

european network against racism

ENAR Shadow Report 2006

ENAR SHADOW REPORT 2006

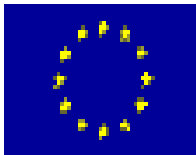
RACISM IN FINLAND

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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

In October 2006, the Finnish government approved the Immigration Policy Programme. Moreover, the plan to improve ethnic relations was also present in the Programme, which is indicated, for instance, by the aim towards so called zero-tolerance in terms of racism and discrimination. Overall, the Programme aims to promote the development of a pluralistic, multicultural and non-discriminatory society. Meanwhile, the minority equality bodies will be moved to the Ministry of Interior, which can be problematic. In relation to anti-discrimination, the Ombudsman for Minorities has noted that the aim stated in the Immigration Policy Programme towards so called zero-tolerance in terms of racism and discrimination is positive.

- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), including ENAR-Finland, have been generally satisfied with the Immigration Policy Programme but the need to find work for those foreigners who are already in Finland must be prioritised;
- Concrete actions besides the aims stated in the Immigration Policy Programme need to be taken to combat racism and discrimination and to promote real equality.

In the labour market, the situation for Roma continues to be difficult. According to recent reports, the employment rate of the Roma population is approximately 50% ¹. Moreover, Roma also continue to face difficulties in accessing public premises.

- Actions need to be taken to improve the situation of Roma in the labour market and the general attitudes towards Roma should be improved.

Education of immigrants is generally good in Finland; a young immigrant aged 7-17 who resides permanently in Finland has the right to the same basic education as a Finn and an immigrant can seek adult education via labour market training or via adult education under the labour market policy measures. However, in relation to education it is important to note that the position of those asylum seekers granted a temporary residence permit, a so-called b-residence permit, remained weak in 2006.

- The position of those asylum seekers granted a temporary residence permit, a so-called b-residence permit, should be improved in education and they should be granted the same rights as other asylum seekers and residents of Finland.

¹ See Joronen & Salonen 2006: 25-46.

All the residents of Finland are entitled to social security as well as social and health services. The position of asylum seekers with a temporary residence permit remains weak also in this field.

- Asylum seekers with a temporary residence permit should be granted the same rights as other asylum seekers and residents of Finland.

Based on academic studies on the media, it would seem that the media is using fairly appropriate language in speaking about ethnicity and minorities. Finnish law gives protection against racism in the media. However, the authorities have been criticised for not using their rights to intervene in the cases of racism in the media as often as they could.

- The authorities are encouraged to use their rights and to intervene in cases of racism in the media more often.

The existence of the several bodies and boards dedicated to securing anti-discrimination and to helping those who feel that they have experienced discrimination, is evidence that anti-discrimination is taken seriously by the Finnish government and authorities.

- The great number of different bodies is also considered to bring negative aspects and this should be revised.

In Finland, there have not been specific policy developments pertaining to racial profiling; nor any significant legal or policy actions against terrorism.

Immigrants who have lived in Finland permanently for more than two years prior to an election have voting rights in municipal elections. This right was granted relatively late, in the 1990s (Municipal Act §26 - §33).² While the number of immigrant candidates in municipal elections has generally been low, it has increased significantly since the last elections. In 2004, 209 candidates from immigrant backgrounds participated.³

Finnish traditional political parties should foster specific efforts in trying to engage immigrants in party activities in order to improve their social inclusion and empower and engage them in their new home country.

² For further details, see also Sagne & Saksela & Wilhelmsson, 2005: 17.

³ Sagne et al, 2005: 29-30

2. Introduction

The situation in the field of racism in 2006 was fairly good in Finland. While there were some court cases related to racism and discrimination, this can be considered positive in that these cases show that the society takes action on issues related to racism rather than remaining silent. The most important developments in Finland during the year 2006 can be considered to be in the fields of labour and immigration policies. In October 2006, the government approved the Immigration Policy Programme. The emphasis of the Immigration Policy Programme is to promote work-based immigration, while plans for creating a system of guidance for immigrants and rationalising the immigrant integration system were also included. If these plans are realised, they will greatly improve the situation of immigrants in Finland. Moreover, in the beginning of 2006 the Aliens Act was amended to promote applications from students from third countries to come to Finland and participation in working life, which can also be considered as a great improvement.

The Shadow Report aims to give readers an in-depth view of Immigrant and Finnish grass-root NGOs' perspective on racism in Finland. Moreover, this Shadow Report highlights the current developments in migration and asylum policies in Finland.

The Shadow Report is based on the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) standard at the European level and its objective is to state reliable national and European information based on Finland's developments regarding ethnic minority and immigrant communities.

The Shadow Report from the Finnish National Coordination of ENAR covers the period from January to December 2006. The Report begins with an executive summary on the key findings of the Report with some future recommendations and suggestions for improvement in different areas. The third chapter introduces the communities vulnerable to racism in Finland. The fourth chapter concerns manifestations of racism and religious discrimination and includes examples of good NGO practices. The fifth chapter draws a light on the political and legal context related to racism and discrimination in Finland. In the sixth chapter, the national recommendations are listed and further developed. The final chapter provides a conclusion of the Report. The literature and sources used in writing this report can be found in the bibliography at the end of the Report.

3. Communities vulnerable to racism

No victim surveys on specific communities and their vulnerability to racism have been conducted in Finland. However, some other recent surveys can be used to draft a picture of the situation for immigrant and ethnic minority communities.

In Finland, the latest survey on the living conditions of immigrant groups was conducted in 2002. This survey was carried out among the largest immigrant populations in Finland (persons originating from Russia, Estonia, Somalia and Vietnam).⁴ Besides this, five national victim surveys dealing with personal safety were conducted in a uniform way between 1980 and 2003. These surveys pay attention to the immigrants as victims of violence. The comparison between the living conditions of immigrant groups (2002 survey) and the national victim survey results concerning the total population (the national survey 2003) indicates that immigrants experience violence twice as often as the total population.⁵

According to the 2002 survey, the experiences of violence were most common among Somali respondents, whose appearance differs most from the original population. Nearly half of them stated that they had experienced violence in the previous 12 months. The majority of the 2002 survey respondents felt that the violence was racially motivated. Moreover, almost every Somali who had experienced violence found it to be connected to the fact that they had an immigrant background. Somalis also reported their experiences of racist violence most frequently. This seems to be in accord with other recent studies suggesting that the victims of racist crime are most commonly the representatives of so-called visible minorities or such persons whose appearance is distinctively different to the appearance of the majority population.⁶

It is also noted that the violence experienced by immigrant women has increased in the past decade; almost half of Somali women (44%), nearly a fifth of Estonian women (18%) and over tenth of both Vietnamese and Russian women (14% and 13% respectively) reported that they had experienced some sort of violence in the previous year. The violence reported by Estonian and Russian women was often experienced in close relationships, while Somali women reported that they had experienced violence only from a stranger.⁷ In a wider perspective, while Somalis and Russians are the 'new minority' groups most commonly facing racism, Roma is the group from the 'traditional' minority groups that continues to face racial prejudice in their everyday life.⁸

⁴ Sirén & Honkatukia, 2005.

⁵ Honkatukia, 2005.

⁶ See e.g. Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind and Vesala, 2002.

⁷ Oikeusministeriö, 2005.

⁸ Honkatukia, 2005.

These research results seem to support the results of Magdalena Jaakkola's research on the attitudes of the Finns towards immigrants in the years 1987-2003.⁹ According to Jaakkola, the attitudes of Finns are different towards different ethnic minorities. The attitudes towards people who originate from poorer countries than Finland or who differ much from the cultural manners and outlooks of the Finns are more rejecting than the attitudes towards people who resemble the Finns. At the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy are Somalis, Arabs, Russians and Kurds and their immigration to Finland is considered negative, while the immigration of Ingrians and people from Nordic countries is considered more positive.¹⁰ In regards to the traditional minorities, Samí are considered most positively and Muslims together with Roma are viewed most negatively)¹¹

The racist experiences of young people have not been researched in Finland. However, Jaakkola's 2005 research on the attitudes of the Finns suggests that the general attitude towards immigrants has become more favourable since the economic recession of 1990s. An alarming finding is that especially the attitudes of young (15-17 year-old) boys are negative towards immigrants. Every fourth boy in that age group considered himself a racist and supported at least partially the anti-foreigner activities of skinheads.

In Finland there is no systematic research or surveillance on discrimination based on religion. Generally, surveillance on religious discrimination in much research is connected to surveillance on ethnic discrimination and often the research concerning attitudes towards religions emphasises attitudes towards Islam. Generally, religion or belief is considered a ground for discrimination; Lepola et al refer to the 2006 attitude barometer of the Finnish Red Cross, which states that discrimination based on religion or belief is believed to be behind 18% of all discrimination cases.¹²

⁹ Jaakkola, Magdalena (2005) "Summary" of *The Attitudes of Finns towards Immigrants in 1987-2003*. Labour Policy Studies 286. Ministry of Labour, Helsinki.
http://www.mol.fi/mol/en/99_pdf/en/90_publications/tpt286summary.pdf
(last accessed on 19.3.2007)

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jaakkola, 2005. See also Ellonen, 2006:14.

¹² Lepola, Outi & Joronen, Mikko & Aaltonen, Minna (2006) "Syrjintä etnisyyden, uskonnon, kielen tai kansalaisuuden perusteella" in *Syrjintä Suomessa 2006* (eds) Outi Lepola & Susan Villa. Helsinki: Ihmisoikeusliitto ry. Pp. 157.

4. Manifestations of racism and religious discrimination

4.1 Employment

With regard to immigrants and labour, the current permit system concerning work-based immigration is based on the Aliens Act (301/2004). The residence permit for an employee follows a two-step decision making process. A residence permit includes a partial decision made by an employment office and a residence permit decision made by the Directorate for Immigration or by the local police. The permit system is seen as complicated and the aim to simplify the system is stated in the Immigration Policy Programme 2006. NGOs, including ENAR-Finland, have been generally satisfied with the Immigration Policy Programme, but underlined the importance of finding work for those foreigners who are already in Finland.

There is no published information available concerning foreign job-seekers in Finland in 2006. During the year 2005, however, there were approximately 28 300 foreign job-seekers in Finland, of whom 14 400 were unemployed. This number is equivalent to 28% of unemployment and shows that unemployment is still more common amongst foreigners than amongst Finns: in 2005 around 8% of Finns were unemployed.¹³ Furthermore, this trend seems to be continuing, since the total unemployment rate in Finland was 10,1% in May 2006¹⁴ while the estimated unemployment rate of the immigrants in 2006 was 26%.

Ethnic discrimination in employment in Finland is forbidden by the Non-Discrimination Act. A person who feels that he or she has been discriminated against in the job-seeking process, in employment contracts or in working conditions can seek compensation and make a complaint within two years, except in the case that discrimination has happened in the job-seeking situation when the complaint must be made within one year. Equality of employees is also covered by the Employment Contracts Act (55/2001) and Occupational Safety and Health Act (738/2002). The shift of the burden of proof is positive for a possible victim of discrimination. Judicial punishment follows the Penal Code (Chapter 47 section 3). The legal supervision and prevention of discrimination in working life in Finland is within the remit of occupational safety and health authorities. The occupational safety and health authorities are divided into nine regions. They give guidance, mainly in the form of advice, in discrimination cases mostly in line with other safety and health guidance.

¹³ Tilastokeskus (2006) *Suomi lukuina 2006*. Tilastokeskus ISSN 1795-732X. Työllisyyskertomus vuodelta... (2006) *Työllisyyskertomus vuodelta 2005*. Työhallinnon julkaisu 363, Helsinki. Available online in the official site of the Ministry of Labour http://www.mol.fi/mol/fi/99_pdf/fi/06_tyoministerio/06_julkaisut/07_julkaisut/thj363.pdf (last accessed 15.3.2007).

¹⁴ Tilastokeskus, Press Release 20.6.2006, "Työllisyys ja työttömyys toukokuussa 2006" available online in the official site of Statistics Finland http://www.stat.fi/aik/tiedotteet/v2006/tiedote_039_2006-06-20.html (last accessed 15.3.2007).

Following the Non-Discrimination Act the Ministry of Labour has implemented programmes and measures to enhance and promote diversity, equality and non-discrimination. The objective of the SEIS project (Finland Forward without Discrimination) is to provide information and training on issues related to diversity and non-discrimination and develop structures and models promoting equality. On the local level, the JOIN project (Joint Promotion of Anti-Discrimination at Local Level) has been created to operate towards the development of dialogue and good practices by e.g. promoting local know-how to identify, prevent and affect discriminatory processes.

In relation to anti-discrimination, the Ombudsman for Minorities has noted that the aim stated in the Immigration Policy Programme 2006 towards so called zero-tolerance in terms of racism and discrimination is positive. However, in relation to the plan, the Ombudsman for Minorities also stated that the authorities should adopt a more planned and detailed attitude towards the promotion of equality, for instance, in employing immigrants (Ombudsman for Minorities, statement 31.3.2006).

There are no official statistics or information available about how ethnic discrimination or racism relate to the high unemployment rate of immigrants. However, by looking at the results of research by Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind & Vesala clarifying cases of racism and ethnic discrimination experienced by immigrants, it seems that most commonly discrimination has been experienced in recruitment situations, in which more than four out of five Somalis had experienced discrimination at some time (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind & Vesala 2002: 86-89).¹⁵ Furthermore, according to the Police College of Finland, in 2005 there were two cases when the Occupational Safety and Health Authorities had asked the police to investigate the behaviour of the employer towards a foreign employee. In at least one of these cases the question was about denouncement and the grounds for that (Ellonen 2006: 21).

The situation of Roma continues to be difficult in the labour market. According to recent reports, the employment rate of Roma population is approximately 50%.¹⁶ The reasons for the high unemployment rate are unclear and it seems difficult to say whether this number is related to discrimination in the employment market, since no research has been conducted in this field and, for instance, the national victim surveys do not consider Roma separately.

In 2005 the Directorate of Immigration took a new stance to the approach to the applications. As a result several asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors, were granted a temporary residence permit, a so-called b-residence permit (see section V.ii Migration and Integration). One of the greatest problems

¹⁵ Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind and Vesala (2002) *Rasismi ja syrjintä Suomessa. Maahanmuuttajien kokemuksia*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus: 86-89.

¹⁶ For further details, see Joronen & Salonen, 2006: 25-46.

related to this so-called b-residence permit is that it does not entitle a person to work or study. This can mean that before getting the 'b-residence permit' an asylum seeker might have been an employee or have had at least very good employment possibilities but he or she must stop working as soon as the decision comes.

4.2 Housing

In Finland, ethnic discrimination in public housing is forbidden by the Non-Discrimination Act (21/2004). The situation is considered problematic especially because its effectiveness is limited to public housing and the private landlords and accommodation agencies are in a sense legally allowed to ethnic discrimination, which causes members of the most vulnerable communities to be very dependent on publicly rented apartments.¹⁷

There is no official monitoring body specialising in accommodation issues in Finland and ethnic discrimination and racism experienced by immigrants therefore remains a fairly unknown field. However, some idea of the discrimination of immigrants in relation to accommodation issues can be ascertained, according to Joronen and Salonen, from the fact that while the total number of homeless people in Finland has diminished in the past years, the number of homeless immigrants has increased.¹⁸

With regard to Roma, the Non-Discrimination Act has enhanced their position in housing but they continue to face difficulties especially in the private housing market, where the prices are high and there is prejudice. With regard to public housing, Finland has underlined the principle of non-discrimination. Besides providing information on the specific needs of Roma residents, the Ministry of Environment has also produced guidance documents and carried out training of public authorities on housing issues. Despite this, Roma continue to face some difficulties in public housing also. The Ombudsman for Minorities has been very actively engaged with cases of Roma housing.¹⁹

A problem connected to the temporary residence permit, the so-called 'b-residence permit' issued to several asylum seekers (see section V.ii Migration and Integration below), is that the municipalities are not required to accept a person with a 'b-residence permit' as a resident. Thus, in practice, the refugees with a 'b-residence permit' are not entitled to access the national social security system and are forced to live in the reception centres for refugees though they are no longer asylum seekers.

¹⁷ Joronen & Salonen, 2006: 48.

¹⁸ Joronen and Salonen, (2005:51).

¹⁹ Heikinheimo & Qassim, 2006.

4.3 Education

The Non-Discrimination Act aims to secure non-discrimination based on many grounds, such as ethnic origin. The Act concerns primary education, adult and basic vocational education, university education and education given in the universities for applied sciences. Moreover, the Act applies to such cases where a person has or is about to start a vocational training, education or re-education connected to work, but has arranged the place by himself or herself. The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) is the national agency in charge of the development of education in Finland. It is working under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

A young immigrant aged 7-17 who resides permanently in Finland has the right to the same basic education as Finns. The aim of the National Board of Education is to ensure that adult immigrants receive the education necessary for working life; that they maintain their existing vocational skills; and for foreign qualifications, studies and work experience to act as the basis of the design and completion of education in Finland.²⁰

An immigrant can seek adult education via labour market training or via adult education under the labour market policy measures. Proportionally, the amount of foreigners within the total group of those who have started labour market training has grown in the recent years. The percentage of immigrants out of the total number of the persons beginning the labour market training was 9,5% in 1999, while the corresponding number in 2005 was 17,3%.²¹

In 2006, the Ministry of Education issued 45 licences to those offering vocational training to immigrants and in September 2005 there were 970 immigrants in vocational training. In a piece of research on the views of the bodies offering vocational training to immigrants, for instance, the length of training period - one year usually - was considered good. It seems that the number of student drop-outs has increased in the past years and every fifth person participating in vocational training does not complete the training period.²²

Instruction in the Finnish or Swedish language is organised for immigrants of all ages including refugees, migrants and other foreigners and, in some cases, asylum seekers. While the education of immigrants is generally good in Finland, it is important to note that the position of those asylum seekers granted a

²⁰ See www.edu.fi/english

²¹ Työllisyyskertomus vuodelta, 2006.

²² Aunola & Korpela, 2006.

temporary residence permit, a so-called b-residence permit, remained weak in 2006.

Moreover, in 2006, the National Discrimination Tribunal of Finland issued a prohibitory decision against the City of Helsinki in a case related to discrimination in education. In Helsinki, a father of a pupil made a complaint to the Ombudsman for Minorities about discrimination in a comprehensive school and the Ombudsman brought this case to the National Discrimination Tribunal of Finland. In the school there were two parallel classes of first year pupils. All children from an immigrant background had been placed in one of the classes, while in the other class there were only children from a native Finnish background. The principal of the School had grounded the decision over the student division on a pedagogical reason since immigrant children learn Finnish as a second language while native Finns learn Finnish as their mother tongue, but the division based on this rule was considered ethnic discrimination and against the international contracts according to the complainant. The National Discrimination Tribunal decided that the division based on Finnish as second or first language was against the Non-Discrimination Act, since instruction in Finnish as a second language should primarily be given, according to the instructions of the City of Helsinki's Board of Education, by a teacher specialised in the instruction of Finnish as a second language. As this had not occurred, pupils found themselves in an unfavourable position with regard to the teaching of Finnish as a second language.²³

Regarding Roma, the National Board of Education conducted nationwide research on the situation of Roma pupils in the years 2000-2001. The results showed that Roma pupils have a high level of absenteeism at school. According to their schools at least one third of Roma pupils have difficulties with school work because of this. Moreover, approximately 5% of Roma pupils dropped out during the research period, which is a high number as the general level of drop-out is closer to zero.²⁴

Following from the report, the government has taken several initiatives. Roma school children special projects have been created to support the attendance of Roma children in school and pre-school classes as well as to support parental involvement in their education. Moreover, since 1994 a Romani education service unit exists within the Finnish National Board of Education. While the Basic Education Act (628/1998) secures the rights of Romani to maintain their own culture and language, in practice the Romani language teaching in Finland has been arranged following the foreign language students teaching in their mother tongue guidelines of the Ministry of Education. Currently, there are approximately 250 children out of 1700 compulsory school students who receive this teaching. Moreover, the number of children receiving education in the Romani language has dropped significantly in recent years. One reason for this

²³ National Discrimination Tribunal, 2732/66/2004.

²⁴ Romanilasten, 2002 2004: 5.

has been the lack of qualified teachers. However, in 2001 the Ministry of Education accepted a degree in Romani culture, which should increase the number of teachers and school assistants skilled in Romani language and culture.

4.4 Health

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for directing Finnish social, health, gender equality and occupational safety and health policy. Comprehensive social protection and broad welfare services are an essential part of the Finnish society. All residents of Finland are entitled to social security as well as social and health services.

Immigrants in Finland are generally granted the same rights to the public health service as native Finns. However, the status of residence permit can put individuals in a different position. An example of the inequality between immigrants and native Finns was presented in a case taken to National Discrimination Tribunal of Finland by the Ombudsman for Minorities. The complaint concerned an insurance company that had enquired about the length of the residence period in Finland from a customer from an immigrant background, though this policy was not practised with native Finnish customers. The National Discrimination Tribunal of Finland issued a negative decision to this case in 2006, since by practising different policies with native Finns and customers from an immigrant background, the insurance company was in breach of the Non-Discrimination Act.²⁵

4.5 Policing and racial profiling

There are no issues related to racial profiling in Finland. With regard to the police force, the most significant problem in policing is related to a racism code, which the police use to mark a crime case when its motive is considered to be connected with racism. The number of cases where this code is used is lower than the actual number of racially motivated crime cases and if some other reason than racism can be considered to be a motive for crime, the racism code is not mentioned. Moreover, as it is noted later on in this report (V.vi Racist violence and crime), the monitoring the proceedings of the racist crime cases from the police to the Prosecutor-General is not clear either.

²⁵ National Discrimination Tribunal, 1920/66/2005.

4.6 Racist violence and crime

Since 1997, the Ministry of the Interior in Finland has ordered inquiries into the racist crime reported to the police and annual reports based on this information were issued by the Ministry of the Interior between 1998 and 2003 and by the Police College of Finland since 2005. The data used in the inquiries is based on the crime reports of the police registering system fulfilling certain criteria. The inquiries consist of information about the numbers, crime types, the time and the place of the crime, the victims and the suspects.

The official number of racist crimes is based on the so-called racism code and a crime case is marked with the racism code when racism is considered to be the most important reason for the crime. The statistics related to racist crimes in 2006 are not available yet. In 2005, the number of racist offences registered was 669 and therefore much higher than in the previous years (552 in 2003, 364 in 2002). The most common racist crime in 2005 was, like in the earlier years, assault, while common also were breach of honour (94 instances), followed by unlawful threats (84 instances). In 2005 there were 37 discrimination cases considered as racist. These were often cases where a service was denied a person; for example, a Roma was denied entry to a restaurant (Ellonen 2006: 20-21). Usual places where offences occurred were public places such as streets, roads, market places, restaurants; the home of the victim and the work place of either the victim or the suspect. Most commonly, the racist crimes happened at the evening or at night.²⁶

The majority (over 70%) of racist crime targets foreigners or persons of foreign origin. Yet almost half of the victims of racist crime were citizens of Finland, while Somalis, Russians and Turkish are also vulnerable groups. 5% of the victims were Roma, which is half of the number of Roma victims in the previous year (10% in 2004). Most commonly the victim of racist crime is a young man (15-44 years) and the crime takes place in the County of South-Finland. The suspect of racist crime was most often male and in two of the five cases the suspect was young (15-24 years).²⁷

In comparison to other EU Member States Finland has, alongside the UK, comprehensive mechanisms in place for registering racist crimes and data collection that can also provide detail with respect to victim characteristics.²⁸ However, the most obvious problem in the monitoring of racist crime according to the Finnish League for Human Rights is still that for instance the proceedings of the racist crime cases from the police to the Prosecutor-General are not systematically monitored.²⁹ Moreover, the Ombudsman for Minorities has noted that the legislation concerning racist or discriminatory crimes is weak; the punishments in the most serious cases are not strong enough and, for instance,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ The Annual Report on the Situation, 2006:17.

²⁹ Salonen & Villa, 2006: 40.

an average punishment in respect of a discriminatory crime is equal to pilferage. According to the Ombudsman, this is not corresponding to the values of the Finnish society expressed in, for instance, the Immigration Policy Programme.³⁰

Examples of NGO Good Practice

An example of NGO best practices is a project offering legal advice to victims of racism. The solicitors gave legal advice by email and on the phone in Finnish, Swedish and English for two hours weekly. The one-year project was started by the Refugee Advice Centre and was supported by the Ministry of Education. It finished in the summer 2006. While this specific project finished, the Refugee Advice Centre continues to give legal advice on demand. Besides the Refugee Advice Centre, other NGOs, such as the Finnish League for Human Rights (Ihmisoikeusliitto ry) also give legal advice to victims of racism.

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

Racism and ethnic discrimination concerning access to goods and services in the public and private sectors are forbidden by the Non-Discrimination Act and by the non-discrimination enforcement system in place since 2004. Prior to these, the civil society representatives had criticised the legal system for its ineffectiveness. For example, in some cases a doorman of a restaurant had repeatedly denied access to members of an ethnic minority. The Ombudsman for Minorities has addressed these issues and the National Discrimination Tribunal has been equipped with powers to issue fines in such cases.

In 2005, the National Discrimination Tribunal of Finland issued its first condemnatory decision on a case which concerned ethnic discrimination. In 2006, the National Discrimination Tribunal issued two condemnatory decisions on similar cases. In one of them, a citizen of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was denied access to a restaurant in Helsinki based on a loose explanation concerning his dress-code and shoes. The Tribunal considered the actual reason to be ethnic discrimination.³¹ The National Discrimination Tribunal made another condemnatory decision in 2006 on a case where a new manager of a restaurant in Oulu had sent a text message to personnel in which the personnel were told not to allow persons from an immigrant background to enter the restaurant.³²

Also, Roma continued to meet difficulties in accessing public premises. This kind of discrimination has been faced especially by Roma women wearing traditional dress. NGOs estimate that approximately 20 of these kinds of cases are taken to

³⁰ Ombudsman for Minorities, Statement 31.3.2006.

³¹ National Discrimination Tribunal, 2392/66/2005.

³² National Discrimination Tribunal, 1528/66/2005.

courts annually. Moreover, the Ombudsman for Minorities and the National Discrimination Tribunal are also very engaged in cases involving Roma.

Examples of NGO Good Practice

An example of NGO best practice in the field of access to goods and services in the public and private sectors is the publication of Equality in Customer Service guide (Yhdenvertaisuus asiakaspalvelussa–ohjeistus) on 14 September 2006. This guide was created through cooperation between the Finnish League for Human Rights, Service Union United (PAM), the Finnish Hotel and Restaurant Association (FHR), the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior and the Office of the Ombudsman for the Minorities (Ministry of Labour). It aims to elucidate equality and non-discrimination in the treatment of restaurant customers and the message that the right to customer selection guaranteed in the legislation does not give a right to discriminate. The publication is available in Finnish, in Swedish and in English. (Read the publication online http://www.yhdenvertaisuus.fi/english/brochures_and_documents/)

4.8 Media, including the internet

The general attitudes towards immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees and ethnic minorities are directly influenced by the media. Therefore, the way in which the media write about racist crimes or the crimes carried out by members of ethnic groups is a significant factor in the creation of tolerance. For this reason, it is important that those working in the media pay attention to the language they use in writing about racist crime as well as in the way they portray ethnic and religious minorities and asylum seekers or issues related to them. Also, the Government Migration Policy Programme (Immigration Policy Programme 2006) encourages the media to take a more active role in creating a more tolerant society.

On the one hand, it is important that the authorities inform in an impartial manner and on the other, it is crucial to take action in such cases where a disparaging manner is used in writing about ethnic origin, nationality or ideology. An important factor in the link of information sharing is the police, who should pay special attention not to belittle racist crimes when informing the mass media.

Since 1998, the Journalism Research and Development Centre at the University of Tampere has run an ongoing project that researches the way in which Finnish media speaks about issues related to racism and ethnic discrimination. In 2006 the research concentrated on the reception of media texts concerning ethnicity and emphasis has been moved from the interpretations of the researchers towards the interpretations of the audience including ethnic minorities. While the results of the 2006 studies are not available yet it seems, according to the earlier studies, that the media is using fairly appropriate language in speaking about

ethnicity and minorities. According to the research results of media monitoring (1999-2004) the researched magazines and daily newspapers did not, for instance, publish openly racist or xenophobic stories.³³ The Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations and Nationalism (CEREN), acting under the auspice of Swedish School of Social Science at Helsinki University, has carried out a similar media monitoring project, albeit concentrating their studies on the Swedish language media in Finland. Moreover, CEREN concentrated in 2006 on reception analysis and the audience's interpretation of the media.³⁴ The analysis of the research conducted by CEREN in 2006 is not available yet.

Finnish law gives protection against racism in the media. The Act on the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in Mass Media (460/2003) gives the authorities a right to get involved in cases where there has been a case of ethnic agitation, which in itself is forbidden in the Penal Code (Chapter 11, section 8). However, the authorities have been criticised for not using their rights to get involved in the cases of racism in the media as often as they could. Moreover, the Ombudsman for Minorities has also expressed his concerns that the Penal Code as such is not sufficient and suggests that the current legislation would be improved by adding a notion of 'breach of honour of an ethnic group' and making a clear distinction between this and the freedom of expression (Ombudsman for Minorities, statement 31.3.2006). This view can be expanded over the issues related to racism and ethnic discrimination on the Internet. While Finnish legislation offers in principle a right to get involved with racist material on the Internet, this is fairly complicated in reality since it is often difficult to differentiate between legal and illegal. Moreover, Finnish legislation only concerns the sites provided by Finnish Internet operators and the foreign service providers are not within the remit of the legislation, which remains a huge problem.³⁵

Besides the Penal Code, it is possible to seek redress on issues related to the media through other means. In Finland, the mass media - including press, television and radio and internet sites connected to these - is self-regulated by the Council for Mass Media (CMM), a committee established in 1968 for publishers and journalists in the field of mass media and communication. CMM is not a court; nor does it exercise legal jurisdiction but its task is to interpret good professional practice and defend the freedom of speech and publication.

The Union of Journalists in Finland produced Guidelines for Journalists and CMM adopted them on 1 January 2005.³⁶ Rule 26 states that,

The human dignity of every individual must be respected. The ethnic origin, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, convictions or other similar personal characteristics may not be presented in an inappropriate or disparaging manner.

³³ Joronen & Salonen, 2006:53-54.

³⁴ CEREN Newsletter, January 2006.

³⁵ Joronen & Salonen, 2006: 62.

³⁶ Guidelines for Journalists, 2006.

Based on these rules, anyone can submit a complaint and the matter does not have to directly concern the person issuing the complaint. The CMM requires, however, that this person consent to the investigation. The complaint must be submitted in writing, signed and sent via post or email. In 2006, CMM issued 84 decisions on complaints. Of these, one concerned disgraceful speech with regard to ethnic origin on a radio programme by the programme hosts and CMM established, through investigation, that good professional practice had been breached.³⁷

Examples of NGO Good Practice

An example of NGO best practice in the field of non-discrimination in the Finnish media in 2006 is a brochure aimed at journalists writing about refugees and asylum seekers. Pakolaistietoa toimittajille brochure was created by the Refugee Advice Centre and the Council for Mass Media and it clarifies the terminology related to refugees as well as the roles of different authorities in the asylum procedure in Finland (Pakolaistietoa toimittajille 2006).

³⁷ JSN 3619/PR/06.

5. Political and legal context

5.1 Anti discrimination

Finland transposed the Race Equality (2000/43/EY) and Employment Equality (2000/78/EY) Directives through the anti-discrimination legislation (Non-Discrimination Act 21/2004), which came into force on 1 February 2004. This Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, ethnic and national origin, nationality, language, religion, conviction, opinion, state of health, disability or sexual orientation. The Act applies to employment issues, working terms and conditions as well as to education, social and health services. Alongside other legislation, the Non-Discrimination Act covers all ethnic and religious grounds of discrimination. Following from 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. While the Non-Discrimination Act covers all the discrimination grounds, it does not however, apply to the content of education or the education system. This law is also limited in the application of provisions governing entry into and residence in the country for foreigners, or the placing of foreigners in a different position for a reason deriving from their legal status under the law.

Several official measures have been taken for improving minority rights. The Ombudsman for Minorities (Vähemmistövaltuutettu) is an independent authority working under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour since 2002 with the basic task of advancing the status and legal protection of ethnic minorities and foreigners as well as equality, non-discrimination and good ethnic relations in Finland. The jurisdiction of the Ombudsman only covers the supervision of ethnic discrimination. The Ombudsman for Minorities, together with other officials, strives to ensure that everyone is treated equally regardless of their ethnic background. The primary means used by the Ombudsman include recommendations, instructions and advice. The Ombudsman can also take initiatives and give legal assistance through legal advice or in some cases by more extensive personal assistance. While the Ombudsman for Minorities has been effective in its action, it is good to note that the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, located in Helsinki, serves nationwide and the services of the Ombudsman could be improved with additional local or regional offices. Moreover, the resources and operating prerequisites of the Ombudsman are tied to the administration of the Ministry of Labour. This position is not in accordance with the ECRI recommendations of the Council of Europe and, because of this, the significance of the Ombudsman's independent position vis-à-vis the Ministry of Labour and in connection with the Council of State should be clarified further.³⁸

³⁸ Annual Report 2005, 2006: 3.

In 2006 the Ombudsman for Minorities dealt with many different issues. Customers contacted the Ombudsman often to ask him to intervene in ethnic discrimination cases. Moreover, another common reason for contacting the Ombudsman was to ask about the prolonged processing time of asylum seeking and refugee applications. While some of the contacts were related to information and advice seeking, the number was proportionally small.³⁹

There are also Advisory Boards dedicated to guaranteeing non-discrimination and the rights of minorities. The establishment of Advisory Boards has given immigrants more possibilities to impact on immigration and integration policies. In 2005, the Advisory Board for Minority Issues (Vähemmistöasiain neuvottelukunta) was established to give advice to the Ombudsman for Minorities e.g. in the development of the monitoring of ethnic anti-discrimination. The Advisory Board for Minority Issues includes representatives of NGOs and different ministries and it concentrates on monitoring anti-discrimination and creating monitoring systems. The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO) is an expert body appointed by the Government working under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour to promote interaction between authorities, NGOs, immigrants and ethnic minorities. In comparison to the Advisory Board for Minority Issues, ETNO aims to take a broader view of the questions related to ethnic relations and immigration policy.⁴⁰ ETNO aims currently to emphasise taking initiatives and becoming more visible, for instance, by organising an Ethnic Relations Forum (Etnisten suhteiden foorumi), which was arranged for the first time in January 2006 (Salonen & Villa 2006: 100). While including representatives of many minorities, ETNO has no Roma or Sami representatives. The rationale given for this is the fact that Advisory Boards for both of these minority groups already exist.⁴¹ The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs (RONK) has functioned for 50 years in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and it serves to enhance the equal participation of the Roma population in Finnish society, to improve their living conditions and socio-economic position as well as promoting the Roma culture. The Advisory Board on Sami Affairs (Saamelaisasiainneuvottelukunta) acts under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice and it aims to e.g. monitor the legal, economic and social situation and the development of the employment situation in the home district of Sami and report on these to the corresponding ministries.

5.2 Migration and integration

At the international level, Finland attempted during its Presidency of the European Union to reignite "the Tampere spirit" in Justice and Home Affairs by inviting the responsible ministers to assess how much progress had been made

³⁹ Information gotten in telephone from Rainer Hiltunen, the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities on 12th of March 2007.

⁴⁰ Salonen & Villa 2005: 105.

⁴¹ Nummela 2005: 2.

since the 1999 Tampere Council. This invitation also aimed to renew the initiative of creating a Common European Asylum System.⁴²

At the national level, at the beginning of 2006, the Aliens Act was amended to promote applications from students from third countries to come to Finland and participate in working life. After completing a degree or qualification, foreign students have the opportunity to apply for a six-month residence permit for the purpose of seeking employment. Having found work, the foreign student can apply for a residence permit that can be granted without consideration of the availability of labour.⁴³

Moreover, the Parliament accepted in 2006 several amendments to the Aliens Act (301/2004). These amendments changed for instance §79 (Chapter 5) in a way that all the residents of Finland whose residence permit is based on family relations have a right to work without an additional residence permit for work, which makes access to the Finnish labour market easier for these persons. Moreover, the amendments to the Aliens Act also diminished the length of both an alien's passport and a refugee travel document to a maximum of five years. After this period, the case of the holder of one of these shall be reconsidered (Chapter 8, §134 and §135). Furthermore, amendments were also made on §105 (Chapter 6) of the Aliens Act in order to enhance the position of an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker by granting the Directorate of Immigration, the police and the Border Guard the right to receive information, upon request, from a reception centre, on information concerning the unaccompanied minor asylum seeker, while all the participants in the information giving process are required to prioritise the best interest of the child.

One of the most severe current policy problems related to human rights in Finland concerns policies linked to asylum seekers. The Directorate of Immigration (Ministry of the Interior) makes the decisions on asylum applications. In 2005 the Directorate of Immigration took a new stance to the approach to the applications. As a result several asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors, were granted a temporary residence permit, a so-called b-residence permit, with reference to section 51 of the Aliens Act instead of granting continuous permits with reference to other sections of the Act. The Directorate of Immigration has confirmed the change in the approach as well as the fact that in most of the cases 'b-residence permits' are granted to failed asylum-seekers originating from Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan. The Directorate of Immigration has grounded the new stance on the current practices in all Nordic countries. The civil society has expressed already in 2005 their concern over the new stance of the Directorate of the Immigration.

One of greatest problems related to this so-called b-residence permit is that it does not entitle a person to work or study. This can mean that before getting the

⁴² www.eu2006.fi

⁴³ Immigration Policy Programme 2006: 12

'b-residence permit' an asylum seeker might have been an employee or have had at least very good employment possibilities but he or she must stop working as soon as the decision comes. Another problem connected to this is that the municipalities are not required to accept a person with a 'b-residence permit' as an inhabitant. Thus, in practice, refugees with a 'b-residence permit' are not entitled to access the national social security system and are forced to live in the reception centres for refugees though they are no longer asylum seekers. Moreover, a 'b-residence permit' does not include the right to family reunification. In a case where a temporary 'b-residence' permit is granted for several years repeatedly, a person holding such a permit must live without their family for many years.

Civil society is also concerned about the judicial appeals procedure. The Aliens Act allows asylum-seekers to appeal most decisions regarding asylum applications to the Helsinki Administrative Court. The decisions on refusal of entry may not be enforced before the final decision of the Administrative Court is made except in so-called Dublin cases, where the decisions on refusal of entry may be enforced immediately. According to the Dublin process, the member state of the EU in which the asylum-seeker first applies for asylum has an obligation to process the application and as a consequence of the Dublin process Finland has returned several applicants to other EU countries and to Norway. NGOs have expressed their concerns about the current situation noting that while the Administrative Court has the power to prevent the enforcement of return decision in all cases, the appeal to the Administrative Court appears to be extremely difficult to make in Dublin cases while the applicant is still in Finland. During the Finnish Presidency of the European Union in 2007, these issues were still relevant and NGOs such as the Finnish Red Cross and the Refugee Advice Centre who are the Finnish member organisations of the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), expressed their common view concerning the rapid need to renew the Dublin II Regulation (Memorandum...beyond 2006).

5.3 Criminal justice

5.3.1 Racism as a crime

In 2006 there were no significant updates or changes in the anti-discrimination legislation or policies. In the current legislation, the Penal Code (Chapter 6, section 5, subsection 4, and aggravating circumstances) makes the penal consequences for racially-motivated crimes more severe.

Moreover, ethnic agitation is prohibited according to Chapter 11 Section 8 of the Penal Code (578/1995) which states that: "*A person who spreads statements or other information among the public where a certain race, a national, ethnic or*

religious group or comparable group is threatened, defamed or insulted shall be sentenced for ethnic agitation to a fine or imprisonment for at most two years. “

The Ombudsman for Minorities requested the Central Criminal Police to investigate two websites and the material posted on them, as to whether or not these websites would constitute ethnic agitation as expressed in Chapter 11, Section 8 of the Penal Code. According to the Ombudsman's opinion, spreading the material in question among the public had the elements of ethnic agitation. In addition, the Ombudsman requested the Central Criminal Police to investigate some forty different racist blogs/websites. Preliminary investigations in all these cases remained incomplete at the end of 2006.⁴⁴

The Penal Code also prohibits discrimination based on ethnic, religious, national or similar grounds (Chapter 11 Section 9).

Finland provides annual statistics on convictions of all district courts on each crime of the Penal Code, including ethnic agitation and discrimination (the discrimination section includes other grounds, such as gender, as well). However, statistics for the year 2006 will be published at a later date.

Since 1997, the Ministry of the Interior in Finland has ordered inquiries into racist crimes reported to the police and annual reports based on this information were issued by the Ministry of the Interior between 1998 and 2003 and by the Police College of Finland since 2005. The data used in the inquiries is based on the crime reports of the police registering system fulfilling certain criteria. The inquiries consist of information about the numbers, crime types, the time and place of the crime, the victims and the suspects (see also section V).

In comparison to other EU Member States Finland has, alongside the UK, comprehensive mechanisms in place for registering racist crimes and data collection than can also provide detail with respect to victim characteristics.⁴⁵ However, the most obvious problem in monitoring racist crime, according to the Finnish League for Human Rights, is still that for instance the proceedings of racist crime cases from the police to the Prosecutor-General are not systematically monitored.⁴⁶ Moreover, the Ombudsman for Minorities has noted that the legislation concerning racist or discriminatory crimes is weak; the punishments in the most serious cases are not strong enough and, for instance, an average punishment in respect of a discriminatory crime is equal to pilferage. According to the Ombudsman, this is not corresponding to the values of the Finnish society expressed in, for instance, the Immigration Policy Programme.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Annual Report of the Ombudsman for Minorities, 2006, p. 16.

⁴⁵ Annual Report on the Situation, 2006:17

⁴⁶ Salonen & Villa, 2006: 40.

⁴⁷ Ombudsman for Minorities, Statement 31.3.2006.

The Police College of Finland publishes information about racist crimes on an annual basis (see also section IV.vi). However, according to the Police College of Finland, only three out of five of the cases (that is, 59% in 2005) that their research considers to be racist, are marked with the racism code. On examining the most common offences, it seems that the offences committed against a person are more likely to be identified as racist than damage to property.⁴⁸ The recent report shows that the number of racially motivated crimes is increasing. This indicates that the Police are not in denial of the situation in Finland but are rather aware of it.

In other legislation (i.e. non-penal legislation), section 6 of the Non-Discrimination Act (Yhdenvertaisuuslaki 21/2004) prohibits discrimination for example on the basis of ethnic or national origin (prohibition of discrimination). The Act also prohibits reprisals. Under section 8 of the Act, nobody should be disadvantaged or subjected to negative consequences as a result of any appeal or other action taken in order to secure equality.

5.3.2 Counter terrorism

In 2006, there were no specific judicial or policy developments pertaining to racial profiling or to countering terrorism. In current legislation, the Penal Code, Chapter 34a deals with terrorist offences only. The law has been in force since 1 February 2003 and has not been applied yet.

5.3.2 Racial profiling

Racial profiling cannot be identified at any level in the political or legislative context of Finland.

5.4 Social inclusion

In 2005, a proposal for amendments to the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (493/1999) was prepared and the amendments were accepted in December. The amendments aim to make the integration of immigrants more effective and faster, while the tasks and responsibilities of the authorities are clarified. Following from this, the local authorities will participate in integration and service issues in their own fields respectively. Moreover, in October 2006 a consultative committee was established as a part of the Ministry of Labour to improve the possibilities of the ministries, municipalities and NGOs to have an impact and to co-operate with each other.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ellonen, 2006: 23.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Labour, Press Release 5.10.2006.

The Government made a principle decision on the strategy plan related to the Citizen Participation Policy Programme. The purpose of the Citizen Participation Policy is to strengthen the basis of Finnish democracy through the co-operation of several ministries. In the implementation plan for the Policy, specific attention is given to young immigrants in thinking about their ability to organise their cultural identity and to integrate in Finnish society.⁵⁰

Currently, new immigrants are entitled to an integration plan for three years from the time of arrival in cases where they are registered as unemployed. During the integration period an immigrant is granted an integration allowance. The intention of the integration plan is that the immigrants will gain language skills and other skills required in Finnish society during the integration period. Besides the personal integration plan, immigrants can become socially included by participating in political life in Finland. Immigrants from EU Member States and from Nordic Countries as well as other immigrants who have permanently lived in Finland for more than two years prior to an election have voting rights in municipal elections. This right was granted fairly late, in the 1990s (Municipal Act §26 - §33).⁵¹ While the number of immigrant candidates in municipal elections has generally been low, it has been increasing significantly and in the last elections in 2004, there were 209 candidates from an immigrant background. Most immigrant candidates are from the capital area where the Green League nominated 19, the Social Democratic Party nominated 15, the Christian Democratic Party nominated 13 and the National Coalition Party (conservatives) nominated 12.⁵²

⁵⁰ Kansalaisvaikuttamisen politiikkaohjelma, 2006: 6

⁵¹ Sagne & Saksela & Wilhelmsson, 2005: 17.

⁵² Ibid.: 29-30.

6. National recommendations

6.1 General

- A coherent integration policy should be created towards minority and immigrant communities.
- Opportunities for immigrants to be treated equally and without discrimination in society should be improved.
- Strengthening and the implementation of legislation concerning the EU's work towards legislation governing international protection and the harmonisation of national legislation should be fostered.
- More attention needs to be paid to the principles of transparency and good governance and other legal principles in administration.

6.2 Anti discrimination

- Concrete actions need to be taken to combat racism and discrimination and promote real equality.
- Increase the awareness of the National Discrimination Tribunal, the Equality Body established as a result of the Race Directive.

6.3 Migration and integration

- State support should be provided to foster multi-ethnic activities of non-governmental actors and agencies.
- The Ministry of Labour should prepare a basic information pack, an "immigration pack", for foreigners arriving in Finland and, moreover, design a distribution plan for the pack. The information pack should be made available both in print and online.
- Adequate resources should be safeguarded for municipalities and the labour administration to provide special measures to promote integration and other positive actions.

6.4 Racism as a crime

- Authorities have not implemented to a maximum level the Race Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) or the Employment Equality (2000/78/EC) Directive, which were transposed through the anti-discrimination legislation (Non-Discrimination Act 21/2004) in 2004. The implementation of the Directives needs to be scrutinised more and improved upon on all the levels.
- The Internet remains problematic; more action to remove racial material on Finnish servers is required.
- The discrimination section in the Penal Code (Chapter 11, Section 11) is often powerless in the prevention of discrimination in restaurants. A restaurant or doorman can pay a small fine and continue the illegal practice of ethnic selection. Heavier penalties,

such as losing one's alcohol licence for a certain period of time, could prevent discrimination in restaurants more effectively.

6.4 Criminal justice

6.4.1 Counter terrorism

- In 2006, there were no specific judicial or policy developments pertaining to racial profiling or to countering terrorism. In current legislation, the Penal Code, Chapter 34a deals with terrorist offences only and the Code has not been applied ever in the Finnish history.

7. Conclusion

One of the most important findings in the realm of anti-racism and anti-discrimination during the year 2006 in Finland concerns the Immigration Policy Programme, approved by the Government in October. It includes a plan to improve ethnic relations and the stated aim is to develop so-called zero-tolerance in terms of racism and discrimination. This plan may, if it is well realised, mark a milestone in the Finnish history of anti-racism and anti-discrimination. The values included in the plan lead to a road that fosters a multicultural and active society with equal opportunities for all. However, concrete actions need to be taken besides the plan.

Another important finding concerns the police and racial crime; the numbers of racial crimes have increased every year and this tension can be considered both negative, since it speaks about the existence of racism in Finland, but also positive, as the higher numbers indicate that the authorities do not deny racism and that the individuals reporting racist crimes trust the police and justice system in Finland.

The third most significant finding concerns the situation of young immigrants in the field of education in Finland. Based on the findings of this report, there seems to be more and more possibilities for young immigrants to receive education and vocational training, which in turn, speaks about a positive future and better inclusion and empowerment of immigrants.

The significance of civil society remains important since civil society, from experience, often has a better understanding of the cultural backgrounds and issues related to minorities than have the governmental actors. The contribution of civil society and NGOs is, however, most important at the grassroots level in the form of supporting individuals and in helping them to find their place in society while also sharing with them information that helps them to empower themselves to be active members of society.

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9. Annex 1: List of abbreviations and terminology

ETNO Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations



european network against racism

ENAR Shadow Report 2006

