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Medical doctor by background, Tapani started in epidemiological research and then moved to Finland's national government and the WHO European Office (1989-1994), working on health promotion.

During his tenure at the European Commission spanning from 2001 to 2018, he served 14 years as Head of Unit, overseeing initiatives such as digital transformation in health, the establishment of European Reference Networks for rare diseases, the Directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, coordination of health research with health policy, and shaping policy on health technology assessment.

Since returning to Finland, he has counselled the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health as well as the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, focusing on EU policies on health, digital and health data. Within the TEHDAS Joint Action, he crafted ideas on the sustainability of the European Health Data Space. Currently, he supports a project on exploring an idea of an EU resource hub for sustainable investments in health, coordinated by Expertise France.