



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Information received from Finland on follow-up to the
concluding observations on its eighth periodic report***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Follow-up information relating to paragraph 20 (a) of the concluding observations (CEDAW/C/FIN/CO/8)

1. Hate speech is criminalised as agitation against a population group according to section 10 (511/2011), chapter 11 of the Penal Code. The Penal Code includes also an aggravated form of the offence (aggravated agitation against a population group, (Penal Code 11:10 a, (511/2011))).
2. A legislative reassessment as to the needs to revise these hate speech offences is currently taking place. A hate speech might, depending on the facts of the case, be punishable as defamation or aggravated defamation (Penal Code 24:9-10, (879/2013)) as well. In some cases, it could constitute sexual harassment (Penal Code 20:6, (723/2022)).
3. Furthermore, it is a ground to increase the punishment (within the penal scale of an offence) when the offence has been committed for a motive based on race, colour, birth, national or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or disability or for another comparable motive (Penal Code 6:5.1 p 4, (1129/2022)).

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 20 (b) of the concluding observations

4. The Government would like to underline for the purpose of clarity that the amendment to chapter 25, section 9, subsection 2 of the Criminal Code that entered into force on 1 October 2021 concerning the right to bring charges for illegal threat has to do with a threat made against a person due to the person's work duty or public position of trust. Under the said subsection, the prosecutor may bring charges for illegal threat if the act was directed at a person because of their work duty and the perpetrator is not employed by the same employer as the injured party. Furthermore, the prosecutor may also bring charges for illegal threat if the act was directed at a person because of their public position of trust. In other words, the subsection does not directly address gender-based hate speech.
5. However, research data indicating that women face a higher risk of violence in working life than men was one of the underlying factors behind the legislative amendment. Therefore, the amendment is conducive to strengthening the protection of women under criminal law. The legislative amendment has been in force for a relatively short period of time, which means that more detailed information on its practical application is not yet available.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 20 (c) of the concluding observations

6. The European Union Digital Services Act (DSA) seeks to protect users from illegal and harmful content online and ensure that fundamental rights are respected also in the online environment. The DSA entered fully into force on 17 February 2024. As an EU regulation, the Digital Services Act is directly applicable in EU Member States. In Finland, certain additional national administrative and supervisory provisions were put in place with a new law on the supervision of online intermediation services (Act on the supervision of online intermediation services, 18/2024) to ensure effective implementation of the DSA.
7. The Ministry of Transport and Communications published in 2021 a blog-post series #WomenInTech that highlighted women working in the tech industry. In the

series, ten Finnish women wrote about their education and career and encouraged women and girls to study and work in the technology field.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 22 (c) of the concluding observations

8. The current Sterilisation Act (283/1970) from 1970, removed the provision on forced sterilisation from the law. It is known that there is a need for legislative development regarding the right to self-determination overall in the present legislative framework, as well as in the Sterilisation Act. However, at the moment, no legislative amendments are being prepared to the Sterilisation Act.

9. Nonetheless, it is noted in Finland that the current Sterilisation Act should not be interpreted as a means for carrying out forced sterilisations, but rather dealing with situations, when a legal representative may submit an application (on behalf of another person) due to the lacking legal capacity. This legislation should be read in conjunction with the Act on the Rights and Status of Patients (785/1992), which provides that “The patient has to be cared in mutual understanding with him/her”. If the patient refuses a certain treatment or measure, the patient has to be cared, as far as possible, in other medically acceptable way in mutual understanding with the patient.

10. If a major patient, because of mental disturbance or mental retardation or for other reason, cannot decide on the treatment given to the patient, the legal representative or a family member or other close person of the patient has to be heard before making an important decision concerning treatment to assess what kind of treatment would be in accordance with the patient’s will. If this matter cannot be assessed, the patient has to be given a treatment that can be considered to be in accordance with his/her personal interests.”

11. Further, a new Act on Disability Services and Assistance (675/2023) enters into force on 1 January 2025. The Act provides persons with disabilities the right to receive supported decision-making as a separate service if they need support to make significant decisions concerning their own lives that are not part of everyday life.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 24 (b) of the concluding observations

12. According to the Government Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo’s Government (20 June 2023 -) mediation in cases involving domestic or intimate partner violence will be discontinued as a rule. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is currently preparing a government proposal to implement this entry.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 28 (a) of the concluding observations

13. In the 2023 parliamentary elections, the proportion of women as candidates (42.9 per cent) was higher than ever before, showing an increase of 0.9 percentage points on the 2019 parliamentary elections. Men have always been in the majority as candidates in parliamentary elections. In 2023, men candidates numbered 1,385 and women candidates 1,039.

14. The proportion of women as candidates of parliamentary parties varied between 34.5 per cent and 84.6 per cent depending on the party. Women accounted for 47.5

per cent of candidates of all parliamentary parties. In the 2019 elections, women accounted for 30.6 per cent of candidates of the parties and constituency associations with no elected representatives.

15. The majority of eligible voters are women. Women account for 51.8 per cent of all eligible voters and for 51.3 per cent of eligible voters living in Finland. See attached the latest elections statistics, especially the statistics on municipal elections, produced by Statistics Finland.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 28 (d) of the concluding observations

16. No statutory gender quotas apply to recruiting by the Finnish Defence Forces. Instead, the Defence Forces strives to find and select the most suitable person for each role. Under the Constitution of Finland (731/1999), the general qualifications for public office are skill, ability and proven civic merit. In addition, provisions on requirements concerning citizenship, age, language skills and qualifications are laid down in the Act on Public Officials in Central Government (750/1994), the Act on the Knowledge of Languages Required of Personnel in Public Bodies (424/2003), the Act on the Defence Forces (551/2007) and the Government Decree on the Defence Forces (1319/2007). Other requirements may be defined for each position concerning for example qualifications required for successful performance of duties or additional capabilities or traits that a successful candidate should have.

17. Gender equality and non-discrimination are basic principles of recruitment. As all central government positions must be filled with the most deserving candidate, a guiding principle of recruitment is that men and women are treated equally.

18. While the proportion of men and women in all central government positions is nearly equal, some professions or duties are still male dominated or female dominated. For example, the Defence Forces is male dominated, while the state financial administration is female dominated.

Military duties

19. The first women entered military service on 16 October 1995, eight months after Parliament accepted the proposal for the Act on Voluntary Military Service for Women (194/1995).

20. Women's voluntary military service equals men's military service in content and requirements, and all units and service duties of the Defence Forces are open to women in voluntary military service. Women and men have equal access to leadership training and to a military career. No service duty is gender-specific; instead, duties are assigned based on personal aptitude and competence.

21. Around 19,000–21,000 conscripts are trained each year. The number of women in voluntary military service has been on the rise especially in the past decade: 567 women served in 1995–2004; 576 women in 2005–2014; and 1,305 women in 2015–2024.

22. Access to the highest military duties also depend on the number of years in service: around 25 years of service are required to become a colonel and around 28 years to become a general. At the moment, the longest serving female soldier has 23 years of service.

23. An example of a measure to improve gender equality in the Defence Forces is a trial that started in 2020 where male conscripts in military service and women in voluntary military service share quarters. The three-year trial demonstrated the many

benefits of shared quarters, such as better gender equality, smoother military service, higher team spirit and better flow of information. As of 2024, shared quartering became a permanent practice, and now all male conscripts and women in voluntary military service can share quarters in all units of the Defence Forces if they consent to it.

24. Another measure to improve gender equality is a 2024 trial where three regional offices (Uusimaa, Häme and Lapland) held the call-ups for male conscripts and the selection events for women's voluntary military service at the same time instead of organising separate events.
