

Submission to the United Nation's Committee on the Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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FINLAND

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## Introduction

This paper is a shadow report to the Finnish government's seventh periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The draft of the periodic report has been critically examined and reviewed by several Finnish women's and human rights organisations, focusing particularly on the obstacles and challenges of equality work and discrimination prevention in Finland.

The shadow report has been gathered and written by the Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations (NYTKIS) based on the comments of 19 Finnish NGOs: 1325 Network Finland, Amnesty International Finnish Section (Article 5: Violence Against Women), Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, EXIT Away from Prostitution, Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters, Finnish Disability Forum, Finnish League for Human Rights, Finnish Refugee Advice Centre, Moniheli, Monika – Multicultural Women's Association in Finland, National Committee for UN Women in Finland, National Council of Women of Finland, National Council on Disability VANE's Women's Network, SámiSoster, Seta – LGBT Rights in Finland, Women Journalists in Finland, Women Together against Addictions, Women's Line in Finland, and YWCA of Finland Helsinki Section.

The NGOs' comments clearly underline specific issues concerning women and gender equality. Instead of evaluating the government's report in detail, we concentrate on the crucial themes and complex issues in Finnish society today. While we acknowledge the government's efforts with regards to equality work, challenging topics and unsolved puzzles remain within the framework of equality policies. Violence against women, the status of minority groups and the inequality of working life are among these questions, to name but a few.

### ***Crucial equality issues in Finland:***

- Violence against women
- Multiple discrimination against women and girls belonging to diverse minority groups
- Trafficking in women, prostitution and sexual exploitation
- Gendered segregation of education
- Inequality in the labour market

## **Article 2 – Legislation**

### ***The Act on Equality between Women and Men***

The Act on Equality between Women and Men came into force in Finland in 1986. The Ombudsman for Equality and the Equality Board monitor and supervise gender equality legislation. Equality work in Finland has been traditionally scattered and arbitrary, suffering from overlapping tasks, lack of continuity and inadequate resources. Unfortunately, this is the case with the high-ranking gender equality authorities in Finland as well. After the revision of the Act on Equality between Women and Men in 2005, the tasks of the Ombudsman have increased considerably without reasonable compensation with regards to resources. Thus, the mandate of the Ombudsman for Equality must be reinforced, and adequate resources for gender equality work must be secured.

The Finnish NGOs are content with the government's decision not to consolidate the Gender Equality Act and the Non-Discrimination Act. This would have led in practice to fewer resources in equality work and a lower level of protection from discriminative practices. We think that gender is an all-encompassing ground for discrimination that has to be dealt with by separate legislation. Nevertheless, we stand up for cooperation between the Ombudsman for Equality and the Ombudsman for Minorities in order to enhance protection from multiple discrimination.

Many women and girls in Finland are subject to multiple discrimination. They are in a particularly vulnerable position, facing discrimination because of their gender, ethnicity, nationality, skin colour, language, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or social status. At present, the Finnish legislation lacks the concept of multiple discrimination altogether. It would be of great importance, however, to recognize multiple discrimination in the legislation for the protection of different minority groups. Due to the equality legislation's imbalance and deficiencies in coverage, the minorities in Finland do not have comparable protection from discrimination, and in some cases, it is unclear whether they should contact the Ombudsman for Equality or the Ombudsman for Minorities. Multiple discrimination has been brought up in

reforming the Non-Discrimination Act, but not in the case of the Gender Equality Act. However, there should be regulations against multiple discrimination in both acts.

In addition, the Finnish legislation concerning the status of trans and intersex people is presently indistinct, for these minorities are not explicitly acknowledged in the equality or non-discrimination legislation. Accordingly, the NGOs and the Ombudsman for Equality recommend that the Act on Equality between Women and Men needs to be revised, so that it protects the rights of trans and intersex people. The diversity of these minority groups has to be legally acknowledged, and the protection against discrimination must be comprehensively extended to gender identity and gender expression.

Another necessary revision in equality legislation is related to a discrepancy concerning sexual harassment. Sexual and gender-based harassment are considered discrimination in the Gender Equality Act, but these regulations are not extended to basic education. Other educational establishments, however, are included in the regulations. Nevertheless, sexual and gender-based harassment are common in the school environment, including name-calling, physical violence and other breaches of bodily integrity.<sup>1</sup> Gender-based bullying and sexual harassment are mostly targeted at girls, and boys who deviate from the traditional norms of masculinity. The NGOs point out that sexual harassment and discrimination should not be tolerated in educational establishments. Accordingly, the Gender Equality Act must be extended to basic education, and the gender equality plans of educational establishments must contain action plans to prevent and monitor sexual and gender-based harassment among children and youth at school.

Equality planning in the workplace and educational establishments is required in the Act on Equality between Women and Men. Furthermore, executing a gender-specific pay survey is included in equality planning. The Finnish NGOs recommend further improvements concerning equality planning in the workplace. First of all, the preparation of gender equality plans must be expressed in such a clear form that the employers are able to define concrete plans, actions, timetables, responsibilities, and resources when drawing up the equality plans. Secondly, more effective regulations on the employer's obligation in co-operating and briefing the employees on equality planning in the workplace are required. Thirdly, the employer must be obligated to participate in executing the workplace salary survey that is intended to study how the principle of equal pay is realised in the workplace. In addition, the transparency of payroll information is of vital importance for successful supervision of equal pay. The

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<sup>1</sup> Aaltonen 2009.

shop stewards ought to be granted access to pay data, employers' payroll and earning statistics in the workplace.

The Government will present its proposal on changes to the Gender Equality Act and the Non-Discrimination Act to the Parliament in autumn 2013. The changes proposed to the Non-Discrimination Act shall deal with the extension of different parts of the Act to apply to a large extent all minorities mentioned in the Act, susceptible to discrimination. During the compilation of this shadow report it is not yet known whether this extension is applicable to all groups in all aspects (e.g. right to information in cases of suspected discrimination in recruitment situations). There is a shared concern among the NGOs concerning the jurisdiction and human resources of the ombudsman in light of the implementation of this extended version of the Act.

Concerning the Gender Equality Act, the Government will most likely suggest that the Act shall apply also to gender minorities in the future. In addition, some precisions will probably be suggested to the part on mapping for equal pay.

The Parliament will presumably be voting on its response to the proposed legal changes during the autumn 2013.

***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- The Ombudsmen for Equality and Minorities must be guaranteed sufficient resources.
- Multiple discrimination has to be acknowledged in the Gender Equality Act and the Non-Discrimination Act.
- The rights of trans and intersex people must be included in the Act on Equality between Women and Men.
- The prohibition of sexual and gender-based harassment must be extended to basic education in the Gender Equality Act.
- Clearer and more efficient regulations on equality planning in the workplace ought to be made in the legislation.
- The transparency of payroll information is of great importance for successful supervision of equal pay in the workplace. The shop stewards must be granted access to pay data, employers' payroll and earning statistics.

## ***Minorities, politics, and data collection***

There is a serious lack of knowledge concerning the living conditions and status of various minority groups in Finland. Hereby, the Finnish NGOs underline the need to examine the politics of national statistics and information services and data production. We think that effective anti-discrimination policies can only be based on adequate information on discrimination in society. Lack of information often leads to lack of sufficient support systems and prevention programs. Indeed, how can efficient social reforms and improvements be made without basic information?

The Finnish privacy law limits registering personal data based on ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation. The policy seems to be a double-edged sword: it is intended to protect the individual from malpractice, but on the other hand, it complicates the possibilities of gathering necessary information concerning minority groups and their experiences in society. Accordingly, data production on minorities is often left to the third sector which generally suffers from inadequate resources and is incapable of producing comprehensive, let alone scientific information. Thus, allocated data acquisition supported by the government would be of great importance to the Finnish equality work.

Statistical data and numbers, however, are not enough. In addition to quantitative research, qualitative analysis is also vital in producing in-depth and all-inclusive information on discrimination and equality. Consequently, the NGOs are concerned about the present status of gender and women's studies<sup>2</sup> in the Finnish academia due to the recent revisions and structural changes in the universities. The integration of women's studies into other disciplines has been recommended in the Universities Finland UNIFI's report on the future of Finnish universities. In addition, the importance of gender studies is not mentioned in the draft of the government's periodic report, or otherwise acknowledged.

Gender studies is an interdisciplinary subject renowned for its critical approach, creativity and diversity. Specialists and experts in gender studies are needed in implementing successful equality politics and gender mainstreaming. The first women's studies unit in Finland was established at the University of Helsinki in 1991. Presently, it's a popular minor subject among the majors of various disciplines at BA level. There are master's programmes and doctoral programmes in universities, and a national PhD programme coordinated by the University of Helsinki. Regardless of the small size of gender studies units, research projects in gender studies have thrived in

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<sup>2</sup> In Finland, both 'gender studies' and 'women's studies' are used in the academia.



receiving funding and grants from the Academy of Finland and various scientific foundations.

On account of the recent revisions in university policies, small disciplines and departments suffer increasingly from the lack of resources and financial support. Despite the high profile and international achievements of Finnish women's studies, these small units are not able to compete with larger disciplines within the academia with regards to resources. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education should pay special attention to make sure that the universities secure the resources of small and interdisciplinary gender studies departments within the strategic planning of the universities.

***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- Allocated data acquisition on minorities must be supported by the government.
- The status and continuity of gender and women's studies must be secured.

**Women with disabilities**

Little data has been gathered on the status and life circumstances of women with disabilities in Finland. In addition to CEDAW, Finland is committed to the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Both conventions bind the state to providing accurate information on the status women and girls with disabilities, and preventing discrimination against them. Furthermore, the NGOs underline the significance of following and implementing the alignments mentioned in the government's Disability Policy Programme of 2010.

Women and girls with disabilities are not a homogenous group, but a diverse group of women having physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional or developmental disabilities. However, the dependency on the help of other people in everyday life makes them vulnerable, and exposed to multiple discrimination and abuse. The opportunities of women and girls with disabilities to express their talents, interests and preferences in education is considerably reduced because of the lack of easy access in educational establishments. Due to negative attitudes, promoting life-long education

to women with disabilities is seldom realised. Accordingly, very few disabled women participate in working life, which leads to life-long economic austerity. Only 17 % of people with disabilities are employed, and the precise percentage of women with disabilities is not known. Furthermore, women and girls with disabilities experience discrimination and negative attitudes concerning sexuality, reproduction and motherhood. Irrespective of their right to sexuality of their own, and to have children and build a family, women and girls with disabilities do not always receive sex counselling and education. The Finnish NGOs demand efficient measures for the protection of human rights of women with disabilities.

According to international research, women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience gender-based violence and harassment than other women. The spectrum of violence includes sexual violence and abuse, violence in close relationships, and human trafficking. The dependency on the help of family members and health care professionals may put them in a position in which independent decision-making and bodily integrity are endangered. Mentally disabled women and girls are a particularly vulnerable group, and acts of violence against women and girls with disabilities remain a taboo subject in Finland. Hence, the needs of women with disabilities must be taken into account in services for victims of violence. Personal assistance and sufficient information need to be provided in shelters, and Internet and phone services. Furthermore, the NGOs recommend building resource centres for women with disabilities concentrating on their special needs.

## **Roma women**

There is no exhaustive data on the discrimination or violence experienced by Roma women in Finland. Discrimination against Roma women wearing their traditional costumes is still common in Finland. For instance, their access to public places such as restaurants or shops is often denied based on racism and prejudice, and the employees of the public sector may not treat them in an equal and professional manner. However, relatively little is known of Roma women's access to social welfare and health services. Roma people's unemployment rate is presumably very high, and many of them have not completed the nine-year basic education. The government's National Policy on Roma from 2009 has no specific guidelines concerning Roma women and girls, although it claims to be gender-sensitive. According to the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, the programme enhances the prevention of discrimination against Roma women and girls regardless of its functional gender neutrality.

Although studying the living conditions and promoting the equal rights of Roma people in Finland is of vital importance, a more visible gender-perspective should be included in the government's programme. Roma women and girls are subject to multiple discrimination as women and individuals belonging to an ethnic minority. According to an ethnographic study on Roma women in Finland, the gendered distribution of domestic work and child care, and women's primary responsibility in running errands outside of home, is a topic of conversation particularly among young Roma women.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Roma NGOs have been reportedly concerned about domestic violence against Roma women. Their access to services for victims of violence, especially shelters, is more difficult because of certain cultural practices. The Finnish NGOs demand gender-sensitive measures in protecting Roma women's human rights, as well as gender-aware studies on the status of Roma women in Finland.

### **Sámi women**

The Sámi are an indigenous people living in Northern Finland. The political community of Sámi people has traditionally been very male-dominated, and questions concerning gender equality or the status of Sámi women have not been a topic of significance in the midst of political efforts related to land and livelihood rights. In addition, the research data available on Sámi people in Finland is gender neutral, and little is known of the circumstances and gendered discrimination of Sámi women and girls.

According to an article concerning Sámi women and politics, women seldom seek high positions in the Sámi community in spite of their higher level of education in comparison to Sámi men.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, attention ought to be paid to increasing women's representation and participation in the Sámi Parliament and other political decision-making arenas. In addition, many Sámi women undertake paid labour as well as the traditional livelihood of reindeer husbandry. The reconciliation of these traits causes pressure for Sámi women, and their opportunities in maintaining traditional Sámi occupations are limited due to lack of respect for women's work and participation in the indigenous community. Nevertheless, women's status in reindeer husbandry ought to be supported by the Sámi community and the state. In addition, so-called nomadic day care ought to be provided for women with children participating in reindeer husbandry.

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<sup>3</sup> Markkanen 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Hirvonen 2006.

Maternity clinics and hospitals seldom provide services in Sámi languages. Most Sámi children do not receive day care or education in their native tongue. Domestic and sexual violence among the Sámi remain a taboo subject not exposed to public discussion. Moreover, access to the services for victims of violence is challenging because of the lack of shelters in Northern Finland. The Finnish NGOs demand further recognition of the status of Sámi women, and research concerning discrimination and violent practises against them.

### **Rural women (Article 14)**

Since the 1980s, the number of women living in the countryside has been steadily decreasing due to a period of transition and decrease in employment in rural areas in Finland. The phenomenon has influenced the living opportunities, population forecast and birth rate in the countryside, leading to a gendered distortion of population in rural areas. At the beginning of the 2010s, women still tend to move to cities and urban areas in search of education and employment regardless of the preferred place of habitat. Consequently, the employment and entrepreneurship opportunities of rural women must be improved with enhancements in child care, a more equal redistribution of care, public transportation, and telecommunications. In addition, the NGOs point out that the status of women in agriculture tends to be weaker than that of men. For instance, many rural women work without pay or the protection of work safety legislation in farm estates owned by their male spouses.

In the present period of municipal mergers directly affecting local services and life circumstances, rural women ought to be encouraged to participate in political decision-making. Accordingly, the activities and projects of rural women's organisations need to be supported in order to regenerate rural areas. In addition, the NGOs demand adequate geographical coverage of shelters in Finland. In comparison to women living in urban areas, rural women do not have equal access to social and health care services, or services for victims of violence.

### **Immigrant women**

The Finnish integration law was revised in 2011, paying special attention to immigrant women and their language education, wellbeing, and integration. There are, however, specific challenges related to the integration of adult women with an immigrant

background. In practise, language education and integration services have not reached certain groups of immigrant women. The illiteracy of immigrant women is considerably higher than that of immigrant men, and due to cultural practises, some women may not be expected to participate in education and social activities outside of home. In implementing the new legislation, it would be of vital importance to reach these vulnerable groups of women and prevent their social marginalisation. In addition, efficient and cultural sensitive services must be provided for immigrant women and children who have experienced violence. The Finnish NGOs monitor the implementation of the new legislation and its special measures, and hope for further improvements concerning the status of women with immigrant background.

Immigrant women experience discrimination in the Finnish labour market due to poor language skills, low level of education, racism, and prejudice. Furthermore, the skills and know-how of educated and highly educated immigrant women are not utilised in the labour market, and finding employment is very difficult for these women. Accordingly, the unemployment rate of women with an immigrant background is almost fourfold in comparison to the majority of population in Finland. According to Monika – Multicultural Women’s Association in Finland immigrant women earn approximately 20 % of the majority population’s wages on the basis of average incomes. Consequently, the NGOs are concerned about the situation and demand efficient measures supporting the employment of women with an immigrant background.

According to NGO Monika, there are approximately 18.000 immigrant women in Finland who have suffered violence. The violence experienced by immigrant women includes domestic violence, honour-related violence, human trafficking, forced marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM), and racist violence. Girls and young women are in a particularly vulnerable position, having a heightened risk at experiencing honour-related violence and being subjected to FGM. Finnish authorities, health care professionals, social workers and teachers need thorough education in identifying honour-related violence. In addition, circumcision of girls is strictly forbidden in Finland, but apart from assault legislation, there are no specific criminal sanctions against it. Efficient preventive measures against these violent practises must be made, and consciousness-raising related to the bodily integrity and human rights of immigrant girls and young women must continue.

According to police reports, immigrant women experience intimate partner violence three times more often than the majority of population. In Finland, approximately 20–26 women die yearly because of domestic violence, and every fourth of them has an immigrant background. The threshold for seeking help is especially high among the immigrants due to their poor knowledge of Finnish legislation and the service system,

as well as their inadequate language skills. Women who have immigrated to Finland because of marriage are in a particularly vulnerable situation, for a permanent resident permit is granted after four years of residence in Finland. A woman might lose her residence permit or risk not obtaining a permanent resident permit if she leaves her violent husband. In addition, the so-called paperless women may be completely left without services, for they do not necessarily contact the authorities for fear of deportation. Consequently, only a small section of violence appears in the statistics. More resources must be directed at the special services for immigrant women who have experienced violence.

## **LGBTI women**

In Finland, there is no national authority, such as an Ombudsman, responsible for addressing discrimination of LGBTI<sup>5</sup> people.<sup>6</sup> The Finnish equality politics are fairly heteronormative and based on a twofold understanding of gender. Revision of the Non-Discrimination Act might change this, but the changes will not be brought to the Parliament before autumn 2013, and therefore the results of the revision have not been known when this shadow report was written.

Accordingly, the status of women belonging to sexual minorities is in many ways invisible, and the existence of trans and intersex people is not sufficiently recognised and acknowledged<sup>7</sup>. The authorities and legislators do not have adequate expertise in the field of sexual orientation, or in the diversity of gender and LGBTI-families, which leads to discriminative practises. In addition, little data or statistics on LGBTI people is available in Finland.

The expectations related to gender roles and sexuality infiltrate school, media and the labour market. This complicates the lives of LGBTI women and their families. Tens of thousands of children live in families in which the parent or parents are gay, bisexual, transgendered or transvestite. Consequently, sexual orientation and the diversity of gender should be included in training social and health care professionals.

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<sup>5</sup> The abbreviation refers to sexual minorities and trans and intersex people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered, and intersex).

<sup>6</sup> In practise, the Ombudsman for Equality monitors the rights of trans and intersex people in spite of the legal deficiency. Sexual minorities, however, are not under the protection of any national authority.

<sup>7</sup> The Government will present its proposal on changes to the Gender Equality Act to the Parliament in autumn 2013.

One of the most blatant forms of discrimination related to gender identity in Finland is the fact that one must prove to be infertile in order to change gender marker. Furthermore, even people considering gender reassignment have been denied the storage of sex cells and their use in future fertility treatments. The Ombudsman for Equality, the Ombudsman for Minorities, and the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights are against this discriminative practise, and the NGOs call for a hurried revision of the gender reassignment legislation. In addition, the bodily integrity and self-determination of intersex children is endangered in hospitals without any medical basis. The cosmetic surgeries of intersex children's genitalia intend to alter their bodies into strictly 'feminine' or 'masculine', having long-lasting consequences related to intersex people's gender identity and self-image. Moreover, the successive treatments of genitalia have been traumatising for intersex children and their sense of bodily integrity. No directions or policies whatsoever are available concerning the status of intersex children, and the experiences of intersex people have not been studied sufficiently in Finland. Hence, the human rights of intersex people should be brought under discussion in equality politics.

LGBTI people have a high risk at becoming victims of violence, threat of violence or crimes of hate. Sexual orientation was included in the new legislation concerning hate crimes in 2011, but regulations related to trans and intersex people were not addressed. However, LGBTI people experience hate crimes related to both homophobia and transphobia, and this ought to be acknowledged in the legislation. Furthermore, LGBTI victims of violence do not necessarily contact the authorities for fear of prejudice, discrimination, and ignorance. Women belonging to sexual minorities may have more difficult access to services, for intimate partner violence in lesbian relationships is not sufficiently identified or recognised in the service system.

## **Homeless women**

In Finland, there are approximately 8.000 homeless people. The majority of homeless people inhabit the metropolitan area of Helsinki, the capital of Finland. Due to the gendered nature of homelessness, services for homeless people are very male-dominated. Few services are intended for women only, and homeless women have trouble finding room in shelters. Homelessness of women is invisible due to the fact that women tend to avoid living in the street at all costs, staying with friends, relatives or temporary partners. Numerous international studies on homeless women indicate that they are an extremely vulnerable group exposed to violence and sexual abuse. In addition, substance abuse and mental health problems are very common among homeless people. In order to cope with everyday life and receive basic necessities such

as food and shelter, homeless women must at times resort to survival sex and other harmful practises. Consequently, the NGOs call for gender-sensitive and good quality services for homeless women.

Homelessness of minority women is even more difficult than that of majority women. For instance, the city of Helsinki has made a central purchase contract with a service provider that houses homeless women. According to the Feminist Association Unioni, the provider has very strict criteria with regards to its clientele, denying shelter to Roma women, women with certain immigrant backgrounds and women belonging to sexual minorities. The Finnish NGOs express strong disapproval of such discrimination, and the lack of intervention on behalf of the city of Helsinki.

## **Female prisoners**

The NGOs feel the need to intervene in the treatment and living conditions of female prisoners in Finland. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment has repeatedly criticised Finland due to the existence of prison cells without toilets. The prisoners have to urinate and defecate in buckets, and this has been the case with women with small children as well. The new government programme recommends renovations of these cells until 2015, but as of yet, no resources have been indicated in the state budget.

In addition, the correctional treatment of prisoners has been traditionally directed at men, for approximately 6.5 % of the prisoners are women. However, women's special needs must be taken into account, as well as the fact that almost two thirds of female prisoners have experienced violence in close relationships.

### ***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- In order to enhance the living circumstances of minority women in Finland, more research data is needed particularly on the status of women with disabilities, Sámi women, Roma women, immigrant women, LGBTI women, and homeless women.
- The particular needs of minority women must be acknowledged when preparing face-to-face, and Internet and phone services for victims of violence. Easy access, personal assistance and language assistance need to be provided in shelters. The



geographical coverage of shelters must be extended, so that shelters are more easily available for women living in rural areas.

→ The legal obligation to provide services in Sámi languages must be realised in practise.

→ Immigrant women ought to be taught sufficient information technology skills in order to gain better access to services in the Finnish society. This is particularly challenging due to the high illiteracy rate of immigrant women.

→ The special needs of female asylum seekers and refugee women must be taken into account, and more attention must be paid to the gender-specific reasons related to asylum seeking.

→ Sufficient resources must be directed at identifying and preventing honour-related violence and circumcision of immigrant girls.

→ The participation of immigrant women in governmental working groups and committees must be secured.

→ Social and health care professionals, civil servants and authorities need education and information related to sexual orientation, the diversity of gender, and the rights of LGBTI-families.

→ The rights of trans and intersex people need to be acknowledged in the legislation.

→ Gender-sensitive and good quality services must be provided for homeless women.

→ In order to ensure humane treatment of female prisoners, prison cells without toilets need to be renovated as soon as possible.

## **Article 5 – Violence against Women**

### ***Attitudes, discourses, and legislation***

In the opinion of several Finnish NGOs, violence against women is considered the most severe human rights violation in Finland. According to the National Research Institute of Legal Policy, approximately 20–26 women are killed each year by their current or former male partner. Proportioned to the population, the figures are very high. Hence,

these acts of violence are the second most common type of capital crimes in Finland.<sup>8</sup> In spite of indisputable statistics, years of consciousness raising and hard work, the discourse on violence against women remains challenging and obscure. In the media and Internet, a rhetorical battle on gender-based violence, victimhood and blame takes place: “it’s not a gendered issue – women are violent too”, “teenage girls seduce adult men”, “she asked for it by wearing skimpy clothes”.

There appears to be an increasing tendency to discuss domestic violence either in a gender-neutral manner or as symmetric between women and men. Domestic violence is associated with substance abuse and socio-economic background, being marginalised as a phenomenon concerning merely the margins of society. Recent studies in violence in Finland, however, challenge this viewpoint. For instance, the overall profile and the socio-economic status of the support services’ clientele appear to be consistent with the general population. Middle-aged, educated women suffering from recurring domestic violence are slightly overrepresented in the service system.<sup>9</sup> Direct conclusions cannot be drawn based on this evidence, but violence against women seems to penetrate socio-economic background and social class.

Violence against women in Finland is not only an individual tragedy, but a severe breach of human rights rooted in violent cultural practises and unequal structures of society. It has serious consequences related to physical and mental health, the national economy, and gender equality. According to several studies, the consequences of domestic violence are different for men and women. In comparison to men, the violence experienced by women is more regular, and the injuries of women are more severe. Furthermore, women are more likely to be victims of hitting, strangling, head traumas and sexual violence carried out by their intimate partner.

In spite of the gloomy statistics and the challenging attitude climate, the Finnish NGOs remark that some good legal amendments have been made recently concerning violence against women. As of February 2011, minor violent assaults have been subject to public prosecution. The police’s workload has increased, but unfortunately, no extra resources have been directed to the police.

Despite the aforementioned positive progress, the Finnish NGOs are concerned because of the fact that recurring domestic violence is not being taken into account in the current legislation or court proceedings. Various acts of violence may precede the victim’s contact with the authorities, the forms of violence including physical, mental,

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<sup>8</sup> Salmi & al. 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Honkatukia 2011.

economical, and sexual violence. We strongly recommend that recurring violence should affect the severity of penalties.

Finland has signed the The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) which deals with many of the questions addresses in this chapter. The ratification working group of the Istanbul Convention has presented its conclusions in April 2013. Of the NGOs presented in the ratification working group six signed a dissent attached to the conclusions. Also the Ombudsman for Minorities presented her dissent. The main concern of the NGOs is that Finland would try to ratify the Convention without securing sufficient resources to revision of the service system for victims of violence and without sufficient changes to existing legislation.

### ***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- The gendered nature of violence must be acknowledged in general discussion and the media.
- Recurring domestic violence has to be taken into account in the legislation and court proceedings, affecting the severity of penalties.

### ***The National Action Plan on Violence against Women***

The CEDAW Committee has repeatedly pointed out to the Finnish government the lack of action plan to stop violence against women. The National Institute for Health and Welfare began to draft this action plan in the fall of 2009. However, no required resources were earmarked for the implementation of the action plan. In February 2012, the situation remains unchanged. The NGOs acknowledge that the government's National Action Plan on Violence against Women is ambitious and justifiable, but inadequate and merely cosmetic due to the lack of funding and resources. In addition to funding, enough work forces should be recruited, and structural amendments ought to be made in order to enable the implementation of the action plan.

The CEDAW Committee has recommended that Finland redirects the coordination of the work on ending violence against women onto governmental level. The NGOs have

demanded a coordination unit ever since the 1990s. Promises of founding such a coordination unit have been made by the Ministers of Social Affairs and Health of the previous governments, but as of yet, they have not been redeemed. In the National Institute for Health and Welfare, there are two officials dealing with violence in close relationships, but no actual coordination unit with its own sufficient funding and personnel has been founded.

### ***Services for the victims of violence***

In Finland, the third sector has the primary responsibility for the provision of services for the victims of violence. The work depends on project funding and suffers from lack of continuity and incommensurable standards. The services are mainly financed by project funding provided by Finland's Slot Machine Association. The service network is scattered and geographically uneven. Moreover, the services seldom target victims in the societal margins. Neither is the current supply of services able to deal with the particular needs of victims representing different kinds of minorities.<sup>10</sup>

There is no legal obligation to provide shelter services in Finland. At the moment the government does not coordinate or fund shelters, and the funding is based on municipal promissory notes. Based on a government bill that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has started to prepare in winter 2014, the government will take charge of the funding next year. The precise content of the law is not yet known.

At the moment the majority of municipalities take promissory notes from the child welfare budget, which complicates the entry of women without children into shelters. According to the NGOs, promissory notes are usually written only for a few days, which does not enable long-term assistance or support for victims of violence. The services ought to be provided as long as they are needed, and they should be free of charge. The Council of Europe recommends that the amount of family rooms in shelters should be one for every 10.000 citizens. In Finland, this means 530 family rooms. At present, there are only 125 family rooms, and there is only one secret shelter in Finland. The NGOs demand that there should be a legal obligation to provide sufficient services for the victims of violence. In addition, the perpetrators of violence need to be provided with professional assistance.

The NGOs demand clear regulations on shelters. Currently, no regulations whatsoever exist concerning the quantity, personnel, opening hours, quality standards, and

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<sup>10</sup> Honkatukia 2011.

geographical coverage of shelters. In addition, shelters should be made free of obstacles for easy access, and they should provide personal assistance and special attention to women with disabilities. Interpretation services must be provided face to face, and the clients ought to have the right to choose the interpreter. Immigrant women and children need to be provided cultural sensitive assistance in their own language. Moreover, special attention must be paid to elderly women and their particular needs.

Furthermore, the NGOs call for low-threshold services, such as pop-in centres, rape crisis centres and 24/7 phone services for victims of violence. Minority groups and women in vulnerable position should be taken into account when preparing these services. The decrease in face-to-face services affects especially elderly women, disabled women and immigrant women lacking sufficient language skills. Easy access for women with disabilities must be underlined when preparing phone and Internet services for victims of violence. Information sheets with sufficient content ought to be provided in different languages, sign language, plain language, and Braille.

#### ***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- Services for victims of violence ought to have more permanent and secured funding supported by the government.
- Finland must enhance the quantity and geographical coverage of shelters, and more secret shelters are demanded. Regulations related to shelters must be made.
- Women without children must have equal access to shelters.
- More low-threshold services ought to be established.
- The particular needs of minority groups must be taken into account when preparing services.

#### ***Mediation of violence in close relationships***

The law on mediation came into force in 2006. In spite of many experts' and women's organisations' critique of mediation of violence in close relationships, it is still common in Finland. According to the National Institute for Health and Welfare, 1017 close relationship violence cases were directed to mediation by the police in 2009, of which 134 were minor assaults, 859 assaults, 18 aggravated assaults and six violent sexual offences. Evidently, the number of cases directed to mediation is very large. In the

spring of 2011, reducing mediation in cases of violence in close relationships was recommended in the new government programme. However, the National Police Board's statement on mediation from November 2011 is favourable to mediation of violence in close relationships, though cautious to mediating aggravated assaults or recurring violence. Consequently, the situation is contradictory and ambivalent, and clear demarcations must be made. The Finnish NGOs demand prohibition of mediation of violence in close relationships.

The NGOs are concerned about the legal protection of victims of intimate partnership violence. According to Finnish research data, mediation considerably lessens the probability of cases proceeding to court. Only approximately 30 % of the mediated domestic violence cases lead to prosecution. In addition, mediation affects the severity of penalties in a mitigating manner. An alarming and distracting fact: the more aggravated the assault, the more likely the legal agreement between the victim and the perpetrator.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the mediation process does not seem to affect the perpetrator's behaviour or the ending of violence in an efficient manner.<sup>12</sup> It is a major problem that the mediators are volunteers lacking sufficient education with regards to the dynamics of intimate partnership violence. The victims and the perpetrators need professional assistance, and the victim cannot be responsible for the perpetrator's violent behaviour.

Mediation of violence in close relationships is extremely problematic from the point of view of the victim. Violence in intimate partnerships is related to subordination and severe misuse of power. Recurring acts of violence make the victim vulnerable, frightened and dependent on the perpetrator. Thus, the victim and the perpetrator are not equal participants and negotiators in the mediation process, and it is very difficult to ensure that the victim participates in mediation voluntarily. The philosophy of mediation, however, tends to conceptualise the mediation process as equal communication and reconciliation between the perpetrator and the victim. The NGOs point out that this is not the case, and appeal to the recommendations made by the Council of Europe on prohibiting mediation of violence in close relationships.

***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

→ Mediation of violence in close relationships must be prohibited due to the distinct

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<sup>11</sup> Iivari & Flinck 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Qvist 2010.

dynamics and features related to intimate partner violence.

### ***Sexual violence and harassment***

The Finnish NGOs demand thorough revision of the sexual assault legislation. There is a government bill that concerns revision of the legislation but the parliament has not yet had time to discuss the bill.

The Finnish NGOs have pointed out that there are many weaknesses in current legislation. The current legislation does not advance sexual self-determination and bodily and mental integrity in a sufficient manner. In addition, the protection of victims of rape, sexual violence and sexual harassment is inadequate. It is estimated that only 6 % of rapes are reported to the police. Of the reported cases, only 16 % lead to court proceedings, and only 13 % to convictions. In June 2011, the Finnish legislation on sexual assault was revised, so that sexual abuse of a defenceless person counts as rape. Another advance is that sexual abuse of a child including intercourse is considered an aggravated crime. However, the NGOs demand that the title of this offence should be rape. According to a Finnish report, 90 % of all the reported sexual abuse cases of children were targeted at fem-1ale children, mostly between the ages of 12 and 14.<sup>13</sup> Teachers and authorities ought to be educated to identify signs of sexual abuse in children and youth. Furthermore, women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience sexual violence and harassment than other women, particularly by health care professionals or personal assistants. Special attention and support ought to be directed at the particular needs of these women. We strongly appeal to the basic principles of human rights and the rights of women as defined in the CEDAW convention. Sexual intercourse without consent is violence and always a crime.

The NGOs acknowledge that these legal revisions are a much-anticipated step in the right direction, but more action needs to be taken. As regards the three-step categories on the severity of rape in the legislation, the category of 'coercion into sexual intercourse' should be repealed. Furthermore, the boundaries of sexual abuse and rape should be reevaluated from the viewpoints of functioning law and justice in general. Moreover, sexual abuse and coercion into sexual intercourse are offences the

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<sup>13</sup> Humpi & Ellonen 2010.

prosecution of which rests with the plaintiff. These crimes ought to be subject to public prosecution, and the so-called firm will permitting the discontinuing of proceedings in cases of sexual offences, must be abandoned.

According to a study, the Finnish legal system recognizes as sexual violence only overt expressions of physical violence. The main characteristics of rape include other forms of violence used in the act. Consequently, more subtle forms of abuse are not included in this framework: a complainant who is raped in an intimate relationship and who, paralysed by fear, submits to intercourse can be seen by the court as consenting, albeit against their will.<sup>14</sup> The Finnish NGOs demand that definitions under Criminal Code must be revised so that sexual intercourse without consent is considered as rape.

Rape victims report insensitive and offensive behaviour by the police and other authorities. According to a recent study on victims' experiences with the criminal justice system in Finland, clients seeking help because of sexual violence are particularly critical of criminal justice authorities.<sup>15</sup> These victims have experienced improper or slow behaviour on behalf of the authorities, problems in being informed, or having received inadequate mental support. The researchers point out the vulnerability of these victims, and the victims' feelings that they are blamed for what happened. The NGOs strongly recommend gender-sensitive education of the authorities and social and health care professionals dealing with victims of sexual violence. In addition, the language used in Finnish criminal procedure and trials to describe sexual offences demonstrate stereotypical ideas and prejudices about sexuality and 'the female nature'.<sup>16</sup> Such sexist and misogynist attitudes must be abolished from the criminal justice system.

***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

→ The definition of rape must consist of lack of consent instead of other violence used in the act. The lack of consent has been left out of the government bill that concerns revision of the sexual assault legislation.

→ In addition, coercion into sexual intercourse must be abandoned in the sexual assault legislation, as well as the firm will permitting the discontinuing of proceedings

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<sup>14</sup> Jokila 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Honkatukia 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Jokila 2010.



in case of sexual violence.

→ Authorities and social and health care professionals dealing with victims of sexual violence must be provided with gender-sensitive education acknowledging the victims' vulnerability and special needs.

→ Currently, sexual and gender-based harassment in working life and education are prohibited in labour law and in the Act on Equality between Women and Men. However, sexual harassment must be criminalised in the Criminal Code which regulates also private life. The new government bill states that sexual harassment should be criminalized in the Criminal Code and it is very important that this actualises. However, in the government bill the definition of sexual and gender-based harassment is narrower than in the contemporary labour law or the Act on Equality between Women and Men. The definition of sexual harassment should be equally wide in new legislation as well.

### ***Stereotyping in media and advertising***

The Finnish NGOs call for an attitude adjustment campaign against the increasing pornification and sexualisation of public surroundings and media. Advertisements, music videos, make-up ads, social media and TV commercials pressure women with unanimous messages related to appearance, a desirable female body, and stereotypical role expectations. The image of an ideal woman is an overly sexualised and objectified young, white, heterosexual female; above all, a physical creature who doesn't think, speak or follow intellectual pursuits. Images are not mere reflections of the world, but shape the realities and surroundings we live in, and participate in producing meaning, power relations, and knowledge. Young women and girls in particular are affected by the unrealistic body image produced by the media. Consequently, Finnish young women and girls suffer increasingly from eating disorders, anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. According to a study on young people and pornography in Nordic countries, the domestication of porn imagery and the representations of female sexuality in the media influence young girls and boys in multiple ways, leading to bodily insecurity in girls, and unrealistic expectations related to sex.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Sørensen & Knudsen 2007.

In addition to media imagery related to women's appearance, the abilities and expertise of women are yet to be represented in an equal way in the news transmission of Finnish media. The NGOs point out the inadequate status of gender sensitive education of reporters and other media professionals. The lack of gender education leads to stereotypical representations in the media, affecting the everyday lives of millions of citizens. Consequently, the frequent participation of Finland in the Global Media Monitoring survey is a necessary means of producing information and tools to promoting gender awareness among the media, journalist training and media literacy education.

In Finland, hate speech against ethnic minorities has been a subject of heated discussion in the media. The NGOs think that this conversation is of major importance, but at the same time, public discussion concerning gendered hate speech is non-existent. In the Finnish social media and Internet forums, there appears to be an increasing trend in hate speech against women, girls, and ethnic and sexual minorities. A similar tendency can be discovered in the discussion boards of online magazines. The media must show their responsibility by implementing efficient moderation policies against racist and misogynist discourses in the discussion boards.

***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- Media literacy among the youth must be increased, and the media ought to show responsibility in producing diverse images and representations of women and girls.
- The educational establishments must provide gender-sensitive education to media professionals preventing stereotypical news transmission and unequal practises.
- Hate speech against women and girls in the social media must be studied, and concrete plans against this phenomenon must be made.
- Online magazines need to implement efficient moderation policies in preventing hate speech in discussion boards.

## Article 6 – Trafficking in Women and Prostitution

### *Human trafficking*

Finland is both a destination and a transit country in human trafficking. In 2006, the Finnish law on human trafficking was revised by criminalising the purchase of sex from a victim of human trafficking or procurement. The Finnish NGOs point out that there are deficiencies in the human trafficking legislation concerning the choice of title of offence, the interpretation and application of the law, and identification of victims. In Finland, only a few dozen victims of human trafficking have been identified, obscuring the extent of the phenomenon. The Finnish parliament has obligated the government to give sufficient funding and resources to police in order to combat human trafficking. As of yet, this has not happened.

According to the Finnish National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, sexual abuse and exploitation in human trafficking are poorly identified by the Finnish authorities in comparison to international standards.<sup>18</sup> As the Rapporteur remarks, women in prostitution are often controlled by physical and sexual violence, threats, burning passports etc. Even these cases, however, are more likely to be investigated and tried as procurement than human trafficking, because the criteria of human trafficking are set very high in the Finnish case law.

Nevertheless, the identification of victims of sexual exploitation is imperative. In pre-trial investigation and judicial process, the status of victims of procurement is that of a witness, whereas the victims of human trafficking have the status of an injured party. The victims of human trafficking are legally entitled to assistance and protection, but if the case is assessed as procurement, the victim loses their status as complainant, as well as their right to residence permit and access to the system of assistance. In addition, instead of focusing on the harsh living conditions of women in prostitution, the authorities emphasise the victim's consent, which results in a situation in which the crime will be assessed as procurement. Consent, however, does not justify violence

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<sup>18</sup> The National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings. Report 2011.

and abuse. The climate of opinion seems to approve of acts of violence against women as a natural and inevitable part of prostitution. One might ask, if violence experienced by women and girls in prostitution is taken very seriously by the authorities.

Unlike the victims of sexual abuse, the victims of work-related exploitation are considered injured parties regardless of the title of offence – work-related human trafficking or extortion-like work. The Finnish National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings states that the current policy is discriminatory. Thus, it is essential to examine the situation from a gender perspective: victims of work-related exploitation are mostly men, whereas victims of sexual exploitation are usually women. In addition, sexual harassment and abuse may be included in work-related human trafficking as well. The difficulty in identification of prostitution-related human trafficking can be seen as gender-related discrimination, for it endorses the continuum of violence against women.

### ***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- A special investigation unit for human trafficking must be established.
- Human trafficking legislation must be clarified.
- If human trafficking is suspected, deportation of victims should be refrained from, and victims should have access to assistance and protection.

## ***Prostitution***

Since 2006, buying sex from a victim of human trafficking or procurement has been prohibited in Finland. Otherwise, prostitution is not illegal. Finland is an exception in the midst of other Nordic countries: Sweden criminalised the purchase of sex in 1999, Norway in 2008 and Iceland in 2009. Finland re-evaluated its own legislation in the fall of 2009, but no revisions were made. Accordingly, the NGOs criticise the inadequate evaluation process, which did not include steering or working groups, or comprehensive legal analysis containing further actions and measures.

Finland is a State party in international agreements demanding protection for victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. In the Finnish NGOs' perspective, however, prostitution is not considered a major problem by the government. The distribution of work, or the lack of it, speaks for itself: there is no official post in the

state administration with regards to prostitution. Neither is there an action plan to prevent prostitution. The CEDAW committee has repeatedly notified Finland of its insufficient actions in preventing prostitution. In its current periodic report, Finland has been specifically asked by the Committee to provide information, statistics, and research on prostitution and hidden crime. Evaluation of the implementation of prostitution legislation is also required, as well as information on the strategies and measures in preventing prostitution and providing services and support for women and girls willing to quit sex work. No effective measures to combat prostitution and exploitation of women, however, are suggested in draft of the periodic report.

Little data or research concerning prostitution in Finland is available. The estimations suggest that there are approximately 4.000–5.000 women in prostitution in Finland. The Pro Centre in Finland is contacted by approximately 2.000 women each year. The majority of women in prostitution are immigrant women in a vulnerable position coming from poor countries. Consequently, the NGOs point out the social marginalisation and stigmatised status of women in prostitution. In addition, the geographical coverage of services directed at women in prostitution is inadequate, and the lack of residence or work permit prevents women's access into municipal social and health care.

The Finnish NGOs are concerned when it comes to the situation of young girls in prostitution. Since 1999, child sex tourism and purchase of sex from a minor have been criminalised in Finland. Since 2010, the organisation EXIT Away from Prostitution has had a project that intends to reduce sexual abuse of young persons and prevent their drifting into prostitution. In addition to facing sexual harassment, young girls in particular experience regular attempts by adult men to buy sex from them. According to EXIT, sexual services may be exchanged for alcohol, clothes, accessories, and small amounts of money. Moreover, the organisation has discovered several Finnish Internet forums containing hate speech against young girls and their sexuality.

***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- The purchase of sex must be criminalised.
- The government must take preventive action against prostitution, and provide accurate research and statistical data concerning prostitution and the life circumstances of women in prostitution.

## **Article 7 – Inequality in Political and Public Life**

In Finland, the proportion of women in political decision-making has been increasing since the beginning of the 1990s. Currently, the proportion of women among the members of parliament, ministers in the government, municipal councillors and EU parliamentarians is approximately 40 %. Regardless of the political power balance and women's high level in education, women do not occupy the leading positions or boards in business. Only 10–20 % of corporate leaders are women in Finland. The Finnish NGOs demand regulations on gender quotas in the boards of state and municipality-owned companies and companies listed in the stock exchange. At least 40 % of the board members should be women.

Moreover, the proportion of women in municipal administration is less than 30 %. The Finnish labour market organisations are also extremely male-dominated, with relatively no women in leading positions. Finland is currently undergoing a municipal reform, and the consequences related to gender equality remain to be seen. In addition, more than half of the new university students in Finland have been women ever since the 1970s. In 2007, 50.6 % of new Finnish doctors were women. In spite of the large amount of women's doctoral degrees, the number of female professors has not increased accordingly. At present, approximately a fifth of all Finnish professors are women.

Currently, there are no women belonging to an ethnic minority or immigrant group in the Finnish parliament, or as Finnish representatives in the EU parliament. Otherwise, accurate statistical information concerning minority women's participation in political and public life in Finland is lacking. According to the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 13 women with an immigrant background have been elected to municipal councils. Only three Sámi women have been elected to municipal councils. Due to the limitations in Finnish privacy policy, this information is based on the mother tongue of the representatives. The political participation of minority women must be encouraged and increased. Easy access ought to be provided in offices and agencies. Not only could these women contribute to the status and wellbeing of minorities and minority women, but be active citizens and participants in political decision-making benefiting society as a whole.

### ***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- The boards of state and municipality-owned companies, as well as listed companies, should have gender quotas. 40 % of the board members ought to be women.
- The political participation of minority women must be encouraged and increased.

## **Article 8 – International Representation**

### ***Finland's development policy***

The Finnish NGOs recommend further recognition, monitoring and execution of improvement of the position of women and girls in Finland's succeeding Development Policy Programme. Equality work has been one of the present programme's cross-cutting themes, but mere gender mainstreaming has not been enough in pursuing the objectives of MDG3 (United Nations' Millennium Development Goal 3 'Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women'). The NGOs are concerned because of the lack of gender-based affirmative actions and projects in Finland's development cooperation. Development cooperation and funding must have lucid, thematic objectives and indicators. In the future, separate actions and projects directed at the wellbeing of women and girls must be supported with sufficient resources and funding.

The implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and UN's Millennium Development Goals has to be in the midst of Finland's development policy.

### ***1325 'Women, Peace and Security'***

The Finnish National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 'Women, Peace and Security' (2008–2011) is concrete and well-planned, but lacks budget and indicators. In the succeeding NAP, indicators will be included, but no separate budget

is likely to be written in the document. Accordingly, the resources allocated to the 1325 work depend on the ministries implementing the action plan. Different ministries and the civil society participate in a follow-up group monitoring the implementation of the NAP, meeting on a regular and frequent basis. However, it is problematic that the same stakeholders, who are responsible for implementing the plan, also monitor its implementation.

The Finnish NGOs appreciate the Finnish Defence Forces' policy on peacekeepers, prostitution and trafficking in women in crisis areas. Purchase of sex is prohibited when on service and leave, and a reason for immediate demobilisation and investigation. However, there is no information whether the policy works in practise, and no reports of demobilisation having happened exist. Is this due to a right code of conduct being practised or, rather, careless interpretation of rules by the heads of mission or others in managerial positions?

Furthermore, the Finnish NGOs are concerned by the gender training received by peace keeping forces, for the minimum amount of gender education consists of only 45 minutes. Representatives of the civil society have requested an opportunity to monitor the gender training by attending a training session, but this has not been granted. Gender mainstreaming and the status of women and children, however, should be in the heart of international crisis management and humanitarian operations.

***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- Finland's development policy programme must contain specific actions and projects directed at the wellbeing and equal opportunities of women and girls.
- The 1325 work requires a minimum budget framework and/or tracking of allocated money.
- Gender-sensitive education must be a cross-cutting theme in the education of Finnish peacekeepers.



## Article 10 – Equality Planning in Educational Establishments

A gender-sensitive education system and equality in education are vital factors in building a society with equal opportunities for women and men. The labour market in Finland is extremely segregated based on gender and stereotyped role expectations for women and men. Consequently, the NGOs think that we should pay special attention to education in order to make a change in attitudes and furthermore, increase gender equality. We must re-evaluate the education system all the way from early childhood education to higher education in universities and other institutions. Gender awareness needs to be promoted among teachers and other educational professionals. From 2008 to 2010, the Ministry of Education supported a development project (TASUKO) promoting gender equality and gender awareness in teacher education, aimed at kindergarten teachers, subject teachers, study advisors and teacher training schools. The project was a positive step forward, but further action and permanent amendments are required in teacher training.

In international assessments of learning outcomes, Finnish girls fare better than boys in reading, whereas boys have a minor advantage in mathematics and a greater one in physics and chemistry. Finnish girls have less faith in their mathematical skills, and are less interested in mathematics than girls in other countries. The attitudes of Finnish youth toward different study subjects are strongly gendered, reflecting traditional values and beliefs concerning gender. The choices that girls and boys make regarding mathematics, physics and chemistry differ greatly between genders, influencing choices related to further studies, and leading to stabilised gender segregation in the labour market.

According to a recent project in early childhood education and equality carried out by the Feminist Association Unioni, gender segregation in the education system begins as early as kindergarten and preschool. Little boys are assumed to take more space and behave wildly, whereas little girls are guided to become responsible care-takers and dutiful helpers to the day care employees. Unfortunately, the project will not continue. A similar project is being conducted in Swedish-speaking kindergartens by Folkhälsan, an association focusing on social and health care issues of the Swedish-speaking community, but due to language differences, it is not likely to reach the Finnish-speaking day care. The NGOs are concerned about equality issues in early childhood

education, and recommend further studies and projects promoting equality and decreasing gendered stereotyping of children in day care.

Traditionally, education in Finland has had gender neutrality as its guideline. Gender has not been brought up in education, teacher training or learning materials. However, the NGOs demand that the education system must be developed in a gender-sensitive, tolerant and multicultural manner, so that young people are encouraged to make studying and career choices irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability etc. In addition, research data implicates that social background strongly affects educational choices, so that the level of education transmits to the next generation. Consequently, the Finnish education system must take preventive action against social inequality and marginalisation of youth, and the special needs of minority groups and marginalised pupils must be taken into account. Moreover, cultural sensitive recreational activities must be provided for girls with immigrant background.

Furthermore, the curriculum and learning materials are not only based on stereotypical views on women and men, but also ethnocentrism, and heteronormative and narrow understanding of human sexuality and gender diversity. Equality and diversity are not discussed in a sufficient manner at school. Girls and boys belonging to sexual minorities or trans and intersex people may feel out of place and unable to express their identities in school environment. They experience bullying and harassment targeted at their gender or sexuality. Sexual and gender-based harassment are considered discrimination in the Gender Equality Act, but these regulations are not extended to basic education. Sexual and gender-based harassment, however, are common in school environment, and the NGOs demand that discrimination should not be tolerated in educational establishments. In addition, sexual orientation, the diversity of gender and the status of minority groups ought to be an important field in teacher training.

***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- The TASUKO programme must be continued, and gender mainstreaming ought to be brought to teacher training permanently.
- Special attention must be paid to the stereotypical gender role expectations in day care and early childhood education.
- Children and youth must be encouraged to make educational choices irrespective of their gender.
- The status of LGBTI people, children with immigrant background and other minority

groups must be acknowledged at school.

→ The regulations on sexual and gender-based harassment in the Gender Equality Act need to be extended to basic education

## **Article 11 – Inequality in the Labour Market**

### ***Women’s vulnerability and the consequences of discrimination of women in the labour market***

The CEDAW Committee has expressed concern with regards to discrimination against women in the Finnish labour market. As stated in the previous chapter on education, the division of labour in Finland is based on gender segregation and stereotypical role expectations. Women earn lower wages than men, participate in fixed-term and part-time work, and experience horizontal and vertical discrimination in the labour market. Horizontal discrimination refers to the gendered segregation between different occupations and sectors, reflected already in educational choices. For instance, social and health care, the cultural sector and the humanities are female-dominated, while the building sector and technical occupations are male-dominated. Female-dominated occupations tend to suffer from low wages. On the other hand, vertical discrimination refers to the unequal representation of women and men in professional hierarchy in the workplace. In spite of their higher education, women have difficulties in advancing to managerial posts. Men are overrepresented in high posts, while women’s salary and career development is limited. In addition, violence in the workplace has increased in female-dominated sectors such as trade, and health and social care. More research data has to be gathered as regards the phenomenon.

In Finland, women earn approximately 82 % of men’s wages on the basis of average incomes. The pay gap for the same work is approximately 10 %. The pay gap is

attributed to the gendered segregation of the labour market, family leaves taken by women, and the fact that men and women tend to be covered by different collective employment agreements. The impact of segregation on the pay gap varies between the private sector, the state and the municipalities, but on the whole, it has not diminished since the mid-1990s. The Finnish government has sought to abolish the pay-gap with the Equal Pay Programme. Its objective is to narrow the pay gap to 15 % by 2015. However, this goal will not be reached at the present pace.

The Finnish NGOs would like to point out the vulnerability of certain groups of women with regards to employment and discrimination. Firstly, the status of elderly women in Finland requires special attention. The lower wages and cost of maternity leaves of women backfire during the years of retirement. Almost 20 % of people with low income in Finland consist of elderly women. The elderly women who receive earnings-related pension, earn approximately 928 €/month, whereas elderly men earn 1530 €/month on average.<sup>19</sup> Approximately 270.000 elderly women do not have earnings-related pension at all. These women have either worked without pay at home in domestic service, or their wages have been insufficient to offer satisfactory economic support later in life. In Finland, the lowest guarantee pension benefit is 714 €/month. Another vulnerable group consists of over 80-year-old women with various medical conditions, living on their own without earnings-related pension. Elderly women in particular living in large cities with high life expenses face difficulties in coping with everyday life. Improvements in social security must be made to enhance these women's living conditions. In addition, adequate information on social benefits and public and private services must be provided for elderly women lacking computer skills.

In Finland, unemployment among women with an immigrant background is very high, almost fourfold in comparison to the majority of population. Only 17 % of people with disabilities participate in working life, but no accurate statistical data exists in the case of women with disabilities. In addition, the unemployment rate is very high among the Roma people. Little is known about the discrimination of women belonging to sexual minorities in the labour market. The status of transgendered women in the labour market is reportedly weak, for they experience discrimination, harassment and violence related to their gender. The Finnish NGOs demand efficient action in preventing discrimination against minority women in the labour market, as well as enhancing their opportunities in finding employment.

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<sup>19</sup> Suomen työeläkkeensaajat ja vakuutetut 2009.

### ***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- Efficient measures and policies against the gendered segregation of labour market must be made in the education system and early childhood education.
- The gendered pay gap between women and men must be abolished.
- Special attention must be paid to elderly women suffering from the consequences of women's weaker status in the labour market.
- The status of minority women ought to be studied closely, and affirmative action ought to be directed at vulnerable groups.

### ***Family leaves and the redistribution of care***

The Finnish NGOs strongly support equal distribution of care and the reconciliation of work and family life. In Finland, over 90 % of family leaves are taken by women. The family leaves earmarked for men are considerably shorter than those of women. Furthermore, there are still negative attitudes towards men's parental leaves, and regardless of the increase in men's family leaves, the development is fairly slow and ought to be supported in a more efficient manner in the legislation and in the workplace. Equal parental leave system would strengthen the role of men as fathers and carers, influence the unequal practises in domestic life, and decrease discrimination against women in the labour market. The NGOs agree unanimously that the so-called 6+6+6 model ought to be favoured to encourage men in participating child care and domestic life, and improve women's career and salary development. This would, in addition, be of great importance to the child's wellbeing: instead of one carer, the child would have two active care-givers. More equal distribution of care would make a difference in gender equality work, decreasing gender segregation and stereotypical role expectations of women and men.

Since 2010, same-sex spouses have been entitled to paternity leave, parental money, and the so-called father month also available for non-biological parent. The status of same-sex parents is, nevertheless, weaker than that of heterosexual parents, for the right to paternity leave may be used only after co-parent adoption.

***The 6+6+6 model highly recommended by the NGOs:***

- Both parents receive six months of parental leave, and the remaining six months leave can be taken by either parent.
- The model would have positive consequences related to women's career and salary development, men's participation in child care, father-child emotional bonding, and the wellbeing of children.
- The model should be included in the next government programme in 2016.

## **Article 12 – Health Issues, Drugs, and Alcohol**

In Finland, women suffer increasingly from alcohol and drug abuse. During the last forty years, women's drinking has increased more than six times in comparison to men. Consequently, alcohol-related diseases are the second most common cause of death in women of working age. Women drink to get drunk, and their binge drinking has increased, as well as drinking more than the recommended maximum of alcohol use. In addition, alcohol abuse has become a more common problem among elderly women. A comprehensive study on the health habits of 14–16-year olds covering the period 1977–2011, discovered that binge drinking among that age group was decreasing for a number of years, but that this trend has been reversed. The proportion of 18-year-olds, particularly girls, who drink themselves into oblivion, is higher in the 2000s than during the rest of the period studied.<sup>20</sup> Prolonged use of alcohol leads to cirrhosis and failure of the liver, as well as symptoms of depression and anxiety or other mental health problems. According to international research, women tend to drink at home alone or with their partner. The increase in women's alcohol abuse is often related to exhaustion and pressure with regards to the reconciliation of working and domestic life.<sup>21</sup> The NGOs are concerned because of the lack of gender-sensitive substance abuse services directed at women. Most patients in residential treatment centres are male, and few gender-specific support and treatment

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<sup>20</sup> Raisamo & al. 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Palojärvi 2012.

options are available for women in residential care and local health care services. In addition, gender-based services and low-threshold services are required for different age groups.

Mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, are also on the increase among women and young girls. Girls and young women suffer increasingly from eating disorders, and approximately 5 % of women in Finland are anorexic.<sup>22</sup> Medical research data shows that individuals with anorexia nervosa have an elevated mortality rate. In addition, anorexia has higher mortality rate than other psychiatric disorders, such as depression or schizophrenia. Patients in their late teens and 20s have a higher death rate than younger patients, or those in their 30s. Furthermore, there seems to be a correlation between anorexia and suicidal and self-destructive behaviour. Accordingly, the NGOs demand efficient medical services for young girls and women suffering from eating disorders. School health care has a great importance in recognising and identifying eating disorders, and consequently, adequate training of health care professionals in the field of eating disorders is required. Moreover, the NGOs are alarmed due to the high suicide rate of Finnish girls in comparison to international statistics. According to WHO, the amount of suicides committed by 15–24-year-old Finnish girls is the second largest in the world. While suicides of young men seem to be slowly decreasing, the development has not been similar with young women.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the NGOs call for gender-sensitive suicide prevention acknowledging the particular issues and hardships experienced by young girls and women in the Finnish society.

More research data and statistical information are required concerning the health issues, substance abuse and mental health of women belonging to various minority groups in Finland. The particular needs of these women must be taken into account in social and health care, and the training of social and health care professionals.

***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

- Gender-sensitive services must be provided for women suffering from substance abuse.
- Girls and young women suffer increasingly from depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. More research data and good quality social and health care services directed

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<sup>22</sup> Keski-Rahkonen & al. 2010.

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.stat.fi/til/ksyyt/2010/ksyyt\\_2010\\_2011-12-16\\_kat\\_006\\_fi.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/ksyyt/2010/ksyyt_2010_2011-12-16_kat_006_fi.html)

at young women are needed.

→ Gender-sensitive suicide prevention must be provided for Finnish girls and boys.

## **Final Words: CEDAW in Finland**

CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and came into force in Finland in 1986. In spite of over twenty years of the convention's implementation, CEDAW remains generally unknown by the Finnish public and is seldom a topic of general discussion. Consequently, the Finnish NGOs are concerned that the state administration does not promote the convention in a sufficient manner. Finland should set an example and make the convention familiar among authorities and citizens. Furthermore, the contents of CEDAW and other human rights conventions need to be taught at school and in higher education. The information should reach minorities and audiences with disabilities. With adequate resources, the Finnish NGOs could participate in this work in cooperation with the government.

### ***The Finnish NGOs' demands:***

→ Finland must set an example in promoting CEDAW and other human rights conventions to citizens, authorities, and students.



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