

REPORT OF FINLAND 2010

Finland reported the first time on measures taken to implement the Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace in 2007. The reply given in 2007 is still valid in its entirety as background information. In addition, here is information on the recent development in Finland:

General background to the information society policy

The Finnish Government has set the main targets and focus areas for the years 2007-2011 to speed up the development of the information society. In order to accelerate development and to achieve concrete results the Ubiquitous Information Society Advisory Board was appointed (July 2007 - February 2011) to take actions according to the strategy. This is a joint effort of the key ministries, public sector agencies, business representatives and other stakeholders.

The action programme of the Board aims at ensuring information society benefits for all by implementing the measures within the key themes: information society infrastructure and basic requirements, like e-identification, e-invoicing and information security, innovation environment and market, development of content and services as well as skills and preparedness in the information society.

Facilitating Access to Networks and Services

The technological development constantly provides new ways to improve people's everyday life and work productivity. Introduction and utilisation of ICT promote equal opportunities, social contacts and inclusion, and increase the availability of information and services. Web services and the ways to use them have become more versatile and the Internet has become an everyday means of communications, networking and involvement.

The aim of Finnish communications policy is to ensure provision of high-quality and inexpensive communications services and the provision of basic communications services across the country. It is Finland's view that universal service should continue to cover all the basic communications services that would not be available to users on market terms. The rights of those living in geographically remote areas and of disabled people and the elderly must continue to be ensured with the system of universal service.

In Finland a majority of users already have broadband Internet access. And a majority of Internet access subscribers have access to a transmission rate of at least 1 Mbit/s.

At national level, Finland has included broadband services in the concept of universal service. A transmission speed of 1 Mbit/s has been defined as universal service. By 1 July 2010 every permanent residence and permanent office of business or public administration body must have access to a fixed or wireless subscriber connection with an average downstream rate of at least 1 Mbit/s. The service provider may decide the technology it will use for the connection.

Finland is currently revising its Communications Market Act due to the revision of the regulatory framework on electronic communications. The new wording of Section 60 c on universal service obligation in the Communications Market Act takes into account the needs of the disabled. The subscriber connection that is offered must be such that all users, including disabled end-users, can use the emergency services, make and receive domestic and international telephone calls, and use other normal telephone services. The connection must also enable all users to have appropriate internet access, taking into account the connection speed in use among the majority of users, technical feasibility and costs. The telecommunications operator can also provide services to the above effect through several connections if this does not cause unreasonable additional costs to the end-user. The Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority can provide more precise technical stipulations as to the technical set-up of the connection and the technical characteristics it should have so that it can also be used by disabled end-users.

Independently from universal service regulation, there is a national broadband project in Finland with the aim that by the end of 2015 nearly all (more than 99 percent of population) permanent residences and permanent offices of businesses or public administration bodies are no more than within two kilometres of a connection permitting 100 Mbit/s. In urban areas, high-speed broadband connections will most likely be established on commercial terms, which will extend the population coverage to 95%. Construction of high-speed connections to around 120,000 households in non-built-up areas will in part be funded through public subsidies. A majority of connections in sparsely populated areas are meant to be built as projects open for competitive bidding in 2010–2015. In areas that will receive public aid the consumers will pay for a subscriber connection of no more than 2 kilometres and the solutions can be technology neutral.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications will renew the Action Programme "Towards barrier-free communication" in order for it to better meet the needs of older people and the disabled in the information society of today. The new Action Programme will be published by

the end of this year. An action programme was drawn up in 2004. Some of the goals of the programme are to raise awareness of the problems that specific groups of end-users, such as older people and disabled, face in the use of communications services, and to help remove obstacles to the equality of all citizens as communications service users. Further objectives of the programme are to increase cooperation between involved parties: competent authorities, organisations for the disabled, communication service providers, and consumers, and to gather information on the current problems related to accessibility of communication services. The Ministry has appointed a working group to monitor the implementation of the action programme. The group's term of office has been extended until the end of 2010. The monitoring group has representatives from government authorities, enterprises and organisations for the disabled.

A special group has been set up to enhance the use of the electronic identification in Finland. The idea is to develop functioning markets based on free competition for e-identification in a way that allows users – both private and public - to acquire or choose the most convenient authentication tool for them. The legislation on strong electronic identification services will promote the development of identification service market that came to force in September 2009. The identification services must be secure and effective. Identification costs will be controlled by adequate competition. By creating the framework for a well-functioning authentication services market in Finland we expect to see a number of new service providers and also reasonable prices for authentication events. For example mobile e- identification is looking very promising tool in the near future.

In order to foster the take-up of e-invoicing government has a guideline to use electronic purchase invoices by the end of 2009. The aim is that the majority of Finnish invoices are electronic by the end of 2010. E-invoicing is a good example of pure benefits of e-services by shortening the time and effort needed in the procurement activities. SMEs, consumers and municipalities as users or billers are in the key positions to foster development by adopting e-invoicing services. We need to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible by creating functioning markets for e-invoicing services to ensure that the transmission system interoperates without problems.

Development of public services

The Finnish Government gave a review on "Accelerating the development of information society and e-services" in March 2010. This review was most of all to outline key targets for public e-service development for the next coming years, that is all electronic communication will be available to citizens and businesses in all the main services by 2013. A shared customer interface between the central government and municipalities will be taken by introducing the

Citizen's e-account, a single entrance to public services online, in 2010. Electronic service packages will be tailored to meet the citizens' needs at different stages of their lives (so called SADe-programme). Each administrative sector will draw up work plans on how to provide the services online. Citizen (suomi.fi) and enterprise (yrityssuomi.fi) web portals are turned into interactive e-service portals. Working towards the targets calls for guidelines to be applied to central government IT management system and sufficient transfers in resources. Within the central government, re-organising the process of defining, acquiring and maintaining public information systems is also a task to be clarified. Newly established The State IT Service Centre uses shared government IT services to support the trans-administrative operation of administrative sectors and agencies.

Development of Open Public Data

Ministry of Transport and Communications has set up a special working group on enhancing availability of public sector information to identify the obstacles in re-use of public data. The working group will set out a government resolution by the end of 2010 to introduce decision principles as well as to encourage practices that make public data storages available for citizens and business.

Final Comments

In addition to the information given in 2007 on the Finnish participation in the WSIS process and related international activities, Finland continues to be an active member of the Governmental Advisory Committee of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which has recently introduced Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs). Broad discussions on the future of internet are taking place on multi-stakeholder basis annually at Internet Governance Forum (IGF) where access and multilingualism figure visibly on the agenda. Finland is a strong supporter of the IGF also through contributions to the IGF Trust Fund.

Finland also participates in various UNGIS (United Nations Information Society Group) related activities and has highlighted especially the importance of universal broadband access for global information society development. In this context Finland has support the work of UNCTAD (Information Economy reports (2009, 2010) and UNECA (budget support for ICT indicators and information society policy development in Africa).