ESPOO
FINLAND

Gender equality & Espoo City Library

Contact for more details:
Jaana Tyrni
Director of Library Services
jaana.tyrni@espoo.fi

©EUROCITIES 2020
Espoo City Library is integrating gender equality in its daily services and supporting equality as a core value. Finnish public libraries must promote equal opportunities for lifelong learning and culture for all citizens. Around 80% of Espoo citizens have visited a library in the last year, making Espoo City Library the most used cultural service in Espoo. The services for youth, kindergartens and schools at Espoo City Library include the following actions on gender equality:

- The Love Bus Tour: a library bus containing information, books, poems, movies and music on sexual health, dating and love, visits schools every year. The tour is carried out in collaboration with two local youth organisations and sexual health experts
- Supporting kindergartens and schools on how to include inclusive books in education
- The sex ratio is considered in recruitment of staff for children and youth services

IMPACT

In 2015, Espoo City Library invited representatives of sexual and gender minorities to develop equal services together with the staff. The workshop produced several development ideas that have been realised in the years following the workshop.

These include:

- Diversifying the sex category in the customer register (from two to four: male, female, other and I do not wish to state)
- Using correct and up-to-date gender conscious terms and classification in the library catalogue
- Gender neutral toilet facilities
- Literature and other materials showcasing versatile gender roles are consciously included in the library collections and made accessible

NEXT CHALLENGES

Espoo City Library has applied for funding from the Regional State Administrative Agency for the project ‘Is the library blind to gender? With knowledge-based management towards a more gender equal library’ for 2020-2021. The aim of the project is to find purposeful indicators to monitor the gender equality performance systematically.

Another goal is to develop the library spaces and services with the safe space model together with citizens identifying themselves as sexual or gender minority members. The idea is to create a surrounding (physical or mental) where everyone feels safe from judgement and harm.