



european network against racism

ENAR Shadow Report 2008

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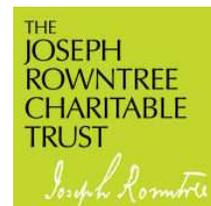
Racism in Finland

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Racism is a reality in the lives of many ethnic and religious minorities in the EU. However, the extent and manifestations of this reality are often unknown and undocumented, especially in official data sources, meaning that it can be difficult to analyse the situation and to establish solutions to it. Even where there is extensive official data, NGOs offer a vital alternative data source that comes directly from experiences of those individuals and communities experiencing racism on a daily basis.

The ENAR Shadow Reports are produced to fill the gaps in the official and academic data, to offer an alternative to that data and to offer an NGO perspective on the realities of racism with the EU and its Member States. NGO reports are, by their nature, based on many sources of data, official, unofficial, academic and experiential. This allows access to information which, while sometimes not backed up by the rigours of academic standards, provides the vital perspective of those that either are or work directly with those affected by the racism that is the subject of the research. It is this that gives NGO reports their added value, complementing academic and official reporting.

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1. Executive summary

For the first time in history, Finland appointed a Minister for Immigration and European Affairs in March 2007, who assumed office on 1st January 2008. The new portfolio falls under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and incorporates the previous immigration functions of the Ministry of Labour and the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities.

One significant development towards the end of 2008 was a notable rise in anti-immigrant/refugee sentiments, which coincided with the rise in popularity of Timo Soini's True Finns party, a xenophobic, anti- EU and anti-immigrant outfit, which in 2007 doubled its share of the popular vote from 2003, and increased its share of seats in parliament from three to five. During the 2008 municipal elections, the True Finns Party increased its share of votes by 4,5 %, outstripping more established parties such as the Swedish People's Party and the Christian Democrats in popularity¹.

The groups most vulnerable to racism in Finland are the Roma, Sami, the visible immigrant minorities and Russian speakers. Despite having lived in Finland for at least 500 years, the Roma are discriminated in all aspects of normal life. Landlords do not want to rent their houses to Roma, and employers are reluctant to employ them. They are refused access to restaurants and are suspiciously trailed in shops.

The Sami, who mostly reside in Lapland are also victims of ethnic discrimination. Although their minority and language rights are guaranteed by law, local authorities have, for example, not provided adequate Sami language services in day care centres and nursing homes.

There are over 49 000 Russian speakers in Finland², and they comprise the second largest minority group after the Swedes. Due to historical reasons, Finns have always regarded Russians with fear and loathing. Despite the size of the Russian minority, there are, for example, no official media services for them on radio and television.

- Anti-discrimination legislation should be harmonised to enable speedy conviction of offenders.
- The language rights of Russian speakers should be recognized and the public broadcasting system should have Russian language services

Visible minorities or non-white immigrants, particularly those from Muslim countries, are also victims of discrimination. The most glaring areas of

¹ <http://yle.fi/vaalit2008/tulospalvelu/index.html> Accessed 5.7.2009

² Statistics Finland 2008. At http://pxweb2.stat.fi/database/StatFin/vrm/vaerak_fi.asp. Accessed 4.7.2009

discrimination are in employment and access to leisure facilities such as restaurant services. Women of colour, particularly Thais and Russians, are stereotyped as prostitutes masquerading as massage parlour workers.

Another group that is vulnerable to discrimination comprise non-white children and youths from multicultural families, who are often the victims of name calling, threats, hostile gestures, exclusion and bullying in schools.

- Authorities should give more support to victims of discrimination from multicultural families.

The immigrant unemployment rate remains relatively high and stood at around 20 % in 2008, a slight drop from the year before, but over two times the national average. Immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries have the highest unemployment rates, while those from European countries and India have the lowest. The unemployment rate among Roma is also quite high at around 50 %.

Some of these immigrants are highly-educated professionals who, again, probably due to discrimination and prejudice, cannot gain employment in their chosen professions. They therefore usually end up in menial jobs.

- Anti-discrimination legislation, particularly with reference to employment, should be strengthened and monitored much more effectively
- Labour markets should be open to highly-skilled immigrants and there should be concerted efforts at uprooting discrimination and prejudice in hiring practices.

Almost 75 % of immigrant children live in rented public houses as opposed to just 23% of their Finnish or Swedish counterparts³. Because their families are larger than Finnish ones, Somali children live in the most cramped conditions averaging 12 m² per individual, as opposed to an average of 25 m² for their Finnish counterparts.

- Immigrant families should be provided with housing proportionate to their sizes

The proliferation of racist and hate messages on the internet is still a problem, which authorities have still, so far, failed to find a lasting solution. Also related is the fact that, in the eyes of many immigrants, police are either unwilling or not motivated to seriously investigate racist crimes.

- The internet should be monitored much more effectively and police and the judicial system should take racist crimes much more seriously.

³ Suomalainen lapsi 2007. Väestö 2007. Tilastokeskus ja Stakes. (Helsinki: Edita Prima Oy 2007) p. 418

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3. Introduction

Partly as a result of political conquest and interference by its more powerful neighbours, Russian and Sweden, Finland has always had communities of Sami, Swedes, Tatars, Jews and Roma. Swedes are, by far, the biggest national minority with over 300 000 members, and are well integrated into Finnish society. The same applies to Tatars and Jews, while the Sami enjoy a measure of autonomy in their homeland in Lapland. Although they have lived in Finland for over five centuries, the estimated 10 000 Roma are the least integrated and face discrimination in all spheres of Finnish life.

In general, however, Finland has largely remained a homogeneous society. Physically, the Swedish, Tatar and Jewish minorities are hardly distinguishable from the general population and speak Finnish as a first language (for the majority of Swedish speakers Finnish can be regarded as a second first language).

In recent times the first wave of foreigners to come to Finland were Chilean refugees fleeing from the right wing regime of Augusto Pinochet during the early '70s. These were followed by substantial numbers of Vietnamese refugees during the late '70s. Finland's immigrant population began to rise during the late '80s and early '90s largely as a result of the collapse of communist governments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the breakdown of Somalia. At over 49 000, Russian speakers comprise the second largest minority group after the Swedes. Because of the difficult history between Finland and Russia, Russian speakers are often treated with hostility and suspicion.

Compared to other Western countries, the number of foreigners and immigrants in Finland has remained relatively low mainly due to restrictive immigration policies and the geographical isolation of the country. The number of immigrants in the country is just over 190 000, around 3,5 % of the total population of slightly over 5 million⁴.

This report covers the time period from January 1st to December 31st 2008. One significant development towards the end of 2008 was a notable rise in anti-immigrant/refugee sentiments (particularly on the internet), which coincided with the rise in popularity of Timo Soini's True Finns party, an anti- EU and anti-immigrant xenophobic outfit, which in 2007 doubled its share of the popular vote from 2003, and increased its share of seats in parliament from three to five seats. Closely related was also the rising popularity of Jussi Halla-aho, a strident critic of immigration and multiculturalism, who secured close to 3 000 votes during the 2008 municipal elections. Halla-aho contested the elections as a non-party member of the True Finns Party, and belongs to Suomi Sisu, a rightwing

⁴ Statistics Finland 2008. At http://pxweb2.stat.fi/database/StatFin/vrm/vaerak_fi.asp. Accessed 4.7.2009

nationalist organization. He is currently facing charges of blasphemy (against Islam) and ethnic incitement to hatred against the Somali community.

Section 4 of this report examines communities, which are most vulnerable to racism and prejudice. Section 5 analyses manifestations of racism and religious discrimination in employment, housing, education and health. Other areas examined in this section include policing and racial profiling, racist violence and crime, as well as access to goods and services in the public and private sector. The last part of this section examines the role of the media, including the internet, in both portraying and integrating immigrants into Finnish society.

Section 6 examines the political and legal context of migration and integration, criminal justice, racism as a crime, counter terrorism, racial profiling and social inclusion. Finally, Section 7 contains national recommendations and Section 8 is the conclusion.

4. Communities vulnerable to racism

The Roma, who have lived in Finland for over 500 years, comprise the minority group that is most vulnerable to racism and prejudice. According to the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, the Roma are particularly discriminated in housing (Approximately 55 % of the cases investigated by the Office concerned this issue). Among other things, Roma public housing applicants face long waiting periods. They are also requested to furnish more information and guarantees than other applicants when they apply for rented flats, which are not normally required from other applicants. Furthermore, the Ombudsman for Minorities discovered that members of the Roma community did not even bother to apply for housing on the private market because it was virtually impossible to get any due to the ethnic background of the applicants⁵.

In addition to discrimination in housing allocation and renting, the Ombudsman also noted the discrimination of the Roma in other aspects of life such as access to restaurants and shops. Roma and other visible minorities are frequently denied entry to restaurants on frivolous grounds, which are not, of course, applicable to other customers. Some shops have denied entry to Roma customers, and even when that entry has been granted, the customers are frequently suspiciously trailed and subjected to humiliating questions. Also, as noted earlier on, the dropout rate for Roma children in schools is one of the biggest concerns for teachers and school counsellors. This dropout rate is also closely linked to the difficulties encountered in obtaining secure and stable housing. There are also still glaring deficiencies in the teaching and provision of day care and pre-schooling services for Roma children.

The number of Sami in Finland is estimated to be close to 8 000, and they were only accorded the official indigenous people status in 1995. Although their language rights are enshrined in the Finnish constitution, their rights as an indigenous first nation are not fully realized or implemented in practice. The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities has drawn attention to the poor implementation of Sami cultural and language rights. In an unprecedented move, the Office has also requested the police to carry out investigations into two municipalities suspected of negligence in implementing Sami rights and drawing up the mandated equality plan as stipulated in the Non-Discrimination Act (21/2004, Section 4). The Office has also pointed out deficiencies in the application and implementation of the Sami Language Act (1086/2003), whose provisions are only applicable to the Sami home territories although half the Sami population resides outside these regions⁶.

⁵ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008 p. 8 - 10.

⁶ Ibid. p. 6 - 7.

Reflecting the practice and trend in many other European countries, immigrants and their families are also highly vulnerable to racism and discrimination in Finland. The majority of immigrants (60%) came to Finland because of family ties. Close to 15% came in as refugees or asylum seekers, while 10% came in as workers, and this figure is rising, although the current economic recession may temporarily freeze it⁷.

There are currently well over 140 000 foreign born nationals living in Finland, just about 2,7% of the total population (Many immigrants have taken Finnish nationality, and thus the number of people who speak other languages than Finnish and Swedish is well over 190 000).

Russian speakers (over 49 000 individuals) comprise the biggest ethnic and linguistic group. Other large immigrant communities are Swedes (30 000), Estonians (22 000), and Somalis (10 700). Furthermore, there are close to 5 000 inhabitants from each of the following countries or regions: former Yugoslavia, Germany, China, Iraq and Thailand. Most of the immigrants (75%) are concentrated in Southern Finland⁸. The communities, which are most vulnerable to racism and discrimination, comprise people from Third National Countries, such as Russia, the Middle East, Somalia and other African countries.

There is an increase in cross-cultural marriages. In 2007, 25 200 Finnish women had foreign spouses, mostly from western countries, but a significant number of relationships also include Third National Countries. In 2007, over 28 800 Finnish men had foreign spouses, mostly from Third National Countries and regions such as Thailand, Russia and other former Soviet territories such as Estonia Well over 3 600 cross-cultural marriages are registered each year, but the majority tend to end in divorce and separation more often than Finnish marriages⁹. In 2006 there were over 53 000 children living in cross-cultural families⁶. These families face many problems including discrimination in the labour market, cultural pressures and integration challenges¹⁰.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a significant number of Russians, mostly women, emigrated to Finland, largely on the basis of marriage, or as workers. In the early '90s, Ingrian Finns were officially given permission to repatriate to Finland from Russia and other former soviet republics. Partly due to historical events¹¹ there is, generally speaking, a lot of prejudice, hostility and animosity towards people of Russian background. This historical baggage combined with racism has a detrimental socio-psychological effect, especially on women and children from Russian speaking families. Russian women are often stereotyped

⁷ Ministry of Labour 2005

⁸ Statistics Finland 2008. At http://pxweb2.stat.fi/database/StatFin/vrm/vaerak_fi.asp. Accessed 4.7.2009

⁹ Statistics Finland, Families 2007. . p. 11.

¹⁰ Suomalainen lapsi 2007. Väestö 2007. Tilastokeskus ja Stakes. (Helsinki: Edita Prima Oy 2007)

¹¹ Finland was a part of Russia for over a hundred years and in 1939 the Soviet Union invaded the country

as prostitutes¹², and due to these negative experiences, some of the women and children are ashamed and frightened to speak Russian in public places, and at times try to conceal their identity.

Women of colour are also vulnerable to racism and often stereotyped as prostitutes. The situation of Thai women, who have come to Finland on the basis of marriage, is particularly bad. Divorced and without any means of economic support, some of them began to provide sex services in brothels disguised as massage parlours, where they are vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination. What makes their situation more precarious is that they are not entitled to integration programmes prescribed by the 2005 Integration Act, which would entitle them to, among other things, learning Finnish language and culture.

During 2008, efforts were made by NGOs, the Ministry of Interior and the Department of Migration to improve the situation of Thai women¹³. Civil society hopes that enough resources will be available to NGOs and local government officials for this purpose.

Children and youths from multicultural families are also vulnerable to racism and discrimination. They are quite often the subjects of naming, bullying, threats, hostile gestures and exclusion. Multicultural children do have many coping strategies against racism and prejudice, but society should give them more support to cope with these emotionally stressful experiences¹⁴.

¹² Saarinen, Aino, "Venäläiset maahanmuuttajat 'naisystävällisessä' Pohjolassa: kansalaisuus ja stigmatisoitunut identiteetti" In Martikainen, Tuomo and Tiilikainen, Marja (eds.) Maahanmuuttajanaiset: Kotoutuminen, perhe ja työ. Väestötutkimuslaitoksen julkaisusarja D 46/2007, p. 136

¹³ Toimenpidesuunnitelma thaimaalaisten naisten kotouttamiseksi. Ministry of Interior, Department of Migration 2009.

¹⁴ Rastas, Anna, 'Rasismi lasten ja nuorten arjessa. Transnationaalit juuret ja monikulttuuristuva Suomi' Ph.D. dissertation. (Tampereen yliopisto: University of Tampere Press. 2007). p. 113, 131.

5. Manifestations of racism and religious discrimination

5.1 Employment

The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities has received close to 100 requests to investigate suspected cases of discrimination in hiring practices, wages, compensation payments and promotions¹⁵. Both immigrants from Third National Countries and EU citizens have lodged complaints about, for instance, unnecessary language demands where the employer demands a perfect knowledge of the Finnish language inappropriate to the requirements of the job. Contrary to the provisions of the Non-Discrimination Act, some employers have also stipulated that applicants should be Finnish nationals in their job advertisements.

Like in other European countries, the unemployment rate for immigrants is quite high and estimated to be close to 20%, a significant drop over the previous year, but still more than twice over the national average, which is 8,5%. The unemployment rates for immigrants from mainly Muslim countries such as Iraq (56%), Afghanistan (60%), Somalia (56%), Iran (45%) and Morocco (47%) are exceptionally high¹⁶.

One common problem faced by immigrants in Finland is that they rarely find jobs appropriate to their educational qualifications. It is not unusual to find the holder of a PhD degree employed in low wage sectors such as cleaning¹⁷. These low wage jobs can, however, be regarded as entry points to higher wage levels, but this rarely happens. Employers justify this underemployment by pointing out that immigrants do not have sufficient Finnish language skills, although as has been noted, many of the job opportunities denied to foreigners and immigrants do not require these language requirements. By not utilising the job skills possessed by foreigners and immigrants, Finland is not benefiting from the expertise of its non-native population. At the same time immigrants' specialist skills are being wasted.

Other complaints received by the Office concern promotions. There is a general suspicion that immigrant employees are not offered the same promotion opportunities as native Finns. The result is resentment, apathy, low productivity and less commitment towards the job and required tasks.

Another problem encountered by immigrants in the Finnish job market is low wages. Because immigrants find it hard to get jobs in Finland, they usually fall

¹⁵ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities, 2008. p.14-16

¹⁶ Statistics Office 2009:1

¹⁷ Huhtanen, Ann-Mari, 2009 "Maahanmuuttajia halutaan ohjata koulutusta vastaavaan työhön," Helsingin Sanomat, 10 Kesäkuuta .p. A10

prey to unscrupulous employers, who offer them jobs on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Desperate, the majority have no choice but to accept unfair wage terms¹⁸.

Examples of NGO Good Practice:

Justice for Cleaners in Finland

Formed in 2007, Justice for Cleaners in Finland is modelled on similar labour advocacy groups in the USA, UK, Germany, Australia, Holland and New Zealand. Its aim is “to encourage all cleaners to fight for their own salaries and rights...”. The organization particularly wants cleaners and their work to be respected and for employers and the general public to realise that the productive of other sectors is dependent on working in clean and hygienic environments. To boost its campaign, the organization employs direct action such as demonstrations in front of the offices of big cleaning companies. Because many immigrants in Finland work in the cleaning services, Justice for Cleaners in Finland, is, in a way, an advocacy group for immigrant work rights. Its motto is: WE DO NOT ASK – WE INSIST ON BETTER SALARIES FOR THE CLEANERS¹⁹.

As in all aspects of life, Roma also face discrimination in hiring, and; as a result, the rate of unemployment is higher than the national average. There are no separate unemployment statistics for the Roma population in Finland.

According to the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, the work-related anti-discrimination measures outlined in the Penal Code, contain some legal loopholes because they only apply to formal employment and not to, for example, education related work practice, which is covered by the Non-Discrimination Act²⁰

Another shortcoming of the current labour legislation is that the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate, which investigates acts of employment discrimination, has no mandate to enforce the anti-discriminatory provisions of both the Penal Code and the Non-Discrimination Act. At most, it can only give guidelines to the offending employer or agency and advice the victim of discrimination to turn to a lawyer or legal aid office to push the case forward.

Immigrants have also complained to the Ombudsman about some employment-related decisions from the labour office. The complaints have mainly been about unemployment benefits being denied for a fixed administrative period. According to the Office of the Ombudsman, discrimination was found to be the chief reason for the long delay in paying out unemployment benefits to immigrants²¹.

¹⁸ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008. p. 18

¹⁹ Justice for Cleaners in Finland:<http://justiceforcleaners.webs.com>, accessed 2009

²⁰ Annual report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008.p. 18-19

²¹ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008.p. 19

Concern has also been raised about the position of Thai seasonal workers, who come to Finland during the summer to pick up natural berries from the forest²². Many of the workers come from poor socio-economic backgrounds, and if the berry harvest is poor, as it was in 2008, they incur huge debts to cover transport, living expenses. In early 2009, the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities urged authorities to ensure that Thai berry pickers in Finland do not, for example, become victims of human trafficking as a result of their unfavourable economic position.

5.2 Housing

Under the terms of the Non-Discrimination Act (21/2004), discrimination in the provision of public housing is forbidden in Finland. This legislation is, however, regarded as inadequate because its provisions do not cover private housing. In theory this means that private landlords and accommodation agencies can discriminate without any fear of legal prosecution. This legal loophole undermines the fundamental rights of many members of the most vulnerable communities, who are mostly dependent on public housing²³.

Statistical evidence indicates the existence of ethnic or racial discrimination in housing allocation. Families and children, whose mother tongue is not Finnish live in rented public houses and they are, in general, much more crowded than their Finnish counterparts. Almost 75% of foreign language-speaking children live in rented public houses. On the other hand, only 23% of their Finnish or Swedish counterparts live in these kinds of housing facilities. Almost every Somali-speaking child and nine out of ten Arabic-speaking children live in rented public apartments. Somali-speaking children live in the most cramped conditions averaging some 12 m² per individual. On the other hand, their Finnish and Swedish-speaking counterparts enjoy, on average some 25 m²²⁴.

Somali families, in particular, are in general quite large; but Finnish public housing facilities are not designed to cater for large families. This causes many problems such as lack of playing space for children, anxiety and high noise levels, which brings the families into conflict with the neighbours. Cramped housing conditions also force older children to move away from the family, something that is untypical in traditional Somali culture, and can create social tensions between parents and young adults²⁵.

²² YLE Lapin radio: <http://radiosuomi.yle.fi/node/3439>, accessed 23 July 2009.

²³ Joronen, Mikko & Salonen, Annamari, 'Rasismi ja etninen syrjintä – ajatuksia ja tekoja: määritelmiä keskeisille käsitteille' in Salonen, Annamari & Villa, Susan (eds.) Rasismi ja etninen syrjintä Suomessa 2005. (Helsinki: Ihmisoikeusliitto 2006), p. 48

²⁴ Suomalainen lapsi 2007. Väestö 2007. Tilastokeskus ja Stakes. (Helsinki: Edita Prima Oy 2007) p. 418

²⁵ Virtanen, Hanna and Vilkkama, Katja 'Somalien asuminen pääkaupunkiseudulla' in Martikainen, Sakaranaho and Juntunen (eds.) Islam Suomessa. Muslimit arjessa, mediassa ja yhteiskunnassa. (Porvoo: Painotyö Bookwell 2008), p. 142-143.

Although the Non-Discrimination Act has, somehow, enhanced the position of the Roma in the public housing sector, they, however, still continue to face enormous hurdles in the private housing market where prices are high and racism and prejudice are prevalent.

Although housing provision is covered by the Non-Discrimination Act, the Roma, as previously stated, still continue to face difficulties in accessing public housing. Every year, over half of the cases handled by the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities (around 55%) concern housing problems²⁶.

An Example of NGO Good Practice – KOTILO project – tools for good living

Financed by the Ministry of the Environment and RAY, the national slot machine association, KOTILO or GASTROPOD in English, is a three-year pilot project aimed at developing good practices and models of living for immigrants and Finns.

The overall aim of the project is to improve living arrangements for all inhabitants. Working with housing authorities, the project targets suburbs where there are significant numbers of both immigrants and Finns, and has trained mediators who work as cultural interpreters and negotiators to prevent conflict.

Kotilo, which has activities in Helsinki, the Finnish capital, Turku, Tampere and Ylöjärvi, has also trained volunteer home keepers, who help residents in day-to-day practical activities as well as “resident enthusiasts” whose job is to encourage everyone to participate in communal neighbourhood activities²⁷.

The problematic housing situation affects many other socio-economic aspects of Roma life such as the legal status of children, and access to educational facilities. The deficient housing conditions faced by Roma families, as well as other social problems, have negative influences on their children’s educational attainment. Authorities should ensure that housing provision arrangements do not therefore impinge on Roma children’s rights to have decent and adequate education.

5.3 Education

The goal of immigrant education, according to the Finnish Board of Education, is to equip people moving into Finland with the skills to function as equal members of Finnish society. Immigrants, the Board emphasizes, are guaranteed the same educational opportunities as native Finns²⁸.

²⁶ The Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008. p.15.

²⁷ KOTILO: <http://www.pakolaisapu.fi>, accessed 23 July 2009

²⁸ Immigration Education in Finland, Finnish Board of Education 2007, <http://www.edu.fi/english/frontpage.asp?path=500>, accessed 2 July 2009

For adult immigrants (those over the 7-17 years compulsory school age bracket), the objective is to ensure that they receive the educational skills needed for work life, and that they retain their existing qualifications and vocational skills, which becomes the foundation for building their educational and professional careers in Finland.

The Board defines immigrants as refugees, migrants, returnees, other foreigners, and in some cases, asylum seekers. Instruction is given in the two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, and, in many cases, in English as well. Immigrants are, however, encouraged to maintain their native languages and cultural identities²⁹.

The Finnish education system is legally anchored on the Equality Act (L21/2004), whose remit is to promote and safeguard equality in society. Under the provisions of the Act, it is illegal to discriminate anyone on the basis of age, ethnic or national origin, language, religion, beliefs, opinions, health, disability and sexual orientation. The Act is applicable to both education and work life.

An example of Good NGO Practice – Infopankki – Info Bank

Started in 2001-2003 as part of the Open Learning Centre Project by the International Cultural Centre (CAISA) of the City of Helsinki, Helsinki City Library and funding from the European Social Fund and the City of Helsinki, the aim of Infopankki, or Info Bank, a web based service, is to provide information and advice to immigrants and other foreigners about Finnish history, culture and society in at least 15 languages.

Although initially intended for immigrants and foreigners within the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, the service became national in 2005, and has now been extended to other cities throughout Finland³⁰.

As has been noted in 5.2, the deficient housing conditions of the Roma have a negative impact on the education of their children. The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities has noted that in the severe situation of homelessness, a Roma child's school attendance may be discontinued or remain sporadic for several years after. The Office has urged municipalities and other local authorities to ensure that Roma children's school attendance is not disrupted by unfavourable housing situations³¹.

The poor state of education for Roma children has been noted and in recent years several projects to support vocal training and employment for Roma youths have been carried out to address this problem. However, despite these noble

²⁹Immigration Education in Finland, Finnish Board of Education 2007, <http://www.edu.fi/english/frontpage.asp?path=500>, accessed 2 July 2009

³⁰ InfoPankki: www.infopankki.fi, accessed 23 July 2009

³¹ The Annual Report of Ombudsman for Minorities 2008. p. 15.

efforts, there are still inadequacies in the provision of day care, preschool and general teaching services for Roma children.

While the Basic Education Act (628/1998) secures the rights of the Roma to maintain their own culture and language, in practice Roma language teaching is quite limited and modelled on the Ministry of Education's guidelines for teaching foreign languages.

Also, as noted before, the Ombudsman Office has had to intervene and remind at least two local authorities in Northern Finland to organize adequate day care, health and elderly services for Sami speakers³².

The Non-Discrimination Act also covers the provision of primary, secondary vocational, higher and adult education. In Finland, the development and administration of education is the responsibility of The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE), which works under the aegis of the Ministry of Education.

Discriminatory behaviour in public schools has now and again come to the attention of authorities. One such case involved a Helsinki City-run school that created a special group for immigrant pupils, ostensibly to provide quality teaching in their own language. The National Discrimination Tribunal, acting on a submission from the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, ruled that the action of the school was discriminatory and illegal. An appeal against the decision was rejected by the Helsinki Administrative Court in June 2007.

Children from multicultural backgrounds are often the target of bullying, and racist name calling. Children from multicultural backgrounds are often the target of bullying, and racist name calling. In a study carried out in 2006 more than 55 % of children from immigrant background reported that that they were being bullied at school. The figure for Finnish children was 35%. In the same study, more than a quarter of children from multicultural families reported being afraid of bullying during break sessions. The corresponding number for Finnish children was one seventh³³. Although a zero tolerance approach to racism exists in many schools, many victims of racist bullying do not receive enough counselling and assistance to deal with their traumas³⁴.

In 2007, the State Provincial Office of Southern Finland pointed out that there were not enough equality promotion plans at schools. An equality promotion plan should contain guidelines on, for example, how to identify and intervene in school bullying and how to resolve situations involving discrimination.

³² The Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008. p.14

³³ Soilamo, Arto, 'Maahanmuuttajaoppilaan osallisuus koulukiusaamisessa' (Turku: University of Turku 2006)

³⁴ Rastas, Anna, 'Rasismi lasten ja nuorten arjessa. Transnationaalit juuret monikulttuuristuva Suomi' Ph.D.Dissertation. (Tampereen yliopisto: University of Tampere Press. 2007) p., 113-118.

An example of Good NGO Practice – KiVa Koulu – Nice School

Started in 2006, KivaKoulu (Nice School) is a nationwide programme initiated by the University of Turku's Centre for Learning Research to reduce school bullying and develop preventative measures. The bullying have been reduced over 40 % with the methods used by project.

The programme also provides some training for teachers, and, at present, over one hundred schools are involved³⁵.

ECRI (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance) has recommended that Finnish authorities should provide more knowledge and information about people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. The organization has also suggested that Finnish authorities should put more efforts into cross-cultural training and human rights education for both teachers and pupils³⁶.

According to the Integration Act (Kotouttamislaki 1205/2005), an immigrant who is entitled to financial support from the social welfare office or who is unemployed, can access adult education opportunities via labour market training or via adult education training. The proportion of foreigners from the total number of people participating in labour market training has grown in recent years.

However, the problem with the Integration Act is that not every immigrant is entitled to education in Finnish or Swedish, or any other form of education that complies with the labour market policy measures. The most vulnerable social groups in this category are foreign women married to well-off Finnish men. Some municipalities and NGOs have noticed this shortcoming and are providing special language courses to these women, particularly during the daytime when children are, either at nursery school or, at primary school. Other workers and entrepreneurs are also entitled to these language courses.

According to the State Provincial Office of Southern Finland³⁷, just half of the foreign applicants for vocational education in 2008 were admitted, and very few applicants got study places in the social- and health fields, areas, which, ironically; suffering from lack of manpower. An ESF (European Social Fund) project was started in late 2008 to diagnose the problem. One reason for the failure by immigrants to qualify for study in the health and social sectors may be due to the fact that the psychological tests are in Finnish and biased towards Western culture and values.

³⁵ <http://www.kivakoulu.fi>, accessed 23 July 2009

³⁶ ECRI 2007. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. Third Report on Finland 2007. ECRI(2007)23.

³⁷ 'Vieraskielisten hakijoiden vaikea päästä ammatilliseen koulutukseen' The State Provincial Office of Southern Finland. 10.10.2008 HYPERLINK "<http://www.laaninhallitus.fi/etela>" www.laaninhallitus.fi/etela > tiedotteet, Accessed 5 July 2009

5.4 Health

Everyone, who is legally resident in Finland, is entitled to social and health services. The overall responsibility for planning, procuring and administering these services is the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The provisions of the Non-Discrimination Act are also applicable here as they are in housing, education, employment and other sectors.

Although the legislation is clear, there are still shortcomings in the provision of health and social services for Roma and Sami minorities. Following representations by the Ombudsman Office in 2008, the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal imposed anti-discrimination orders and a penalty payment on the city of Rovaniemi in Lapland for not efficiently providing day care services for Sami children as required by law (A penalty payment is a coercive measure by which a court or an administrative authority orders someone to do something or desist from doing something on pain of paying a penalty)³⁸.

In general, according to the Finnish League for Human Rights report in 2008, the provision of health and social services in Sami language, as stipulated by the law, is still unsatisfactory. Equally unsatisfactory is the condition of the Sami elderly, who, partly because of the shortage of Sami language care workers, cannot get services in their own language in nursing homes. The problem is particularly acute for those who do not have a good grasp of Finnish³⁹.

The Roma also fare badly in the provision of services for the elderly and the disabled. According to the Finnish League for Human Rights report, Roma elderly distrust the services provided in care homes because of previous discriminatory experiences and the fear of losing their cultural identity.

The increasing number of immigrants is posing challenges to the Finnish social and health service. An investigation of these challenges was carried out by the Provincial State Office of Southern Finland in 2007⁴⁰. The results of the survey indicate that although there are many good practices developed by municipalities and NGOs, there are still some limitations in the quality and amount of health and social services provided for multicultural families. There is, for example, a great need for specialized social-psychological support in situations where a spouse is a native Finn and the other is foreign born.

³⁸ *Vähemmistövaltuutettu tiedottaa*: Syrjintälautakunta linjasi saamelaisten oikeuksia ja yhdenvertaisuusla tulkintaa (08.12.2008)

<http://www.intermin.fi/intermin/vvt/home.nsf/Headlines/39DD1CB3615E5F23C2257519002A4E60>, accessed 2 July 2009.

³⁹ Aaltonen, Milla, Joronen, Mikko ja Villa Susan; Syrjintä Suomessa 2008 (Ihmisoikeusliitto, 2008) p. 114-115

⁴⁰ Roos, Jonna, 'Monikulttuurisuuden haasteet Etelä-Suomen läänin kunnissa'. Etelä-Suomen lääninhallitus. 128/2008. p. 1-2

In the survey, some municipalities pointed out that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health should be more knowledgeable about the needs and situations of immigrants and multicultural families. The Ministry, they suggested, should prepare a multicultural social and health programme, which would guide municipalities, which, in turn, could also prepare their own multicultural social and health programmes⁴¹.

Typically, young immigrant women have more children than their Finnish counterparts. They therefore use more maternity and hospital services than Finnish women⁴². One result of the survey carried out by the State Provincial Office of Southern Finland is that midwives in cities with large immigrant populations want and need training for cross-cultural communication⁴³.

In 2007, a report was published on the development of the work with immigrants in early childhood education and care. The advisory board's vision for 2020 is to have immigrant children take part in quality early childhood education. This requires a lot of effort, resources and commitment. The advisory board suggests that more research should be done to measure how much more specialised staff in migrant issues in early childhood education is needed. Staff training is also needed by the state and municipalities. Early childhood education requires the cooperation of parents, administrators and teachers⁴⁴.

Civil society organizations have been urging authorities to commit enough resources and effort towards the development of early childhood education for immigrant children. By investing in the welfare of these children, authorities are not only investing in the future prosperity and wellbeing of immigrant families, but of Finnish society as a whole.

Immigration is an experience that can cause tremendous culture shock when individuals confront a new culture, language, values and norms that are totally different from their own. Failure to cope with these divergent experiences can result in mental problems such as depression. In Finland, the cold, dark days are enough to trigger depressive impulses.

There should be more resources for immigrant-specialized mental care health services, particularly at the municipal level⁴⁵. Currently, an NGO called Suomen Mielenterveysseura is organizing emergency help for immigrants under a programme called OVI (Door). The programme has received funding for the

⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 58-60.

⁴² Gissler, Malin & Matveinen, 'Maahanmuuttajat ja julkiset palvelut Terveydenhuollon palvelut ja sosiaalihuolaitospalvelut. Pienten lasten hoito ja sosiaalihuollon avopalvelut'. Työpoliittinen tutkimus 2006. Työministeriö. p. 33- 35.

⁴³ Hakulinen-Viitanen, Tuovi & Pelkonen, Marjaana, 'Äitiys- ja lastenneuvoloiden tilanne Etelä-Suomen läänissä'. Etelä-Suomen lääninhallituksen julkaisusarja 111/2006. Helsinki.

⁴⁴ Development of the work with immigrants in early childhood education and care, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2007

⁴⁵ Rauta, Asko, 'Selvitys maahanmuuttajien mielenterveyspalveluiden tarpeesta ja saatavuudesta'. Selvityksiä 2005:3. STM. p. 39-40

period from 2007 to 2011. Under the programme, immigrants and workers in NGOs are offered specialized courses, which enable them to deal with some of the psychological problems specific to immigrants⁴⁶. The training and assistance is, however, not available for all the needy. The government and local authorities should provide more resources and psycho-social assistance for immigrant mental health care services.

Compared to other developed and industrialised countries, domestic violence is quite common in Finland. Many immigrant women also confront violence, either from their Finnish-born spouses or foreign-born husbands or partners. Some immigrant women do not know about their rights and that domestic violence is a crime. A national project to prevent and reduce domestic violence was launched in 2005 by the provincial state offices. The project, which ended in 2007, devised and implemented different models to tackle this social problem.

Currently there are plans to build a national expertise centre to gather information, develop new methods; and train workers to deal with issues related to domestic violence. Civil society hopes that training will also be availed for women from immigrant backgrounds.

An example of Good NGO Practice – Monika-Naiset ry,

Started in 1998, Monika-Naiset ry. is an umbrella body for 16 organizations, whose aim is to promote the welfare of immigrant women and children by, for example, offering services to victims of violence associate with forced marriages, honour issues and human trafficking. The organization also offers expert assistance to identify, prevent and offer assistance to victims of violence, and, in general, assist the integration of women into Finnish society.

In 2008, INTI-CITIES, an EU-financed integration monitoring project described MONIKA as one of the best immigrant integration initiatives in Helsinki⁴⁷.

One positive health-related development in 2008 was the Supreme Court ruling that properly administered that male circumcision was not a punishable offence⁴⁸. The ruling stemmed from a 2004 case in which a Muslim woman had had her four-and-half-year old baby boy circumcised by a certified doctor. Although circumcision had long being practised by old religious minorities such as Jews and Tatars, it became a hot topic as the number of new immigrants increased. The Finnish League of Human Rights had argued that male circumcision should be legalised and performed as part of a normal public health service. The Turku law court had ruled that the mother was not guilty of assault, while the Tampere district court had found her action illegal but, nevertheless, decided to dismiss the case on the grounds that the defendant was unaware of the legality of her action.

⁴⁶HYPERLINK "<http://www.mielenterveysseura.fi/>"www.mielenterveysseura.fi, accessed 5.7.2009

⁴⁷ http://www.monikanaiset.fi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59&Itemid=56

⁴⁸ Korkeaoikeuden tiedote 17.10.2008- Asianmukaisesti suoritettu muslimipojan ympärileikkaus ei ollut rangaistava teko

5.5 Policing and racial profiling

Relations between the police and immigrants in Finland are generally characterized by mistrust and suspicion. The former, as expressed through representations to the Ombudsman Office, feel that the former, together with the justice system, lack the motivation and resolve to investigate and act on racist offences⁴⁹.

In 2007 the Ombudsman for Minorities Office, in cooperation with the police department of the State Provincial Office of Southern Finland, organized a course to sensitize the latter to issues surrounding racist offences. During the course, the Office urged the police to develop their operational mechanisms so that they would retain the trust of the immigrant population. During the course, it was pointed out that the police should consider all racist offences seriously and should speedily inform the complainant if there are delays or obstacles in investigating the offence.

Furthermore, in line with the recommendations of the European Council European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), it was pointed out that the victims' or other witnesses' perception of a crime as racially motivated should be the starting point for investigating race crimes. The Ombudsman also pointed out that police should refrain from publicizing the ethnical or racial profile of a suspected criminal unless this information can be of help to the police in investigating the crime.

5.6 Racist violence and crime

According to the Ministry of the Interior, hate crimes, which include racist offences, have become quite common in Finland, and, for the first time in history; police have begun to keep separate statistics on them. The number of racist crimes reported to the police in 2007 was over 700, and the most frequent crime was either attempted or executed assault. Other racist crimes included discrimination, defamation of character, unlawful threats and destruction of property⁵⁰. According to the report, most of the crimes are concentrated in areas which have large immigrant populations such as southern Finland.

The most common places where racist crimes occurred were public spaces such as streets, market places, parks and restaurants. Around 16% of racist crimes occurred in home surroundings such as yards and staircases, while 8% happened at the workplace⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008. p. 21

⁵⁰ Joronen, Mikko Poliisin tietoon tullut rikollisuus Suomessa 2007. Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun raportteja 72/2008. p. 27

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 44 - 48.

An example of Good NGO Practice – Passport project: Preventing Ethnic Conflicts

Funded by the City of Vantaa, local police and the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the Passport Project or Passi-projekti in Finnish was launched in 2006 with the specific purpose of preventing discrimination and marginalisation of youths from immigrant backgrounds. A network comprising NGOs, police, youths and city officials was established for this purpose. When a problem crops up, a meeting involving all member organizations of the network is convened, and a solution worked out.

The project ended in 2008⁵².

Kotka, a harbour town in south east Finland, followed by Kajaani in north east Finland, had the highest number of racist crimes. In general towns and cities with more immigrant populations or refugee reception centres recorded more racist crimes⁵³.

Youth racist crimes have also been on the increase within the Helsinki Metropolitan Area during the past year and culminated in the fatal stabbing of a youth outside a grill kiosk.

An example of Good NGO Practice – Discrimination Free Area

Discrimination Free Area is a campaign, which is being conducted by Helsingin Sanomat, Finland's largest daily, and several NGO's, including FIMU (Multicultural Sport League), SETA ry, Vammaisfoorumi and Finnish League for Human Rights.

Companies, schools, factories, offices, and other organizations apply for a Discrimination Free Area sticker; which is, for example, prominently displayed in canteens, lobbies and conference rooms for workers, clients, visitors, etc. to see⁵⁴.

Traditionally, sport has, for some reason, been left out of the discrimination debate. For a change, however, the Finnish League for Human Rights 2008 report contains substantial information on sport discrimination. For immigrations and other foreigners, the most relevant focus is on football, a highly- popular, global sport. According to immigrant sportspersons and enthusiasts, the most common expression of bigotry is racist name calling. Immigrant players also face problems in finding a club or place to practice, and if they do, they are usually given unfavourable training times such as very early in the morning or very late in

⁵² www.vantaa.fi/i_perusdokumentti.asp, accessed 23 July 2009

⁵³ Poliisi alkaa seurata tarkemmin viharikollisuutta, http://www.hs.fi/artikkeli/11352460306862ref=rss#Scene_1, accessed 3 July 2009

⁵⁴ http://www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi/suomi/syrjinnasta_vapaa_alue, accessed 23 July 2009

the evening. The Monitoring Attitudes and Progress in Sport 2008 (MAPS) project carried out by Liikkukaa ry found that on average referees given immigrant or players of immigrant background 30 percent more cautions than native players⁵⁵.

In 2007 Suomen Palloliitto (The Football Association of Finland) carried out a survey to determine the state of racism in Finnish football. The result was that racism, particularly in lower divisions, was more widespread than had been previously thought. In 2008, the Football Association embarked on a nationwide crusade to racially sensitize referees, coaches and club managers⁵⁶.

5.7 Access to goods and services in the public and private sector

As has been mentioned earlier on in the report, the provisions of the Non-Discrimination Act apply to the provision of both movable and non-movable public and private services. The remit of the Act does not, however, apply to relationships between individuals. In 2008, the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities received over 60 representations concerning suspected cases of ethnic discrimination. Some clients, however, just wanted to tell the Office about the discrimination that they had experienced and did not wish the issue to be taken on any further⁵⁷.

One area where immigrants have been denied service in Finland is in the insurance business. The Ombudsman has found out that immigrants are hardly sold voluntary personal insurance policies, mainly due to the complication of some legal terms, which are mainly in Finnish and Swedish. The Office's opinion is that there will be more demand for insurance policies as the number of immigrants increases.

Another commercial sector where the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities has found anomalies is in telecommunications. Some mobile phone operators, it appears, charge different deposit amounts for immigrant and native customers who want to purchase a phone line⁵⁸.

The issuing of credit cards has also raised suspicions of racial or ethnic discrimination. The Ombudsman for Minorities has been approached by immigrant or foreign complainants who have had difficulties with either procuring a credit card or using it to effect transactions. In one case a shop had put in place a restriction that only allowed Finnish citizens to participate in hire purchase transactions. And in another one, a customer's credit card application

⁵⁵ Maps (Monitoring Attitude and Progress in Sports) – project, <http://www.liikkukaa.org/index.php?id=54>, accessed 3 July 2009

⁵⁶ Aaltonen, Milla, Joronen, Mikko ja Villa, Susan, Syrjintä Suomessa 2008, p. 146-7, Ihmisoikeusliitto

⁵⁷ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008 p. 11

⁵⁸ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008.p. 12

was apparently rejected because the customer, who had lived in Finland for 15 years, had a name of foreign origin⁵⁹.

By far one of the most common examples of racial discrimination in Finland is the denial of entrance to bars and restaurants for ethnic and racial minorities, particularly Roma and African men. Restaurants justify this discriminatory practice by either pointing out that the customer was intoxicated or that it has had previous problems with members of the customer's ethnic group or racial group. Although it is illegal to discriminate against anyone in Finland on the basis of colour, racial or ethnic origin, many of the incidents in which a customer is denied entrance to a restaurant or bar hardly lead to police investigation or prosecution by the justice department. One major reason is that it is very difficult to find witnesses to support the victim and some victims do not want to press the issue any further for fear of unpleasant consequences or they simply want to forget the unpleasant incident and continue with their life.

Russian speakers are the biggest immigrant and linguistic group in Finland, and their language is the third biggest after the two official languages, Finnish and Swedish. Many Russian immigrants are, however, unaware about the local government services that they are entitled to. There is a need for more information about these local services in different languages, particularly in Russian⁶⁰.

5.8 Media, including the internet

Although the Finnish media has somehow changed a lot from the late '80s and early '90s in its reporting on immigrants, there are still many areas that need to be improved. For the last couple of years, media research has concentrated on how immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers have been portrayed in the media. For a change, a research project currently conducted at the University of Tampere is examining how immigrants are using the media. This is a welcome development because the media can help and support immigrants to integrate into Finnish society.

Internet use within the immigrant community is quite high, as many use the global media to get news from their home countries; and to keep contact with friends and relatives left behind. Apart from that, immigrants also need information and news about Finnish society. The most popular content is news and films from commercial TV channels. The use of both global and local Finnish media is explained by the fact that although immigrants are physically and

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 12

⁶⁰ Tanntu, Jekaterina, 'Venäjänkielisenä Suomessa'. Selvitys vähemmistövaltuutetulle. Helsinki 2008.

geographically in Europe, they still maintain social and cultural ties with their home countries – a healthy way to promote the integration process⁶¹.

There is a clear need for special media services targeted towards immigrants, particularly Russian speakers. Although there are Russian language news services on private radio stations, there is, as yet; nothing available on the publicly funded Finnish Broadcasting Company. Instead, Russian language media services, such as the newspaper Spektr, have had to downscale their services due to lack of resources. The Ombudsman for Minorities has pointed out that funding for NGOs and media engaged in immigrant activities should not be project based, but rather longer term oriented to facilitate planning and investing into the future⁶².

There is a vibrant flow of racist material on the internet. For example, much of the political popularity for the anti-immigrant agitator, Jussi Halla-aho, stems from his popular Scripta blog. There has been a lot of public discussion about this issue, and some private citizens have expressed their concern to the Ombudsman about the proliferation of racist messages on the internet. As usual, however, this discussion is always underpinned by the dichotomy between freedom of expression and respect for human rights. In 2007, the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities issue a bulletin entitled; “Freedom of Expression must Respect Human Values” (Sananvapaudesta kunnioitettava ihmisarvoa). The bulletin sheds light on aspects of agitation against ethnic groups, which are punishable offences under the Penal Code and the Non-Discrimination Act⁶³. The Ombudsman is of the opinion that the international convention on the elimination of racial discrimination (CERD 37/1970) requires Finland to intervene more resolutely against the dissemination of hateful, racist propaganda. Current, available means to limit the spread of racist messages should therefore be exploited, and new ones should be developed.

The chairperson for The Council for Mass Media (CMM), a self-regulating committee established by publishers and journalists, also drew attention to this problem and proposed the setting up of a net monitoring authority⁶⁴.

Apart from the challenge posed by the delicate need to balance freedom of expression and the respect for human rights, the Ombudsman is of the opinion that the effectiveness of the police to investigate internet-based racist crimes is being hampered by the technical challenges posed by the increasingly sophisticated information technologies. For instance, in 2007 police had to stop investigations about the origins of a Youtube video clip derogatory towards the

⁶¹ Maasilta, Mari, Simola, Anna ja af Heurlin, Heidi ‘Maahanmuuttaja mediankäyttäjänä’. Tampereen yliopisto. Julkaisuja. Sarja A 107/2008

⁶² Tantt, Jekaterina, ‘Venäjänkielisenä Suomessa’. Selvitys vähemmistövaltuutetulle. Helsinki 2008. p. 6

⁶³ Rasistiset Ilmaisut, <http://www.ofm.fi/intermin/vvt/home.nsf/pages/0E638109F664EB7C225739>. accessed 4 July 2009

⁶⁴ Näinkö nettikeskusteluja pitäisi valvoa? <http://www.uusisuomi.fi/kotimaa/40662-nainko-nettikeskusteluja-pitaisi-valvoa>, accessed 4 July 2009

Sami because they could not technically identify the perpetrator. At the request of private individuals, Youtube administrators finally removed the offending clip and replaced it with a Sami language TV news item about incitement to ethnic hatred⁶⁵.

In July 2008, State Prosecutor, Mika Illman, proposed that owners of websites and blogs should be legally responsible for racist material appearing on their space in the same way that newspapers owners are currently required to do⁶⁶. This is already the situation in neighbouring Sweden.

In a similar vein, the Ombudsman called on the hosts of internet discussion forums to clamp down on overtly racist messages. However, as noted, this a difficult area to police as the desire to clamp down on racism clashes with the cherished desire to preserve press freedom. The result is that internet based racial hate and bigotry is still thriving in Finnish cyberspace.

In November 2008, the Green Women's Association filed a police complaint against Halla-aho⁶⁷ who had written that immigration would increase rape crimes and that the appropriate people to be rapped should be "green-leftist-do-gooders and their supporters." In December police announced that they were investing Jussi Halla-aho for inciting hatred against an ethnic group and were also pondering the possibility of reviewing his gun ownership licence. Halla-aho practices pistol and rifle shooting⁶⁸.

⁶⁵ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008. p. 20

⁶⁶ <http://www.uusisuomi.fi/kotimaa/22617-nettirasistien-rajoittamiselle-tukea>, accessed 23 July 2009

⁶⁷ Jussi Halla-aho is a popular right wing, anti-immigrant blogger who received lots of votes during the 2007 municipal elections.

⁶⁸ Halla-aho charged with agitation and blasphemy, <http://freedom.blogspot.com/2009/03/halla-aho-charged-with-agitation-and.html>

6. Political and legal context

As pointed out earlier in this report, the most significant 2008 political event, which has a bearing on immigration, was the electoral popularity of Jussi Halla-aho, an anti-immigrant columnist who garnered in 2 977 votes in Helsinki during the municipal elections. Halla-aho, who was the 18th most popular candidate during the elections, campaigned as an independent candidate on the ticket of the True Finns party, an anti-immigrant and anti- EU nationalist party, whose political fortunes have been rising.

Found in 1995, the True Finns (Perussuomalaiset in Finnish) party has become something of a sensation in the Finnish political field. During the 2003 parliamentary elections, the party gained three seats, and four years later it more than doubled its share of the national vote, gaining two more seats to give it a total of five. The success of the True Finns party is attributed to the charisma and oratory skills of its leader Timo Soini.

Soini was the party's presidential candidate during the 2006 elections, and finished fifth out of the race of eight candidates, with a 3.4% share of the votes during the first round of the contest. During the 2009 elections for the European Parliament, he garnered over 130 000 votes, the highest number in Finland.

6.1 Anti-discrimination

There are a number of legal measures and statutes designed to prevent discrimination in Finland. The provisions of the Finnish Constitution Act (1999), outlaw any form of discrimination based on age, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, ethnicity and skin colour. The most comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation at the moment is the Anti-Discrimination Act (21/2004), which is derived from earlier legislative statutes, such as the Race Equality (2000/43/EY) and Employment Equality (2000/78/EY) Acts. Apart from outlawing familiar forms of discrimination, The Anti-Discrimination Act, which came into force on 1 February 2004, encompasses issues such as employment, working conditions, as well as education, health and social services.

Under the provisions of the Non-Discrimination Act, all state and municipal authorities are obliged to draft an Equality Plan, which includes measures and tools to promote operational diversity and non-discrimination. As pointed out in an earlier report, some criticism has been levelled at the Non-Discrimination Act, particularly from state and municipal authorities, who point out that it is difficult to comply or enforce the act because there are already other anti-discrimination instruments such as the Work Discrimination Act, the Penal Code and the Equality Act. So, there is a need to renew the Anti-Discrimination Act and the Ministry of Justice established a committee for that purpose in 2006.

The Finnish League for Human Rights also organized a seminar for other NGOs and trade unions, with the sole purpose of renewing the Anti- Discrimination Act. NGOs have, for example, pointed out that the Non- Discrimination Act does not apply to person-to-person discrimination and that as far as the issue of housing is concerned, the provisions of the Act do not extend to the private sector and still continue to discriminate against Roma and immigrants⁶⁹.

As pointed out earlier, in general, the labour and employment terms enforcement authorities do not apply the Non-Discrimination Act efficiently because they do not know its provisions well enough.

Nonetheless, there has been some improvement. In March 2008, the government amended the provisions of the Anti-Discrimination Act to cater for private commercial relationships such as accommodation renting. The impetus behind this was the European Union Commission statement, which stated that Finland's Equality Law does not go far enough in complying with the provisions of the Commission's non- discrimination directive⁷⁰.

A project launched by the Ministry of Labour focuses on monitoring discrimination, and makes suggestions on how to monitor discriminative practices⁷¹. The first suggestion is that there should be a national discrimination monitoring system, which should improve reporting and processing information available at the moment. There should also be a web site about discrimination monitoring, and there should be input from the support committee of the Ombudsman for Minorities office, NGOs and government authorities. The reporting would make discrimination more visible, and it would also help to provide a measure on how the anti-discrimination legislation is working.

The Ministry's project report is part of the EU handbook for monitoring discrimination in member states. The Finnish League for Human Rights is of the opinion that a discrimination monitoring system should be put in place as soon as possible⁷².

The Ombudsman for Minorities is an independent authority, which first started operating under the Ministry of Labour in 2002. In 2007, it was transferred to the Ministry of the Interior. The remit of the Office is to promote the legal status of ethnic minorities and foreigners residing in Finland. The Ombudsman can, however, only recommend, issue statements, provide advice and instructions, but has no juridical authority to investigate and prosecute.

The Ombudsman can also take initiatives and give legal assistance and in some cases give more extensive personal assistance.

⁶⁹ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008. p. 11

⁷⁰ Ihmisoikeusliitto (Finnish League of Human Rights) Syrjintä Suomessa 2008, (Discrimination in Finland). p. 15.

⁷¹ Monitoring the Discrimination in Finland 2007

⁷² Ihmisoikeusliitto (Finnish League of Human Rights) Syrjintä Suomessa 2008, (Discrimination in Finland). p. 7

During 2008, the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities handled a total of 737 cases, and over half of them dealt with discrimination. The cases dealing with discrimination and inappropriate treatment rose up by a third – an increase which was also noted by the law enforcement authorities. The discriminatory cases investigated by the Ombudsman included internet-based racist information, Roma housing problems, ineffective implementation of Sami constitutional rights, discrimination in the provision of public and private services, as well as workplace discrimination. The Office also received representations about issues relating to implementation of the Aliens Act. Haphazard or non-implementation of Sami minority and language rights were also highlighted⁷³.

In addition to the Ombudsman's office, there are also some organizations that have been instituted to monitor discriminatory practices and ensure that the rights of ethnic minorities are recognized and respected. The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO) is an expert body appointed by the government. Up until the end of 2007, it operated as an independent unit within the Ministry of Labour but has since been transferred to the Ministry of the Interior. The aim of ETNO is to promote coordination and cooperation between authorities, nongovernmental organizations, immigrants and ethnic minorities.

The Advisory Board on Roma Affairs (RONK) has operated for more than 50 years in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. RONK's main function is to promote the fair participation of the Roma population in Finnish society, to improve their living conditions and socio-economic position, as well as to advance Roma culture.

The Advisory Board on Sami Affairs (Saamelaisasiainneuvottelukunta) operates under the Ministry of Justice. Its function is, for example, to monitor the legal, economic and social situation of the Sami and report back to the corresponding ministries.

The most important development in anti-discrimination legislation is the 2007 initiative by the Ministry of Justice to harmonize the Equality Law with other non-discrimination laws and statutes. As mentioned before in this report, the provisions of the current Equality Law are disjointed and unspecific, and do not conform with the international norms and demands.

Given this uncoordinated legal background, no case, has, so far, been brought forward on the basis of the EU Race Equality Directive. Equally, there has not been much discussion about UNICERD, and although the Durban Declaration has been discussed, it has, as yet, not had any noticeable impact on Finnish legislation. Officials are of the opinion that many of its recommendations,

⁷³ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008. p. 14.

particularly with regard to the position of the Roma, are already incorporated in existing legislation⁷⁴.

6.2 Migration and integration

Immigration has always been a very sensitive issue in the Finnish political and social discourse. Although the number of immigrants and foreigners living in the country (just over 190 000 out of a population of slightly over 5 million), is one of the lowest among industrialised countries, the intense discussion against immigrants and refugees points to a widely-shared view that the national borders should be sealed.

The popularity of the anti-immigrant and EU True Finns, which is currently the fourth most popular political party, as well as that of its sympathizers such as Jussi Halla-aho is the best political barometer of Finnish attitudes towards immigrants and other foreigners. Mainstream political parties such as the Social Democrats, the Centre Party and the Leftist Union have seen their support dwindle as voters drift to the right. As many political experts have pointed out, there is a danger that the mainstream parties could pander to anti-immigrant sentiments to attract disgruntled voters.

The centre right government, which is dominated by the Centre Party and the conservative National Coalition Party, has stated that it supports an economic oriented immigration policy, which will satisfy Finland's current and future labour needs. According to the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, there has been a notable rise in employment-based immigration⁷⁵.

However, as has been noted before, the unemployment rate for immigrants in Finland is quite high, and many highly-skilled foreigners are woefully underemployed as menial workers. Civil society organizations would like to see measures and resources marshalled to improve the employment position of immigrants residing in Finland. Activists in non-governmental organizations point out that the government's immigration programme should not just view the newcomers as mere workers but, rather, as people who have needs, desires and hopes. Thus, state and municipal administrations should also expand their educational, health and social services to cater for the new immigrants.

The government has noted the importance of integration in its migration policy programme and suggests that there should be a special orientation information package for new migrants⁷⁶. But, so far, despite the importance of integration, nothing has come out of this proposal. The eleven EU Common Basic Principles

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http://www.mol.fi/mol/fi/06_tyoministerio/06_julkaisut/05_monitori/05_vanhat/MONITORI2001_4/MON2001_4_6.jsp?teksti=pienenna

⁷⁵ The Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008. p. 1

⁷⁶ The Government Migration Policy Programme 2006 p. 4. The Government Policy Programme 2007.

on integration have been discussed and incorporated into the Integration Act 2005. Civil society has, however, noted that there are still many practical problems in implementation. This particularly applies to mainstreaming in social, health and employment issues.

As noted in an earlier report, the Integration Act (493/1999), obliges municipalities to design their own integration programmes, which should indicate measures and programmes, which municipalities intend to implement in order to integrate migrants into the Finnish society. Apart from that, the Act also obliges municipalities, in cooperation with Employment Offices, to design personal integration plans for each migrant.

The Integration Act was renewed in 2005, and the amended legislation defines the specific role of each actor/organization in the integration process. Under the act, municipalities are also obliged to design and enforce an anti-discrimination plan. State official provinces should, for instance, plan, develop and ensure the delivery of municipal health and social services in order to facilitate the integration process⁷⁷.

One shortcoming of the Integration Act is that its personal integration plan leaves some of the more vulnerable immigrant groups, such as children and nonworking mothers, out of the programme. The employed and entrepreneurs also fall out of the scope of the Integration Act, (in short anyone who is not unemployed or dependent on social services). Some municipalities have tried to solve this problem by providing Finnish language lessons to non-working mothers. One chief obstacle is, of course, the lack of resources and knowledge by authorities about the kind of educational, health and social services required by immigrants and multicultural families⁷⁸.

One of the most controversial aspects of the Finnish immigration policy is the so-called b-residence permit, which has mostly been given to so-called failed asylum seekers from countries such as, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan. Legally, the b-residence permit is regarded as a temporary residence permit, which does not entitle the holder to, for instance, legally work in Finland. Human rights experts and other activists are particularly concerned by the fact that the Directorate of Immigration, which is part of the Interior Ministry, justifies the issuance of b-residence permits on section 51 of the Aliens Act (301/2004) instead of incorporating other aspects of the act, which would enable the department to grant continuous residence permits.

Using its right to be reserved, once again the Ombudsman for Minorities intervened in this burning issue by, among other things, reminding the Finnish

⁷⁷ Laki maahanmuuttajien kotouttamisesta ja turvapaikanhakijoiden vastaanotosta annetun lain muuttamisesta 1215/2005

⁷⁸ Roos, Jonna, 'Monikulttuurisuuden haasteet Etelä-Suomen läänin kunnissa'. Etelä-Suomen lääninhallitus. 128/2008.

Immigration Service, which has been deporting mainly Afghan asylum, that despite the fact that some Afghans had returned voluntarily to their country, the situation in Afghanistan still remains volatile. Furthermore, the Ombudsman pointed out that Afghans who have been living continuously in Finland for more than two years should be granted a continuous residence permit in accordance with Section 54 (5) of the Aliens Act, and that the immigration service should bear in mind government proposals relating to changes to Section 51 of the Aliens Act.

One of the biggest problems posed by the b-residence permit is that the holder is not legally entitled to municipal residence. This means that the holder of the permit has still got to continue living in a refugee reception centre, although he/she is no longer an asylum seeker. Apart from being denied employment, the b-residence permit holder is also not permitted to study. If the holder is already employed or has good employment prospects, he/she has to stop work and depend on handouts. Family reunions are also forbidden for the b-residence permit holder, and he/she cannot access national social security services.

The presence of foreign Roma beggars on the streets of Helsinki has been hotly debated for the last two years. Some of the comments and observations aired in the media have been racist. The beggars, who are mainly from Romania, have been joined by other street people such as musicians; and according to police, by pickpockets and other petty criminals. The beggar phenomenon has spread to other Finnish cities as well, and Helsinki authorities are coordinating a campaign to classify begging as an offence.

6.3 Criminal justice

6.3.1 Racism as a crime

As noted before, Finland has several laws which prohibit racism and racist discrimination. The Non-Discrimination Act (2004) prohibits discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion and skin colour, amongst other things. Again, as stated earlier in this report (see 6.2), the legislative measures against discrimination are quite wide ranging, and, unfortunately, rather complex for the concerned authorities. That is one reason why the Non-Discrimination Act has been under review since 2007.

The Penal Code (Chapter 6, section 5, subsection 4) toughens the penal consequences for racially motivated crimes. Ethnic agitation is specifically prohibited under Chapter 11, section 8 of the Penal Code (578/1995), which states that a person who spreads information or statements to the public to defame, insult or threaten a race, ethnic or national group shall be sentenced to at most two years or a fine.

In 2008, as noted earlier, police announced that they were investigating anti-immigrant agitator and Helsinki City councillor, Jussi Halla-aho, for ethnic agitation and blasphemy (In his blog he had written that paedophilia was institutionalized in Islamic religion, and that Somalis are genetically lazy welfare spongers)⁷⁹. In March 2009, a prosecutor announced that he was charging Halla-aho for blasphemy and ethnic agitation⁸⁰. By summer 2009 the trial had not yet begun.

Finnish authorities and activists have been concerned by the increasing prevalence of internet-based racist chat forums, network communities and blogs. In May 2008, state prosecutor, Mika Illman, stated that Finnish legislation should be modified to compel website hosts to become more responsible for the racist content appearing on their sites. Sweden has such legislation. The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities concurred that legislative initiatives could be used to combat net-based racism. (On some of the sites, the Ombudsman is referred to as the Nigger Ombudsman). However, apart from the Halla-aho incident, there was no significant police initiative or campaign to clamp down on net-based racism in 2008.

Although the Penal Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religious beliefs or nationality (Chapter 11 section 9), the Ombudsman for Minorities has noted that the legislative measures to combat racist or discriminatory behaviour are quite ineffective. The punishment for the most serious cases is simply not strong enough to deter offenders. For example, the average punishment for a discriminatory offence is the same as the one for shoplifting. According to the Ombudsman, this does not correspond to the values of Finnish society as expressed in, for instance, the Immigration Policy Programme.

In its Third Report on Finland in 2007, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) noted that, based on the observations of NGOs, very few people are prosecuted or convicted for racist crimes. ECRI recommended that Finnish authorities should put more effort into improving the implementation of the criminal law provisions in force against racism and racial discrimination⁸¹.

According to the 2008 European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) report, Finland has one of the most comprehensive crime registration services. However, despite this positive development, there are still shortcomings in the collection of data related to racist crimes. The government has realised the problem, and identified operational areas that need to be developed. These include; the definition of a racist crime and the subsequent follow up through the criminal justice system as well as the need to convince victims to file a police

⁷⁹ The Annual Report of The Ombudsman for Minorities 2008. p. 1

⁸⁰ Uusi Suomi, Nettirasistien rajoittamiselle tukea, 5.5.2008

⁸¹ ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) Third Report on Finland. 24th May 2007. p. 9-10.

report. It has also been noted that instead of relying solely on police, prosecution and judicial services for crime related statistics, there need to be a development of terminology. The latter task requires the cooperation of immigrants or their representatives and will mean that a racist crime can only be identified after the judicial process⁸².

In 2007 (Figures for 2008 are still unavailable) there were at least 454 reported racist crimes in Finland, a three percentage increase over the previous year. However, the number of suspected racist crimes was actually 698, a 6% decrease over the previous year⁸³. Attention should be drawn to the fact that many racist crimes remain unreported. The most common racist crime was assault (over 25% of all recorded crimes) followed by damage to property (over 16%).

According to the Finnish police criminal administrative procedures, all crimes in which the victim's skin colour, race and ethnic origin is the principal variable should be coded as racist crimes. Although for some reason, racist crimes may not be coded this does not mean that they will not go through the criminal justice system. The downside is that the judicial branch will be unable to utilise the aggravating circumstances function befitting such crimes.

The geographical location of racist crimes followed the same pattern as in previous years. Over 52% of all racist crimes recorded in 2007 occurred in Southern Finland Province, where the majority of immigrants and foreigners reside. Well over 30% occurred in Western Finland Province, above 7% in East Finland Province, and over 6% in Oulu Province. Figures for Lapland and the autonomous province of Aaland Islands were 2,7 and 0.3% respectively⁸⁴.

Besides keeping annual statistics of racist crimes, police also keep a record of the crime types, the times of day they are committed, the locations, as well as the victims and suspects. According to the Finnish League for Human Rights, one of the serious shortcomings in monitoring racist crimes is that proceedings from the Prosecutor-General are not systematically reported⁸⁵.

For years the Ombudsman for Minorities has drawn attention to the lack of trust that prevails between police and minorities with reference to racist crimes. There is a lingering perception among immigrants and foreigners that the police do not seriously evaluate and investigate racist crimes. Furthermore, there is a lingering

⁸² Joronen , Mikko, Poliisin tietoon tullut rasistinen rikollisuus suomessa 2007, Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun raportteja 72/2008 Tampere, 2008.p. 27.

⁸³ Joronen , Mikko, Poliisin tietoon tullut rasistinen rikollisuus suomessa 2007, Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun raportteja 72/2008 Tampere, 2008.p. 48

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 44

⁸⁵ Lepola, Outi, Joronen, Mikko & Aaltonen, Milla, 'Syrjintä etnisyyden, uskonnon, kielen tai kansalaisuuden perusteella.' In Lepola, Outi & Villa, Susan (eds.) Syryntä Suomessa 2006. (Helsinki: Ihmisoikeusliitto 2007.) p. 134-136.

suspicion that both the police and the criminal justice administration are unwilling to identify and evaluate possible racist motives behind these offences.

In November 2007 the police department of the State Provincial Office of Southern Finland organized a comprehensive training seminar for police to sensitize them to the issues surrounding racist offences⁸⁶.

6.3.2 Counter terrorism

The Finnish Penal Code (Chapter 34a) contains provisions for dealing with terrorist offences. The law, which has been in force since 1 February 2003, has so far never been applied. For some years now, intelligence and security services have reiterated that there is no immediate danger for Finland from political or religious radicals.

Organizations like The Finnish League for Human Rights are, however, concerned about the stepped up electronic surveillance conducted by the police and intelligence services against individuals suspected of having links to radical political or religious organizations, and the fact that the counter terrorism concept is being used as a catch-all for a variety of intelligence actions, which have the potential to undermine personal liberties⁸⁷.

6.3.3 Racial profiling

Racial profiling was quite common in Finland during the late '80s and early '90s, but was discontinued after pressure from progressive activists and NGOs.

In spring 2008, police launched several operations in Helsinki restaurants and in the streets in search for the so-called illegal immigrants. The Ombudsman for Minorities intervened and reminded the police that, by randomly demanding papers from people of colour the police were, in fact, engaged in racial profiling⁸⁸. The operations were stopped.

6.4 Social inclusion

Close to 60% of immigrant and foreign children belong to the lowest income groups. The proportion of native Finnish children who belong to this socio-economic group is a mere 18%. More immigrant children are reared by a single parent than their native born counterparts. Between 33-43% of immigrant

⁸⁶ Annual report of the Ombudsman for Minorities 2008

⁸⁷ Villa, Susan, Terrorismin torjuntaan ei ole oikopolkua, Ihmisoikeusraportti 3/2007, p.10

⁸⁸ http://mediaseuranta.blogspot.com/2008_03_01_archive.html accessed 6.7.2009

children from Somalia, Vietnam and Middle Eastern countries are currently being raised by a single parent (usually the mother), as opposed to just 16% for native born children⁸⁹.

Most of the anti-racism projects in Finland have been funded by the European Social Fund, and several NGOs and other actors have developed many good practices. However, as soon as funding has ended, these projects have stopped. To maintain sustainability and social inclusion, funding should be continuous.

The government has formulated some proposals for youth development, and has outlined measures and targets to be reached in order to promote social inclusion for immigrant youths and children. One significant initiative has been to develop the language and social skills of these children under the Child and Youth Programme 2007.

Despite these commendable efforts, what is glaringly missing is the acknowledgement that there are close to 60 000 children who belong to families in which the other spouse was not born in Finland⁹⁰. Civil society activists hope that government funding should also take this group of children into consideration.

In 2007, over 40 different non-governmental organizations established a network called Benefit for Multicultural Children Network. (Monikulttuuristen lasten etu -verkosto). The views of this network were taken into consideration when the government was in the process of planning the current youth and child development policy.

To use an overused cliché, we live in a global village. People have to understand each other much better than before. What is called global education plays a very important role in this process. Global education not only helps Finnish children to come to grips with the fast-paced world they live in, but it also helps them to understand the migrant children in their midst. Currently there are over 35 000 pupils and students in Finnish schools and vocational institutions who come from an immigrant background.

The Ministry of Education adopted a special programme for global education in 2007⁹¹. Under this programme, the mainstream school system will be developed to cater for children from immigrant backgrounds as well as migrant teachers. The possibility for individualised teaching will be used at all levels - from early childhood education onwards. Global education will also be included as an important theme in teachers' in-service training and more widely in staff development in the overall school system.

⁸⁹ Suomalainen lapsi 2007. Väestö 2007. Tilastokeskus ja Stakes. (Helsinki: Edita Prima Oy 2007.) p. 416

⁹⁰ Central Statistical Office 2007.

⁹¹ Global Education 2010, Ministry of Education. p. 16 - 17.

Apart from global education programmes in schools, there is also the need to use the expertise and experience of organizations such as friendship associations, NGOs, as well as private and public players. Youth organisations and groups will also be given opportunities to influence, implement and develop global education programmes. Cultural and sports organisations will be encouraged to integrate global education in their activities with a view to influencing decisions from major global education facilitators such as the Council of Europe, the OECD, UNESCO and the UN overall. In addition, measures will also be instituted to facilitate dialogue and understanding between world religions and faiths.

The government also adopted the Health Promotion Policy Programme in December 2007⁹². Thanks to the programme, authorities have begun to acknowledge the obstacles that immigrants confront in accessing health and social services. They have also recognised that health and culture are closely linked, and urge state and local authorities to consider cultural factors in the delivery of health services to immigrants and foreigners.

The Health Promotion Policy Programme is part of Finland's National Strategic Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion⁹³, which also includes the Children and Youths Welfare Programme, as well as the government's Immigration Programme. Civil society has, generally, welcomed these programmes, but is concerned about their practical implementation. Another concern is that the most vulnerable social groups such as immigrant women and multicultural children are not marginalised, but empowered and encouraged to participate as equal and full members of society.

Vulnerable migrant groups in this category are housewives and the unemployed. In order to prevent social exclusion and the resultant health problems such as mental disorders, the authorities are advocating early intervention. This early intervention, they maintain, will mean more information, guidance and adequate support to promote the integration process.

The programme also acknowledges the important role of NGOs in promoting immigrant health, and urges the state and municipalities to give more support to these efforts. In general, civil society has welcomed the new Health Promotion Policy Programme and urged state and local authorities to release more funds and resources to promote migrants' health.

⁹² Health Promotion Policy Programme 2007, p. 14

⁹³ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2008/nap/finland accessed 23.7.2009

7. National recommendations

7.1 General

- Although legislation has been amended, authorities should vigorously monitor the discrimination of the Roma in housing allocation
- authorities should actively monitor the implementation of Sami language and minority rights,
- anti-discrimination measures, particularly with reference to employment discrimination, should be harmonised and made more effective
- police should take racist crimes more seriously and the judicial system should rigorously apply the aggravating principle in sentencing
- the B- residence permit system should be replaced with a more humane system
- more immigrants should be employed in media organizations to reflect the composition of society

7.2 Anti discrimination

- more vigorous measures to combat racism and discrimination and promote real equality
- more support for victims of discrimination
- firm mechanisms to support multicultural victims of racist bullying in schools

7.3 Migration and integration

- integration legislation should be more thoroughly implemented
- employment discrimination should be vigorously investigated and the perpetrators should be severely punished
- personal integration plans should be made for all new arrivals

7.4 Criminal justice

7.4.1 Racism as a crime

- there should be more coordinated, vigorous efforts to stamp out internet-based racism
- the police and the judicial system should be educated to speedily detect, investigate and prosecute racist crimes

7.4.2 Counter terrorism

- intelligence and security services should not violate personal liberties in their counter terrorism campaigns

7.4.3 Racial profiling

- Police should desist from stop and search operations targeted towards people of colour

7.5 Social inclusion

- authorities should ensure that vulnerable groups such as immigrants and ethnic minorities have adequate and equal access to information and resources
- information about local government services should be widely available to all immigrants
- funding for NGOs engaged in immigrant programmes should be long term based

8. Conclusion

The demographics of Finnish society are changing fast. More than 3 300 cross-cultural marriages are reported each year and more and more multicultural children are being born from these unions. After years of keeping the door firmly bolted to outsiders, Finland has finally acknowledged, like all industrialised countries, that it needs immigrant labour to propel its economy into the future. This, for example, will mean that, in the future, Finnish citizenship will not be defined by colour. In short, Finland is inexorably on the way to becoming a fully fledged multicultural society.

Like everything new, the concept of a multicultural society is being vigorously opposed by a significant proportion of the native Finnish population ranging from plasterers to professors. The popularity of the xenophobic, anti-EU New Finns party is mainly based on its anti-immigrant stance. So loud is the party's voice that it has succeeded in upturning the racism discourse altogether (It's supporters have successfully compelled media practitioners to replace the concept of racism with the euphemism immigration criticism). The internet has become the favourite medium for the party's supporters to propagate their xenophobic views.

Although the authorities know that the internet is being used to propagate racist, anti-immigrant views, not much, apart from some suggestions from the State Prosecutor and the Ombudsman for Minorities, has been done to combat this phenomenon. This is quite understandable as the distinction between free speech and social justice is a murky one.

The transformation from a near homogenous society to a multicultural one is a great challenge for Finland. It requires changes in attitudes and perspectives, as well as in structures of governance and administration. State and local administrations, civil society and individuals, should all work together to integrate the newcomers into the society. This integration should be a two-way process in which both parties interact fairly and learn from each other. These changes do not take place overnight, and sadly, intolerance, racist violence and bigotry will continue. The only way to effectively combat these negative social behaviours is through education and other forms of intervention. This of course, requires material and human resources, as well as willpower and commitment. Civil society should be actively involved in all activities designed to accept and integrate immigrants into the Finnish society.

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10. Annex 1: List of abbreviations and terminology

CMM - The Council for Mass Media

ETNO - The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations

CAISA - International Cultural Centre

RONK - The Advisory Board on Roma Affairs

RAY - The national slot machine association

SETA ry. - Organization of Sexuality Equality

