



OHCHR-cerd@un.org

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NHRI contribution for the preparation of List of Themes 2026

This document contains observations by the Finnish Human Rights Centre (HRC¹, NHRI) to the CERD-committee for the preparation of List of Themes-document to be used for the formal dialogue with the Government of Finland during the Committee's 118th session in August 2026.

Reference is made to other recent observations made by the NHRI to UN Committees

- [CAT - 8th periodic report – NHRI submission for follow up](#) (24 July 2025)
- [CED - NHRI submission for the LOI in 2025](#) (12 June 2025)

Should you have any further questions or need for additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us at leena.leikas@parliament.fi

This document can be published on the Committee's website.

The Human Rights Centre will attend the informal meetings as well as the formal dialogue in August 2026, making also an oral statement, if permitted. We will register in due course for the said meetings and statements.

Jarna Petman
Director

Leena Leikas
Senior Expert

¹ The Human Rights Centre represents the Finnish National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in international NHRI cooperation and other international and European cooperation in human rights. The NHRI comprises the Human Rights Centre, its pluralistic 39-member Human Rights Delegation, and the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman. The institution complies with the UN Paris Principles and the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI) accredited it with A-status in 2014, 2019 and 2025.

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Introduction

1. The National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the List of Themes to be used during the examination of Finland’s combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).
2. Since the submission of the State party’s report in 2021, especially during the current Government since 2023, significant legislative and policy developments have taken place, particularly in the areas of migration, asylum, anti-racism policy, and equality measures. At the same time, substantial budget cuts have affected all sectors of public administration as well as civil society actors.
3. Racism and hate speech have increased, including their acceptance in public discourse, weakening the impact of positive policy measures. Employment levels have declined, while the cost of living has risen. Cuts to social benefits, services and health care have reduced their accessibility and adequacy. Funding reductions have also severely affected non-governmental organisations that have hitherto provided a wide variety of essential support and services to the civil society.
4. The gradual weakening of the welfare system is contributing to growing marginalisation. This, in turn, creates conditions that foster racism, hate speech, and disregard for individuals perceived as less economically

productive. These developments risk undermining societal wellbeing and internal security.

Coherence between obligations and policy/actions

5. The NHRI has repeatedly stressed the need for the Government's policies and actions to be fully consistent with its fundamental and human rights obligations. However, progress is often limited to formal commitments, with insufficient implementation in practice. At present, little progress is visible even at the policy level, particularly in tackling discrimination and racism.
6. Respect for international human rights obligations appears to have weakened. Although the Government has initiated an [annual discussion](#) on recommendations from human rights monitoring bodies—held twice so far—there is limited evidence that these discussions have led to improved respect for those obligations.

Recent developments on racism and hate speech in Finland

7. The Government has made several public commitments to combat racism and hate speech. However, at the same time, some Government ministers and Members of Parliament have continued to use discriminatory and hostile rhetorics in public and political discourse, whether in the media, on social media or during parliamentary debates.
8. Inappropriate or even unlawful behaviour has been tolerated in order to advance Government policies that are explicitly right-wing in that they are designed to benefit corporations, investors and high-income earners over those in need. Public debate on these issues, including increasing inequality and social division, remains limited.
9. The NHRI notes that, following public controversies and racism-related scandals involving several Government ministers in 2023, the Government has adopted a number of measures to combat racism. These include a [Government statement to Parliament on promoting equality and non-discrimination](#) (2023), an [Action Plan to Combat Racism and Promote Equality](#) (2024) and public pledges, including an [anti-racism campaign](#), by Government representatives to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to racism. However, these initiatives have faced opposition from within the Government itself.
10. While these commitments are welcome, their effective and consistent implementation remains a concern, particularly in light of restrictive developments in migration and asylum policies.
11. It is also noteworthy that at the level of the European Union, infringement proceedings against Finland remain ongoing (as of 2021) due to shortcomings in the transposition of the [EU Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia](#), particularly regarding the definition of hate speech in the Finnish

Penal Code. The process has stalled due to political disagreement within the Government, and no progress is expected before the 2027 elections.

12. In 2025, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance published its sixth monitoring [report](#) on Finland, urging the Finnish authorities to take action in several areas and making recommendations to improve the human rights situation. ECRI's recommendations address de facto equality and access to rights, hate speech and hate crimes, and integration and inclusion. The Government is urged to develop a detailed programme of concrete and measurable actions against hate speech.
13. To be sure, recent reports by all human rights monitoring bodies have highlighted the need for more concrete actions to address racism and hate speech in Finland, and the need to take more strict measures against racist and hate motivated acts, especially against specific groups of people.
14. Despite some progress, discriminatory attitudes towards perceived “others” remain widespread and affect many areas of life, including employment, housing, and education.

Specific themes – in short

15. The NHRI proposes the following themes for further discussion during the exchange with the Government. Additional information will be provided as needed.

Human Rights Structures - Independent institutions

16. Independent human rights institutions, such as the non-discrimination ombudsman, equality ombudsman, child ombudsman and other ombudsman bodies, as well as the NHRI, are also affected by budget cuts. At the same time, some political actors have questioned the very necessity for such institutions, especially in the current financial situation.

Civil Society

17. Government funding for NGOs has been significantly reduced on several occasions. As a result, many organisations providing essential services and support to vulnerable groups have had to scale back activities, reduce staff, or cease operations entirely .
18. Because Finland lacks strong traditions of private funding or tax incentives for donations, NGOs depend heavily on public funding. These cuts therefore weaken civil society, including organisations that address racism and hate speech, and limit public participation in policymaking.

Human rights education and training

19. Human rights education and training remain inconsistent across sectors. Although some projects have been implemented, there is no systematic or continuous approach to ensuring adequate knowledge and understanding of human rights in education or professional development..

Digitalisation and discrimination

20. The digitalisation of the society risks excluding certain groups from full participation in society. Persons with disabilities, older people, and those lacking language or digital skills, including migrants, may face discrimination as services move online.
21. At the same time, digital platforms facilitate the spread of hate speech and discriminatory content, often without effective mechanisms to address or remove it. Children and young people are particularly vulnerable in this environment.

Asylum and Instrumentalised Migration

22. The *Act on Temporary Measures to Combat Instrumentalised Migration (Rajaturvallisuuslaki)* empowers Finnish authorities to temporarily restrict asylum applications and push back migrants at specific border areas in situations of instrumentalised migration. Initially adopted as a temporary measure in 2024, the Act has been extended until the end of 2026, with further extensions under consideration. This legislation raises concerns regarding its compatibility with Finland's constitutional obligations, EU law, and international human rights standards. The border between Finland and Russia has remained closed since December 2023.

Racism encountered by children and youth

23. Discrimination and racism experienced by children and young people in schools, public spaces, media, and online is a significant concern. Several recent studies show that such racist experiences include stereotypes, prejudice, harassment, belittlement and disregard of the lived experience, as well as exclusion, sometimes disguised as humour.
24. These experiences have far-reaching consequences, affecting educational choices, mental well-being, and sense of belonging. In normalising racism and inequality, they contribute to and maintain minority stress, resulting in reduced trust in society. Mental health challenges among the youth (and children) is on the rise, often leading to substance abuse, especially where support services are limited.

Hate speech and hate crimes

25. Hate speech and hate crimes have significantly increased, particularly online and in political discourse. There are ongoing challenges in investigation and

prosecution, and authorities require further training to respond effectively. In addition, available data and statistics remain insufficient, and recent budget cuts may further weaken data collection and monitoring.

Discrimination and hatred

26. Discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes affect especially migrants and asylum seekers, but also Roma, Sámi, individuals belonging to gender and sexual minorities as well as persons with disabilities. Discrimination and intolerance is also affecting linguistic minorities, including Swedish speaking Finns and users of sign languages.
27. Religious discrimination and intolerance are also persistent, with increasing antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate. Heated discussions on the negative freedom of religion (freedom from religion) in schools flare up regularly towards the end of the school year and pending school festivities with traditional Christian undertones.

Sami - Truth and reconciliation

28. The Government appointed the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sámi People](#) in cooperation with the Sámi Parliament and the Skolt Sámi Siida Council in 2021. The purpose of the Commission was to identify and assess historical and ongoing discrimination and rights violations, including the impact of assimilation policies. The Commission was also given the task of promoting reconciliation between the Sámi and the state of Finland as well as among the Sámi people. In addition, it was to raise public awareness of the Sámi as the indigenous people of Finland.
29. The Commission completed its work in December 2025 and, in addition to a two-part report, issued [recommendations](#). Prior to the conclusion of the mandate, the Government set up a [parliamentary working group](#) (Members of Parliament) to assess the upcoming recommendations.
30. In March 2026, the Government appointed an additional [Coordination and monitoring group](#) to support the assessment of the recommendations and to ensure the participation of the Sámi. This group consists of representatives from the Sámi Parliament, the Skolt Sámi Siida Council, the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Justice. However, no concrete progress has yet been reported.

Roma – structural racism and antigypsyism

31. Structural racism against Roma and racism specifically targeting Roma (antigypsyism) receive increasingly limited attention in Finland, despite recognition at the European level. Moreover, different manifestations and forms of racism are not always adequately identified; the various minority groups in Finland, including Roma, use varied narratives to describe the diverse forms of racism they experience.

32. With an apparent conceptual inflation of racism, discussions on racism often tend to shift towards broader concepts of multiple/intersectional discrimination. This can obscure the specific experiences of Roma communities and weaken their visibility in anti-racism discussions.
33. In addition, concerns persist regarding ethnic profiling in services and policing, as well as insufficient training and resources to address it.
