

YK:n ihmisoikeusvaltuutetun toimiston (OHCHR) tietopyyntö koskien ikääntyneiden oikeuksia ja ilmastonmuutosta

YK:n ihmisoikeusneuvosto hyväksyi 16.7.2020 päätöslauselman ”Human Rights and Climate Change” (A/HRC/RES/44/7). Päätöslauselma on luettavissa osoitteessa <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/44/7>

Ihmisoikeusneuvosto on päätöslauselmassa pyytänyt ihmisoikeusvaltuutetun toimistoa toimittamaan selvityksen ihmisoikeusneuvoston 47. istuntoon. Selvitystä varten ihmisoikeusvaltuutetun toimisto pyytää jäsenvaltioilta tietoa liittyen ikääntyneiden oikeuksiin ja ilmastonmuutokseen. [Linkki](#) pyyntöön.

Ulkoministeriö pyytää vastaamaan soveltuvin osin ihmisoikeusvaltuutetun toimiston kysymyksiin ja toimittamaan vastaukset (englanninkielisenä, mikäli mahdollista) määräaikaan 30.10.2020 mennessä. Pyydämme mahdollisimman tiiviitä vastauksia huomioiden, että Suomen vastauksen pituus on rajattu viiteen sivuun. Vastaukset julkaistaan ihmisoikeusvaltuutetun toimiston verkkosivuilla.

JAKELU: ulkoministeriö/kestävän kehityksen ja ilmastopolitiikan yksikkö KEO-90, oikeusministeriö, sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö, ympäristöministeriö, Saamelaiskäräjät, Ihmisoikeusliitto ry, Suomen YK-liitto ry, Amnesty International - Suomen osasto ry, MIELI Suomen Mielenterveys ry, Vanhustyön keskusliitto ry, Omaishoitajaliitto ry, SOSTE Suomen sosiaali ja terveys ry, Suomen luonnonsuojeluliitto ry, WWF Suomi ry, Greenpeace Suomi ry, Maan ystävät ry

TIEDOKSI: Ihmisoikeuskeskus; Suomen ilmastopaneeli

The Finnish Climate Change Panel's responses

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1. Please describe the impacts of the adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of older person. Where possible, please share specific examples and stories.

There are many adverse effects of climate change, direct and indirect, which concern older people. The most important direct impact is the increased frequency or intensity of heatwaves. People who are chronically ill, or have reduced health in other ways, especially suffer in these situations. A recent paper by researchers of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare discusses how heatwaves are associated with increased risk of cardio-respiratory hospital admissions and concludes that there is a need to adapt to climate change in the public health sector, also in Northern Europe to protect vulnerable population groups.¹

The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare identify the following indirect impacts of climate change, which may have health implications: water-borne disease outbreaks, vector-borne infectious diseases, and indoor air problems related to moisture damage in buildings.² Other impacts of climate change may be slip and fall accidents due to slippery conditions, since weather conditions are expected to fluctuate between freezing and thawing during the winter period. In addition, winters may become darker due to less snow cover, which may lead to increased mental health deterioration and depression. Extreme weather phenomena may lead to accidents and decreased service availability. When considering adaptation plans, these aspects need to be taken into account, to ensure that vulnerability of the elderly is reduced, and adaptation plans take in account their special circumstances.

Some of these adverse effects have been specifically addressed in the context of older people in a study in the 2016 study "Characterising vulnerability of the elderly to climate change" by a group of researchers from Nordic institutions.³ They identify levels of vulnerability, various climate change effects relevant to the Nordic context and combine these to map out indices and conduct interviews. Their analysis is available online, but whether updates are being made since the paper was written in 2013 is not known to us.

Finally, it is essential to see older people as a diverse group with different levels of skills, resources, capabilities and health. They are also exposed to different climate related hazards and their vulnerability varies, meaning understanding these and their dynamics is key to understanding their overall climate risk. Furthermore, the ability to adapt to changes in everyday life may be easy for some, while others may need support to have a fulfilling life, while facing the adverse effects of climate change.

¹ Sohail, H., Tiittanen, P., Kollanus, V. and Lanki, T., 2020. Heat, heatwaves and cardiorespiratory hospital admissions in Helsinki, Finland. *European Journal of Public Health*.

² <https://thl.fi/en/web/environmental-health/climate-and-weather/climate-change> based on <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161015/43-2018-Saa%20ja%20ilmastoriskit%20Suomessa.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

³ Carter, T.R., Fronzek, S., Inkinen, A., Lahtinen, I., Lahtinen, M., Mela, H., O'Brien, K.L., Rosentrater, L.D., Ruuhela, R., Simonsson, L. and Terama, E., 2016. Characterising vulnerability of the elderly to climate change in the Nordic region. *Regional Environmental Change*, 16(1), pp.43-58.

2. Please describe any specific policy, legislation, practice or strategy that addresses the nexus between climate change and the rights of older persons.

The Finnish Climate Change Panel is not aware of any national specific policy, though there is advice available on how to deal with heatwaves for citizens⁴ and for health institutions⁵. Finland published in 2014 a National Climate Change Adaptation Plan which elaborates on vulnerable sections of the society. The document includes a sentence which indicates elderly as a vulnerable group, but there is no strategy or recommendations for protecting the elderly from the effects of climate change.⁶

Neither is there to our knowledge specific identification of older people as a vulnerable group of people. However, the Finnish Climate Act is under revision, and may consist of specifications of vulnerable groups in the future.

- ~~3. Please share a summary of any relevant data that captures how the adverse effects of climate change have affected older persons, taking into account multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (i.e. discrimination based on a combination of multiple grounds, including disability, gender, race, colour, sex, language, religion, nationality and migration status) – including in older age cohorts.~~
- ~~4. Please describe any mechanisms and tools that are in place to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of older persons.~~
- ~~5. Please identify and share examples of good practices and challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the human rights of older persons in the context of the adverse effects of climate change, including any age-appropriate or sensitive support services that are provided.~~
- ~~6. Please include examples and good practices that highlight international and multilateral cooperation and approaches that are implemented in close consultation with and with the active involvement of older persons, including through their representative organisations.~~
7. Please provide any additional information you believe would be useful to support climate action that promotes the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of older persons.

In research project Extreme Temperature Alerts for Europe (EXTREMA)⁷ satellite, weather and city-specific data were used to assess in real time the city areas that would suffer most during an ongoing event, such as extreme heat or cold. A mobile app was developed, which based on a user profile gives notifications of unsafe temperatures and provides navigation information, by foot or public transit, to the nearest or most fitting cooling centre. This application is in use in some European cities, but not in Finland.

Automation and AI in heating and electricity use could help with dealing with temperature changes in homes of older people, and thus lessen the adverse effects. Automation can help keep homes a comfortable temperature by adjusting based on weather forecasts – a sudden frost or heat wave would be prepared for. Automation would help with energy costs as well, once installed.

Flood alert systems and coping mechanisms are something that would provide insights for coping with other adverse weather effects.

⁴ <https://thl.fi/fi/web/ymparistoterveys/ilmasto-ja-saa/helle/helteen-terveyshaittojen-torjunta-vaestolle>

⁵ <https://thl.fi/fi/web/ymparistoterveys/ilmasto-ja-saa/helle/helteen-terveyshaittojen-torjunta-hoitolaitoksissa>

⁶ Kansallinen ilmastonmuutoksen sopeutumissuunnitelma 2022. Valtioneuvoston periaatepäätös 20.11.2014.

Helsinki: Maa- ja metsätalousministeriö 5/2014,

https://mmm.fi/documents/14108337/1720628/2014_5_Ilmastonmuutos

⁷ <https://extrema.space/>