**Questionnaire on ways to bridge the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective**

**Replies of the Government of Finland**

**15 February 2017**

**1. Please identify the obstacles and barriers to access the Internet faced by women in your country. Please elaborate on the nature of these obstacles (e.g. social, cultural norms, literacy gap) and how they manifest themselves in practice.**

There are no big differences in Finland regarding access to Internet by sex (age group 16–89). Men use the Internet somewhat more than women do, the difference being 2 percentage points. This is due to the fact that men aged over 75 years use more internet than women over 75 (difference being 12 percentage points). For some reason, older men are more active to use the Internet in Finland than women.

In Finland, men also have more smart phones than women. This is again due to the fact that men aged over 75 years have more smart phones than women over 75. Men are generally more active to use Internet by mobile devices compared to women. The reason for this is that young educated men are the most active in starting to use new digital devices and technologies.

It is recognized that gender and equality must be taken into account when developing new digital solutions, in order to ensure equal access to services, information, and decision-making for all. Regarding social and welfare services, the coordination group for digitalization of the health, social services and regional government reform (the SoteDigi group) has in its report (26 January 2016) looked into the current state of social and welfare services in municipalities, to inform the process of ICT organization and production, as well as decision-making, democracy and governance aspects. The aim is to strengthen the opportunities for users to contribute in designing and providing services. The report identifies differences in the level of digitalization among municipalities as well as sectors at national and municipal levels. The report further points to the importance of equal treatment and differences in individuals’ needs, drawing attention to the ageing population in particular.

**2. Please indicate if your Government collects disaggregated data on the basis of sex regarding Internet access. Please provide any other available data on Internet use by women, including with regard to type access (e.g. broadband, household, mobile) and relevant studies done over the last five years. Please indicate if your Government uses qualitative and quantitative indicators to assist in monitoring progress regarding the ICT sector and/or on the gender digital divide.**

Statistics Finland produces annual data on the use of Internet and information technology. The statistics are based on an annually conducted survey.

The purpose of the survey “Use of information and communications technology by individuals” (<http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/sutivi/index_en.html>, <http://tilastokeskus.fi/meta/til/sutivi_en.html>) is to produce data about ICT usage in households and by individuals. The data are used for the development projects of Finnish information society and for compiling pan-European information society indicators.

The survey “Use of information and communications technology by individuals” moved from telephone interviews to a mixed-mode data collection in 2016, where respondents aged 16 to 69 could select between filling out a web questionnaire and a telephone interview and respondents aged 70 to 89 were interviewed by telephone.

Further, the publication “Women and Men in Finland 2016” includes following information on technology by sex and age groups:

* Followed some social network service in the past three months, 2015, %
* Uses wireless Internet with a laptop outside the home and workplace at least once a week, 2015, %
* Uses wireless Internet with a tablet outside the home and workplace at least once a week, 2015, %
* Uses wireless Internet with a mobile phone outside the home and workplace at least once a week, 2015; %
* Ordered or bought something on the Internet for their own or household’s use in the past three months, 2015, %
* Read online magazines and papers or TV companies’ news sites in the past three months, 2015, %
* Used a word processor in the past twelve months, 2015, %
* Used a spreadsheet in the past twelve months, 2015, %
* Written program code in the past twelve months, 2015, %
* Used the Internet to send an official form to authorities or a provider of a public service, 2015, %

The publication is available online: <http://tilastokeskus.fi/ajk/julkistamiskalenteri/kuvailusivu_en.html?ID=16133>

**3. What measures has your Government taken to facilitate and expand access to Internet for women? Please elaborate on the impact of these measures.**

Since there are no particular gender-based problems concerning access to Internet generally (see question 1), this has not been on the agenda of the gender equality policy in recent years. However, adult education centres offer courses on using the Internet and mobile devices. This training is popular among older people and easily accessible also in the countryside. The coverage of the broadband connections might be a challenge in some parts of the country, but new connections are built all the time.

**4. What are the challenges faced by your Government in implementing policies and programmes to bridge the gender digital divide and to enhance the use of enabling technology in order to promote the empowerment of all women and girls? Are there regulatory and supply-side constraints (i.e. low affordability and a lack of digital skills), or barriers on the demand side? Please elaborate on the measures taken or identified to address them (i.e. access to internet in public libraries, universities, public wifi access points, etc.)**

Since the use of mobile devices and access to Internet are at a high and almost the same level for men and women, some of the possible challenges concerning gender divide could be in the field of digital skills. The occupational segregation by gender is quite strong in Finland. Men are a clear majority in the education and occupations in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), especially in mathematics and engineering. This reflects to the skills in the adult population. In recent years, basic education on programming etc. has been initiated at the primary and secondary schools, conducive to improvement in the skills of all children, also girls. The introduction and training of young children, especially girls, to practise programming is a topic that has gained some attention in Finnish media and inspired commercial children’s books recently.

Overall, equality is a fundamental corner stone in all policies and measures to develop education in Finland at all levels. This is also considered in one of the key projects of the government: to make Finland a model country for modern and inspiring learning, among others by increasing the use of digital learning methods in basic education.

All digital materials and services in schools must be pedagogically appropriate and stimulate the child’s learning. Teachers are encouraged to innovate, and best practices will be shared. Teachers are also provided with continuing professional education and training.

Also in Higher Education Institutions, digital learning tools and environments and guidance to use them are available for all in equal terms. Gender equality is strongly embedded as one of the cross-cutting themes in the entire higher education system in Finland, and has not been taken up as a specific question in this context so far.

The Higher Education Institutions should, however, assess the potential gender issues in introducing new teaching methods and environments. In some cases digital assessment methods and practices make anonymous assessment of tests and papers possible and this could be used to prevent gender and also other possible biases.

**5. Please indicate if a national Internet policy exists in your country and if this policy includes reference to human rights and gender considerations.**

In order to strengthen trust the Ministry of Transport and Communications will implement Finland’s information security strategy, in line with the Government Programme.

Greater trust is a key to the realisation of fundamental and human rights in future society. Matters that damage trust, such as information security violations and infringements of privacy protection in networks, must be properly addressed.

As the basic functions of society will be digitalized, people must be able to trust that these functions are performed securely. At worst, significant information security violations may pose a threat to securing the vital functions of society.  Information security will become a more and more important part of the overall security of modern everyday services and equipment. In future, it is important that there will be goods and services with inbuilt information security available on the market.

Other aims of the strategy can also be seen to indirectly support equality, for example increase in research and education.  Information security and the related expertise will be investigated, measured, followed up and developed. The authorities will help communities and citizens improve information security.

In addition, gender and equality considerations are integrated in the digitalization of social and welfare services, for example (see question 1).

**6. Please indicate if your Government has developed specific initiatives to eliminate gender disparities in digital literacy by 2030, taking into account goals 4 and 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as other relevant SDGs.**

As part of the national implementation plan of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government of Finland will establish an advisory board to enhance digitalization in everyday life, which can take this issue into account. While the national implementation plan of the goal 5 does not include special measures on this issue, a gender perspective will be taken into consideration in all the relevant activities in the implementation of SDGs in Finland.

The advisory board discusses ways to ensure all citizens’ equal opportunity to lead a full and well-balanced life in the digitalized society. In this vein, the board establishes a permanent venue for collaboration and dialogue between the non-governmental sector and the Ministry of Finance that is in charge digitalization of services. The board is actively involved in developing joint service centres, as well as a support service project (AUTA), primarily in view of the digitalization roadmap and the implementation of the directive on accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies (2016/2102).  
  
The concepts of “multiliteracy” and “ICT competence”are integrated in the national core curriculaof pre-primary education, basic education and general upper secondary schools (all recently renewed). Multiliteracy means abilities to obtain, combine, modify, produce, present and evaluate information in different modes, in different contexts and situations, and by using various tools. Multiliteracy is based on a broad definition of text. In this context, text refers to knowledge presented by systems of verbal, visual, auditive, numeric and kinaesthetic symbols and their combinations. For example, text may be interpreted and produced in a written, spoken, printed, audiovisual or digital form.

Multiliteracy and ICT competence are considered as “transversal competences”, competences crossing the boundaries of different fields of knowledge and skills, which are understood to be a precondition for personal growth, studying, work and civic activity now and in the future. The transversal competences need to be taken into account in all subjects. Other examples are learning-to-learn and cultural competence, interaction and expression.

The Ministry of Education and Culture launched in May 2016 an action plan “Meaningful in Finland” ([http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2016/toimintaohjelma.html?lang=fi&extra\_locale=e](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2016/toimintaohjelma.html?lang=fi&extra_locale=en)

[n](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2016/toimintaohjelma.html?lang=fi&extra_locale=en)) for preventing hate speech and racism as well as for promoting participation in the societal activities. The action plan contains ten initiatives, aimed towards training of education personnel, youth work, sports and the dialogue between religions. Among others, the programme aims to strengthen the structures and procedures in early childhood education, libraries and cultural fields so they can better support the learning of multiliteracy and help create media education materials for young people and educators.

Please see also the answer to question 4 on the government project to increase the use of digital learning methods.

**7. Does your Government have any specific laws or policies to address gender-based violence online? What are the challenges faced by your Government to ensure accountability of perpetrators of human rights violations committed against persons for exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms on the internet?**

The [Criminal Code of Finland](http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1889/en18890039.pdf) includes relevant provisions to address gender-based violence or hate speech. Into question may come the following, for example: Chapter 11, Section 10 - Ethnic agitation; Chapter 24, Sections 9 – 10 – Defamation; Chapter 25, Section 7 – Menace.

Overall gender-based violence is addressed by provisions on violence in the Criminal Code. Wording of the provisions is gender neutral and thus applicable to both men and women. Despite the general wording, criminal law can be considered gender-sensitive, and violence against women is widely recognized in the preparatory works (for example Government Bills 78/2010 vp and 19/2013 vp)

One specific challenge is reporting of hate speech to the police. To tackle the challenge, the Government of Finland has decided to allocate more resources for Internet police activities preventing hate speech and for the investigation of hate speech offences.

The Finnish Police works online and in social media by means of a division of virtual police officers. Having an online presence is part of the police’s preventive work. Virtual police officers also contribute to solving crime and disseminating information about important current issues. One objective of this is also to make the police appear less intimidating to the public and to encourage people to contact the police. <https://www.poliisi.fi/finnish_police/police_in_the_social_media>

On the policy side, Finland is now in the process of implementing the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) that it adopted in April 2015. To raise awareness and provide tools for addressing gender-based violence online, the Ombudsman for Equality has campaigned for preventing sexual violence in schools (Ei meidän

koulussa [“not in our school”], www.eimeidankoulussa.fi, available in Finnish). In 2013, the campaign by the National Institute for Health and Welfare against sexual violence targeted young people and made use of

electronic media (Mun kroppa. Mä päätän. [“My body. My decision”]). In 2015-2017, the Nordic Ministers for gender equality jointly issue reports and actions to tackle sexist and hate speech (Hate Speech and Sexism in the North 2015). In 2016, Finland led work on analyzing the regulation of offensive advertising and on the portrayal of women and men in the media. Both reports will be finalized in the spring 2017. At the moment, there is an ongoing study on regulation of sexist hate speech in the Nordic countries. Guidelines for young people on how to tackle hate speech will be published in 2017.

This theme is also considered an integrated part of the overall policies and measures to combat violence and bullying in schools. The new Government Programme was launched in May 2015 and in the section on health and well-being, it is stated that schools and early childhood education will be developed in support of children’s wellbeing and that obligations to intervene in cases of bullying will be increased. Prevention of bullying in schools is also mentioned in the Basic Education Act and the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education.Under the Basic Education Act (1998), a pupil participating in education shall be entitled to a safe learning environment. The education provider shall draw up a plan, in connection with curriculum design, for safeguarding pupils against violence, bullying and harassment, execute the plan and supervise adherence to its implementation. The Finnish National Agency or Education shall issue regulations in the core curriculum concerning the formulation of the plan. The education provider shall adopt school rules or issue other regulations to be applied in school with a view to promoting internal order in school, unhindered learning and the safety and satisfaction of the school community.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has supported the Kivakoulu ("Nice school")

programme aimed at reducing school bullying. About 90% of all comprehensive schools in Finland (ca. 2500 schools) are registered users of the program and they have reached good results. The University of Turku coordinates and develops the programme (since 2011). The programme has been implemented in other countries too. <http://www.kivaprogram.net/>

The underlying fundamental premise in the national core curricula at all levels is that good and safe school days are safeguarded for provision of education, guidance and support. Schoolwork should be organized so as to create the most favorable conditions possible for each pupil’s well-being, development and learning. Any risks to health or safety in the learning environment should be addressed immediately. There are several instruments, through which the Ministry of Education and Culture supports the work of various actors, including in youth policy, culture and sports in order to tackle bullying. For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture supports the work of NGOs in raising awareness about bullying (including cyberbullying) and in campaigning against it. One such example is the National Centre for Online Youth Work (“Verke”, [www.verke.org](http://www.verke.org)), which offers expert services in this area. The Ministry also supports various online youth work projects that address the issue of cyberbullying by means of counselling (experts as well as peers).

Further examples:

The national media literacy campaign week (MLW) is planned and carried out in cooperation with wide network of Finnish operators (incl. public authorities, NGOs, businesses) and it is translated into educational actions in local institutions such as schools, libraries, youth centres and day care centres. The aim of the week is to promote the importance of media literacy in order to create a better and safer internet for everyone, especially children and young people. MLW has been arranged annually in February since 2013 and it includes international Safer Internet Day celebrations and promotion. [www.mediataitoviikko.fi](http://www.mediataitoviikko.fi)

The Finnish Safer Internet Centre (FISIC) is a part of the European Insafe network of 30 national centres, partially funded by the European Commission (EC). FISIC is a national project that aims to enhance the media skills, safety and welfare of children and young people in the internet. It consists of three consortium partners: the National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI), Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL) and Save the Children Finland (STC). KAVI operates as a coordinator for the project and acts as an awareness centre. MLL does awareness work and runs helpline services for children and young people and their guardians. STC operates a hotline in order to prevent and report on material related to child sexual abuse.

<http://www.saferinternet.org/finland>

The Media Literacy School is a web portal hosted by KAVI designed for professional educators. The portal contains educational material for teachers, librarians, youth workers, and early childhood educators. The portal also contains a media literacy research index for both the national and international community of researchers.

Themes such as cyberbullying and respectful online behaviour are covered in various materials and lesson plans. [www.mediataitokoulu.fi](http://www.mediataitokoulu.fi)

Helpline activities, operated by Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, are based on two well-known national general helplines: the Child and Youth Phone and the Parent Phone. Both services are run by volunteers. All helpline volunteers go through basic training before they start volunteering. The volunteers are also offered training on online safety issues. <http://www.saferinternet.org/finland>

The organization Save the Children maintains a hotline, called Nettivihje (“Web tip-off”) in Finland for the public to report content or use of the Internet that they suspect to be illegal. Nettivihje is member of INHOPE (International Association of Internet Hotlines) network, which strives to enhance the removal of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) from the Internet through national and international cooperation. The hotline analyses the reported websites and, if the content is considered illegal, it traces where the website appears to be located and passes the information to relevant stakeholders in that country for further action. <http://www.saferinternet.org/finland>