

Reply of Finland to the OHCHR's request for information on how protecting and promoting human rights contribute to preventing and countering violent extremism

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland would like to express its thanks for the opportunity to provide information to the OHCHR's request for information on how protecting and promoting human rights contribute to preventing and countering violent extremism. The information was gathered with assistance from the Ministry of Employment and Economy, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the National Institute for Health and Welfare, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional authorities and the cities of Helsinki and Jyväskylä.

Violent extremism is not a new phenomenon, and Finland has been working to counter it for decades. However, violent extremism has increased rapidly in recent years and has gained new forms. Moreover, it has become evident that security-based counter-terrorism measures alone are not sufficient, and need to be complemented by a more comprehensive approach. We need to widen and deepen our cooperation further, with more **emphasis on prevention**. Prevention should be used as a proactive approach with real potential for both addressing immediate security concerns and for achieving sustainable long-term results.

The increasing instances of religious intolerance, discrimination and violence in many countries have to be noted with deep concern. The active **promotion and protection of the freedom of religion or belief** is a key. Freedom of religion and belief is a human right that we have agreed upon in the universal declaration of human rights and in a good number of international conventions. These rights also carry with them the responsibility to respect the human rights of others. This requires tolerance both at collective and individual levels.

Experience also shows that there is a correlation between gender equality and a decrease in violent extremism. Societies with an aim of gender equality and inclusiveness and wide participation of the entire population are less prone to violent extremism. Here **women's empowerment** and ensuring women's full participation in decision-making are especially essential when it comes to preventing violent extremism.

Violent extremism is often related also to the injustices or lack of opportunities that have been felt in the society. The more the human rights enshrined in the international Covenants are enforced in a society, the less likely are the feelings of powerlessness among its members. Government policies promoting employment and integration can promote social inclusion and participation, which are key elements in preventing extremism. After all, those who have joined radical groups include well-educated and employed people, and their motives are also related to foreign and development policy, for example.

Human rights education

Human rights education is a crucial requirement for development and ultimately, also the actual realization thereof. In Finland, human rights education and training is implemented in various ways and in several sectors. As a result of the increasing significance of fundamental and human rights, the authorities need improved capabilities for recognising fundamental and human rights questions and familiarity with these rights in national, European and international activities alike. This sets requirements on the fundamental and human rights competence of both the authorities and public elected officials as well as on the drafting processes of the authorities. As stated in the Government of Finland Human Rights Report 2014¹, education and training related to fundamental and human rights should be stepped up. Both the citizens and public actors should have adequate knowledge of the rights contained in international and regional human rights treaties, EU law and national

¹ <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=324091&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>

fundamental rights provisions, and of their possibilities to appeal to these rights. The quality of the current fundamental and human rights education and training can be improved by better coordinating the training provided by various authorities and by enabling cross-administrative participation in training events.

The Human Rights Centre plays a central part in developing human rights education and training. The competence of NGOs should also be efficiently drawn upon. According to a study by the Human Rights Centre in Finland (2013), the teaching of human rights norms and mechanisms is still relatively limited. Non-governmental organizations provide expert support also in the field of human rights and democracy education. The upcoming 100th anniversary of Finland's independence in 2017 will offer an opportunity to spread awareness about fundamental and human rights as an example of how Finnish society and its form of life have developed. During the anniversary year, an extensive information campaign could be implemented in educational institutions to highlight the significance of civil freedoms, other human rights, diversity and tolerance, both now and in the future. Developing fundamental and human rights education and training should be part of the following National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights. A report drawn up by the Human Rights Centre and a study commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture on how objectives and contents related to democracy and human rights are approached in teacher education, provided by professional teacher education units, lay a good foundation for preparing action plans.

Perhaps the best way to encourage feelings of belonging and cohesion within a society is to empower children and youth via education. A concrete example of strengthening the work around prevention of violent extremism through the promotion of human rights has been taken by the Youth Department of the city of Helsinki. In cooperation with Youth Departments in other Finnish cities and HUMAK University of Applied Sciences, as well as The Finnish League for Human Rights, they are currently developing a course for youth workers to increase their knowledge and understanding of human rights. With the new human rights course being developed the aim is to give youth workers tools to tackle new challenges brought on by the migration crisis, have discussions and dialogues with youth around migration and human rights. To lessen talk about us and them, decrease feelings of exclusion and preventing polarization and conflicts that arise from it. Putting human rights in the center also focuses on teaching youth to see the world through different perspectives. Every youth worker is expected to complete the course, thus contributing to bringing a stronger human rights perspective to youth work.

Promotion of Immigrant Integration

It can be concluded in general that successful integration prevents marginalisation and, consequently, violent radicalization. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy is responsible for promoting integration and good ethnic relations as provided in the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010). The purpose of the Act is to support and promote integration and make it easier for immigrants to play an active role in Finnish society. Another purpose of the Act is to promote equality, non-discrimination and positive interaction between different population groups. It also defines the obligations of national, regional and local authorities in achieving these objectives.

Local authorities have a key role to play in promoting integration and preventing social exclusion. Their measures aim to support internationalisation, equality and non-discrimination at local or regional levels, and to promote positive interaction between different population groups. Another aim is to promote good ethnic relations, dialogue between cultures and participation of immigrant groups, and to support the opportunities of immigrants to preserve their own language and culture. Local authorities must promote integration through multi-sectoral cooperation and draw up together with civil society and other actors an integration program for promoting integration and strengthening multi-sectoral cooperation. This program must include plans for the promotion of the integration and social empowerment of children and young people and of groups outside the workforce, and

a plan for the promotion of good ethnic relations and dialogue between cultures. It is believed that these elements also bring added value to the prevention of violent radicalization.

For individuals and families, the most important thing is that they can participate in planning their integration path by drawing up with the authorities, a personalised or family-specific integration plan. Integration plans for minors are drawn up where their individual circumstances so require. An integration plan is always made for unaccompanied minors, who are vulnerable targets for recruitment to radical groups. The aim is to identify the vulnerability of their situation and the support measures required, and to monitor the integration process.

Government Integration Program

The Government decides every four years on measures to be taken by different ministries to promote integration. The Government Integration Program for 2016–2019 is being prepared. It will outline the objectives, measures and resource allocations for the following four focus areas in line with the priorities of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government Program and government migration policies:

1. Promoting a humane national discussion culture that will not tolerate racism
2. Using immigrants' cultural strengths to enhance Finnish innovation capacity
3. Enhancing integration through cross-sectional measures
4. Enhancing cooperation between the State and municipalities in the reception of beneficiaries of international protection

It is believed that successful implementation of the Government Integration Program contributes to the prevention of violent radicalization. Measures aimed at promoting a humane discussion culture and preventing, identifying and intervening in racism, in particular, are crucial to inclusion and participation and the prevention of social exclusion.

Along with the Government Integration Program, competent ministries have been preparing an integration partnership program with municipalities, immigrant organisations and other non-governmental organisations, labour market organisations and other key actors. Various actors involved have made initiatives in the focus areas of the Government Integration Program, and commitments to implement integration partnerships. The integration partnership program will be a continuous process of encouraging partnerships to be maintained by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. The Government Integration Program for 2016–2019 and the integration partnership program will be published simultaneously in spring 2016.

National Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism

In 2012 the Government drew up an action plan called **Towards a Cohesive Society - National Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism**. It seeks to identify and prevent violent acts aimed at promoting extremist ideas or ideologies as prevention of violent extremism is a key part of strengthening our democratic system. The Action Plan sets out 12 measures to achieve the set objectives. These measures include, inter alia, piloting an operating model that enables fast access to health care services for individuals assessed as being at high risk of committing violent acts against other people and increasing low-threshold services provided by organisations, such as mentoring, to support an individual in relinquishing violent ideas and fantasies about acts of violence. The implementation and effect of these measures are monitored and reported on regularly. The Action Plan of 2012 was monitored in 2013 and is currently being updated by the Ministry of the Interior. The reports and results from the first Action Plan were published in 2013. **According to the results, more focus should be placed on the actual prevention of extremism instead of merely concentrating on counter-terroristic activities.** Furthermore, the report recommended spreading more widely the good experiences from multi-agency early intervention methods which were included in the Action Plan.

The second national Action Plan will be published in 2016. **Finland has a National Cooperation Network for preventing violent radicalization and extremism: members are police, intelligence service, representatives of different ministries, local authorities and different communities.** Further, there are local cooperation networks with the task of preventing violent radicalization and extremism in Helsinki, Turku and Oulu. These networks include representatives from the local authorities in the fields of education, health, social work and youth work.

The Action Plan 2016-2020 will cover at least the following subjects: Best practices, Finnish Exit-program - Radinet, Helpline-service, hate crime, virtual community policing. The plan will present the following steps forward:

- Developing capability to prevent violent extremism in all parts of the country
- Anchor teams in all police districts, cooperation network, officials specialized in preventing violent extremism (police, mental health, social work, youth work)
- Interventions targeted to individuals, prevention targeted to groups, communities and areas.
- Developing skills in education sector, health and social sector and in the police
- Preventing travelling to conflict zones, reducing risk of violence regarding the returnees
- More focus on right wing extremism: the Finnish Resistance Movement

New measures to be included in the Action Plan:

- Supporting families
- Cooperation with young people, religious communities and Muslim communities, NGOs
- Language and communication: Round table discussions with the media
- Developing research and information products

The Importance of Non-Governmental Organizations

The Ministry of Employment and the Economy grants discretionary government transfers for projects implemented by non-governmental organisations in 2016–2019 that aim to coordinate voluntary activities or enhance the expertise of local associations. The beneficiaries of funded projects include young immigrants, who are also active participants in many projects.

The good practice for which a number of these projects receive funding is to identify the role, knowledge and skills of immigrant communities themselves, especially of young immigrants, in voluntary activities that support integration. The aim is to share models where young people themselves provide newcomers with peer support. The identification of the involvement of young immigrants enables to give them a role and connect them more closely with local communities, which is believed to prevent radicalization. Another good practice is a gender-sensitive approach to integration that aims to identify different challenges faced by young men, in particular, in the integration process and as part of the ethnic community. Some projects also recognise the vital importance of the family in young people's integration and wellbeing and, with this in mind, the aim to strengthen the role of parents in supporting the development of teenagers.

Practical measures to promote the education and employment of young people

Inclusion and participation of especially young immigrants can be supported by promoting coherent education, training and employment pathways, and ensuring the availability of personal guidance and support especially in transition phases. In accordance with the principles of **the youth guarantee**, the employment and economic development administration will offer all young people under the age of 25 and recent graduates aged 25–29, including young immigrants, services promoting employment that meet their needs (a job, a traineeship or a study place, or a period in a workshop or rehabilitation) within three months of them becoming unemployed.

In Finland, the national basic education core curriculum (determined by the National Board of Education) emphasizes human rights and the respect of human dignity in many ways. Teaching and learning is based on equality and cultural diversity and it aims at promoting democracy and active citizenship. All schools providing basic education are obliged to have a plan of protecting pupils from harassment and school bullying as well as to foster diversity and tackle discrimination. The Ministry of Education and Culture has supported the **Kivakoulu ("Nice school") program** aimed at reducing school bullying. About 90% of all comprehensive schools in Finland (ca. 2500 schools) are registered users of the program and they have reached good results. The University of Turku coordinates and develops the program (since 2011).

Local authorities are responsible for measures linked to education and culture. The Ministry of Education and Culture is allocating money for the training of teachers on how to identify pupils at risk and for practical exercises for teachers. **On the level of education providers in municipalities, each education provider can locate the student groups of instruction preparing for basic education in the same schools than the Finnish students to enhance the integration with Finnish citizens.** This instruction is intended for those pupils of immigrant backgrounds whose Finnish or Swedish language skills and/or other abilities are not sufficient to study in a pre-primary or basic education group. The preparatory instruction takes place for about 12 months, but within that time the pupils can and will also integrate into Finnish- or Swedish-language teaching groups in pre-primary or basic education corresponding with their own age, in the manner determined in each pupil's personal study program, usually starting with arts and sports. Pupils participating in instruction are entitled to transfer to basic education even prior to fulfilling the required timing, provided that they are able to keep up in basic education.

In basic education schools try to bond the immigrant students with their own age group even though they would not be academically ready to study with their own age group. In their pedagogical arrangements, schools take into account the fact that learners are different in terms of age, learning abilities and background and that individual pupils' teaching arrangements are planned and instruction is differentiated according to their age and developmental phase. Instruction provided with support in pupils' native languages will promote absorption of different subject contents. There are also many different informal extra curriculum activities to increase friendship with the same age group, such as sports and arts clubs etc.

Multi-sectoral cooperation between local actors, and networks bringing together public, private and third sector actors also contribute to meeting the needs of young immigrants and directing them to education. With funding under the European Social Fund in the programming period 2014-2020, **a low-threshold one-stop service for young people across the country ('Ohjaamo')** has been developed. Besides public services of different authorities, this service covers voluntary and third sector activities and business cooperation. It aims to offer personal guidance and advice, and support for life management, career planning, development of social skills and abilities, and for education and employment. In 2015, the service was introduced in a number of municipalities. It can also support young immigrants by providing them with low-threshold individual guidance and advice.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy will reform **integration training offered as part of labour market training.** The aim is to make it more working-life-oriented and adopt models combining language and vocational education more widely. Work-oriented educational models can also accelerate education and employment pathways for young adult immigrants. In addition, the results of job coaching especially directed at young immigrants have been promising in terms of promoting their employment.

Practical measures to promote health and social welfare

According to the Constitution of Finland, those who cannot obtain the means necessary for a life of dignity have the right to receive indispensable subsistence and care. Everyone shall be guaranteed by an Act the right to basic subsistence in the event of unemployment, illness and disability and during old age as well as at the birth of a

child or the loss of a provider. The public authorities shall guarantee for everyone, as provided in more detail by an Act, adequate social, health and medical services and promote the health of the population. Moreover, the public authorities shall support families and others responsible for providing for children so that they have the ability to ensure the wellbeing and personal development of the children. The public authorities shall promote the right of everyone to housing and the opportunity to arrange their own housing.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient social and health services and that people have an adequate income at all stages of life as provided for in the Constitution. The Finnish social and health policy aims to prevent poverty and violence and substance abuse. Actions focus on preventive measures. Social insurance and social security aim to ensure that no-one falls through the net. **Equality, inclusive measures, income support and universal, functioning services as well as measures aimed at preventing violence and substance abuse are essential in preventing social exclusion, which may lead to radicalization and violent extremism.** Traditionally, the approach to counter violent extremism has concentrated on recognizing and controlling of potential individual extremists. This approach has recently been balanced with a more holistic view on crime prevention with a strong basis in human rights promotion. The weight of the latter should however still be increased.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for matters concerning the welfare and health of immigrants living in Finland. The Ministry deals with the basic security of immigrants, essential social and health services, in terms of integration and other forms of support. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Strategy for social and health policy stresses the inclusion of the special needs of immigrants in the development of social and health care services as well as social and health care as a means of supporting the integration of immigrants and their families into Finnish society, in order to improve their chances of employment and studying.

In 2012, the Government of Finland adopted a Resolution on the third Internal Security Program, whose title is A Safer Tomorrow. The objective set out in the Government Program is to make Finland the safest country in Europe, one in which people feel that they live in a fair and equal society regardless of how they identify themselves. The approach of the Program is intersectoral, which outlines the idea that security challenges should be addressed widely. According to the view of the National Institute for Health and Welfare, questions related to the Finnish welfare state can substantially either prevent or, when lacking, create a basis for the growth of radicalization within the society. Therefore, increasing the welfare of the people by building the society through means of human rights education and social policies, such as preventing marginalization, are inherently linked with countering violent extremism.

The purpose of social services is to promote wellbeing and security, to reduce inequality and to promote inclusion and participation. For example social rehabilitation, family work and family guidance clinics offer means to support the balanced development and wellbeing of children and to prevent their social exclusion. **Functioning social services prevent social polarization, help those in need of support, and for their part prevent radicalization and extremism.** For example the family center service model is being developed as part of the current Government Program to produce early support services in a coordinated way, including taking account of the special needs of immigrants. Implementation of the family center service model requires wide cross-sectoral coordination in municipalities, systematic steering structures and integrative management of services as well as negotiated agreements with NGOs and other partners. The objective of the youth guarantee is to help young people gain access to education and employment. Successful execution of the youth guarantee requires cooperation among national and municipal authorities, the business sector and organisations. Methods of implementing the guarantee include measures related to the educational guarantee, employment services for youth and rehabilitation services, including municipal social and health care services and other individual services for young people, such as youth outreach work and youth workshop activities. One of the principles of the youth guarantee is that young people are heard and allowed to influence the course of their life.

The youth receive personalised guidance and advice in accordance with their own needs at '**One-Stop-Guidance Centers**', which are easily accessible low-threshold services, being set up all over Finland. Also under preparation is a nationwide internet-based guidance service for youth. The One-Stop-Guidance Centers are aimed at those aged under 30 and for which no referral is required. At the One-Stop-Guidance Center young people receive personalised guidance and advice, as well as the support appropriate to their own situation. For example, the support can be connected with life management, career planning, social skills and abilities, or educating oneself and finding employment.

Other measures to prevent violent extremism

One of the noted good practices is called the **Anchor team –model (Ankkuri -toimintamalli)**, which focuses on early intervention in the criminal behavior of offenders under the age of 18 as well as their experiences of domestic violence. The primary goal of this method is to offer an immediate and inclusive intervention to the situation of a young person struggling to get his/her life under control. The Anchor-team consists of a police officer, a social worker, a psychiatric nurse and a youth worker. For the professionals, working as a team on the case enables a comprehensive approach to offering simultaneous support to the young perpetrator of a crime and/or its victims. As a result of positive outcomes, this method is being currently spread nationwide.

The purpose of **Outreach youth work (Etsivä nuorisotyö)** is to help those under 29-year-old young people who are left outside the education or labor market, and who need support in reaching public sector services or with committing to an available service, or who are at risk of social exclusion. Methods of the outreach youth work can include street work, detached youth work, mobile youth work or outreach youth work depending on target groups and environments. The Finnish Youth Act has laid down provisions on outreach youth work and multi-disciplinary cooperation at local level since 2011.

Several non-governmental organizations provide expert services which complement existing governmental crisis services for men who have resorted to using violence. These services include peer group discussions and private sessions with an anti-violence worker. Such services are provided by several organizations from slightly varying backgrounds and approaches. The most prominent ones aiming to break violent behavioral patterns are **Lyömätön linja Espossa ry** and **Miessakit ry** in the Capital city region. The first has also a culturally sensitive service specializing in immigrant men.

Another non-governmental organization focusing on young clients is **Helsinki Missio**, with its low threshold program **Aggredi**. **Aggredi** program is financed by RAY (Finland's Slot Machine Association). It focuses on the offenders of street violence. The aim of the program is to create a system based on partnership and collaboration that enables a fast and efficient intervention in the lives of young adults that have drifted to problems due to violence. The aim is to break away destructive patterns and to make way for new opportunities and behavioral patterns within the target group.

The city of Jyväskylä has started an **EU project called "Kotona Jyväskylässä" (2016-2018)**. The project aims at improving the integration of immigrants by using a model of initial assessment and integration plan, increasing the level of knowledge on the Finnish society and work life, providing career counselling in a special "Poluttamo" method. The aim is to develop immigrants' language skills and give them personalized counselling on job search as well as to create a platform for local immigrant entrepreneurs for sharing experiences. The project also aims at networking local actors in order for a more comprehensive view on the roles and functioning of the different actors in view of integration as well as a more efficient way of working together.