



# Time for gender equality

The European Charter for Equality of Women  
and Men in Local Life put into practice

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities recommends that Finnish municipalities and regions advance equality between women and men on the basis of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. With the publication *Time for gender equality*, the Association encourages elected officials and officeholders to read the Charter with care and take action to adopt it and put its principles into practice. The publication is the Association's contribution to the 100 Acts for Gender Equality campaign, which is part of the celebrations of the centenary of Finland's independence in 2017.



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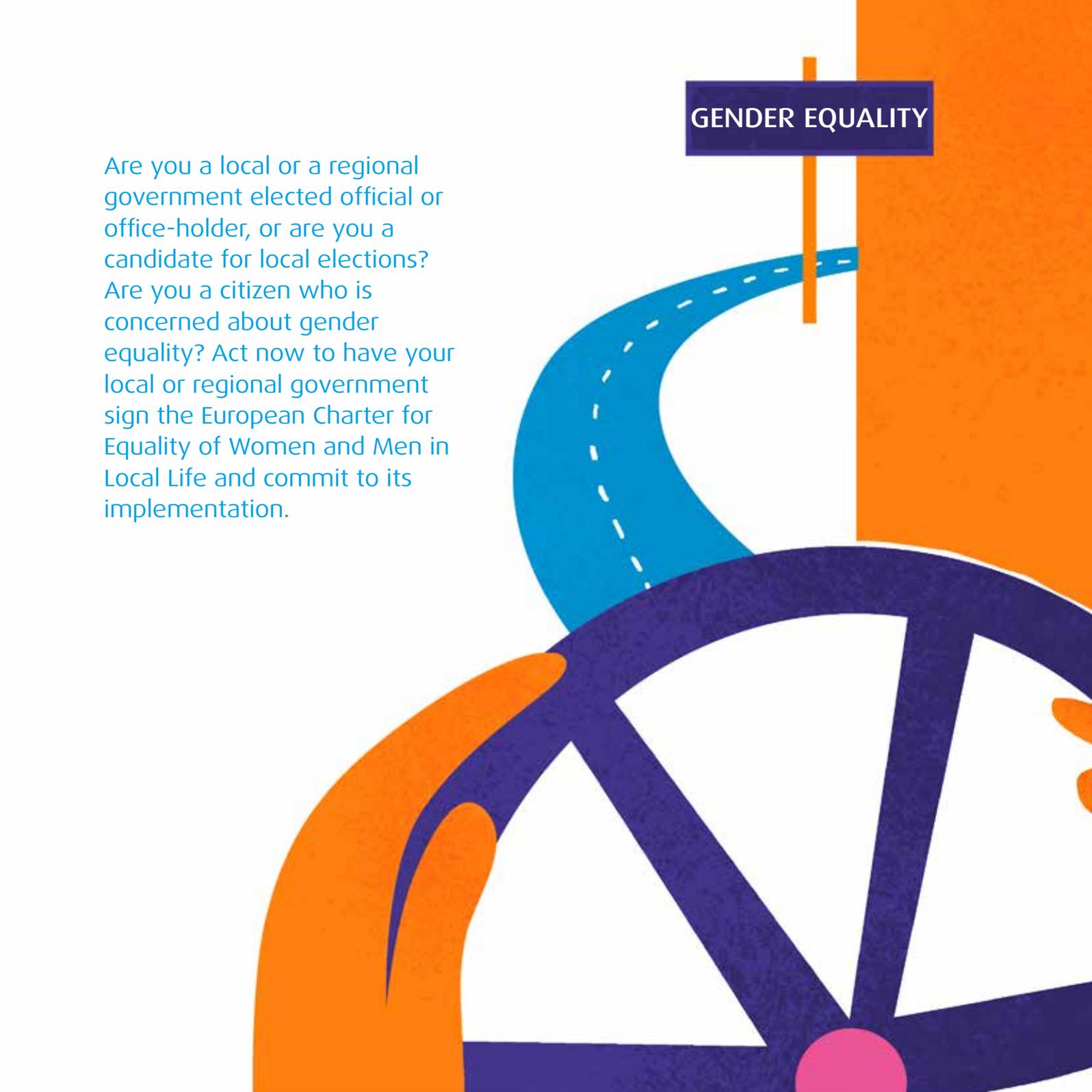
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## GENDER EQUALITY



Are you a local or a regional government elected official or office-holder, or are you a candidate for local elections? Are you a citizen who is concerned about gender equality? Act now to have your local or regional government sign the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life and commit to its implementation.



In Finland, we already have equality legislation in place. No reason to sign anything more, is there?

You are right, Finland does have both gender equality and non-discrimination laws in place, but that is not enough. The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life stimulates discussion on how to advance equality between women and men in practice. By signing the Charter, a local authority signals that it is serious about equality issues.

But Finnish women and men are already equal! Shouldn't we rather talk about age discrimination or the treatment of immigrants?

That as well, of course — but there's still a lot to be done for gender equality. Occupations are segregated along gender lines, you have more often a male boss than a female boss, few fathers take paternal leave, women have lower pensions than men, girls do better at school than boys, men live shorter lives than women ... and the people discriminated against on other grounds too have a gender.

All right, I got your point! Let's keep on talking. So what is this thing about a charter?

Please turn the page and you will find out!



We are not supposed to nominate more than 10 candidates, and nine of them just happen to be men. Sorry, there's nothing to be done.

Yes there is! Let's take a closer look at these women, and maybe we'll find equally qualified candidates. How about we propose this competent woman for a chairperson?

# Women, men and democracy

Every individual's right to participate is a prerequisite of democracy. It is an unfortunate fact that gender influences the opportunities for people to participate, because our thinking is affected by gender-specific expectations and stereotypes — to a greater or lesser extent, consciously or subconsciously.

For example, we may think that a job in a municipal public works department or a committee is best suited for a man, whereas women are 'naturally' more suited to work in childcare or to sit in a social welfare committee. In hiring employees or electing someone to a political position, if we are even subconsciously thinking of a specific gender, we are more likely to choose a representative of that gender. It takes conscious efforts to release these thought patterns and choose the best candidates irrespective of gender.

In a democratic society, the first step towards gender equality is the nomination of candidates for elections. The signatory of the European Charter for Equality of

Women and Men in Local Life commits itself to working towards ensuring that

- sufficient numbers of both women and men are nominated as candidates to a political position
- both women and men are given every opportunity to participate in administration and decision-making
- every effort is taken to overcome gender stereotypes
- girls, boys, women and men from migrant and diverse ethnic backgrounds are not discriminated against
- it is recognised that women and men may be discriminated against on grounds other than gender or ethnic group. People can be discriminated against on the basis of religion, language, age, disability, sexual orientation, economic situation, or on some other basis. Discrimination on any grounds must be identified and eliminated.



Sure, I would come back to work, but I have some problems here. It's really difficult to get to the daycare. It's not on a bus route, and I don't have a car. And as a single parent I really don't have much choice...

It's hard. The daycare is open only on weekdays during the day, and I'm soon supposed to start working in three shifts. I don't know what to do ...

# Decisions have different impacts on women and men

Local and regional authorities constantly make decisions, both large and small, that impact on people's lives. Along with other aspects, the decisions should always be assessed as to their potential impact on women, men, girls and boys of different groups.

Mobility is a good example. We know that more women than men tend to use public transport and pedestrian and bicycle routes, whereas men drive a car more often. This means that the decisions local authorities take on traffic arrangement may impact on women and men differently. This should be taken into account in decision-making, and solutions to promote gender equality should be sought at an early stage.

Women and men may have caring responsibilities for children, older people or other dependants. A local authority's decisions may either undermine or advance gender equality. Good quality child daycare services and services for the elderly, sick or disabled ensure a more gender-equitable sharing of caring responsibilities in families.

The signatory of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life

- commits itself to assessing the gender impacts of all aspects of its work and decision-making
- refuses to take decisions that either directly or indirectly undermine gender equality
- commits itself to taking decisions that directly or indirectly advance gender equality.

The ninth graders will soon have workplace learning. Boys, you must be interested in this games company?



# Getting rid of stereotypes

The greatest barriers to the achievement of equality between women and men are gender prejudices and stereotypes. Girls are like this and boys are like that. Women are interested in certain matters, while men are interested in others. Breaking free from these pre-conceptions requires an active pursuit of equality in all aspects of local and regional government work from decision-making to service provision.

Municipal daycare staff must see to it that both girls and boys can choose what and how they play. The school should avoid gender-stereotyped attitudes and practices in teaching and study materials. Young people need to be encouraged to make study and career choices that challenge traditional role models.

Social and health services must take account of the differences in the needs of women and men. Women's and men's living and working conditions differ in some aspects, which may lead to differences in service needs. However, a client's or a patient's gender must not determine the kind of treatment, services or care they receive.

Let us take the development of housing services as an example. Account should be taken of the fact that most single parents are women, whereas more men than women are homeless. Provision of affordable

housing to all who need it is not only important for well-being, but also serves to advance gender equality.

Childcare should not be seen as being mainly the task or responsibility of women.

In the planning and construction of municipal sports facilities, account needs to be taken of two aspects: first, women and men engage in somewhat different activities; and second, everybody should be able to take part in any activity they want regardless of gender.

These two aspects are important in terms of cultural services as well. For example, the development of theatre, music and library services should take account of the clients' diverse needs, but without gender prejudices or stereotypes. Proactivity is the key: for example, library staff can support boys in their reading if they recognise a need for this.

The signatory of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life

- commits itself to incorporating the gender perspective in the development of local and regional educational, health, social, sports and cultural services, while also actively eliminating gender segregation and gender prejudices and stereotypes.

I'm going on a parental and  
childcare leave for one year,  
isn't that great!  
Tiina's the deputy manager,  
she will take over from me.  
I will send pics of the baby.  
Have fun!



# Local and regional authorities can set an example of an equal workplace

As major employers, public authorities should actively advance equality in all their practices.

Equal pay and remuneration systems are a cornerstone of equality, but it is important that local and regional government workplaces take account of cultural and social aspects as well. Do men and women have equal career advancement opportunities? Are jobs still segregated according to gender? Do recruiters know how to treat both genders equally?

The signatory of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life

- commits itself to gender equality in recruitment, pay, work organisation, job descriptions, promotion opportunities, and consultation of workers
- understands that women and men have caring responsibilities in their private lives and that the employer can support equal sharing of these responsibilities through its own actions, such as by offering flexible working hours and by actively encouraging men to take parental leave
- does not turn a blind eye to sexual harassment, but combats it actively by creating practices for intervening and by offering help to victims.

## Public procurement as a way of promoting gender equality

Local and regional authorities award large procurement contracts to deliver their services. As major economic players in their area, they can use procurement to drive equality.

For example, a local or a regional authority may require all its goods and services suppliers and their subcontractors to have in place a regularly revised equality action plan and to implement it actively. In the same way, a local authority acquiring sports equipment for schools commits itself to ensuring that the equipment serves both genders, or that the acquisitions for child

daycare centres do not reflect preconceptions of what is suitable for girls or for boys. In service procurement, a local authority may also consider the impacts of the procured services on the employment of women and men.

The signatory of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life

- commits itself to conducting a gender impact assessment and actively promoting gender equality in all public procurement.



I don't bother going to the cinema tonight, because I would have to walk back home through the station and then across the park. At night, anything can happen there.

# Everyone has a right to a safe and secure environment and home

Women and men have an equal right to safety and security in a public place, outside of home and at home. Women and men often differ in their experiences of safety. For example, more women than men may feel that the city centre or parks are unsafe at nighttime. Men, in turn, may fall victim to violence in different environments than women. Especially young men, and more often young immigrant men, experience violence or a threat of violence.

Local and regional authorities should identify such gender-based experiences, address the issue and take the necessary action. Once the problems have been identified and recognised, solutions can be sought. Sometimes safety can be increased by improving street lighting or allowing buses to stop between bus stops to let out passengers travelling alone.

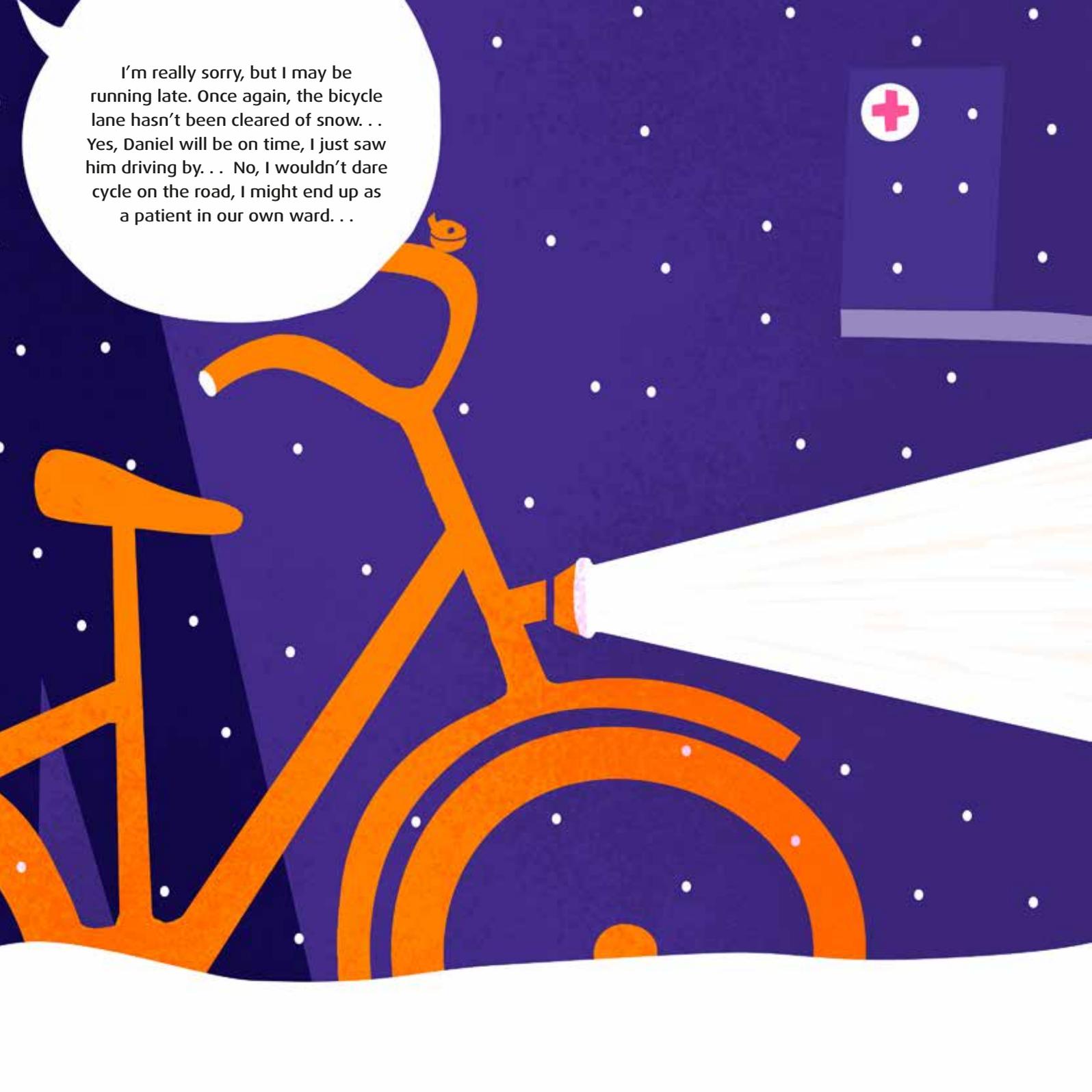
Women are more likely than men to fall victim to domestic and interpersonal violence. A local authority should ensure that the social and health services professionals who encounter and help domestic violence victims are properly trained and have adequate resources.

Human trafficking is often linked to prostitution and exploitative work. Local or regional authorities need to have the competence and resources to prevent human trafficking and assist the victims.

The signatory of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life

- recognises gender-based violence or a threat of such violence and wants to raise awareness of the problem; prevents violence in all its activities, starting with child welfare counselling clinics, early childhood education and care, and schools
- commits itself to the action necessary for the prevention of violence against all people
- allocates resources for improving safety and security
- ensures adequate resources for the services, care and support for the victims of violence and human trafficking, and
- recognises violence and a threat of violence experienced by people with migrant backgrounds and takes action to prevent it.

I'm really sorry, but I may be running late. Once again, the bicycle lane hasn't been cleared of snow. . . Yes, Daniel will be on time, I just saw him driving by. . . No, I wouldn't dare cycle on the road, I might end up as a patient in our own ward. . .



# A healthy and sustainable economy needs everyone's contribution

Equality between men and women is a key element of sustainable development. In a healthy economy, women have an equal role and equal opportunities to men.

Planning, economic policy and traffic arrangements are among local authority functions that may have an impact on the employment and income of women and men.

Women's employment is as important as men's employment. This is a perspective that local and regional authorities should employ in examining their employer role and the area's economy. When supporting economic activity in its area, a local authority should consider the direct and indirect impacts that its actions will have on women's and men's employment. Public authorities need to recognise the needs and importance of both female and male entrepreneurial activity.

Good quality child daycare services and older people's nursing services promote the employment of both women and men and help municipalities improve their

reputations as a place to live and work. By investing efforts in good quality early childhood education and care, a local authority advances equality and creates a better living and operating environment for its residents and for the area's businesses. It is good for the vitality of the whole area, when a municipality's or a region's residents can live their lives free of discrimination and in an atmosphere of equality.

The signatory of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life

- recognises that both women and men participate in economy, well-being and sustainable development
- incorporates the gender-perspective in its planning and economic policy and in its sustainable development targets
- recognises and takes into account the mobility needs of women and men
- considers women's and men's employment, entrepreneurship and other economic activity as equally important goals in all activities.

# We are not just our gender

People are far more than their gender. Equality and non-discrimination should be actively promoted among all kinds of people. A signatory of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life is building a municipality or a region, a Europe and a world where all people can live in freedom and safety with equal rights, obligations and opportunities.

Most people are either women or men, but not all people fit the male and female binary. They are called transgender people, and equality is for them as well.

A local or a regional authority signing the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life commits itself to drawing up an equality action plan and allocate the resources necessary for its implementation. The Charter allows two years from the date of its signature for the formulation of the equality action plan. The plan's implementation starts right afterwards without delay. It should be borne in mind that striving for equality is a continuous process, and sometimes backwards steps are taken. Signatories of the Charter are committed to monitoring the situation attentively and taking corrective action immediately when a need is recognised.

The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life was produced by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), which represents local government organisations in Europe, together with its member organisations. CEMR is the largest organisation of local and regional governments in Europe. Through its member organisations in 42 countries CEMR represents 130,000 European local and regional governments. The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities is a CEMR member.

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities is the national voice of local government, advocating the interests of and providing services to all the country's Finnish and Swedish speaking municipalities and cities, and engaging in research and development. It also provides services to and cooperates with regional councils, hospital districts and other joint municipal authorities, as well as with limited companies that are under local government control. The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities recommends to municipalities, cities and regions the adoption and effective implementation of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life.

Okay, you convinced me! We must still work hard for the equality between women and men. So, what should I do now to make my own municipality or region sign the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life?

Fantastic! Start by reading the Charter. You can download it at <http://www.charter-equality.eu/>. Then talk about it with your own local council members. Prepare the matter in municipal or regional administration. Bring into the debate a broad range of stakeholders. Keep everybody informed. The local or the regional council makes the decision to sign the Charter. Please send the commitment to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and to the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities.

And what should we do after having signed the Charter?

By signing the Charter, you commit yourself to draw up or update an equality action plan and to engage with all the region's stakeholders. You will already see matters with a fresh pair of eyes and be better able to advance gender equality in all your work. You commit yourself to implement your excellent plan.  
Good luck!

Thank you!  
Let's start right now.



Are you a local or a regional government elected official or office-holder, or are you a candidate for local elections? Are you working for a local or a regional government? Are you a citizen who is concerned about gender equality? Do you wish your home local authority or your regional authority to accelerate gender equality?

Act now to have your municipality or region sign the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. The signatory municipality or region commits itself to making efforts to turn legislation into practical steps towards equality in our everyday lives.

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities recommends the adoption and signing of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. This publication provides you with an overview of the Charter and advice on how to become a signatory.



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