



The recommendations of the Human Rights Delegation for securing fundamental and human rights during the COVID-19 pandemic

Impact assessment and communications

- An overall assessment of the coronavirus pandemic's and its aftercare's impact on fundamental and human rights must be carried out. In addition, the impact assessments must separately assess the pandemic's and its aftercare's impact on vulnerable people (such as children, people with disabilities, older persons minorities, and the Sámi).
- Assessment of the impact on fundamental and human rights must be carried out continuously, systematically and comprehensively.
- Authorities' announcements related to measures taken during the pandemic must be accessible and clear. The information must be available equally to all regardless of language, age, disability or other background. Information on the coronavirus pandemic must also be available through alternative modes and means of communication and in non-digital environments.

Rule of law

- The discussion on the state of the rule of law and the realisation of its core values must continue in Finnish social, legal and political debate. The theme will continue to be emphasised in the Human Rights Delegation and in the activities of the Human Rights Centre.
- Training in fundamental and human rights must be increased, especially for authorities, also at the local level.
- Teaching fundamental and human rights at all levels of education must be strengthened. Teacher training must include fundamental and human rights education as a mandatory subject.
- The monitoring of the implementation of rights must be further developed and its continuity and the necessary human resources ensured. The Government's third National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights, which will be completed in 2021, and the indicator framework contained in it will concern the monitoring and measuring the implementation of fundamental and human rights.
- The Human Rights Centre collects and produces information on fundamental and human rights and publishes up-to-date reports on the implementation of rights. The centre's long-term and independent monitoring work must be further strengthened.

- The field of fundamental and human rights actors must be clarified, and existing actors strengthened. The powers must be clear and easy to understand for those in need of legal protection. New activities must be placed so that the overall concept does not weaken and fragment further, and without creating duplicate activities.
- The National Human Rights Institution needs to be strengthened structurally so that it has the best conditions to carry out its statutory tasks also in a state of emergency. In order to strengthen the rule of law, it is important that the National Human Rights Institution is strong and independent. It is partly strengthened by the constitutional powers of the Parliamentary Ombudsman.
- The basic tasks of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, promoting equality and tackling discrimination, must be strengthened.
- The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted various issues in law drafting, legislation, access to information and competence questions, which will need special attention in future. Solutions to solve the issues need to be sought.
- Legislative projects delayed due to the pandemic, such as the reform of the Transgender Act and reforms related to the legal protection of immigrants, must be completed as soon as possible.
- The activities and crisis preparedness of overseers of legality, as well as other fundamental and human rights actors, must be further strengthened. The guidelines of international human rights bodies, for example, must be used even better in ensuring and monitoring the fundamental and human rights.

Older persons and persons with disabilities

- In order to complete the legislative process concerning the right of self-determination of social welfare and healthcare customers, sufficient human resources and a clear and comprehensive implementation plan must be ensured.
- Public authorities must ensure that the operating practices in social welfare and healthcare units are based on binding provisions, and that they implement fundamental and human rights as well as possible and are proportionate to the objectives pursued.
- General visiting bans or mobility restrictions cannot be imposed on supported housing or other social services units. All restrictions must be based on an individual decision issued under the law. The customer and their family need to be consulted and agree on procedures that can be used to carry out visits without causing a risk of infection.
- Older persons and persons with disabilities must be consulted both in their own affairs and in their societal activities concerning them.
- The legislative project concerning the end-of-life care, right to self-determination, terminal care and euthanasia must pay attention to the fact that regulation supports the principle that the prioritisation and limitation of treatment must be based on the need for care or the individual's own will, not on the person's high age or externally assessed quality of life.
- Care and service queues must be cleared and missing social welfare and healthcare services must be arranged as quickly as possible for those entitled to them. The process must be closely monitored, especially through self-monitoring, but also by means of municipal supervision obligations.

- Procedural guarantees, such as the formal requirements for decision-making and the regulation of appeals, must be taken particular care of in the case of essential services for vulnerable persons.
- Sufficient information must be provided to social welfare and healthcare customers on the possibility of lowering customer fees and not collecting them, and the costs incurred by people in the coronavirus pandemic must be taken into account when considering this.
- Financial losses incurred by persons with disabilities due to the interruption of rehabilitative work must be compensated. In future, rehabilitative work must be developed to ensure that persons with developmental disabilities receive adequate pay for their work and other rights and benefits that belong to an employment relationship.
- The livelihoods of families where parents are forced to leave work because of the risk of infection to treat their disabled children must be ensured.

Children and young people

- Promoting equality and combating the development of inequality among children and young people require sufficient public support measures in the management of the coronavirus pandemic. The fight against inequality among children and young people must be a key objective. In the case of different groups of children and young people, specific measures are needed to achieve effective equality, i.e., positive action.
- Adequate support must be ensured in services for children and young people. In particular, child health clinic services and other support for families provided in social welfare and healthcare services as well as support for learning and well-being provided in connection with early childhood education and care, schools and educational institutions as well as the activities and services for children and young people in leisure time play a key role.
- The state of livelihood of families with children and young adults must be assessed, and the adequacy of livelihood, especially during the coronavirus pandemic and its follow-up, must be ensured.
- In the management of the coronavirus pandemic, the participation of children and young people, opportunities for exerting influence and to be heard equally must be strengthened.
- Fundamental and human rights impacts on children and young people must be assessed, and children and young people must be consulted in connection to the assessments.
- Information collected from children and young people must be systematically used to support decision-making.
- The belief in the future of children and young people and their experiences of security and inclusion in everyday life must be strengthened.
- Communications and news must ensure that children and young people can receive information in ways that are suitable for them.
- Public decision-making must ensure sufficient resources for the implementation of services for children, young people and families in crisis management. The resources of both universal services and targeted services must be taken care of.
- Services and activities for children, young people and families must be organised in a child-oriented, youth-oriented and family-oriented manner. Good cooperation practices and practices introduced during the coronavirus pandemic need to be further developed and permanently implemented.

Violence against women and intimate partner violence

- The GREVIO recommendations to Finland and the 32 measures of the programme to combat violence against women must be fully implemented. Particular attention must be paid to the recommendations highlighted by the Parties to the Istanbul Convention.
- The knowledge and skills of citizens and, in particular, different professional groups in identifying and intervening in violence against women and intimate partner violence must be developed, for example, through systematic training in compulsory studies and further education.
- Victim support measures and training must take into account the different forms of violence, multiplicative effects on different individuals and cultural sensitivity.
- Measures to combat violence against women and intimate partner violence must be included in the welfare and safety plans of the various levels of government (state, region, municipality) and in monitoring their implementation.
- Equal low-threshold services for victims of violence against women and intimate partner violence must be developed, for example, by means of legislation and as part of the reform of social welfare and healthcare services. Special circumstances, such as a pandemic, must be taken into account in the development work.
- We must ensure that services are flexible, regionally comprehensive, and accessible to all those who need them. For example, age, language and cultural issues must be taken into account.
- The compilation of services for victims of violence against women and intimate partner violence in a multidisciplinary support centre like the SERI support centres (support centre for victims of sexual violence) must be considered.
- The coordination and cooperation of work against violence against women and domestic violence at all levels of the administration must be improved in preventive action, support services and distribution of information.
- In order to avoid overlaps and service gaps, the roles of different actors must be clarified by means of legislation, for example.
- Sufficient financial resources must be provided to combat violence against women and intimate partner violence, to support victims and to make the perpetrators responsible and to provide help.

The Human Rights Delegation functions as a cooperative body in the field of fundamental and human rights and helps to intensify information flow between the different actors. It also deals with human rights issues of a far-reaching significance and principal importance. The Human Rights Centre, its Human Rights Delegation and the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman together form the Finnish National Human Rights Institution (NHRI).