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Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Evaluation: Third Phase of World Programme for Human Rights Education

Report by the Finnish Government

The Finnish Government thanks the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the work in relation to the World Programme for Human Rights Education (resolution 42/7) as a global initiative to advance human rights education in all sectors.

Action undertaken at the national level between 2015-2019, aiming to strengthen implementation of human rights education in primary, secondary and higher education

Promoting human rights and non-discrimination is in many ways at the heart of the Government program of Finland (2019) "Inclusive and competent Finland – a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society". Human rights and fundamental rights are taken into account across different policy sectors.

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/rinne/government-programme>

According to the Government Program, **democracy and human rights education and inclusivity will be further enhanced in schools**. In concrete terms, the Ministry of Education and Culture has launched a **"Right to Learn" program**, with a funding of 300 MEUR, extending throughout the government term 2019-2022. The program focuses on early childhood education and care (ECEC) and basic education, aiming at reducing learning disparities in Finland. The measures also cover aspects of strengthening democracy and human rights education. As part of the program, surveys are made, in order to ensure evidence based decision making. For example, in basic education such surveys will target – among others – the impacts of the current practices on learning in ones' own mother tongue, as well as the preparatory education, which are both highly relevant for pupils with immigrant background.

In Finland, promoting wellbeing is an important aspect in the school culture. The **multi-professional pupil welfare system** prescribed in legislation (Pupil and Student Welfare Act 1287/2013) is the main mechanism for preventing and intervening in all kinds of harassment from the viewpoint of both the entire school and an individual pupil. Pupil welfare is organized in multidisciplinary cooperation with educational administration and health and social services so that a uniform service is formed. Pupil welfare is implemented in cooperation with the pupil and the pupil's guardian, taking into

consideration the pupil's age and capabilities. The primary responsibility for pupil welfare lies with the school's staff. Pupil welfare services include psychologist's and school social worker's services and school health services, to which pupils and students of pre-primary and basic education, general upper secondary education and vocational education and training have a statutory right. The national core curriculum lays down detailed and comprehensive provisions on how pupil welfare should be organized.

All schools and education providers are obliged to prepare a **plan for the promotion of non-discrimination**. This is stipulated by the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014). The plan must cover all discrimination grounds pursuant to the Non-Discrimination Act, thus age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has supported **the Kivakoulu ("Nice school") programme aimed at reducing school bullying**. About 90% of all comprehensive schools in Finland have been registered users of the program and they have reached good results. The University of Turku coordinates and develops the programme (since 2011). The programme has been implemented in other countries, too.
<http://www.kivaprogram.net/>

A working group in the Ministry of Education and Culture has surveyed methods for preventing and **intervening in bullying and for promoting school peace** in early childhood education and care, pre-primary and basic education and upper secondary education. The working group's report was completed in March 2018 and included 24 proposed measures. Their aim is to safeguard every child's and young person's safety and wellbeing during early childhood education and care, education or training.

In spring 2018, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched the preparation of a **national action plan to improve the safety cultures of the learning communities** in early childhood education and care, pre-primary and basic education, upper secondary education and higher education (2018-2021). The programme sees safety broadly as physical, mental and social safety, thus also taking into account the prevention of harassment and sexual harassment.

National core curricula as the foundation for human rights education in formal education

In Finland, education legislation, policies and practices are human rights-based. Every pupil in school is seen as unique and has the right to high-quality education. Pupils are heard, valued and encouraged. Decisive steps are made to offer equal opportunities also for people with immigrant background to pursue study paths all the way to tertiary education, should they wish to do so. The Finnish schools function as a learning community with emphasis on safety and wellbeing, cooperation and interaction, participation and democracy as well as equity and equality. **The national core curricula** are central for implementing human rights education, due to their normative character.

Finland has holistic and inclusive national core curricula for Basic and General Upper Secondary Education with a strong emphasis on human rights values.

Examples in the core curriculum for basic education:

Underlying values of basic education

Basic education is built on respect for life and human rights. It directs the pupils to defend these values and to appreciate the inviolability of human dignity. Basic education promotes well-being, democracy and active agency in civil society.

Cultural diversity as a richness

Basic education lays the foundation for global citizenship that respects human rights and encourages the pupils to act for positive change.

Mission of basic education

Basic education educates the pupils to know, respect and defend human rights.

Transversal competence (needs to be taken into account in all subjects)

Cultural competence, interaction and self-expression:

The pupils are supported to recognise how cultures, religions and philosophies exert influence in society and daily life and how the media shapes the culture, and also to consider what is unacceptable as a violation of human rights.

In Finland, we have recently updated Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary General Education (2019), which further underpins the said values, now also through a set of transversal competences where especially the one dedicated to societal competence is aimed teaching and learning about civic rights and human rights oriented democracy and societal activity locally and globally.

Teacher education

In Finland, **teacher education** is provided by autonomous universities. Teacher education needs to equip the teachers with the necessary competences for implementing the national core curricula. Therefore, it is fair to say that all teachers receive the basic knowledge and skills, relevant to human rights education during their pre-service education.

In 2016, **a teacher education development programme** was launched, the objectives of which have been implemented with ca. 30 MEUR through joint programmes of higher education institutions, providing teacher education. In these "change programmes", higher education institutions and education providers have together created development models for the degree education programmes and the continuing education programmes from early childhood education to vocational teacher education. The programs have contained also aspects relevant for human rights education, such as

- Strengthening inclusion and the human rights-based approach in vocational teacher education
- Developing contents for teacher education in Finland related to gender equality, planning and equality work (SetSTOP)

- Linguistically responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogy
- Inter-religious Dialogue and multiliteracy skills
- Creating Spaces for Diversity of Worldviews in Early Childhood Education

Descriptions of some of the programs, Ministry of Education and Culture:

<https://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4183002/Teacher+Education+Development+Projects+2017.pdf/4d9358f9-4fde-4000-ab02-60b2fd647098/Teacher+Education+Development+Projects+2017.pdf>

Teachers also take actively part in in-service training, which is provided by a range of actors, funded by the Finnish National Agency for Education EDUFI (ca. 12 million EUR annually). These in-service trainings also take into account human rights education in many ways, also through PVE training.

The University of Helsinki has coordinated, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and the Human Rights Centre a **project for promoting education for democratic citizenship and human rights education (EDC/HRE) in teacher training** (2018–2019). the project has – among others – evaluated pilot a web-based course in education for democratic citizenship and human rights education for teachers: <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/projects/human-rights-democracy-values-and-dialogue-in-education> (see also sections “materials and publications” of the web page)

The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) and the Human Rights Centre of Finland have jointly constructed a learning module (2017-2018) for educational management and **school leadership on fundamental and human rights in educational sector**. The module (in form of a tour) was carried out in co-operation with the Regional State Administrative Agencies, Trade Union of Education in Finland and Finnish Principals Association, which helped to ensure a good range of heads of schools nationally.

Materials for schools and educators:

Based on the continuous collaboration of the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) with different Ministries, human rights organisations, universities/researchers, civil society actors etc, EDUFI has published or collected numerous materials related to education for democracy and human rights education. A large selection of materials and resources can be found on the EDUFI web pages (in Finnish): <https://www.oph.fi/fi/opettajat-ja-kasvattajat/ihmisoikeus-ja-demokratiakasvatus>

The Finnish National Agency for Education has published a Teacher’s Guide (2017): **‘CONSTRUCTIVE INTERACTION - strengthening democratic inclusion, preventing hate speech and violent radicalization’**. <https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications/constructive-interaction>

The publication written by Finnish experts, took use of the essential international processes and materials, such as:

- Teacher’s guide on prevention of violent extremism, UNESCO
- Competences for Democratic Culture Framework, Council of Europe
- Teaching Controversial Issues, Council of Europe

The brochure by the Finnish National Agency for Education (2018), was distributed to all schools, in order to increase the awareness about the conceptualization and response around PVE: Prevention of Violent Radicalization in Schools and educational institutions (2018):

<https://www.oph.fi/english/publications/brochures>

Several measures, policies and initiatives address issues of combatting discrimination, hate speech and bullying, which are relevant also to human rights education. Such measures include (not limited to):

Finland's second **National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights** 2017-2019 was approved by a Government resolution on 16 February 2017. The priorities of the Action Plan included fundamental and human rights education and training, equality, the right to self-determination and fundamental rights and digitalisation. The Ministry of the Justice is currently preparing the third National Action Plan for the years 2021-2023. The Ministry of Justice also coordinates the preparation of the **National Democracy Program 2025**. Both processes are cross-sectoral, thus the branches of the Ministry of Education and Culture are firmly engaged.

In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched a comprehensive **Meaningful in Finland Action Plan** to prevent hate speech and racism and to foster social inclusion. The Action Plan included ten measures targeted at, for example, teaching personnel training, youth work, sports, culture and dialogue between religions. At the same time, all actors in the ministry's administrative branch were urged to participate in joint action against hate speech.

As part of the implementation of the Meaningful in Finland Action Plan, training on working in a multicultural environment has been organised for persons working with children and young people. This aims at supporting their capacities to strengthen democratic values, awareness of human rights and a sense of inclusion among children and young people.

http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2016/toimintaohjelma.html?lang=fi&extra_locale=en

The national media education policy was published in 2019 by the Ministry of Education and Culture, updating the previous policy line (2013), in collaboration with the National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI), in cross-administrative and cross-sectoral collaboration with actors involved in media education. High-quality media education aims to promote human rights, equality and non-discrimination and to create preconditions for sustainable development. Media education in Finland is based on the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, European Convention on Human Rights (63/1999) and, as far as it is applicable to children, particularly on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Media literacy contributes to the consolidation of democracy and human rights education.

Media education policy:
<http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162065>

According to the Youth Act (1285/2016), the Government shall adopt a national youth work and policy programme every four years. In December 2019, the **National youth**

work and youth policy programme 2020-2023 was adopted by the Government. The aim of the programme is to improve the conditions young people live and grow in, thereby preventing marginalization and discrimination, and promoting participation. The program emphasizes the need to strengthen education for democracy and human rights education through a school-wide approach, as well as improving the competences of teachers.

In Finnish: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162007>

The national **Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism** 2019-2023 was published in December 2019, and prepared in collaboration with authorities (incl. of education), expert organisations and communities. The Ministry of the Interior coordinates the implementation. The aims is – among others – to promote the engagement of young people in the PVE work, eg. through education for democracy in formal education, by putting more focus on youth work online, and combatting discrimination and racism through sport. Action Plan in Finnish, Ministry of the Interior: <https://intermin.fi/poliisiasiat/vakivaltainen-radikalisoituminen/toimenpideohjelma>

Further measures in combatting hate speech, bullying and discrimination in education:

Teachers, schools and education providers in Finland are encouraged to engage in **networks and peer learning**. For example the national UNESCO Associated Schools network, coordinated by the Finnish National Agency of Education, covers 60-70 schools, extending from ECEC to upper secondary level. The UNESCO associated schools, as part of a global network, pilot and share good practices, resources, methods and tools, in terms of promoting the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development and global citizenship, also through human rights education. The national network collaborates with the related UNESCO Chairs in Finland, including with Prof. Arto Kallioniemi, **UNESCO Chair in Values, Dialogue and Human Rights in Education** at the University of Helsinki.

One of the civil society organisations receiving support from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is “**Fingo**”, **Finnish civil society’s expert organisation on development policy issues**. Among others, Fingo coordinates a **global education network comprising over 150 organizations**. Fingo disseminates learning materials, tools and good practices, suitable also for human rights education, freely available for educators. In Finland, CSO’s collaborate actively with schools. <http://www.gloaalikasvatus.fi/node/930>.

International networks

Finland is also active in international networks. For example, Finland has contributed in the development of the **Council of Europe’s Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)**, which was among the priorities of Finland’s Presidency in the CoE Committee of Ministers in spring 2019. The aims and principles of the Reference Framework promote human rights education in many ways.

The RFCDC Framework, Vol. 1 by the Council of Europe has been translated into Finnish in 2019 and will be published during 2020. The original can be downloaded at

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/rfcdc>

Additionally, the implementation of the RFCDC has been promoted among Finnish schools through the CoE Free to Speak – safe to learn – Democratic Schools for All - campaign. The campaign's pages are at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn>

As a member of **IHRA** (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) Finland participates actively in IHRA Plenary meetings and has a permanently acting Finnish National IHRA-committee with cross-ministerial cooperation (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, MoE, EDUFI), University-researchers, National Advisory Board of Roma affairs, Peace Building Institute and the Jewish community of Helsinki. The Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust (2019) by IHRA and UNESCO, have recently been translated in Finnish, by the Finnish National Agency for Education: <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/educational-materials/ihra-recommendations-teaching-and-learning-about-holocaust>

Funding to CSOs and higher education institutions to strengthen human rights education and training

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs provides support to Finnish CSOs to carry out projects related to **global citizenship education and development communication** to Finnish audiences, including in primary, secondary and higher education, vocational education and training, and the broader public through non-formal and informal education (including museums and film festivals). Human rights are visible in this funding instrument in at least three ways. First, according to [Finland's Guidance Note on the Human Rights-Based Approach in Development Cooperation](#), all funded projects must be at least human rights sensitive, and indeed many projects have human rights norms and principles at the centre of their analysis and objectives. Second, human rights are the topic of many projects, as they range from global challenges such as food security and the human rights of migrants to combatting racism and extremism in Finland. Third, the funding instrument includes since 2018 a thematic category on business' responsibility to respect human rights. In projects of this category, CSOs work mainly with Finnish companies with global supply chains, training them on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and measuring their compliance according to international standards.

Funding to advance human rights education has also been provided to Higher Education Institutions, for instance in 2016-2019 the Ministry for Foreign Affairs funded a **cooperation project** between the [Institute for Human Rights](#) at Åbo Akademi University in Finland and [Centre for Human Rights](#) at University of Pretoria in South Africa, [School of Law](#) at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, [School of Law](#) at Makerere University in Uganda and [School of Law](#) at University of Nairobi in Kenya. The project **improved capacity in research and research-based teaching in human rights in project countries**. The emphasis was on improving **quality and availability of PhD training in human rights**, and strengthening the role of human rights research in societal development processes.

The MFA's support to Finnish NGOs includes support related to development communication. As Finland's development policy is human rights-based, the support focuses on providing CSOs with the possibility to **conduct training on human rights issues to media professionals and journalists**, among other target groups. Projects that have targeted media professionals and journalists that have been carried out by CSOs in the period of the third phase of the WPHRE (2015-2019) have focused on, inter alia, media literacy, women's rights and gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We wish to emphasize that our reply is not exhaustive. Due to the broad scope of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, an exhaustive report would be difficult to conduct, yet we have aimed at presenting some of the key measures.

Finland reports on similar type of information through official reporting mechanisms of human rights instruments, such as (not limited to):

- Framework Convention for the Protection Of National Minorities, Council of Europe
- UNESCO's 1974 Recommendation Concerning Education For International Understanding, Co-Operation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, UN.