities.

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