

<b>Country</b>	<b>Finland</b>
<b>SIGI 2019 Category</b>	<b>Very low</b>
<b>SIGI Value 2019</b>	<b>15%</b>

<b>Discrimination in the family</b>		<b>22%</b>
	Legal framework on child marriage	50%
	Percentage of girls under 18 married	0%
	Legal framework on household responsibilities	50%
	Proportion of the population declaring that children will suffer if mothers are working outside home for a pay	21%
	Female to male ratio of time spent on unpaid care work	1.6
	Legal framework on inheritance	0%
	Legal framework on divorce	0%

<b>Restricted physical integrity</b>		<b>16%</b>
	Legal framework on violence against women	75%
	Proportion of the female population justifying domestic violence	11%
	Prevalence of domestic violence against women (lifetime)	30%
	Sex ratio at birth (natural =105)	105
	Legal framework on reproductive rights	25%
	Female population with unmet needs for family planning	8%

<b>Restricted access to productive and financial resources</b>		<b>4%</b>
	Legal framework on working rights	0%
	Proportion of the population declaring this is not acceptable for a woman in their family to work outside home for a pay	1%
	Share of managers (male)	69%
	Legal framework on access to non-land assets	0%
	Share of house owners (male)	-
	Legal framework on access to land assets	0%
	Share of agricultural land holders (male)	89%
	Legal framework on access to financial services	0%
	Share of account holders (male)	49%

<b>Restricted civil liberties</b>		<b>18%</b>
	Legal framework on civil rights	0%
	Legal framework on freedom of movement	0%
	Percentage of women in the total number of persons not feeling safe walking alone at night	91%
	Legal framework on political participation	0%
	Share of the population that believes men are better political leaders than women	19%
	Percentage of male MP's	58%
	Legal framework on access to justice	0%
	Share of women declaring lack of confidence in the justice system	57%

Note: Higher values indicate higher inequality. Percentages range from 0 to 100, while legal variables are categorised as 0%, 25%, 50%, 75% or 100%. See data source [here](#).

Source: OECD (2019), Gender, Institutions and Development Database, <https://oe.cd/ds/GIDDB2019>.

## Finland

### 1. Discrimination in the family

#### a) Overarching legal framework for marriage

The Constitution (731/1999, amendments up to 1112 / 2011 included) prohibits sex discrimination (Sec. 6 (1)) and promotes the principle of equality (Sec. 6 (12)). Multiple discrimination is not specifically addressed in national legislation, and no other articles in the Constitution pertain to equality between women and men (European Commission, 2016: 8 & 12; CEDAW, 2014: 3).

The law provides women with the same rights as men to marry (Sec. 1 of the Marriage Act). Forced marriage is prohibited and punished as coercion or trafficking in human beings, irrespective of whether it was committed in Finland or abroad (Ch. 1, sec. 11 of the Criminal Code).

Under the Marriage Act (234/1929; amendments up to 1226/2001 included), civil marriages are concluded by a marriage ceremony if there are no impediments (Ch. 1, sec. 1). Marriages may be concluded at a Local Register Office or by an officiating person. Examination of impediments to marriage must be done at the Register Office or a Parish (Secs. 10-13).

Registered partnerships are regulated by the Finnish Act on the Dissolution of the Household of Cohabiting Partners (1929).

#### b) Child marriage

The legal age of marriage is 18 for both sexes (Ch. 2, sec. 4(1) of the Marriage Act).

Underage marriages are allowed if a dispensation to marry has been obtained from the Ministry of Justice (Ch. 2, sec. 4(2) of the Marriage Act).

#### c) Household responsibilities

In accordance with the Marriage Act (1929) spouses are considered equal (Sec. 2(1)). Furthermore, women and men have equal responsibilities to participate in the common household of the family (Sec. 46). Property of the spouses acquired outside of marriage remains hers or his upon marriage and she or he may also own what is acquired during the marriage (Ch. 2, sec. 34).

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) statistics (2017) on 'Time spent in paid and unpaid work, by sex,' women in Finland spend far more hours in a day on unpaid care work than men.

Everyone has the freedom to choose where to live (Art. 9 of the Constitution).

#### **d) Divorce**

According to the Marriage Act (1929), a marriage is dissolved if the spouse dies or when the spouses are granted a divorce by court (Ch. 3, sec. 3 and Ch. 6, secs. 25-32). The end of cohabitation is upon a joint petition, and must be granted by a court (Ch. 6, sec. 2).

Spouses have equal responsibilities for the maintenance of their children after the end of marriage or partnership. Women and men may request child custody, and the court decides the arrangement according to the child's best interests (Ch. 6, sec. 31). However, when custody of children is decided upon after divorce, domestic violence is not taken into consideration (CEDAW, 2014: 10).

The Committee on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) expressed concern over the economic situation of women following divorce due to the current property system that encourages entering marriage settlements requiring the separation of property (CEDAW, 2014: 10). Pension benefits and future earning capacity are not marital rights women are entitled to following separation or divorce (CEDAW, 2014: 10). Furthermore, the CEDAW Committee (2014) was concerned about the issue of domestic violence, as it is not taken into consideration when deciding upon the custody of children upon divorce.

#### **e) Inheritance**

Spouses have the same marital right to the property of the other spouse. The surviving spouse and the heirs of the deceased spouse may acquire half of the net property of the spouses (Ch. 2, secs. 35-39 of the Marriage Act).

Under the Code of Inheritance (1965, amendments up to 2001 included), women and men can construe a will in writing, with two witnesses present (Ch. 11, sec. 1). The spouse (wife or husband) does not have full inheritance rights if "the father, mother, brother or sister or a descendant of such a brother or sister of the first deceased spouse is alive, those of the said persons who at the time have the primary right to inherit the first deceased spouse shall receive one half of the estate of the surviving spouse" (Ch. 3, sec. 1 of the Code of Inheritance).

Sons and daughters receive an equal share of inheritance (Ch. 2, sec. 2 of the Code of Inheritance).

## **2. Restricted Physical integrity**

#### **a) Violence against women**

The Criminal Code (39/1889, amendments up to 766/2015 included) forbids numerous forms of violence, and the law applies to Finnish citizens even if the crimes committed, e.g., "forced marriage, female genital mutilation, or forced abortion or forced sterilization," were not committed in Finland (Sec. 11(8) of the Criminal Code).

Finland strived to prevent domestic violence through the Prevention of intimate partner and domestic violence Action Programme 2004- 2007, issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Moreover, there was a five-year National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women 2010-2015. Violence against women (VAW) was also one of the six priority areas via the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2012. According to the Committee Against Torture 2016, the goal included a unified

treatment chain for victims of domestic and sexual violence, such as medical, physical, mental and legal support (CAT, 2016).

Finland has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, reformed legislation on sexual offences, and committed to increasing its core funding to UN Women from 5 million to 7.5 million dollars (UN Women, 2012).

Despite these efforts, resources allocated towards the action plan were insufficient; there was no formal institutional mechanism to monitor progress, and public awareness of the issue was discussed in gender neutral language (CEDAW, 2014: 4).

Amnesty International recommended that Finland incorporate a permanent national government-sponsored action plan (Amnesty International, 2010). In 2008, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) expressed concern that VAW is still a widespread problem. CEDAW generally repeated its recommendations to the State party to pay more attention to the prevention of VAW in 2001, 2008 and 2014.

#### **b) Domestic violence**

The Child Welfare Act (No. 417/2007; amendments up to 1292/2013 included) and the Criminal Code 1889 protect victims from domestic and intimate partner violence. Under the Criminal Code 1889, violence that occurs in private is divided into three categories: petty assault, assault and grievous bodily injury. Petty assault is a plaintiff crime and requires the consent of the victim for the perpetrator to be punished, whereas the latter two are public prosecution crimes (Gender Violence Effects Indicators: 4-5).

Sexual assault occurring on private property became an impeachable offence in 1995. In 1997 victims received government-funded counselling and support services during their court cases (Amnesty International, 2010). According to the national report 'Gender Violence in Finland,' victims are entitled to a Right to Trial counsel once they have reported a crime to the police. Legal aid is disbursed through the State Legal Aid Offices, according to the financial circumstances of the victim. Moreover, the Service for Crime Victims provides trained support and free assistance in various phases of the court proceedings (Gender Violence Effects Indicators: 6).

The initiative for the Act on the Restraining Orders 1999 (4.12.1998/898) was initiated to protect women in intimate relationships, but under Finnish law it is possible to mediate sexual and intimate partner violence. Mediation and conciliation is often used in domestic violence cases, despite numerous recommendations from international bodies, as such procedures may lead to the re-victimization of women who have been victims of violence (CEDAW, 2014: 4).

The 2004-2007 project on preventing violence within intimate relationships and domestic violence received criticism for its short-term life. In response, the government of Finland made plans to establish a special cross administrative action plan to reduce violence against women (Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2008-2011).

### **c) Rape**

Rape is a criminal offence (Ch. 20, sec. 1 of the Criminal Code). Attempted rape or attempts at other sexual crimes are also liable to be punished. Finnish legislation criminalised marital rape in 1994 (no specific law indicated), being one of the last European countries to do so (Amnesty International, 2010).

The chapter on sexual offences in the Finnish Criminal Code 1889 has three categories of rape according to the severity of the crime, including: rape, aggravated rape and coercion into sexual intercourse. The last category is known as lesser degree rape, where no violence is used, and the offenses are only investigated at the victims' request. Therefore, charges of rape are dropped if the victim of rape or sexual abuse demands it so. Amnesty International Finland (2010) stressed that all sexual violence crimes should be prosecuted regardless of the victim's decision. Rape has a punishment for a maximum of six years' imprisonment, aggravated rape has a maximum of 10 years' imprisonment, and coercion has a maximum of four years' imprisonment or fines.

CEDAW critiqued Finland for not mentioning the concept of consent as an element of rape (CEDAW, 2014: 4). Instead, the inability to express or decide is included in the section defining sexual abuse. The gender-neutral formulations in the law has been criticised because most women are still raped due to their gender (Kainulainen, 2012: 265).

According to Amnesty International, rape is not often reported according to the police (Amnesty International, 2010). The rape cases that are reported and prosecuted are not always convicted as rape but rather as sexual assault/abuse, which is a lesser criminal offence. Punishment for sexual abuse is a fine or a maximum of four years' imprisonment (Ch. 20, sec. 5 of the Criminal Code). According to a prosecutor in the Crime Trends Yearbook 2006, when the court does not press charges in cases of rape, it's because there was 'no evidence.'

A study of female victimisation (2005) indicated that a large majority of Finnish women between the ages of 18 and 74 had been coerced into sexual activity, and, an even larger number of women were in a situation where they were unable to resist.

The State party acknowledged that a support system was needed for victims, and this was implemented into the legislative reform in 1999. There are services available for victims, such as 24-hour helpline services and rape crisis centres, however, according to multiple reports the support services are not sufficient (CEDAW, 2014: 5; Amnesty International, 2010).

### **d) Sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment is prohibited in national legislation (Secs. 7, 7(6), 7(7) of the Act on Equality). It is specifically prohibited in institutions, organisations, workplaces and in the provision of goods and services (Secs. 8b, 8c, 8d, and 8e of the Act on Equality).

The Criminal Code 1999 introduced stalking and sexual harassment as crimes (European Commission, 2016: 40). The State also stipulated an Act to provide compensation for public and private bodies operating shelters from state funds (Government Bill HE 155/2014). Experts criticised Finland's shelters as insufficient, and since 2014 the State pledged to make improvements.

Sexual offences are defined as sexual abuse, nevertheless, sexual intercourse largely remains the main form of sexual abuse (Amnesty International, 2010). The crime is categorised as sexual abuse when “a person abuses his/her position and entices another person into sexual intercourse or into another sexual act that is essentially violating his/her right of sexual self-determination” (Amnesty International, 2010: 93).

Sexual abuse can either induce public prosecution or complainant offence. If the victim is under the age of eighteen or is not mature enough to make a sexual decision, or if the person is dependent on the offender, it is considered a complainant offence (Amnesty International, 2010).

#### **e) Female genital mutilation**

Although there is no explicit provision in national legislation criminalizing the practice of FGM (CEDAW, 2014: 4), all forms of female genital mutilation (FGM) can be treated as crimes in the Criminal code, including assault (Ch. 21, sec. 5), aggravated assault (Sec. 6) and minor assault (Sec. 7). Prevalence of FGM in Finland can be seen in the data obtained from the Migrant Health and Well Being Study carried out in 2010-2012, where the clear majority of women effected by FGM were among women of Somali and Kurdish origin. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality 2011-2012, there has been no criminal procedures on FGM initiated thus far (no up to date information found between 2013-2017). This is likely since authorities have a margin of discretion when it comes to pursuing criminal proceedings, because the Finnish legal system distinguishes between private prosecution and public prosecution (Europa, 2015: 29).

Female genital mutilation is included and discussed in strategies and action plans addressing: children’s rights, sexual and reproductive health, violence against women/intimate partner violence/domestic violence and internal security (EIGE, 2012: 52).

The National Action Plan 2012 on female genital mutilation (FGM), referred to as The Action Plan for the Prevention of Circumcision of Girls and Women 2012-2016, was issued by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health, in collaboration with Finnish League for Human Rights, and National Institute for Health and Welfare (EIGE, 2012: 100).

The Promotion of sexual and reproductive health Action programme 2007–2011 was issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which recommended counselling and care for victims of FGM (EIGE, 2012: 105).

The Action Plan to reduce Violence against Women 2010-2015, issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, sought to development a National Action Plan on FGM in the chapter on Violence against ethnic minorities (EIGE, 2012: 105).

The Programme for Internal Security 2008, issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, specified that there is no need for special criminalisation of FGM, and recommended to focus on prevention of FGM in schools and healthcare instead (EIGE, 2012: 105).

#### **f) Abortion**

Abortion is legal under a broad range of circumstances in the Act on Termination of Pregnancy 1970. In general, a woman may seek an abortion for social, emotional, medical or criminal reasons under certain conditions. Abortion up to 20 weeks of the pregnancy is legal if there is a risk to the physical

health of the woman or if she is under 17. The procedure can be performed up to 24 weeks if there is foetal inviability (Art. 5a). After week 12, an abortion may not be permitted due to a pre-existing illness of the woman (Art. 5). Depending on the context, an abortion either requires the consent of two medical physicians or the consent of the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs (Art. 6). All abortions are performed by a licensed physician at a hospital, or outside of a hospital if there is urgency (Arts. 8 and 9).

Abortion is performed at the request of the mother (Art. 1) and she must provide a reason for seeking to terminate her pregnancy. However, the father may impact the decision by offering his views, “if there are special reasons that warrant doing so” (Art. 7, par. 1).

### *More*

Prostitution is legal in Finland and there is no indication that the State party has made efforts to reduce the demand for prostitution (CEDAW, 2014: 6).

Social partners in the state party have the right to bring sex discrimination to the Non-Discrimination and Equality Board, draft legislation on issues concerning working life and these agreements have strong influence on gender equality law (European Commission, 2016: 43).

Chapter 20 of the Criminal Code 1889 includes penal provisions for the sexual abuse of children.

Amnesty International has an international campaign to Stop Violence Against Women (SVAW) in Finland, also known as ‘joku raja!’

The existence of an effective national action plan in every EU Member State is one of the main goals of the Council of Europe’s (CoE) Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including domestic violence (2006).

Finland has signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210). The following international conventions were also ratified: UDHR, the CEDAW, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, CAT, CRC and ECHR.

## **3. Restricted Access to productive and financial resources**

### **a) Secure access to land and assets**

The law provides women with the same rights as men to own and use land (Secs. 6 and 15 of the Constitution) (Secs. 36-38 of the Marriage Act) and property (Ch. 2, secs. 34-40a of the Marriage Act). After divorce, the law provides for an equal distribution procedure of property (Ch. 2, secs. 98-102 of the Marriage Act).

Joint ownership of land by registered partners is stipulated under the general provisions of the Finnish Act on Certain Joint Ownership (180/1958). The Finnish Act on Residential Leases (S. 53) apply to couples who jointly rent an apartment. The Finnish Act on the Dissolution of the Household of Cohabiting Partners (26/2011) pertain to couples who jointly own assets.

## **b) Secure access to formal financial resources**

Sex as an actuarial factor in the calculation of premiums and benefits in consumer insurances is prohibited (Ch. 31, sec. 10 of the Act on Insurance Companies (521/2008)).

Women and men have the same rights to obtain credit (Sec. 8e of the Act on Equality) and open a bank account (no specific law indicated). Women do not need permission from their husbands or legal guardian to choose a profession or register a business (Sec. 18 of the Constitution).

The State Pensions Act 1295/2006, Municipal Pensions Act 549/2003, Employees' Pensions Act 395/2006, and Municipal Pensions Act 549/2003 define gender equality concerning pensions (European Commission, 2016: 6).

## **c) Workplace rights**

The Equal Pay Programme 2015 aimed to reduce the gender pay gap since women in Finland still earn considerably less than men (CEDAW, 2014: 7). The difference in wages may be in part explained by the fact that more women work in the public sector, while more men work in the private sector (Wikigender, 2015). The concept of pay is not defined in national legislation, but equal pay is stipulated under Section 6(4) of the Constitution, and under Section 8 of the Act on Equality 1986.

According to the Act on Equality between Women and Men (1986/609), Section 1 prevents discrimination based on gender or sex, particularly in the workplace. Direct (Sec. 7 (2)) and indirect (Sec. 7 (3)) discrimination are prohibited. It contains provisions on the prohibitions of discrimination: in working life (Sec. 8), of victimisation (Sec. 8a) and harassment at the workplace (Sec. 8e). Punishment includes compensation to the victim of discrimination (European Commission, 2016: 9). Discrimination on other grounds is prohibited by the Non-discrimination Act 2004 (European Commission, 2016: 13).

The law mandates non-discrimination based on sex in employment. Legislation specifically covers: job advertisements (Sec. 7 of the Act on Equality), selection criteria (Sec. 6, subsect. 2(1) of the Act on Equality), recruitment (Sec 6, subsect. 2(2) of the Act on Equality), hiring (Ch. 47, sec. 3(1) of the Criminal Code), terms and conditions (Sec. 6, subsect. 2(3) of the Act on Equality), promotions (Ch. 47, sec. 3(1), training (Sec. 6, subsect. 2(2) of the Act on Equality), assignments (Ch. 47, sec. 3(1) of the Criminal Code) and termination (Ch. 47, sec. 3(1) of the Criminal Code).

Women may receive up to 17.5 weeks or 105 weekdays (weekdays are from Monday to Saturday) of paid maternity leave (Ch. 4, sec. 1 of the Employment Contracts Act). The allowance during maternity leave (the entitlement begins when a woman has been pregnant for 154 days) calculated on the basis of former income from work is higher than the sickness leave benefits for approximately 9 weeks of the maternity leave, being 90 % of the yearly income up to EUR 50 606, and then 32,5 % (European Commission, 2016). After that, the benefits are similar to the sickness leave benefits, or 70 % of the income (European Commission, 2016; Health Insurance Act, Chapter 11, Section 1). Chapter 4 of the Employment Contracts Act 2001/55 stipulates family-related leaves including maternity leave, and Chapter 9 of the Sickness Insurance Act 2004/1224 contains provisions on the benefits during leave. According to Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, women have the freedom to choose their pregnancy leave about 5-8 weeks before the estimated date of delivery.

Since legislative reform in 2013, the total duration of paternity leave is 54 weekdays (European Commission, 2016). Fathers can take up to 18 weekdays of paternity leave during the mother's parental or maternity leave period, and the remaining 36 days need to be taken when the mother is not on pregnancy leave (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2013).

The duration of parental leave is 158 weekdays (European Commission, 2016). Additionally, paid parental leave can be split between both parents (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2013). Despite this, there was a much higher percentage of women taking parental leave, and there were concerns over reports of illegal dismissals of women due to pregnancy and maternity leave (CEDAW, 2014: 7).

Recommendation 9 from the Corporate Governance Code for Finnish listed companies (2010) stipulates that both sexes are to be represented in company boards (European Commission, 2016: 15). Authorities have a duty to guarantee gender equality (Sec. 4). Section 4a includes a gender quota provision for municipal bodies to be at least 40 percent, however there are no quotas for elected bodies. Section 6a obliges employers with a minimum of 30 employees to produce an equality plan concerning pay and other conditions of employment every other year (European Commission, 2016: 14).

In sex discrimination cases, the burden of proof is shifted (Sec. 9a of the Equality Act). Alleged victims of discrimination may seek compensation under the Act on Torts, the Act on Equality, labour legislation, or administrative-law remedies (European Commission, 2016: 41).

### *More*

Protection of pregnant women and childbirth is not to be considered as gender discrimination (Sec. 9 (1) of the Act on Equality).

The State Pensions Act 1295/2006, Municipal Pensions Act 549/2003, Employees' Pensions Act 395/2006, and Municipal Pensions Act 549/2003 define gender equality concerning pensions (European Commission, 2016: 6).

Women's participation in the labour market is almost equivalent to men's (Wikigender, 2015). Most women, including mothers, work full time due to the extensive State system of childcare (Wikigender, 2015). There is a presence of traditional values and gender stereotypes that attribute to the choice of profession between women and men (CEDAW, 2014: 7).

According to the Finnish Barometer both women and men were supportive of the two-provider family model (Wikigender, 2015).

Statistical evidence was used in Finland to determine a premise of indirect sex discrimination. In the case TT:1998-34, a judgement of the Labour Court on indirect discrimination established that both maternity leave and parental leave were to be counted as time to be considered for the calculation of pay benefits. The statistical fact that women use their right to parental leave more often than men was used to establish indirect discrimination (European Commission, 2016: 11).

## 4. Restricted Civil liberties

### a) Citizenship rights

Finnish citizenship acquisition is based primarily on the legal principle of *jus sanguinis*. Citizenship may be acquired by birth, marriage of parents, adoption, the place of birth, by application or by declaration to authorities (Wikigender, 2015).

Under the Nationality Act (359/2003; amendments up to 974/2007 included), women and men may acquire, change and retain their citizenship (Secs. 13, 34, 35, 37, 38, and 40) (Sec. 5 of the Constitution). A child generally acquires citizenship at birth through one or both parents. Married women and men may confer nationality to their children (Sec. 9) and spouses (Sec. 22). A local registration office records all births in the Population Information System immediately (US State Government, 2016). A paternity test is required if a child was born outside marriage and the father was a Finnish citizen (Sec. 9).

Women and men have equal rights to apply for identity cards under Art. 2 of the Personal Identification Card Act (28.7.1999/829), and passports under the Passport Act (21.7.2006/671), parents may acquire passports and travel documents for their children (Ch. 1, secs. 3 and 24). Documents required to apply for a national identity card can range from the name, date of birth, family relations and other personal data (Sec. 6).

Women and men have equal rights to travel (Sec. 9 of the Constitution).

### b) Voting

Everyone who is not under guardianship has the right to vote and run as a candidate in parliament (Sec. 27 of the Constitution).

Finnish women were the first in the world to fully exercise their civil liberties to vote and stand for election in 1906 (The Embassy of Finland, 2006).

### c) Political voice

Women and men have equal rights to hold public and political office, including legislature, executive and judiciary (Secs. 27, 38 and 54 of the Constitution) (Sec. 11 of the Code of Judicial Procedure).

Although there are no quotas or temporary special measures implemented for political bodies, Finland has a high track record for women working in the Parliament, Government and in the European Parliament (Wikigender, 2015). However, there is a low percentage of women in decision-making positions in the private sector (CEDAW, 2014: 6).

The State made efforts to improve its framework by adopting The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2012-2015, "to strengthen the management structures of gender mainstreaming within the Government, including through the development of a handbook to support gender equality work within Finnish Ministries and the introduction of several training projects and briefings on gender mainstreaming for civil servants" (CEDAW, 2014: 3). Despite this there is a lack of adequate human, technical and budgetary resources (CEDAW, 2014: 3).

An agenda initiative has been in use since 2012. The Finnish Constitution (1999) added Section 53(3) on the citizens' initiative, which allows an agenda initiative to be presented to Parliament by 50, 000 citizens, in a manner further regulated by the Act on the Citizens' Initiative 12/2012.

At the local level, special committees or ad hoc-working groups have been established to advance equality issues within the region. Some of the committees have produced equality plans for the community, including the Helsinki City Equality Plan (Gender Equality Creates Democracy, 2003-2006).

In 2014 Finland pledged to incorporate a gender perspective and the promotion of gender equality in the Government Report on Democratic Policy (UN Women, 2012).

#### **d) Access to justice**

Legislation on specific equal treatment is in the Act on Equality between Women and Men (1986/609) (Sec. 7), and it is the main legislative instrument to implement EU directives in Finnish law. There are equality bodies that monitors the Act on Equality and sex discrimination, including: The Equality Ombudsman and the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal of Finland. The Discrimination Tribunal and former Gender Equality Board monitors the Act on Equality between women and men on all other grounds besides sex/gender (European Commission, 2016: 42).

Finland increased the country's annual contribution to UN Women from four million euros to six million euros to enhance women's access to justice (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland, 2012).

There is no legal barrier to access to courts, but there may be de facto discrimination due to excessive costs. Interest groups and other legal entities associated with anti-discrimination causes do not have a formal standing in legal cases, but they may assist a complainant. Legal aid for alleged victims of gender discrimination is provided by public legal aid offices for low income persons only (European Commission, 2016: 42).

Discrimination is criminalized under the Criminal Code 1889 (Ch. 11, sec. 11). The Equality Ombudsman offers advice regarding the alleged discrimination (Sec. 19 of the Act on Equality). The right to compensation is provided within two years after the violation has occurred (Sec. 12 of the Equality Act). However, compensation may be reduced or removed if the economic situation of the violator is insufficient (Sec. 11 of the Equality Act).

#### **More**

Although the Human Rights Centre operates as part of the parliamentary Ombudsman's office, the Centre does not have authority to investigate individual human rights abuses (US State Government, 2016). CEDAW raised concerns regarding the State's monitoring and awareness raising capabilities (CEDAW, 2014).

Antidiscrimination policies and the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations is legislated by the Ministry of Justice's Unit for Democracy, Language Affairs, and Fundamental Rights. The parliamentary Constitutional Law Committee monitors compliance with international human rights conventions, particularly with legislation relating to criminal and procedural law, the courts and the prison system.

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