**TOPICAL PROJECTS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE, end of year 2020**

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# 1 PROMOTION OF FUNDAMENTAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights and Human Rights Report**

The Government network of contact persons for fundamental and human rights continues the preparation of the National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights (2020–2023). The HRC participates in the network as an expert and takes part in a related sub-group with the aim of developing relevant indicators, monitoring activities and knowledge base. Alongside this project, the HRC continues to develop its own monitoring activities. The working group will issue its proposal early in 2021.

[Read more about the National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights on the website of the Ministry of Justice.](https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/fundamental-and-human-rights)

Under the leadership of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the HRC works on the Government Report on Human Rights Policy (2021) which will steer the Government’s actions in fundamental and human rights issues on the national, European and international level. The objective is to submit the report to the Parliament during the spring.

[Previous Human Rights Report (2014)](https://um.fi/publications/-/asset_publisher/TVOLgBmLyZvu/content/government-of-finland-human-rights-report-2014)

[Speech by Minister Haavisto at the consultation event 10.9.2020 (in Finnish)](https://um.fi/puheet/-/asset_publisher/up7ecZeXFRAS/content/ulkoministeri-haaviston-puhe-valtioneuvoston-ihmisoikeusselonteon-kuulemistilaisuudessa)

**Promotion of human rights education and training in teacher education**

The project funded by the HRC and the Ministry of Justice supports the development of democratic citizenship and human rights education in teacher training. The project will continue at the University of Helsinki until 31 July 2021. The target group consists of educational professionals, teachers and teacher students. A special subsidy has been applied for the project from the Ministry of Education and Culture for a period of three more years.

As a part of this project, the HRC will work in the autumn to prepare educational material about the equal educational rights of persons with disabilities. The purpose of the material is to increase the target group’s awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and of the legal background of inclusive education, and to clarify the meaning of inclusive education. The project strengthens the pedagogical approach the HRC applies to educational work and materials.

A preliminary plan has been prepared with the Sámi Parliament on human rights training related to the indigenous people of Finland. The selected themes of the training are: 1. Increasing awareness of indigenous people (what do the terms “indigenous people” and “self-determination” mean?), 2. Linguistic and cultural human rights, 3. Climate change & the Sámi people, and 4. Hearing the teachers and educators (based on a survey) + political influence.

In 2021, a three-year research project funded by the Kone Foundation will start at the University of Helsinki, called “Demokratiakasvatus ja poliittinen polarisaatio globaalien kriisien aikakaudella” (Democratic citizenship education and political polarisation in the era of global crises), with human rights education as one section of the project.

In addition to domestic and international collaborative efforts, the plans for the spring of 2021 also include a seminar for higher education institutions involved in democracy and human rights education, and possibly an open seminar on the latest research results and perspectives. Moreover, an article will be published on the challenges of implementing human rights education and on the related views of teacher students.

[Project websites](file:///C%3A/Users/susan.villa/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/DN47BHJX/%20https/www.helsinki.fi/fi/projektit/ihmisoikeudet-demokratia-arvot-ja-dialogi-kasvatuksessa)

[Read more about human rights education on the HRC website.](https://www.ihmisoikeuskeskus.fi/ihmisoikeuskoulutus/)

[Report on knowledge about the Saami people and their languages and cultures in learning materials (Miettunen, 2020)](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162566%29)

**Fundamental and human rights in housing services**

The HRC has been collaborating with the disability affairs team of the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman on a joint project aimed at supporting the management and personnel in housing units for persons with disabilities and helping them to reinforce their clients’ right to self-determination. During the project, a self-assessment tool was prepared to guide the activities of the housing units.

The tool was submitted for final commenting to five housing units for persons with disabilities. Based on the received comments, certain aspects of the tool will be modified further, and the tool will be published in the beginning of next year.

**Training project on elderly people’s right to self-determination in care services**

The HRC has also initiated a second project to promote the implementation of people’s right to self-determination. The HRC is working with Valvira and the Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland on a pilot project aimed at promoting the right to self-determination of elderly clients and the implementation of fundamental and human rights in 24-hour housing services. The project is carried out in collaboration with providers of intensified assisted living services. The project is implemented by training the staff, supervisors and senior physicians in the involved units. The future goal is to put the training material obtained from the project to wider use also in other housing service units.

The project was launched this autumn with a survey sent to the pilot units’ staff members, supervisors and senior physicians. The survey is aimed at mapping the employees’ views and competence in fundamental and human rights issues, and it will be used as the basis for the future training materials.

In addition to the training materials, the survey will be used to draw up a report that is intended to provide support for the HRC activities.

**Report on the opportunities of older people’s councils to exert influence**

The goal of the HRC is to strengthen the legislative perspective in activities and decision-making related to older persons, as well as more extensively with regard to attitudes. Older people’s councils should have a central role in, for example, issues related to the well-being, health, inclusion and housing of the elderly. Consequently, safeguarding the older people’s councils’ opportunities to participate and exert influence is essential.

In the autumn of 2020, the HRC has launched a survey aimed at mapping the good practices and possible challenges of the councils. As the basis for the survey, all Finnish older people’s councils have been sent a questionnaire analysing each council’s practices and operating conditions. The purpose of the questionnaire is to find good practices that should be shared between municipalities and to analyse how the work and status of the councils can be supported in the future. A report of the survey results will be published in the spring of 2021.

**COVID-19 photo exhibition and discussion event – postponed until spring**

In March–April, the HRC will organise a COVID-19-themed photo exhibition in the Temppeliaukio Church and later also in the facilities of the local parish at the Mall of Tripla. The photographs are part of Photographer Johanna Kare’s KATSO IHMINEN™ exhibition concept. The opening event of the exhibition will also include a discussion on mental health, led by the patron of the exhibition Pekka Sauri. The event can also be followed online.

[Website of photograph artist Johanna Kare](https://johannakare.com/en/)

# 2 MONITORING OF FUNDAMENTAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Fundamental rights barometer**

At the moment, the HRC is working with the Ministry of Justice to complete the national human rights barometer aimed at examining the experiences that persons with disabilities and representatives of different linguistic minorities (Swedish, Russian and Arabic) have of the fundamental rights. The results will be published early in 2021. In addition, the HRC will publish two short summary reports of the results of the study. The first one will focus on persons with disabilities and reduced functional capacity, while the other will concentrate on awareness of individual rights on a more general level. The fundamental rights barometer was carried out simultaneously with the Fundamental Rights Survey of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, replicating the EU survey’s methodology and questions. The EU survey was carried out in all EU member states, and some of the results have already been published. The Finnish study is a part of the implementation of the National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights.

[Read more about the Fundamental Rights Barometer on the website of the Ministry of Justice (in Finnish).](https://oikeusministerio.fi/hanke?tunnus=OM040:00/2018)

**The OITIS project studies elderly persons’ legal problems and access to their rights**

December marks the start of a new project titled OITIS*,* or *Oikeutta ikäihmisille* – *tarinoita ikääntyvästä Suomesta* (Justice to the elderly – stories of an aging Finland), aimed at exploring the legal problems that the elderly (over the age of 65) have and whether or not they have found solutions to their problems. In the first stage of the study, elderly persons will be asked to provide free-worded accounts of the legal problems they have encountered and their opportunities to access their rights. The request for written accounts has been published in Finnish, Swedish, Inari Sámi, Northern Sámi, Skolt Sámi and Romani. The project partners include the Institute of Criminology and Legal Policy at the University of Helsinki, the Institute of Law and Welfare at the University of Eastern Finland, Tampere University and the Human Rights Centre. The project is led by Docent Kaijus Ervasti.

[More information about the OITIS project (in Finnish)](https://www.helsinki.fi/fi/uutiset/talous-yhteiskunta/tutkimushanke-ikaantyvien-oikeusongelmista-ja-oikeudensaantimahdollisuuksista)

[Request for written accounts](https://www.ihmisoikeuskeskus.fi/?x5822114=9941927)

**Report of the SIHTI project will be published on 26 January 2021**

The SIHTI project, aimed at assessing how Finnish companies are fulfilling their human rights responsibilities, is nearing completion, and the results will be published in a webinar held on 26 January 2021 at 9:00–11:00.

The HRC participates in the SIHTI research project that started in May and is aimed at assessing how Finnish companies are fulfilling their human rights responsibilities, meaning how they have implemented the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Approximately 80 Finnish companies will be reviewed during the project. The SIHTI project is conducted under the Government of Finland’s research, analysis and assessment activities. In addition to the Human Rights Centre, the project consortium includes Hanken School of Economics' and the University of Helsinki’s joint research and development institute Centre for Corporate Responsibility (project leader), FIANT Consulting Oy and 3bility Consulting.

[Website of the SIHTI project](https://www.hanken.fi/sv/node/2408911)

**Study on the impact of the UN treaty system in different countries**

In 2001, Christof Heyns and Frans Viljoen from the University of Pretoria published a study on the national impacts of the United Nations human rights treaties and the activities of the treaty bodies in 20 UN countries (including Finland). At present, an updated version of the study is in the making. The study will be published during the first half of 2021.

[Project website](http://www.icla.up.ac.za/research/impact-of-the-un-human-rights-treaties-on-domestic-level)

[Heyns and Viljoen: The impact of the United Nations human rights treaty system on the domestic level (Kluwer, 2001)](http://www.icla.up.ac.za/the-impact-study/publications)

**Statement on Finland’s report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the related event**

The HRC issued a statement on Finland´s report on the implementation of the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 31 August 2020. The most significant observation was that information is not always available for the vulnerable groups, which means that these groups are easily excluded from reports, as well. The knowledge base related to the implementation of fundamental and human rights must be strengthened.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was forced to postpone the review of periodical reports due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the current plan is that Finland’s report will be reviewed in the Committee’s 69th session between 15 February and 5 March 2021. The recommendations to Finland will most likely be published on 5 March 2021. The Human Rights Centre, in collaboration with the Finnish League for Human Rights, had planned to organise an event in November 2020 to discuss the Committee’s concluding observations and recommendations, as well as the general significance of the economic, social and cultural rights. The event was postponed to spring 2021.

[HRC’s statement on the report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in Finnish)](https://www.ihmisoikeuskeskus.fi/?x5984785=9630389)

**Rule of law reports of ENNHRI and the European Commission**

Last May, the HRC contributed to ENNHRI’s rule of law report, which was based on data collected from national human rights institutions. The report was submitted to the Rule of Law Review Cycle of the European Commission. In addition to national governments, the Commission requested information from organisations and other rule of law operators on themes that are essential for the rule of law system (justice, checks and balances, media and corruption). The HRC wrote the section about Finland for the ENNHRI report. The European Commission's report, which also includes recommendations applicable to Finland, was published on 30 September 2020.

[European Commission’s rule of law report (in Finnish)](https://ec.europa.eu/finland/news/rol_200930_fi)

[ENNHRI’s rule of law report](http://ennhri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/The-rule-of-law-in-the-European-Union-Reports-from-NHRIs-11-May-2020-public.pdf)

[ENNHRI website](http://ennhri.org/)

**Summary of the fundamental and human rights actors’ observations**

In 2021, the Human Rights Centre will publish its second and final summary of the fundamental and human rights actors’ observations regarding the implementation of these rights in Finland. The first summary was published in April 2020.

[Perus- ja ihmisoikeuksien toteutuminen Suomessa - koottuja havaintoja](https://www.ihmisoikeuskeskus.fi/?x5822114=9108275) (vol 1) (Implementation of fundamental and human rights in Finland – a collection of observations, vol 1)

# 3 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

**ENNHRI Legal Working Group and other network collaboration**

The HRC is actively involved in the development of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions ENNHRI, as well as in the operation of the ENNHRI working groups. The Legal Working Group published a [manual](http://ennhri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Third-Party-Interventions-Before-the-European-Court-of-Human-Rights-Guide-for-NHRIs.pdf) and procedural guide for institutions on how to undertake interventions before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). In 2021, if the permit is granted, ENNHRI will make a third-party intervention before the ECHR in the matter of Duarte Agostinho and Others v. Portugal and Others (39371/20), an environmental complaint submitted by six Portuguese youth.

Overall, the HRC’s efforts in 2020 focused on the methods of promoting the implementation of ECHR decisions on the national level and in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, on rule of law issues, and on the implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The HRC will continue its work in all these areas also in 2021.

[ENNHRI Legal Working Group](http://ennhri.org/our-work/topics/democracy-and-rule-of-law/)

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