Consistent data on social welfare: The Finnish model

Organisation(s):	Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)
Country:	Finland
Contact:	policy@esn-eu.org

Theme: *Choose at least one option*	☐ Ageing & Care ☐ Asylum & Migration ☐ Young People ☐ Support for Children & Families ☐ Community Care ☐ Integrated Care & Support ☐ Co-Production ☐ Disability ☐ Housing & Homelessness ☐ Artificial Intelligence ☒ Digitalisation ☐ Quality Care	☐ Labour Market Inclusion ☐ Social Inclusion ☒ Technology ☐ Workforce and Leadership ☐ Social Benefits ☐ EU Funding ☐ Social Services' Resilience ☐ Mental Health ☐ Person-Centred Care ☐ Research & Use of Evidence ☐ Management & Planning ☐ Other, please specify:
Principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights: *Which principles does your practice cover? Check the 20 principles here.*	☒ 1. Education, training, life-long learning ☐ 2. Gender equality ☒ 3. Equal opportunities ☐ 4. Active support to employment ☐ 5. Secure and adaptable employment ☐ 6. Fair Wages ☐ 7. Transparent employment conditions ☐ 8. Social dialogue ☐ 9. Work-life balance ☐ 10. Healthy, safe work environment	☐ 11. Childcare and child support ☐ 12. Social protection ☐ 13. Unemployment benefits ☐ 14. Minimum income ☐ 15. Old age income and pensions ☐ 16. Health care ☐ 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities ☐ 18. Long-term care ☐ 19. Housing and assistance to homeless ☐ 20. Access to essential services
Current status of the practice:	☐ Concept and Design Phase ☐ Testing or pilot phase ☐ Temporary practice that has terminated ☐ Temporary practice that is ongoing and has a termination date ☒ Established and ongoing practice ☐ Scaling Up and Transformation Phase ☐ Other (please specify):	
Summary: *Please summarise the practice in maximum 3 sentences. This will be the disclaimer of your project on our*	Nationally consistent data on social welfare is needed to develop better services and more effective social welfare. This goal has been achieved by defining nationally uniform client document structures, implementing the Social Welfare Client Data Repository within the Kanta services, and ensuring professionals' competence in structured documentation. In this way, clients are able to access their own data through MyKanta, professionals are gaining improved opportunities to utilise client data, and high-quality data is available for secondary use.	

website. Example *[here](#)**.*	
	Our work addresses several critical social and organisational issues within the realm of social welfare documentation in Finland. Despite the mandatory requirements for documenting client data since 2015, inconsistencies in data recording persist. Various laws have introduced documentation requirements, but these have often resulted in localised implementations rather than a cohesive national standard. Training has been sporadic and primarily focused on the technical use of case management systems, leading to lengthy, prose-like entries that make it challenging to extract essential information in fast-paced environments. Additionally, documentation has often been created for the benefit of other professionals rather than for the clients themselves. A nationally consistent knowledge base on social welfare has not been available. Data has been accessible unevenly, both in client work and in secondary use.
Objectives: *Please provide a maximum of three objectives in bullet points.*	1. National Unification of social welfare documentation 2. Professionals' competence in structured documentation 3. Utilisation of client data in primary and secondary use

Activities:
Please describe the activities put in place to achieve the objectives (maximum 400 words).
	For over 10 years, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) has been proactive in emphasising documentation skills in the development of social welfare. This has laid important groundwork for the national unification of documentation. The implementation of structured documentation affects the daily work of over 170,000 professionals in both public and private organisations.
	
	Structured documentation requires nationally uniform document structures, which are implemented in all client information systems used in social welfare. National guidelines are published in handbooks and incorporated into client document structures. Storing client information in the national Client Data Repository within the Kanta Services enables the secure use of client data both in primary and secondary contexts.
	
	The appropriate use of structured documents requires strengthening the documentation skills of all professionals. In addition, organisations must implement several operational and technical changes.
	Operational changes concern:
	  • Processing of client data through the implementation of structured documentation
	  • Harmonisation of the organisation's service structure by adopting nationally defined service tasks and social service classifications
	Technical changes concern:
	  • Deployment of client information systems that meet the technical requirements of the Kanta Services
	  • Other technical requirements related to, for example, data protection and user management
	THL supports social welfare organisations by arranging free training sessions and Q&A events for developers and professionals, as well as by providing free support materials. THL encourages service providers to make use of the materials from training sessions and Q&A events.

Outcomes: *Please explain what the results were/are so far and how you evaluated this (i.e. statistics, a study, or feedback)*	The initiative aims to support developers in transforming organisational practices by promoting structured documentation. Effectiveness has been evaluated through extensive participant feedback from training and Q&A events, with over 6,500 participants giving an average rating of 3.9/5. Open-ended responses (100+) highlighted strategies such as knowledge sharing, organisational guidelines, skills maintenance, project management, new roles, and case management system development. In spring 2024, feedback was gathered from more than half of Finland's 21 counties on the use of national support materials. Most developers reported applying these materials for training, development work, and expert tasks. THL also engages actively in national networks, enabling documentation coordinators and developers to provide feedback and collaborate as change agents. We will continue to measure the impact of these initiatives throughout the implementation phase. Final information on the success of our work will only be available in late 2026, when nationally unified documentation should be used in all social welfare services. We are currently only getting preliminary information in pieces through the National Social Welfare Data Register. This information is used to develop and target our work.
Funding Source	EU Funds: ESF+ ☐ INTERREG ☐ ERDF ☐ ERASMUS☐ RRF ☒ other ☐ ☒ National Government Funds ☐ Regional Government Funds ☐ Local Government Funds ☐ Private Sponsorship / Public-Private Partnership ☐ Financial contribution of People using Services ☐ Other, please define:
Links to supporting documents: *e.g. project website or report of the practice, articles*	https://thl.fi/en/topics/information-management-in-social-welfare-and-health-care/steering-of-information-management/social-and-health-care-processes-and-documenting
Comments and tips *i.e. for people willing to implement your Practice in their service*	