

Coping of persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations in serious disruptions and emergencies

Emergency action plans supporting preparedness

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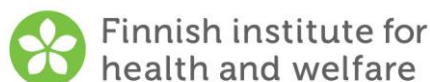


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Susanna Rieppo, Laura Musta, Elina Lindström, Sara Austero, Riitta Hakoma, Marja Holm, Marika Korhonen, Sonja Miettinen, Maiju Mikkonen, Saida Mäki-Penttilä, Sanna Nykänen, Päivi Sainio, Natalia Skogberg, Maria Valtokari, Anna Väre

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PunaMusta Oy
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For the reader

In this publication, we introduce the emergency action plans that support taking vulnerable people into account in serious disruptions and emergency conditions and in preparedness for these. Experiences gained from the COVID-19 pandemic have been utilised in the development of emergency action plans. This publication is intended for persons responsible for preparedness and preparedness planning in cooperation areas, wellbeing services counties and municipalities. The publication can also be utilised by social work, health care and communications professionals in different operating environments.

In this publication, emergency action plan refers to a brief instruction and the procedure created in the Building the Future project as the organisation's operating model when preparing for serious disruptions and emergency conditions. The purpose of the emergency action plans is to promote the consideration of the needs and resources of persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations in general preparedness work, in disruptions themselves, in emergency conditions and in their related exercises. Co-creation methods and research data on the impacts the COVID-19 pandemic had on the lives and services of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations have been utilised in the development of the emergency action plans.

Development work produced three emergency action plans:

- Emergency action plan 1. Accessible communications in disruptions and emergency conditions
- Emergency action plan 2. Cooperation between professionals in disruptions and emergency conditions
- Emergency action plan 3. Securing services in disruptions and emergency conditions

The emergency action plans contain key tasks, operating methods, and proposals for supporting coping and developing preparedness.

There are three different states in which a society may be: normal conditions, a disruption or emergency conditions. **Normal conditions** refer to the state of society in which vital functions can be secured with ordinary powers. Capabilities built in normal conditions lay the foundation for operations in all security situations. A **disruption** is defined as a threat or event that endangers society's vital functions or strategic functions and the management of which requires more extensive or closer cooperation and communication between authorities and other actors than normal. Typical disruptions include interruption of electricity supply in winter, storms, floods or accidents involving dangerous substances. The term disruption has not been defined in legislation. A **state of emergency** or **emergency conditions** is determined by the Government in cooperation with the President of the Republic. Provisions on the powers during emergency conditions are laid down in Part II of the Emergency Powers Act, the application of which is regulated by a Government decree (the so-called implementation decree).

This publication has been produced in the project 'The Coping of People with Disabilities and migrant origin populations in Emergency Conditions and Crisis Situations - Building the Future based on Covid-19 Experiences', funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) in 2021–2023. The two-year Building the Future project was carried out jointly by the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) and the Association of Finnish Municipalities and wellbeing services company Hyvil Oy. The project is coordinated by the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

We would like to thank the European Social Fund for its funding, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and persons with disabilities, their families and friends, migrants, professionals working with these groups, representatives of organisations, office holders and other partners from different parts of Finland, who have participated in the development of the emergency action plans.

Abstract

Susanna Rieppo, Laura Musta, Elina Lindström, Sara Austero, Riitta Hakoma, Marja Holm, Marika Korhonen, Sonja Miettinen, Maiju Mikkonen, Saida Mäki-Penttilä, Sanna Nykänen, Päivi Sainio, Natalia Skogberg, Maria Valtokari, Anna Väre. Vammaisten ja maahanmuuttaneiden ihmisten selviytyminen vakavissa häiriötilanteissa ja poikkeusoloissa. Varautumista tukevat toimintakortit. [Coping of persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations in serious disruptions and emergencies. Emergency action plans supporting preparedness]. Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). Guidance 12/2023 40 pages. Helsinki, Finland 2023.

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People with disabilities as well as migrant origin populations may be in a more vulnerable position than the rest of the population in serious disruptions and emergency conditions where the continuity of society's functions and tasks is threatened. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the lack of equality related to such things as the accessibility of information and services, limitations in functional capacity and socio-economic position in the event of serious disruptions and emergencies. When we strengthen the operating opportunities and coping of people with limited functioning capacity, people with disabilities and migrant origin populations in these situations, we promote equality and inclusion.

The main objective of the Building the Future based on COVID-19 Experiences project has been to develop operating models that support the coping of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations in serious disruptions and emergency conditions. Development work has been carried out together with persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations, employees of municipalities and wellbeing services counties, professionals in the organisation sector and other stakeholders.

The project developed three emergency action plans that are specifically intended for use by persons who hold responsibility in municipalities and wellbeing services counties for emergencies and preparedness. The first emergency action plan covers accessible communications in the event of disruptions. The second emergency action plan covers cooperation between professionals in disruptions and the third covers securing services in disruptions. Each emergency action plan contains a list of tasks and related operating models. In addition, information such as who is responsible for carrying out each task in the region during a crisis and emergency conditions can be added to the emergency action plan.

The aim is that each municipality and wellbeing services county could use the created emergency action plans when preparing their own emergency and preparedness plans, when carrying out drills and exercises for operating in disruptions and emergencies, and of course also when a real situation arises.

The Building the Future based on COVID-19 Experiences project (2021–2023) is funded by the European Social Fund.

Keywords: emergency preparedness, preparedness, disruptions, people with disabilities, migrants, emergency action plan

Tiivistelmä

Susanna Rieppo, Laura Musta, Elina Lindström, Sara Austero, Riitta Hakoma, Marja Holm, Marika Korhonen, Sonja Miettinen, Maiju Mikkonen, Saida Mäki-Penttilä, Sanna Nykänen, Päivi Sainio, Natalia Skogberg, Maria Valtokari, Anna Väre. Vammaisten ja maahanmuuttaneiden ihmisten selviytyminen vakavissa häiriötilanteissa ja poikkeusoloissa. Varautumista tukevat toimintakortit. Terveiden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos (THL). Ohjaus 12/2023. 40 sivua. Helsinki 2023.

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Toimintarajoitteiset ja vammaiset ihmiset sekä maahanmuuttaneet ihmiset voivat olla muuta väestöä haavoituvammassa asemassa vakavissa häiriötilanteissa ja poikkeusoloissa, joissa yhteiskunnan toimintojen ja tehtävien jatkuvuus on uhattuna. Koronaepidemia teki näkyväksi yhdenvertaisuuden puutteen, joka liittyy muun muassa tiedon ja palveluiden saavutettavuuteen, toimintakyvyn rajoitteisiin sekä sosioekonomiseen asemaan vakavissa häiriötilanteissa ja poikkeusoloissa. Vahvistamalla vammaisten ja toimintarajoitteisten ihmisten ja maahanmuuttaneiden ihmisten toimintamahdollisuuksia ja selviytymistä näissä tilanteissa edistämme yhdenvertaisuutta ja osallisuutta.

Tulevaisuutta luomassa covid-19-kokemusten pohjalta -hankkeen päätavoitteena on ollut kehittää toimintamalleja, jotka tukevat vammaisten ja maahanmuuttaneiden ihmisten selviytymistä vakavissa häiriötilanteissa ja poikkeusoloissa. Kehittämistyötä on tehty yhdessä vammaisten ja maahanmuuttaneiden ihmisten, kuntien ja hyvinvointialueiden työntekijöiden, järjestökentän ammattilaisten ja muiden sidosryhmien kanssa.

Hankkeessa kehitettiin kolme toimintakorttikokonaisuutta, jotka on tarkoitettu erityisesti kuntien ja hyvinvointialueiden valmius- ja varautumistoiminnasta vastaavien henkilöiden käytettäväksi. Ensimmäinen toimintakorttikokonaisuus käsittelee saavutettavaa viestintää häiriötilanteissa. Toinen toimintakortti käsittelee ammattilaisten välistä yhteistyötä häiriötilanteissa ja kolmas palveluiden turvaamista häiriötilanteissa. Jokainen toimintakortti sisältää listan tehtäviä ja niihin liittyviä toimintamalleja. Lisäksi toimintakorttiin on mahdollista kirjata, kuka vastaa alueella kyseisen tehtävän tekemisestä kriisi- ja poikkeustilanteessa.

Tavoitteena on, että jokainen kunta ja hyvinvointialue voisi hyödyntää luotuja toimintakortteja luodessaan omia valmius- ja varautumissuunnitelmiaan, harjoitellessaan häiriötilanteissa ja poikkeusoloissa toimimista ja tietysti myös tositilanteen tullessa.

Tulevaisuutta luomassa covid-19-kokemusten pohjalta -hanketta (2021-2023) rahoittaa Euroopan sosiaalirahasto.

Avainsanat: valmius, varautuminen, häiriötilanteet, vammaiset ihmiset, maahanmuuttaneet ihmisten, toimintakortti

Sammandrag

Susanna Rieppo, Laura Musta, Elina Lindström, Sara Austero, Riitta Hakoma, Marja Holm, Marika Korhonen, Sonja Miettinen, Maiju Mikkonen, Saida Mäki-Penttilä, Sanna Nykänen, Päivi Sainio, Natalia Skogberg, Maria Valtokari, Anna Väre. Vammaisten ja maahanmuuttaneiden ihmisten selviytyminen vakavissa häiriötilanteissa ja poikkeusoloissa. Varautumista tukevat toimintakortit. [Åtgärder för att personer med funktionsnedsättning och invandrare ska klara av allvarliga störningssituationer och undantagsförhållanden. Handlingskort som stöder förberedelser]. Institutet för hälsa och välfärd (THL).Handledning 12/2023. 40 sidor. Helsingfors, Finland 2023.

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Personer med funktionsnedsättning och personer med funktionshinder samt invandrare kan vara i en mer sårbar ställning än den övriga befolkningen i allvarliga störningssituationer och undantagsförhållanden där kontinuiteten i samhällets funktioner och uppgifter är hotad. Coronaepidemin synliggjorde bristen på likabehandling, bland annat när det gäller tillgången till information och tjänster, begränsningar i funktionsförmågan och socioekonomisk ställning i allvarliga störningssituationer och undantagsförhållanden. Genom att stärka möjligheterna för personer med funktionsnedsättning och personer med funktionsvariationer samt invandrare i dessa situationer främjar vi likabehandling och delaktighet.

Huvudmålet med projektet Framtiden skapas utifrån erfarenheter av covid-19 har varit att utveckla verksamhetsmodeller som stöder personer med funktionsnedsättning och invandrare att klara av allvarliga störningssituationer och undantagsförhållanden. Utvecklingsarbetet har genomförts tillsammans med personer med funktionsnedsättning och invandrare, anställda i kommuner och välfärdsområden, yrkespersoner inom organisationsfältet och andra intressentgrupper.

Inom projektet utvecklades tre handlingskortshelheter som särskilt är avsedda att användas av de personer som ansvarar för beredskapen och förberedelseverksamheten i kommunerna och välfärdsområdena. Den första helheten behandlar tillgänglig kommunikation i störningssituationer. Det andra handlingskortet behandlar samarbetet mellan yrkespersoner i störningssituationer och det tredje tryggandet av tjänster i störningssituationer. Varje handlingskort innehåller en lista med uppgifter och tillhörande verksamhetsmodeller. Dessutom är det möjligt att på aktivkortet anteckna vem som ansvarar för utförandet av ifrågavarande uppgift i en kris- och undantagssituation i området.

Målet är att varje kommun och välfärdsområde ska kunna utnyttja de handlingskort som skapats när de skapar sina egna beredskapsplaner, övar på att agera i störningssituationer och under undantagsförhållanden och naturligtvis också när ett verkligt läge uppstår.

Projektet Framtiden skapas utifrån erfarenheter av covid-19 (2021–2023) finansieras av Europeiska socialfonden.

Nyckelord: beredskap, förberedelser, störningssituationer, personer med funktionsnedsättning, invandrare, handlingskort

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Introduction

People with disabilities as well as migrant origin populations may be in a more vulnerable position than the rest of the population in serious disruptions and emergency conditions where the continuity of society's functions and tasks is threatened. Examples of this are the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on welfare, which were emphasised in these groups. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the lack of equality related to such things as the accessibility of information and services, limitations in functional capacity and socio-economic position in the event of serious disruptions and emergencies.

The main objective of the Building the Future based on COVID-19 Experiences Project has been to develop operating models that support the coping of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations in serious disruptions and emergency conditions. In addition to dangerous communicable diseases, potential threats to coping and the functioning of society may be caused by such things as interruptions in the supply of food, other supplies, water and energy, serious disturbances in information and communication systems and networks, large-scale accidents and threats that endanger health and functional capacity, such as natural disasters and wars.

The Building the Future project has produced

- information on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives and services of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations, and
- developed operating models and instructions so that the needs of persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations can be better taken into account in future disruptions and emergencies and in preparedness for these.

Research and development work began in February 2021. It was based on experiences related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which were discussed in various networks, development groups and roundtable meetings with health and social sector professionals, representatives of organisations, people with disabilities and migrant origin populations.

At the beginning of 2022, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the resulting energy crisis raised new concerns and questions among people, which also came up in the project's development groups and workshops. Concerns related to the war also raised questions on issues such as evacuations and the accessibility of civil defence shelters. The energy crisis raised concerns, particularly among people with disabilities who use electronic aids and a breathing apparatus. Serious disruptions also caused concern, for example, in migrant origin populations families with disabled children, where the parent in the family has experienced war and was concerned about the ability of their disabled child to cope in a serious disruptions. This new type of situation and the experiences gained from it contributed to expanding the emergency action plans and models created in the development work so that they could be utilised as extensively as possible in various serious disruptions or emergency conditions.

People with disabilities and migrant origin populations as groups are both very heterogeneous and not all people in these groups are vulnerable in the same manner. Both groups include people with a high level and low level of education. They can live in households and families of different sizes and be in different life situations. The need for assistance and support services may vary significantly. However, the groups are linked by the fact that some of the people in these groups are more likely to be adversely affected by serious disruptions and emergency conditions than the rest of the population on average, due to factors such as limited functional capacity, background, language skills or financial resources. For example, some belong to a risk group for severe COVID-19 due to the nature of their disability or illness or need support in protecting themselves in the situation. Vulnerability factors may also accumulate (e.g. disability, background as an migrant origin populations, other minority status), which may further expose one to vulnerabilities in disruptions and emergency conditions.

The emergency action plans developed on the basis of the diverse information collected during the project contain instructions and methods that support preparedness for disruptions and emergency planning in

wellbeing services counties and municipalities. With the help of developed operating methods and instructions, the needs of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations can be better taken into account in the event of serious disruptions in the future.

Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives and services of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations

Experiences gained during the COVID-19 pandemic show that preparedness that supports the coping of people with disabilities and the migrant origin populations in various disruptions and emergencies must be improved. The coronavirus epidemic that began in Finland at the beginning of 2020 and its related restrictive measures caused extensive societal impacts and challenges to people's everyday lives. During the epidemic, in particular people with disabilities and the migrant origin populations have experienced more challenges with coping than that of the rest of the population. During serious disruptions and emergency conditions, vulnerabilities and structures that create inequality in society are emphasised.

According to the definition of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.' (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). The convention's definition also covers different types of limited functional capacity. A key feature of the definition is that disability is intrinsically linked to the environment. A non-accessible environment causes restrictions and makes life more difficult for people, whereas an accessible environment can reduce the significance of restrictions and support people's opportunities to act equally with others in various situations.

It is difficult to estimate the exact number of persons with disabilities due to different definitions and statistical methods related to disability. According to population studies adults with disabilities account for around 10–15 per cent of the population in Finland about half a million people (Tilastokeskus 2023, Sainio et al. 2021). According to the School Health Promotion Study, approximately 15% of young people had some sort of disability (Kanste et al. 2017). The most common limitations were those related to cognitive functions or behavioural regulation (Holm et al. 2022d). At the end of 2021, the total number of persons receiving disability allowances was 261,538, or 4.7% of the total population (Kela 2021). Despite the variation in definitions, it is clear that people with disabilities are one of our most important minorities (Gissler and Sainio 2016).

In this publication, migrant origin populations refer to people who have moved to Finland from elsewhere and whose first language is a language other than Finnish, Swedish or Sámi. As language plays a key role in acquiring information and coping with everyday life in serious disruptions and emergency conditions, we focused in particular on people whose native language is not Finnish, Swedish or one of the Sámi languages. According to Statistics Finland, at the end of 2021, there were 458,000 people living in Finland whose native language was some other than those mentioned above (Statistics Finland 2022). This accounts for slightly more than 8% of the total population. The group includes people from very different backgrounds, and the reasons for coming to Finland vary greatly. It is important to note that this group also includes people who already speak excellent Finnish, Swedish or Sámi in addition to their mother tongue, but there are also many people who do not yet have this language proficiency. Some migrant origin populations encounter challenges during serious disruptions and emergency conditions due to various cultural differences and customs, and possibly a Finnish service system that differs from the service system in their native country.

However, it is essential to remember that a disability or a person's background as a migrant origin population does not automatically lead to vulnerability. The situation is also affected by such things as a person's own resources and other factors, such as background and resources, the quality of a possible disability, place of residence, and family and life situations. Vulnerability factors may also accumulate. Additional challenges for coping may be caused by, for example, a low level of education and income and overcrowded housing, or living in a household with one guardian whose support networks are limited.

People with disabilities

Population studies show that the wellbeing of adults with disabilities deteriorated more during the COVID-19 pandemic than that of the rest of the population. Unfavourable wellbeing and health impacts were observed among people who had experienced impaired hearing, vision, learning/memory and mobility. Loneliness, sleep difficulties, concerns about being infected and a weakened financial situation were emphasised in the everyday life of adults with disabilities. In addition, psychological distress increased more than among the rest of the population. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were also visible in lifestyles, such as healthy eating habits and physical activity, which declined more among people with disabilities than among others. The situation was often the worst for persons with disabilities using personal assistance and migrant origin populations with disabilities. (Sainio et al. 2021, Holm et al. 2022a, Holm et al. 2022b, Holm et al. 2022c). Some young people with disabilities experienced negative mental health impacts more often than other young people. Anxiety and depression increased more among young people with cognitive and mobility disabilities, but less among young people with vision and hearing disabilities. (Holm et al. 2023). The situation during the COVID-19 pandemic was particularly bad for young people both with disabilities and an migrant origin background (Holm et al., coming).

In addition to negative health and wellbeing impacts, people with disabilities experienced more difficulties in accessing health and social services than the rest of the population. They felt that health services were insufficient more often than others. Those using personal assistance had difficulties in getting assistants, assistive device services and transport services as well as physiotherapy and social worker services. (Sainio et al. 2021, Nurmi-Koikkalainen et al. 2021). Lower secondary school pupils with disabilities reported more often than other young people that they did not receive the support that they needed from teaching and pupil welfare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation was least favourable for young people who had numerous disabilities at the same time. (Holm et al. 2022d).

Interviews with users of housing services for persons with intellectual disabilities (Miettinen, coming) and a survey and interviews with professionals in the disability sector (Valtokari et al. 2023; Korhonen et al. 2023) illustrate how the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on life in housing services for persons with disabilities. The residents' social circles shrank. Mobility in and outside housing units was restricted, as were social contacts, even when a person had not themselves been exposed to the coronavirus. There were challenges in the implementation of services, and remote services did not completely compensate for the gaps that emerged in the provision of support. Those living independently at home said that they had to cope largely on their own, as a result of which may have put their ability to live independently in jeopardy. Challenging behaviour, isolation and symptoms of depression increased. The resources of housing units for acting in the situation and their cooperation with other actors varied.

The coping of residents was supported with measures that ensured the continuity of meaningful activities and social relationships individually, including in serious disruptions. However, the operating methods of service providers were often seen as rigid and categorical, focusing on protecting residents from infection at the expense of other wellbeing. Support for coping would have required more individualised solutions and a person's participation in making decisions on everyday measures. (Miettinen, coming)

Migrant origin populations

The experiences of migrant origin populations during the pandemic have been studied in several different surveys and studies. It has been evident that the epidemic has had an impact on the health, welfare and everyday life of the migrant origin populations population, and the differences between them and the entire population were statistically significant in many respects. However, the impacts have varied by native country group.

A study conducted by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the welfare of people born abroad (MigCOVID) (Skogberg et al. 2021) was carried out between September 2020 and February 2021 and provided extensive population-level information on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the migrant origin population in Finland. Key conclusions of the MigCOVID study included that migrant origin populations experienced more concerns, loneliness and sleep problems than the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant origin population felt less optimistic about the future, and differences were also observed in psychological distress compared to the general population. The economic impacts of the epidemic were also significant among the migrant origin populations in relation to the general population.

Although the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were emphasised in the migrant origin population, some also reported positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and these were mentioned more often than by the general population. Migrant origin populations reported increased contact with their loved ones, hopefulness towards the future and reduced loneliness more often than the general population.

Finell's research group (Finell et al. 2021) also surveyed the experiences of migrant origin populations who are Somali, Arabic and Russian-speakers living in Finland as part of their qualitative research at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The subjects of the study reported on various fears, difficulties and concerns during the pandemic, but also noted that that the pandemic strengthened communities and the resilience of both individuals and communities. The conclusions of the study are in line with the MigCOVID study.

The availability of information to migrant origin populations during the coronavirus epidemic has also been studied (Skogberg et al. 2021). A clear majority of migrant origin populations felt that they had received sufficient information during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, people who reported their Finnish or Swedish language proficiency as moderate or novice felt less likely to have received sufficient information compared to people with excellent proficiency in one of the two. The professionals who have worked with migrant origin populations at the meetings related to the Building the Future project reported that such things as a lack of multilingual, up-to-date and easily accessible information weakened the position of migrant origin populations during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, numerous services important to migrant origin populations were closed or limited, which naturally affected the availability of services. The status of migrant origin populations was hampered by the fact that information on changes in services and substitute services was rarely available in multiple languages. During Building the Future project meetings, the key persons from communities and professionals who worked with migrant origin populations brought to light their concerns about how to ensure equal implementation of services for people who do not have the capacity to use remote services for reasons such as them not having the necessary IT skills, IT equipment or online banking codes. The discussions also strongly highlighted the need for stronger cooperation between different actors and strengthening trust between emergency preparedness actors and culturally diverse communities.

In the following chapters, we will detail the emergency action plans that support the needs of migrant origin populations and persons with disabilities when preparing for future disruptions. Nationally collected research data on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives and services of persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations as well as the experiences accumulated in co-creation also provide a starting point for the development and implementation of emergency planning locally.

Emergency action plan 1: Accessible communication in disruptions and emergency conditions

The emergency action plan for accessible crisis communication contains instructions on how to take the needs of people from different language backgrounds and people with disabilities into account in crisis communication to citizens. Coping during serious disruptions and emergency conditions requires that as many people as possible understand and are able to follow instructions related to the situation. Accessible crisis communication takes into account people's different needs, disabilities and obstacles that are related to accessing information. In this chapter, we discuss accessibility in particular from the perspective of easy language (selkokieli), multilingual and multi-channel communication. The availability of information on what is happening in disruptions and how to act supports independent preparedness and opportunities to act and make decisions as the security situation changes. The availability of easy-to-understand information from reliable sources also prevents unnecessary concerns, misunderstandings and the spread of misinformation and reduces dependence on the support from others.

Accessibility means that communications take into account obstacles related to receiving a message and strive to facilitate access to and understanding of information by dismantling these obstacles. Obstacles may relate to such things as the content of the message, its technical implementation or the way in which the message is transmitted. Receiving information may be hindered by, for example, sensory impairments (visual impairment, hearing impairment), limited language skills or cognitive challenges. People may also experience motor skill-related challenges, which hinder their use of websites.

In other words, various obstacles may be linked to the content of the message or the way it is transmitted. The recipient of the message should have the opportunity to obtain information in an easy-to-understand format and in a manner that is suitable for them. The accessibility of the message can be promoted through numerous means, such as providing information in many forms (text, image, audio, video), in different channels and adapted to different needs. It is also important to remember that the general mood and attitudes are also part of accessibility; everyone has the right to know what is happening in the situation and how to act.

Easy language and multiple languages

The starting point for crisis communication is plain language that avoids specialist terminology and difficult language structures. However, in addition to clear and easy-to-understand plain language, easy language and multilingual communication are also needed, as these take people for whom even a plain language is too difficult to understand into account.

Easy language is a form of Finnish in which the content, vocabulary and structure has been adapted to make it more readable and understandable. It is different from plain language. Easy language is intended for people who have difficulties reading or understanding plain language. Easy language is a language form intended for special linguistic groups to which special principles apply concerning the language of the text and the visual layout of the publication. Clear language, on the other hand, refers to plain language for those who speak Finnish as their mother tongue, the use of which citizens familiarise themselves with, for example, at school. (Leskelä, Piehl & Mustajoki 2022; Leskelä 2019; the Finnish Centre for Easy Language) Easy language communication is also possible in other languages such as Swedish (LL-Center).

It is estimated that approximately 11-14% of the Finnish population, or 650,000-750,000 people need easy language. The reason for this need may include an intellectual disability or other cognitive disability,

dyslexia, memory disorder or the fact that Finnish or Swedish are not a person's native language. (Selkokielen tarvearvio 2019)

Information is always needed in easy language when

- the matter concerns all citizens,
- the matter particularly concerns people in need of easy language, or
- information is only available in digital format

(selkokeskus.fi/selkokieli/selkokielen-tarve/)

Multilingual communication refers to communications that are implemented in several languages and target people living in Finland who speak languages other than Finland's official languages (Finnish, Swedish, Sámi). The largest language groups are Russian, Estonian, Arabic, English and Somali. Some of these people naturally speak Finnish, Swedish or Sámi in addition to the language marked as their native language, but the group also include a significant number of people who do not have language proficiency in these languages. A knowledge of one's own area (e.g. municipality, wellbeing services county) is of particular importance in multilingual communication so that one can select the communication languages which are necessary in their area of operation.

Often, communications in official languages and official channels do not reach the people described above because the backgrounds, experiences and perspectives of data providers (e.g. municipalities, wellbeing services counties, other authorities) and data recipients differ. The websites or social media accounts of authorities are not familiar to those who have moved to Finland and they are used to searching for information from very different sources. In addition to producing easy language and multilingual information, an effort must be made to ensure that the information is received.

Further information:

Familiarise yourself with the Government's final report on developing communications with citizens in crisis situations.

Developing communications with citizens in crisis situations [Final report of the working group Publications by the Prime Minister's Office 2023:1](#)

The accessible communication emergency action plan (Table 1) presents the implementation of accessible crisis communication by describing the easy language and multilingual communication process consisting of four tasks. The first task is to integrate easy language and multilingual communication into the general communication plan, which ensures it will not remain a separate measure disconnected from other communication.

Second, a situational picture is needed of the information and material needs that easy language and multilingual communications aim to respond to. As a rule, situations require the provision of information that is common to all of the population. On the other hand, there may be situations in which people with disabilities or migrant origin populations have a special need for support.

Third, expertise and resources are needed for implementing easy and multilingual communications. For example, a competence in easy language is a specialised communication skill that authorities should invest in. In addition to easy and understandable language, easy communication involves a clear and understandable layout and, if necessary, understanding must be supported with images. These also require expertise.

Fourth, communications require a multi-channel approach in order for the message to reach people. This means, for example, printed and electronic communications, using text, images, audio as well as face-to-face communication and their various combinations in different channels and locations.

The chapter after the table describes the operating practices and methods listed in emergency action plan 1 in more detail. These support the implementation of tasks related to easy language and multilingual communications. The table's last column titled "Implemented by" encourages the reader to contemplate on how the division of labour related to tasks could be implemented in their own organisation. The table can also be printed.

Table 1: Emergency action plan 1

Emergency action plan			
ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS IN DISRUPTIONS AND EMERGENCY CONDITIONS			
Measure	Tasks	Operating methods	Implemented by
Easy and multilingual communications	1. Coordinate easy and multilingual communications as part of general communications	1.1 Attach the implementation of easy language and multilingual communication to your crisis communications plans	
	2. Maintain a situational picture of information needs	2.1 Utilise participatory practices and participatory communication 2.2 Organise security workshops 2.3 Utilise social listening	
	3. Allocate resources to communication	3.1 Maintain basic instructions in easy language as part of an emergency plan 3.2 Map your organisation's easy language and multilingual competence 3.3 Utilise translation and easy language adaptation services	
	4. Reach people with disabilities and migrant origin populations	4.1 Ensure multi-channel communication	

Operating practices and methods

1. Coordinate easy and multilingual communication as part of general communication

1.1 Attach the implementation of easy language and multilingual communication to your crisis communications plans

Serious disruptions and emergency conditions are first and foremost situations that affect the entire population and instructions related to these. It is therefore important that the information is easy for everyone to understand. Integrating easy language and multilingualism into the general communication plan ensures that they are systematic alongside general communication. This is needed as it is not just a matter of translating communication materials. This also requires that the organisation employs linguistic and communication professionals who have special expertise in areas such as easy language.

It is essential to take into account the suitability of the message for people who you must reach and the accessibility of information, i.e. how information can be received. Understanding concepts and terms, methods and channels of communication and, for example, trust in authorities may vary between different population groups, cultures and communities. For this reason, in multilingual communications, the message may not be in the same format as the original message in Finnish and Swedish, but it must be possible to adapt the message as necessary. When preparing instructions, information must be provided not only in an easy-to-understand format but also in an accessible, acceptable and culturally appropriate format for the recipient of the message. These perspectives should be taken into account from the start of communications. It is important to consider in advance how the aforementioned matters will be implemented in practice, i.e. whether it will be the translator or source text writer who will adapt the text, which substance expert can help in adapting the message and the routes via which the message can best be transmitted. There's no point in creating any communication product if its distribution channels have not been thought through in advance.

By taking into account the equality and accessibility of communications, a wider group of people can be reached also in serious disruptions. A clear and unambiguous approach and easy language should always be the starting point for communication. The list of tips below is based on THL's checklist for more equal communications and the guidelines for easy communications by the Finnish Centre for Easy Language, which include concrete methods for improving the equality of communications.

Tips for implementing easy language and multilingual communications:

- Think about who you are targeting with your message. The same message is unlikely to work for everyone.
- Select the appropriate channels for sharing the message. The message will not reach everyone through one channel. Not everyone knows how to search for the necessary information.
- Utilise participatory methods to plan communications (e.g. community dialogue, collaboration with target group representatives)
- When planning the message:
 - Communicate in easy language whenever possible.
 - Consider the required language versions and take into account the accessibility of communications. Easy language text is often a good basis for language versions.
 - Always communicate respectfully about all people and avoid unnecessary generalisations. Do not use discriminatory language or images.
 - Select images that display diversity, also avoid unnecessary generalisations in the images.
 - If possible, use images that support understanding. The use of images also helps to make the message concrete.
 - Ensure that the layout, images and publication format support accessibility when planning and publishing the text.

Further information:

The Finnish Centre for Easy Language and the LL-Center are national centres of expertise in easy language that promote information provision in easy language communication and culture in Finland. Read more about easy language, the layout of a easy language publication and easy language training:

- in Finnish on [the Finnish Centre for Easy Language website](#)
- in Swedish [LL-Center](#)

2. Maintain a situational picture of information needs

Maintaining a situational picture in serious disruptions and emergency conditions may be challenging due to the constantly changing situation. In order to maintain the situational picture, basic information is needed on an understanding of the people with disabilities who live in the area, the linguistic distribution of the area and the differences between different residential areas.

From the perspective of the situational picture, it is important to consider in advance what methods will be used to collect information and how changes in the situation will be monitored in the event of a serious disruption or emergency conditions. This can be facilitated with means such as various statistics collected in the area, if these are available. For example, statistics related to morbidity and vaccination coverage were used during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify areas with more morbidity or fewer vaccines.

However, collecting qualitative information is also essential. The participatory operating methods, such as social listening and a safety workshop, described in the following sub-chapter are excellent methods. They provide accurate and local information and perhaps even perspectives on how to act on the basis of the information obtained.

2.1 Utilise participatory practices and participatory communication

Community dialogue and co-creation are participatory operating methods in which people are involved in planning, implementing and evaluating communications. During the COVID-19 pandemic, methods were tested and these were used especially in the planning and implementation of targeted communications for non-Finnish speakers. The model was also applied in the development of communications that meet the needs of people with disabilities, and it is also suitable for use with other groups.

Community dialogue helps to identify people's needs and wishes and facilitates open discussion on questions, concerns, wishes and fears arising from a serious disruption or emergency conditions. It is also a way to build, maintain and strengthen trust between different actors. The methods for implementing community dialogue should always be planned with key persons belonging to the target groups. It is a good idea to invite a diverse group of people to take part in dialogue, such as trusted key persons and representatives as well as other members of communities. It is important to remember that communication includes give and take - all parties must benefit from community dialogue.

Co-creation can mean, for example, inviting migrant origin populations and people with disabilities to be involved when planning communications. When the needs have first been determined, through means such as community dialogues, people can be involved in the planning of communications that meet these needs through co-creation. The communication produced in this way meets the real needs of the community and is likely to be culturally and linguistically appropriate. Co-creation can also be used for finding the best ways in which to reach people through communications. It is essential to do things together and avoid a hierarchy in which information is provided from the top down.

Community dialogue and co-creation require the networking of local office holders, professionals, organisations, associations, communities and other actors. However, networks must be created before the crisis, because building common approaches and trust require time of which there is little at the time of a crisis.

Co-creation with people with disabilities leans heavily on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 11 of the Convention safeguards the right of persons with disabilities to protection

in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. The key principles of the convention also require the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the planning and decision-making concerning them.

The statutory disability councils operating in wellbeing services counties and municipalities are concrete, already existing partners for developing crisis communications and preparedness. Disability councils act as cooperation bodies for disability associations, authorities and decision-makers that promote the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities. They influence planning, decision-making and monitoring in different administrative branches, take initiatives and issue statements and opinions.

For more information please visit [the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities VANE website](#).

In addition, disability organisations have their own active networks, which also include organisations representing informal carers. The most essential part of the cooperation is to ensure that people with disabilities are involved and their right to represent themselves in matters that concern them is realised. This also requires that matters are processed in an accessible manner.

Culturally diverse communities and organisations are actors that often are aware of and understand the needs and wishes of local migrant origin populations and e.g. the channels for reaching people. These actors are often also perceived as reliable sources of information in communities, which means that people may be more open to listening to information when these actors are utilised in its dissemination.

You can contact local organisations, for example, via integration professionals, coordinators of municipal or wellbeing services county organisations, municipal guidance and counselling services, culturally diverse umbrella organisations, local organisations networks or meeting places. Religious communities often have different kinds of websites that provide contact information for local actors. Where necessary, an interpreter will be used in the planning of cooperation.

In addition to registered associations, many so-called key persons operate in culturally diverse communities. **Key persons** are people valued, known and trusted in the community who have the role of an opinion influencer. They may be religious leaders, people working in influential positions, community members active in social media or, for example, the community's elders. The easiest way to connect with these people is to use snowball sampling, i.e. by asking existing partners who they feel would be important to invite to participate in the cooperation. Cooperation with these people helps to get the message across effectively.

One of the strengths of organisations and networks representing persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations is the opportunity to act as a two-way channel for communications. They voice people's voices and needs, and they also have skills and methods for reaching people. They can highlight the significance of easy language, multilingualism and accessibility in preparedness and its related communications, present perspectives on safety plans and initiate development and cooperation by familiarising themselves with office holders working with preparedness and communications. However, when cooperating with key persons and organisations, it should be kept in mind that ultimately, it is the authorities of the municipality and the wellbeing services county who are responsible for the accuracy and delivery of the message. The rules, wishes and needs related to cooperation should be agreed on as closely as possible to ensure that the responsibilities are clear to everyone.

The Finnish Red Cross has produced materials for cooperation with culturally diverse organisations and for implementing multilingual and multi-channel communications together with organisations in the event of various disruptions and emergency conditions.
Read more: redcross.fi/multilingual-coronavirus-communications

2.2 Organise security workshops

The security in serious disruptions workshop serves as a method for co-creating preparedness and emergency planning. Suitable partners for implementing the workshop include disability councils in wellbeing services counties and municipalities, culturally diverse communities and networks of organisations.

The aim of the workshop is to strengthen people's participation in preparedness by increasing their knowledge of the concerns and questions related to coping, by promoting independent and joint preparedness from their perspective, and by strengthening cooperation needed in serious disruptions and emergency conditions. The outcomes of the workshop can be used to plan and implement communications that meet people's needs and to find ways to support preparedness and coping.

The Building the Future project organised workshops with people with disabilities. As key questions, they highlighted the functionality of electronic aids in disruptions and emergency conditions as well as the importance of obtaining easy language information and support. The workshop method can also be used when working with migrant origin populations. In this case, the focus may be on such things as how one can strengthen one's own preparedness in Finland and the differences there are in safety, preparedness and emergency issues between a person's country of origin and Finland.

Implementation of a workshop and how the process proceeds

Implementation by:

- The inviting actor can be e.g. a wellbeing services county or municipality, disability council or other cooperation body, a local organisation
- Participants: people in the target group, local associations and representatives: representatives of the wellbeing services county, service representatives (e.g. disability or integration services), rescue services, municipality, etc.

Example of a workshop outline:

Duration approximately 3 hours or 2 x 1.5 hours

1. Welcome, an introduction to the discussion
 - Purpose of the event and common rules
 - Safety and preparedness, addresses by experts
2. Small group discussions, discussion questions
 - What are some concerns and issues related to safety?
 - What can I do myself? What do I need support in?
 - What can others do?
3. Termination of work in small groups, and joint discussion, discussion questions
 - What did we learn?
 - What will we do next?
 - Who do we need to join us?

Please note the following:

- Take into consideration the needs and coping of participants when planning the size of the group and the duration of the event. If necessary, divide the workshop with two meetings. Make sure that there are breaks.
- Make sure that the meeting place is accessible. Use easy language and avoid professional language and specialised terminology. Use easy language when the participants include people with developmental or other cognitive disabilities or when the language used in the workshop is not the native language of the person
- Reserve enough time for hearing participants and for discussions. Give concrete examples related to everyday life. Ask about the participants' own experiences.

2.3 Utilise social listening

Social listening refers to a systematic process in which information on people's perceptions, beliefs and questions obtained through social media and/or social contacts is used in the planning and targeting of communications in disruptions and emergency conditions. Social listening can help increase an organisation's understanding of their target group. Credible communications can help build trust between authorities and the public, prevent the spread of misinformation, correct misunderstandings and motivate people to follow instructions. (Lohiniva et al. 2022)

Social listening requires a team whose duties include the collection of data, analysis of data, and on the basis of these, the planning and implementation of communications in disruptions and emergencies. Good partners in implementing the process include organisations that work with persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations. For example, the municipality's information point could be a good partner in collecting people's acute questions, thoughts, concerns and feelings.

Tips for implementing social listening:

- Brainstorm on where you could find information on your target group's thoughts and ideas that you could use in communications. This could include social media channels, events, advisory services, interviews and personal meetings and projects.
- Consider who could collect data and who would carry out an analysis or synthesis of data collected from several sources. Gather a team where you utilise existing resources, such as one or two NGO employees, a health care professional, and a communications professional.
- Agree on where you will collect the material and how you will share it with each other. Good alternatives to working together include various electronic collaborative platforms, such as Teams or a shared Word document.
- Develop a structure for social listening in which the roles and tasks of each team member are defined. Who will collect the data? Who will analyse it and who will make recommendations? Who will implement the recommendations?
- Agree on the time to be spent on social listening. For example, two hours a week of data collection, one hour a week of data analysis and one hour a week of communications planning.

Further information:

Familiarise yourselves with the methods of social listening. How do you want to collect data? How do you wish to analyse communications or make recommendations for it?:

[Social Listening in Eastern and Southern Africa, a UNICEF Risk Communication and Community Engagement Strategy to Address the COVID-19 Infodemic](#)

How can social listening be trained? An example from Finland:

[Social Listening to Enhance Access to Appropriate Pandemic Information Among Culturally Diverse Populations: Case Study From Finland](#)

3. Allocate resources to communication

In serious disruptions and emergency conditions, the need for communications increases. Good preparedness and, for example, the operating models below can facilitate a response to this challenge, but it is also a good idea to consider how to get additional resources for crisis communications if necessary.

3.1 Maintain basic instructions in easy language as part of emergency plans

Preparing basic instructions related to serious disruptions in easy language in advance, linking these to emergency plans and publishing them on your website is a concrete solution that speeds up the provision of information in acute situations. Anticipating situations is important and enables rapid response.

The recommended method is to maintain easy language information on your website where it is easy to find. It is essential to explain what the situation is, how to prepare for it, act accordingly and protect yourself in

the situation, and where to get help and support if necessary. In addition, it is important to take into account issues related to special needs, such as the impact of power shortages on aids essential for people with disabilities. A website is also a good way to collect and answer questions in an aggregated manner. Things that improve the findability of information include a language menu and a sufficiently large link on the home page to easy language materials.

Easy language instructions for citizens can also be used to support the independent preparedness of households. Instructions in easy language can be distributed, for example, in services or directly to households and people can be reminded of these regularly via communications.

Producing basic instructions in advance ensures that there is time to produce professional adaptations and translations and assure their quality. Professional translators are commissioned to translate official guidelines and instructions. The Selko symbol granted free-of-charge by the Finnish Centre for Easy Language acts as a quality stamp for easy language texts.

3.2 Map your organisation's easy language and multilingual competence

The starting point for all organisational communications is appropriate, clear and understandable official language as provided in the Administrative Procedure Act. To ensure effective communications, it is also essential to determine the easy language and multilingual competence in your organisation before a disruption takes place. Special expertise related to easy language and accessible communications can be acquired through continuing education (Finnish Centre for Easy Language; LL-Center).

When utilising experts in easy language or multilingual communication, agree on common rules in advance. Points to take into consideration include whether employees should be paid a language supplement or overtime compensation when performing tasks that differ from their own job description. It is also worth considering how helping out with multilingual communications will affect an employee's own work. It should also be noted that even if a person has a certain language proficiency, they have been hired first and foremost because of their professional skills related to their job description. It is also essential that language proficiency does not make a person a linguistic professional in the language in question, so strong support from communications professionals is necessary to ensure the quality of the text. Keep in mind that easy language competence is not comparable to multilingual competence, as easy language is not anyone's mother tongue.

Once your organisation is aware of its employees language skills, the utilisation of their competence can be agreed on efficiently in the event of a disruption. A list of people with easy language and multilingual competences should be kept in the intranet of a municipality or wellbeing services county, if the utilisation of the listed persons' language competence has been jointly agreed upon.

If your municipality or wellbeing services county does not have anyone with the needed language proficiency or easy language proficiency find out where the service can be purchased in the region and complete competitive tendering before a disruption takes place.

Further information:

Increasing competence in easy language in public sector organisations is part of an open government strategy the aim of which is to promote everyone's right to understand and be understood. More information is available on [the Ministry of Finance's open government strategy website](#).

3.3 Utilise translation and easy language adaptation services

In serious disruptions and emergency conditions, effective and rapid translation and adaptation processes play a key role in ensuring that information is disseminated as quickly as possible. Information is needed quickly and accurate translations and adaptations ensures that the information is correct. It is often impossible to translate information into all possible languages, so it is a good idea to make the text easy language from the start.

Adaptation to easy language

- Easy language and a layout and possible images that support understanding should be included in the planning of communications from the start.
- There are still very few professionals who provide easy language text services. For this reason, competence in easy language should be strengthened in one's own organisation.
- The quality of the adaptation work purchased as a service is guaranteed by the Selko symbol granted to the adaptor by the Finnish Centre for Easy Language. The Selko symbol also helps people identify and find easy language materials.
- Easy language text serves as a good source text for multilingual translations according to the needs of the region.

Tips for the use of translation services in serious disruptions and emergency conditions:

- Always use a professional translator if one is available
- Delivery times for translations and easy language adaptations may be long for operators that meet the qualification requirements. It is a good idea to agree with the translation service provider on how crisis communications can be handled in the fastest possible way when entering into a contract with them.
- The source text should be as clear as possible in order to facilitate translation work. Short sentences and avoidance of professional terminology make translation easier.
- It is important to ensure that the translations are accurate, especially in the case of crisis communications and the translation of various instructions. In addition to the professional translator, at least one person who is proficient in the target language should proofread the text before its publication. If possible, it is advisable to agree on the proofreading at the contract stage so that the translation service provider takes care of this. If proofreading is carried out in your own organisation or a party such as an organisational partner, it is advisable to agree on compensation and the working hours reserved for this in advance.
- It is advisable to agree with the translation agency on the creation of a translation memory so that terms are translated consistently in the same way. If possible, it is worth agreeing that the same translator is always used for translations of a specific theme.
- However, if there are errors in the translations, it is advisable to discuss them with the translation agency to ensure that the process will be smoother in the future. Errors should also be communicated openly so that the correct information reaches the target groups.

Translating and adapting texts and the coordination of these assignments is work that consumes resources. For this reason, it is worth considering whether it is possible to cooperate with other public sector actors or organisations and utilise the same translations.

4. Reach people with disabilities and migrant origin populations

4.1 Ensure multi-channel communication

It is obvious that not all people in need of information can be reached through a single channel in the event of a serious disruption or emergency conditions. It is therefore important to consider in advance the channels through which people living in a specific area such as a municipality or wellbeing services county can be reached most efficiently. The participatory methods described earlier in this chapter, cooperation with different actors and, for example, social listening are helpful in determining the best channels.

It is also important to consider the form in which the information would best reach its target group. For example, a long PDF file with text content on the municipality's website was found to be a fairly poor communication channel during the pandemic and it was noted that multiple different channels and different communication materials were needed. It is also not advisable to create materials until their distribution channel has been considered. In particular in the case of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations it is of key importance that they are approached as an individual.

Creativity is also often required in disruptions. It is advisable to work together with organisations, associations and communities that have information about the ways in which people access information and which

have channels for reaching people. Suitable channels can often also be found through experimentation, so we recommend to try different communication materials and channels before crisis situations to ensure to have a command of suitable channels. In the event of a disruption, you should also be prepared to adapt existing operating methods flexibly and quickly.

Tips on channels and materials proven to be effective during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Proven channels:
 - An organisation's social media platforms and mailing lists
 - Visits to organisations' premises
 - Posters and flyers in service providers' premises
 - Discussion events in cooperation with actors such as organisations and religious communities
 - Letters in a person's native language, which are delivered to their home in which essential information about the situation is available (not just guidance to e.g. websites)
 - Personal conversations by phone or face-to-face
- Forms of information sharing proven effective:
 - Easy language materials adapted from Finnish or Swedish materials
 - Paid advertising on social media in a person's native language
 - Videos with subtitles, dubbing, and sign language for accessibility.
 - Audio files in one's own language, which can be forwarded for example via Whatsapp.
 - Text files suitable for Braille printing
 - Image-supported materials and clear graphics that can be used online and printed
 - Information graphs suitable for sharing on social media

Emergency action plan 2: Cooperation between professionals in disruptions and emergency conditions

The flow of information and cooperation between professionals supports the dissemination and application of instructions and measures concerning disruptions and emergency conditions in everyday life. It is important to understand and recognise what a disruption means from the perspective of a person with disabilities or an migrant origin populations and how it will affect the work of a professional. In this chapter, we present operating practices that support cooperation between professionals, which promote the implementation and application of information and instructions in practice.

In serious disruptions and emergency conditions, it is important to ensure the implementation of instructions and regulations and that they are understood. Effective cooperation between professionals plays a key role in supporting the coping of migrant origin populations and persons with disabilities in serious disruptions and emergency conditions. A key factor in this emergency action plan is that professionals work together to plan, implement and ensure the implementation and understanding of instructions and regulations among persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations. This requires that they understand the needs and service forms of different population and client groups and are able to apply instructions to people's everyday lives. Processing information and instructions together helps in finding ways to act in these situations.

People with disabilities and migrant origin populations can use specialised services intended for them, such as services for the people with disabilities and migrant origin populations services, as well as general services, such as healthcare services and services used by families with children. Services can be provided as a wellbeing services county's or municipality's own services or as an outsourced service. In addition, some people use the services provided by organisations. If information does not flow between the parties and/or it is assumed that someone else will handle matters, there is a risk that nothing will get done. For this reason, systematic cooperation and the planning of its coordination play a key role in the emergency action plan, and we encourage that organisations enter forms of cooperation in their preparedness and emergency plans.

In this chapter, professionals refer to a broad group of people from those whose work involves emergency planning and communications to professionals who work with persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations. Professionals may be officials and employees of wellbeing services counties or municipalities, private service provider employees or professionals of organisations. As the security situation changes, all of them play an important role in reaching and supporting the target groups.

Cooperation describes a process in which the shared objectives are clear to the actors, the operating methods for achieving the objectives are shared and information flows smoothly between actors. Cross-organisational and multiprofessional cooperation makes it possible to examine situations from many perspectives. Professionals working in the fields of social services, health care and multiculturalism, experts in communications, rescue services and emergency planning, and professionals from other fields, such as education, can participate in cooperation.

Strengthening cooperation can help in avoiding overlapping tasks, sharing competence and creating new ideas and learning. Effective cooperation ensures that different professional groups feel that they have been heard, and joint action towards a common goal is smooth. The management responsibility for the situation is clearly defined. Combining networks between different actors also supports reaching a wider audience, and cooperation supports the smooth continuation of operations as the security situation changes.

The **emergency action plan for supporting professional cooperation in disruptions and emergency conditions** (Table 2) contains tasks that support sharing regulations, recommendations and instructions

concerning the situation with professionals and including these in the daily work carried out with persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations. When implementing the guidelines, it must be ensured that professionals who meet people with disabilities and migrant origin populations in their work have access to easy-to-understand and up-to-date information. It is also important to ensure that professionals are not left alone in changing situations, but receive support for applying information in their own work.

The following chapters describe the operating practices and methods in Emergency action plan 2 that support the dissemination of instructions to professionals and its implementation in work with people in more detail.

Table 2: Emergency action plan 2

Emergency action plan COOPERATION BETWEEN PROFESSIONALS IN DISRUPTIONS AND EMERGENCY CONDITIONS			
Measure	Tasks	Operating practices	Implemented by
Implementation of recommendations, regulations and instructions and support for implementation	Ensure easy-to-understand and the up-to-date flow of information to professionals	1.1 Ensure the clarity of content 1.2 Ensure regular communication 1.3 Utilise different information sharing methods	
	Take into account the diversity of professional groups and service forms in instructions	2.1 Ensure that the content of communication is consistent 2.2 Support others in the application of information and instructions	
	Ensure two-way communications	3.1 Utilise the round table approach	

Operating practices and methods

1. Ensure easy-to-understand and regular flow of information to professionals

1.1 Ensure the clarity of content

Various working and action groups are responsible for preparedness and emergency work in wellbeing services counties and municipalities. The groups are tasked with ensuring the actors at different levels review what the emergency plan means in their own unit and communicate up-to-date information to support the work of professionals. This is why it is important to hear professionals in the field and clients and to work together with organisations.

The language used in the instructions and their communication must be clear and easy to understand. A distinction must be made between recommendations, regulations and guidelines. In addition, clarifying the concepts and defining their differences is particularly important when communicating about new situations and specific measures. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was some confusion between instructed restrictions and recommended isolation and the binding restrictive measures and isolation specified in legislation. As measures restricting fundamental rights, restrictive measures and isolation imposed on people against their will are comprehensively specified in binding legislation and strictly limited to certain environments and special situations, which only certain professional groups have the right to implement.

The adoption of shared information is also supported by clear agendas and clear roles of actors. When offering information or instructions, it is important to provide clear guidance on who to address more detailed questions to and how their responses will be communicated to everyone.

1.2 Ensure regular communication

Good provision of information and up-to-date, regular instructions facilitate operations. The need for information of professionals increases in various disruptions. It is important to ensure that information is available frequently enough. Regular and consistent communication also increases trust in the party responsible for the situation and guarantees that the information will be disseminated in the organisation.

Continuous changes in recommendations and instructions increase the need for information. On the other hand, frequent briefings can be considered stressful in calmer times. It is important to plan a suitable meeting interval. For example, in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the epidemic working groups responsible for the activities first met at short intervals and then at longer intervals, taking care of the instructions. The assessment of the frequency of communication was emphasised.

It is also important to remember to inform professionals about the end of a disruption and, if necessary, provide support for the safe dismantling of the special arrangements used. For example, as the COVID-19 pandemic declined, the special arrangements implemented in services for people with intellectual disabilities were phased out at different paces in different housing units and in daytime activities. At the same time as some returned to normal everyday life was, there was no plan in place elsewhere for how to dismantle the situation as COVID-19 subsided.

1.3 Utilise different information sharing methods

When sharing information with professionals, use different methods to ensure that the information reaches as many people as possible.

Tips on information channels that were proven to be good during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- physical or remote briefings;
- status reports and emailed key bulletins
- information published in an actor's intranet
- text messages
- Whatsapp groups where current and acute information was shared

Naturally, in a large organisation, the entire staff cannot participate at the same time in information events organised. For this reason, it is necessary to record events held by working groups and to keep minutes and

share them in the staff's information channels. The recordings and minutes must be easily accessible to those who need them.

2. Take into account the diversity of professional groups and service forms

2.1 Ensure that the content of communication is consistent

It is important for instructions to take into account the diversity of professional groups, service forms and methods of implementation as well as the various population and client groups with whom different professionals work. It is important to ensure that all actors receive the information with the same content and as close to the same time as possible. For example, when communication was hierarchical during the COVID-19 pandemic, some professionals felt that they received too little information and the instructions changed along the way.

Information on the required measures must be sent with the same content to the service provider's own operations and to outsourced services. Cooperation must also take into account those actors in the organisation sector responsible for delivering services and support to individuals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, those service providers whose activities were supported directly by the pandemic groups or with as few intermediate steps as possible functioned best.

Personal assistants, whose employers are people with disabilities, can be compared to home care workers in terms of the need for information. During the COVID-19 pandemic, employers with disabilities felt that there was a lack of information available on the organisation of the assistant's work and taking care of occupational safety and it was difficult to access. It is therefore important to remember persons with disabilities acting as employers of personal assistants and the support they need to fulfil their employer obligations in emergency conditions and disruptions.

2.2 Support others in the application of information and instructions

In addition to up-to-date information, it is important for professionals to have time and support for processing instructions in the work community. This supports the application of information and instructions in one's own work. Everyday situations can be complex and challenging from the perspective of implementing instructions. These include situations where the safeguarding of health and a person's right to self-determination are considered to be in conflict.

Sharing and reflecting on concerns and questions related to work together as a group supports coping with difficult situations and coping at work. For example, online cafés were organised for supported housing instructors working alone during the COVID-19 pandemic, which focused on topical concerns and solving issues together. In addition to peer support received from colleagues, professionals found support from their immediate supervisor important in situations where applying instructions was challenging.

3. Ensure two-way communication

Cooperation between professionals highlights the back-and-forth nature of communications and how this can be ensured. Professionals must be provided information as well as an opportunity to ask about the topic and share observations related to it. In order to maintain trust, it is essential to ensure that questions are also answered. In addition to press conferences and information channels, it is advisable to agree on contact persons who are able to answer or find answers to questions concerning disruptions. For example, support received from the service provider in an outsourced housing unit during the COVID-19 pandemic was considered important when challenging issues were raised by the relatives of housing unit's residents.

3.1 Utilise the round table approach

The purpose of the round table meeting is to bring together a multidisciplinary group of professionals from different fields to discuss one topic. The aim of the meeting is to strengthen cooperation, share good practices, provide peer support and improve the flow of information. All actors invited to participate in the meeting have equal rights to participate and speak.

The meeting's target group will depend on the topic in question. Contemplate whether it would be useful to invite actors from the wellbeing services county, representatives of organisations and municipalities, state employees, private sector actors or perhaps meet together with all of the above. Note the importance of crossing sectoral, municipal, regional and organisational boundaries in meetings, but also confidentiality or non-disclosure obligations that apply to different parties, so that everyone can actively participate in the discussion.

For example, during the COVID-19 epidemic, THL organised joint national round table meetings for health and social sector professionals and communicators working with migrant origin populations. In addition, national meetings were held with organisations representing cultural diversity. The purpose of the meetings was to map out the steps taken in the region and the region's current status and to share good practices between different actors in order to avoid overlapping work and to ensure that good practices are disseminated as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Implementing a round table:

- Decide on the topic or theme to be discussed at the meeting and contemplate on who could be the target group. If you invite actors from a larger area to participate, there should be at least one representative from each municipality, wellbeing services county or hospital district so that information can flow and good practices can be disseminated efficiently. Mention this in the invitation.
- Consider the number of participants so that everyone can participate in the discussion.
- Approach the participants in advance by e-mail, explain the purpose of the meeting and ask them to forward the invitation to a colleague if they are not the correct person to attend the meeting in question.
- Prepare a meeting invitation which contains a clear theme, questions to be addressed and target group. It is a good idea to state again in the invitation that the invitation may be forwarded to others, for example, within the municipality.
- At the meeting, elect a chairperson, secretary and, in remote meetings, the person responsible for the message field.

Tips on participatory methods in remote roundtable meetings:

- Encourage participants to keep the camera on during the meeting and tell them about this already in the calendar invitation. Also encourage the use of the message field and reactions.
- Be prepared to change the theme and approach if other perspectives or topics than those you have planned are highlighted more during the meeting. You can also ask people you have invited to send their wishes on topics to be discussed in advance.
- Asking actors to share their own situation and share good and bad practices is a proven way of obtaining wide-ranging views from different actors. Specify the time for which participants are invited to speak in advance, e.g. 3 minutes.

It is worth remembering in advance that the speeches tend to go overtime. For this reason, reserve enough time for the meeting. If it is not possible to request all actors to speak due to the schedule, you can request a few actors in advance if they would speak. You can also collect experiences in the message field or on various electronic work platforms. If necessary, experiences can also be collected before the meeting, and the chairman of the meeting can make a summary of them. Small group work is an effective way of exchanging experiences and developing activities. It is a good idea to divide the groups so that each group has participants from different sectors and regions.

Emergency action plan 3: Securing services in disruptions and emergency conditions

The everyday coping of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations can be supported with different client-oriented services and solutions. As the security situation changes, there is a need to increase the efficiency of services. The need for more efficient and secure services does not apply to all persons with disabilities or migrant origin populations, and in this emergency action plan, we primarily focus on people for whom it is necessary to plan in advance what kind of enhanced service is needed. In addition, we describe the necessary measures for maintaining equality in security as far as possible in all security situations. This chapter includes some means of securing services for people in a more vulnerable position.

Individuality is essential in risk assessments related to disruptions and emergency conditions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, decisions on the downsizing and restriction of services were made in a very categorical manner. Many people with disabilities and migrant origin populations had to cope in numerous situations with services that are more limited than needed.

During changes to the security situation and preparations for these, it is essential to identify and take into account especially those people for whom securing services and support is particularly critical. For example, personal assistance used by persons with disabilities is often a service that safeguards and maintains life. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some people were at risk of severe coronavirus disease due to their disability or illness. We also did not have the understanding to take personal assistants into account in the distribution of protective equipment in the same way as home care employees.

Services can play an important role in supporting the coping of persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations. Services other than those specifically targeted at them are also important. For this reason, their needs should be taken into account in general in activities that ensure social preparedness, such as health and social services, education and other sectors. For example, the impact of switching to remote services and the need for adjustments in a serious disruption and in emergency conditions should be assessed in advance from the perspective of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations.

However, people with disabilities and migrant origin populations are partly in a different position when considering the services provided to them in the event of a disruption. A large share of people with disabilities receive support from social services or are clients of services for the disabled, in which case their situation and need for support are largely known to the authorities. This way, the needs of people with disabilities can be anticipated, and they can be contacted directly in the event of a disruption. Only a small percentage of migrant origin populations are covered by various social services, which makes it more difficult to determine their need for support and reach them in the event of a disruption.

For more information on securing services in disruptions and emergency conditions, see the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare's [Handbook on Disability Services](#).

The **emergency action plan on securing services** (Table 3) presents the tasks supporting the organisation of services in disruptions and emergency conditions, as well as the operating practices and methods for managing these. The card identifies three tasks which require attention. First, it is essential that people have sufficient information about preparedness. It is also a good idea to ensure that people are aware of where to get help and support when needed. Second, it is important to identify the special needs and resources of vulnerable people as part of preparedness. The third key task is to find ways in which to implement essential services and support as the security situation changes.

Table 3: Emergency action plan 3

Emergency action plan			
SECURING SERVICES IN DISRUPTIONS AND EMERGENCY CONDITIONS			
Measure	Tasks	Operating methods	Responsible persons
Arrangement of services in disruptions and emergency conditions	1 Ensure that people have information about preparedness in services	1.1 Take care of general preparedness 1.2 Pay particular attention to preparedness in social work 1.3. Support people's independent preparedness	
	2 Identify the special needs of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations	2.1. Take the resources of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations into consideration 2.2 Take care of clients' individual preparedness plans	
	3 Secure the accessibility of services and the necessary in-person services	3.1 Prioritise work tasks and see that instructions are prepared 3.2 Utilise outreach services. 3.3 Cooperate with organisations	

Operating practices and methods

1. Ensure that people have information about preparedness in services

1.1 Take care of general preparedness

Preparedness is carried out with plans. When the security situation changes, actions are carried out in accordance with the plans. The implementation of equality and the availability and accessibility of services play a key role in the planning of emergency preparedness. Involvement plays an important role in the safety of vulnerable people. This means that people belonging to special groups become safety actors of themselves, and not only the targets of safety communications.

The starting point for general preparedness for persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations is that those responsible for preparedness and emergency work in the area are aware of what kind of vulnerable persons live in the area. For this purpose, an overview should be formed in the area.

The following factors can be determined in the overview:

- individual emergency plans,
- the language distribution and most common language groups in the region,
- organisations and actors in the region that are connected to communities; and
- key residential areas and meeting places.

1.2 Pay particular attention to preparedness in social work

Social work manages general preparedness related to the work and to some extent the preparedness of individual people. The social services sector must have instructions in place for disruptions and emergency conditions. The instructions must be up to date and easily accessible, even when there is an electricity outage or digital information systems are down. The instructions must be familiar to the entire organisation, not just to the management and communicators. Especially those employees who encounter clients in their daily work play a key role. Emergency preparedness planning provides information to employees on who to contact when the security situation changes, how clients should be advised and guided, and what kinds of things can be said about the situation.

Tips for matters that should be addressed in social work for people with disabilities:

- What kind of plan for preparedness is in place?
- This is what it says in the emergency preparedness plan, what does this mean for us?
- What does preparedness mean for us in concrete terms in this work?
- Is there an up-to-date emergency action plan on preparedness?
- Who do I have to take care of and what does this mean in practice?
- Individual emergency preparedness plans have been drawn up for clients who need a great deal of external help and who live in individual dwellings
- For outsourced services and own services: How will preparedness be incorporated into the outsourced service agreement and what are the service providers' obligations in preparedness?
- Training for disruptions so that people are able to comply with existing instructions and act in accordance with training.

More information on contract-based preparedness huoltovarmuuskeskus.fi/sopiva

1.3 Support independent preparedness

Preparedness is an important civic skill that supports coping and gives services time to implement the preparedness plans drawn up in them. Independent preparedness supports the safeguarding of services, as resources can be allocated to people who need the most support.

The management of everyday life of people with disabilities can be supported with different client-oriented services and solutions. During a disruption, there is a need to improve the efficiency of services for

some people. Things that must be planned in advance include who are in need of enhanced services and the necessary measures for maintaining safety as equally as possible in different security situations. In the case of a client with disabilities, there may be a need to increase personal assistance or to change the way assistance is arranged from the employer model to outsourced services or home care.

People with disabilities and migrant origin populations have the right to receive information and, if necessary, also support for preparedness. For example, many people with disabilities live independently with help and support to their home, which makes independent preparedness particularly important. In addition to general emergency preparedness instructions for households, it is important to examine together with the person in need of support

- how the person will receive information about the disruption,
- what assistive equipment the person needs and how they function during a power outage,
- for what and how soon the person may need additional support and
- from whom and how the person can get help if necessary.

For example, instructions and materials in easy language and with images can be used to support preparedness together with professionals, family and friends. Reviewing the situation in advance helps in understanding what is happening in the situation and provides support in responding to a disruption.

Individual preparedness in housing units is supported by updating the emergency plan and discussing it together with employees and residents. The plans must give concrete consideration to the impacts of the disruption on the service and work and how to act when a disruption is likely or during it (adjustment and prioritisation of work tasks).

2. Identify the special needs of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations

2.1. Identify the resources of people with disabilities and migrant origin populations

When risk groups are defined during preparedness planning, it is worth remembering that people with disabilities and migrant origin populations are both diverse groups of people. For example, not everyone has diseases on the basis of which a person would automatically be in risk groups. However, some disabilities include an increased risk of serious illness.

A person's vulnerability in serious disruptions should be investigated separately if they have more than one of the following factors:

- impaired functional capacity
- a disability or long-term illness,
- a native language other than Finnish, Swedish or Sámi,
- lack of reading and digital skills;
- lives alone;
- there are minor children in the family;
- needs an assistant and/or uses electronic aids and/or
- lacks social networks.

An individual factor does not automatically mean vulnerability, but it is a good idea to bring up coping when speaking with the person. The accumulation of vulnerabilities weakens human resilience, i.e. psychological coping and flexibility in disruptions more-so than for the rest of the population.

Assessments on the impacts of disruptions and emergency conditions should be carried out individually. In this case, it will also be possible to identify human strengths and resources in addition to the need for support. This will support responding to individual needs in the event of a disruption and support will be targeted to those most in need. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some people with disabilities who were involved in work and day activities experienced increased loneliness when they could not meet their friends in the scope of the activities. On the other hand, some people also enjoyed that they did not have to leave for work and day activities and could spend time at home alone.

Methods that do not focus solely on restrictions should be sought for managing the risks associated with changes in the security situation. For example, finding alternative and safe ways of meeting family members,

implementing communal activities and peer support as the security situation changes and their discussion afterwards will prevent loneliness and exclusion as well as the need for additional services in the future. In addition, people themselves must also have enough easy-to-understand information available and support as well as opportunities for making decisions on their own activities in the same situation as other people.

2.2 Take care of clients' individual emergency plans

An individual emergency plan is a plan drawn up by the service provider together and a social welfare client on the means used to support and secure the client's coping in the event of serious disruptions and emergency conditions. The plan is a separate plan from the service or client plan, which is entered in the client information system by a party such as social worker in services for the disabled. It is particularly suitable for planning the coping of clients living in individual dwellings and clients in need of a great deal of support and help.

The individual emergency plan contains a description of the assistance essential for the client and how it will be organised. The plan describes the critical assistance needed daily by the client, which must also be arranged for them in serious disruptions. The plan also describes how the assistance will be organised and with which family member or acquaintance of the client or authority will be involved in planning and organising assistance.

The plan includes the names of the people who have agreed to be involved in the event of a serious disruption and help and support needed by the client on a daily basis is organised. The persons themselves may not necessarily be the people who will assist or provide support in the situation, but they will help the client to arrange for the assistance.

If the client has no family members or close friends with whom to organise help and support, this is also an important piece of information to include in the plan. In this case, the contact details of an authority will be entered in the plan.

Information added to an individual contingency plan includes:

- how the help and support needed by the client will be arranged in various disruptions and emergency conditions,
- persons to be contacted in the event of a disruption, such as the client's possible family member(s)/acquaintance and their contact details, and
- information on the lack of family and friends.

In the event of disruptions and emergencies, the client's individual emergency plan can be accessed from the client information system and complied with. Printing the plans and storing them in a jointly agreed location should also be considered in case the client information system does not work.

Further information:

A more detailed description of the structure of the client's individual emergency plan is available in THL's Social Welfare Document Structures and Metadata Service, in Sosmeta.

3. Secure the accessibility of services and the necessary in-person services

3.1 Prioritise work tasks and see that instructions are prepared

Many people with disabilities who use personal assistants, get support for informal care or use supported housing services felt that they had been left to fend for themselves in matters related to securing the continuity of support during the COVID-19 pandemic. As housing services are organised both in individual dwellings and for housing groups, these different forms of housing and the measures required in them must be taken into account in the instructions on the organisation of services in the event of disruptions and emergency conditions.

Even individual measures are significant to the client's everyday life:

- Personal assistance must be treated equally with home care and housing units, for example in matters related to employees' protective equipment, vaccinations and safety competence. In the event of an epidemic, a disabled person who is the employer of a personal assistant should be aware of whether or no their assistant is vaccinated and have the right to refuse an unvaccinated assistant.
- In supported housing services, it must be ensured that the resident is not left to fend for themselves in situations, for example due to restrictions on employee home visits or the termination of daytime and work activities.
- Alternative solutions should be sought for the implementation of short-term care that supports the coping of informal carers if the service provided in the housing units cannot be used in the situation. For example, a COVID-19 test could be performed during the pandemic before short-term treatment.
- Protective equipment and its distribution must be managed more effectively in the future. In the future, it should be possible to deliver vaccinations, testing and masks to the home of persons with disabilities, who have an A symbol on the disability card, which indicates that a person needs an assistant or a support person.

The flexibility of professionals' work tasks and finding alternative forms of support promote securing the support of service users in different situations. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the job descriptions and workstations of the staff were modified as necessary to ensure that staff for necessary services was available. Good practices were found in services for persons with disabilities, while at the same time services had to be closed and the services needed by clients had to be secured.

- Work and day activities and its staff were transferred to housing services, school assistants to housing services, to positions such as meal distributors, and care assistants were employed as home service assistants and support for outdoor activities
- Remote connections were perceived as an effective and easy way to implement the service for some people: clients were satisfied, the employee's travel time was minimised, which gave employees more time for people who needed in-person meetings and more support
- The spread of COVID-19 was prevented by dividing and appointing employees to work with certain people in such a way that not all employees encountered all clients
- Work and day operation units reduced group sizes, staggered the implementation time of the activities and implemented individual meetings with people in need of a great deal of support
- People who lived independently were met outdoors and in remote guidance meetings; in addition, WhatsApp groups in which the employees were involved were set up; the residents also set up peer groups with remote connections.
- Leisure time activities with personal assistants or support persons were arranged outdoors more than previously.

3.2 Utilise outreach services

The accessibility of services during disruptions and emergency conditions can be enhanced by implementing some services as outreach services. Outreach services can be implemented as services of the municipality or wellbeing services county itself or, for example, in cooperation with organisations or different religious communities. Organisations and different communities often also have ways to reach people who municipalities and wellbeing services counties cannot reach through their own services.

It is important to ensure that people working in outreach work receive thorough induction training and that everyone has a common understanding of the objectives and framework of the work in question. It is important to define the division of responsibilities in advance. It is also important to define what kind of competence is required of people working in the outreach work and how the work will be implemented in practice.

Tips for organising outreach work:

- Plan the appropriate times, places and objectives for outreach work together with local communities and actors (for example, community dialogue as described in the previous chapter can be utilised in this)
- Once the implementation of outreach work has been thought through, recruit suitable employees for the work. It is important to recruit people with the trust of the target group, competence in the relevant communication methods and languages (e.g. sign language), cultural understanding and suitability for network work.
- Plan in advance how you will report on the needs and questions that come to light during outreach work so that the results can also be utilised in other services

3.3 Cooperate with organisations

Organisations can support the work of authorities in serious disruptions and emergency conditions and in preparing for these. Organisations act as representatives of persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations, making sure their voices are heard, carry out lobbying, educate people on different issues, develop services and support people by providing information and organising activities.

For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations adapted their activities agilely to meet changed needs. Their strengths included collecting information on the status of special groups, finding answers and compiling information on questions concerning them, providing advice and enabling peer support. Experts by experience from organisations play an important role in the development of services and activities.

Organisations have gained a wide range of expertise on the basis of the experiences had during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the future, we must also be prepared to provide financial support to organisations for their activities when they are expected to contribute to managing disruptions. The competence of disability organisations and culturally diverse organisations should also be utilised in the development of voluntary preparedness work. In addition to training, the competence required for encountering persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations can be strengthened by increasing the accessibility of voluntary preparedness activities and by involving people extensively in preparedness training exercises.

In conclusion

The cooperation model for Finnish preparedness is called comprehensive security, in which the vital functions of society are ensured in cooperation between the authorities, business life, organisations and citizens. Preparedness is based on well-functioning services in normal conditions and the realisation of equality in all situations. The continuity of operations in disruptions and emergency conditions also relies on these. Emergency plans are an essential part of being prepared for disruptions and emergency conditions.

People with disabilities and migrant origin populations as groups are both very heterogeneous and not all people in these groups are vulnerable in the same manner. However, the groups are linked by the fact that some of the people in these groups are more likely to be adversely affected by serious disruptions and emergency conditions than the rest of the population on average, due to factors such as limited functional capacity, background, language skills or financial resources. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the lack of equality related to such things as the accessibility of information and services, limitations in functional capacity and socio-economic position in the event of serious disruptions and emergencies.

It will be important for the additional support measures and tasks needed by persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations to be taken into account as part of general preparedness in the future. The independent preparedness of these groups is also as important as that of the rest of the population, even though this partly requires increasing the accessibility of communications and creating easy language and described preparedness material. In addition, individualised preparedness measures and enhanced planning of general functions may be needed. Preparedness materials should be easily available electronically, and individual preparedness plans should be available in customer information systems.

Information on taking vulnerable people into consideration should be increased at all levels of preparedness. Training preparedness is a key part of preparedness planning. The preparedness of persons with disabilities and migrant origin populations is part of general preparedness, and not only something that concerns professionals working with these groups.

Parties implementing the project

The Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities was tasked with the coordination of the project, carried out qualitative research on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives and services of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and migrant origin populations with disabilities, and was responsible for planning and implementing co-creation between persons with disabilities, professionals in the disability sector, experts and organisations in cooperation with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. In addition, the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities produced information, plain language materials and materials with images that support independent preparedness. Project Manager Susanna Rieppo, Project Manager and researcher Sonja Miettinen, researcher Pilvikki Heinonen and developers Miinukka Tuominen-Hakoila, Niina Sillanpää and Liisa Jokela took part in the project work.

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (Wellbeing Services County Hyvil) carried out a preliminary assessment in cooperation with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare on the organisation and implementation of networking with municipal social work professionals and experts. In addition, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities was responsible for the planning and implementation of co-creation together with the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. In cooperation with the National Institute for Health and Welfare's Disability in Society team, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities created web pages related to preparedness on the Handbook on Disability Services website. Project worker Elina Lindström, Senior Adviser Jaana Viemerö and Director of Disability Services Riitta Hakoma took part in project work.

The wellbeing services counties began their operation during the project on 1 January 2023, and at the same time, the persons participating in the project were transferred from the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities to Wellbeing Services County enterprise Hyvil Oy.

Persons from three teams at the **Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)** participated in the project work.

Research Manager Natalia Skogberg, Project Coordinators Sara Austero and Sanna Nykänen and Senior Planning Officers Saida Mäki-Penttilä, Maiju Mikkonen and Laura Musta from the Immigration and Cultural Diversity team participated in the project. The team was responsible for the project's entities related to migrant origin populations. The team carried out both population research on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant origin populations and qualitative research related to the effectiveness of multilingual COVID-19 communication. During the project, the team was responsible for co-creation, cooperation, community dialogues and round tables with migrant origin populations and professionals working with them, and developed operating models related to supporting the coping of migrant origin populations in the event of disruptions and emergency conditions. In addition, the team was responsible for multilingual and multichannel COVID-19 communication carried out during the project together with the task force for multilingual and multichannel COVID-19 communication, which included the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Employment.

Members from the Disability in Society team who participated in the project included Development Manager Maria Valtokari, researchers Marika Korhonen and Anna Väre, Chief Specialist Päivi Nurmi-Koikkalainen and Senior Specialist Päivi Hömppi. The Disability in Society team collected data on two occasions on the experiences had in services for the disabled during the COVID-19 pandemic: a national survey for people working at the customer interface and in-depth interviews with directors of housing units. The studies examined experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspectives of disability services' work, the work environment, management and clients' coping. In cooperation with a representative of the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the team created web pages related to preparedness on the Handbook on Disability Services website maintained by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. The handbook is intended for social work professionals, but it is open to all parties interested in services for the disabled.

Statistical Researcher Marja Holm and Senior Researcher Päivi Sainio from the Monitoring team and were responsible for the population-level survey of persons with disabilities, participated in the project. The studies examined the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its related restrictive measures on the lives of people with disabilities, such as their psychological and social welfare, lifestyles, access to health services and help and support as needed, and their economic situation. The studies were based on extensive population research data collected by THL during or immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic. The research articles were produced in cooperation with other THL experts.

The research data produced by the project was utilised in the project's development measures.

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