



european network against racism

# ENAR Shadow Report 2011-2012

## ENAR SHADOW REPORT

**Racism and related discriminatory practices in  
Finland**

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Racism is a reality in the lives of many ethnic and religious minorities in the EU. However, the extent and manifestations of this reality are often unknown and undocumented, especially in official data sources, meaning that it can be difficult to analyse the situation and to establish solutions to it.

The ENAR Shadow Reports are produced to fill the gaps in the official and academic data, to offer an alternative to that data and to offer an NGO perspective on the realities of racism in the EU and its Member States. NGO reports are, by their nature, based on many sources of data - official, unofficial, academic and experiential. This allows access to information which, while sometimes not backed up by the rigours of academic standards, provides the vital perspective of those that either are or work directly with those affected by racism. It is this that gives NGO reports their added value, complementing academic and official reporting.

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## 1. Executive summary

This summary provides an overview of the key findings of this report. This report describes how racism, and other forms of discrimination, have manifested in Finland during the year under review (March 2011-March 2012).

In 2011 the new Act on Integration of Immigrants (1386/2010) came into effect. Its aim is to promote equality, non-discrimination and positive interaction between different population groups.

The levels of structural discrimination in **employment** are difficult to ascertain, in particular in Finland there is insufficient recognition of previous education and workplace experience outside of the European Union.

- Recruitment policies in each Municipality require revision so as to place skilled immigrant workers in positions appropriate to their talents and skills.
- There needs to be better recognition of education and workplace experience gained in countries outside of the European Union.

In **education** there are concerns about the availability of language services for Sami and Roma children. There are also concerns about the high levels of drop-outs among Roma children.

- Improved resources to encourage children to learn their native language.
- Increased employment of minority representatives in the schools in order to support students from minority groups.

A quarter of all immigrants have experienced discrimination in the **housing** sector. Homelessness of immigrants has increased in the last year.

- There needs to be increased awareness training for residential housing committees about discriminatory practices.

In the **health** sector, some Muslims encounter difficulty due to confusion regarding the legality of male circumcision. There is also a need for qualified translators, especially in mental health sectors.

- Review the legality of male circumcision
- Increase the number of skilled interpreters, especially in mental health sectors.

Access to many basic **goods and services** such as housing and banking are limited for immigrants and refugees who are waiting to receive a Finnish identity number.

- The bureaucracy in relation to accessing basic goods and services without a Finnish Identity number need to be reviewed.

Several members of parliament from the True Finns party have committed hate speech crimes in the public **media** and were subsequently convicted and fined. Whilst internet monitoring has increased, overcoming hate speech in online forums and blogs remains a challenge.

- Improve representation of minority groups in media forums such as television and newspapers to promote diversity.

While racially motivated crimes in general have decreased since 2010, street violence towards Somali immigrants is higher in Finland than anywhere else in Europe, despite Finland having a lower proportion of Somalis than the rest of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of **criminal justice** the Criminal Code (511/2011) and Cybercrime Act (TSF 84/2011) were introduced in 2011 in order to increase protection of citizens vulnerable to discrimination, xenophobia and acts of hate speech.

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<sup>1</sup> This claim is based on a study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and was reported in the following article: Kouros, Alexis, Helsinki Times, *Self-denial won't save Finland*, Wednesday, July 2011, accessed 10 August 2012.

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### 3. Introduction

This report provides an overview of racism and related discriminatory practices in Finland during the period of March 2011 to March 2012. The purpose is to highlight racism and related discriminatory practices occurring at all levels of Finnish society. This report also provides an overview of the positive narratives that are constantly being developed by civil actors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with regard to improving non-discriminatory practices and raising awareness about racial discrimination.

The focus of this year's report is Islamophobia and the particular situation of Muslim communities living in Finland. The sources referenced include a variety of reports, books, articles related to media coverage, discussions observed on online forums and interviews conducted specifically for this report. In total nine interviews have been conducted with representatives from a selection of Muslim communities as well as interviews with representatives of NGOs and related organisations.

Clear-cut racism manifests itself in Finland predominately in online forums and blogs as well as in speeches by members of the extreme right wing political party the True Finns.<sup>2</sup> Racist and related discriminatory acts also occur frequently in public towards members of minority groups. However these cases are rarely reported to the police or to other officials, and when they are reported the discrimination component is not necessarily recognised. The reasons for this vary. In a report published by the Ombudsman for Minorities (OFM) titled *Regional Development of Anti-discrimination Advisory Services (RDAAS)* a cross-section of authorities in Finland were interviewed about discrimination cases they have handled. Findings show that authorities' 'ability to recognise discrimination is lacking'.<sup>3</sup>

Discrimination in areas such employment, education, housing and health are often hard to identify with certainty. Indirect structural discrimination, in particular, can be very difficult to pinpoint.<sup>4</sup>

The TNS Gallup questionnaire from late 2011 found that the most vulnerable minority groups in Finland are the Roma community, Somalis and Muslims. An article appearing in the Helsingin Sanomat newspaper presented the results which revealed that two-thirds of Finns consider racism to be a serious issue in Finland, however:

Only two per cent of Finns see in themselves much racist sentiment,

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<sup>2</sup> In August 2011 the True Finns party officially changed their name to The Finns, however for consistency's sake this report will refer to The Finns as The True Finns.

<sup>3</sup> The Ombudsman for Minorities, *Regional Development of Anti-discrimination Advisory Services*, 2011, p.5. See also p.18-19 about the rarity in which discrimination cases are reported.

<sup>4</sup> For further information see: Ombudsman for Minorities, *Regional Development of Anti-discrimination Advisory Services*, 2011, p.24.

while 12 per cent admit to possessing quite a lot. [...] Of all minority groups, Sami people, Swedes, English people, Estonians and Chinese people were seen most positively in the Helsingin Sanomat-Gallup poll.<sup>5</sup>

The findings also reveal that ‘a significant amount of Finns (35 per cent) fully or somewhat agree that Islam is a threat to Western values and democracy.’<sup>6</sup> The findings indicate that many Finns are wary of those who are different from the Finnish ‘norm’ (in their appearance and culture). The findings of the TNS Gallup questionnaire are particularly relevant for the special focus of this report.

It is estimated that there are between 10,000 and 12,000 Roma people living in Finland.<sup>7</sup> The Roma population is spread out throughout Finland and experience discrimination at many levels of society, despite having lived in Finland for almost 500 years. Even though the Constitution guarantees the cultural and linguistic rights of the Finnish Roma minority, the Roma language is endangered. There exist many challenges in overcoming the stigma that the Roma people face in the perception of the majority population. For example:

Discrimination and mutual distrust between the majority population and the Roma originates partly from the lack of knowledge. In addition to sharing cultural knowledge, there is a need to raise awareness of different forms of discrimination experienced by the Roma, as well as of social changes that have weakened the situation of the Roma.<sup>8</sup>

Several legal changes have occurred in the year covered by this report, most notably the introduction of the new Act on Integration of Immigrants (1386/2010), the Criminal Code (511/2011) and the Cybercrime Act (TSF 84/2011).

This report is structured as follows: Section 4 discusses significant political and legal developments during the period covered by this report; Section 5 focuses on Islamophobia and the Muslim communities; Section 6 provides an overview of the trends of discriminatory practices in Finland within employment, education, housing, health, goods and services, media and criminal justice; Section 7 assesses the role of civil society in promoting equality and diversity; Section 8 examines good practices of NGOs and civil society actors in Finland; and Section 9 lists national recommendations.

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<sup>5</sup> Mykkänen, Pekkä, *Racism rife in Finland*, Helsingin Sanomat 12 November 2011, <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/htimes2/finnish-papers/17292-racism>, accessed 13 August 2012. See also: <http://www.tns-gallup.fi/>, accessed 10 August 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> This amount is cited in: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma: Finland’s Handbook on the European Policy on Roma*, Working group report, 2011, [www.951291\\_romanipol\\_en\\_Osa1.pdf](http://www.951291_romanipol_en_Osa1.pdf), p. 21, accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>8</sup> For detailed reports about the Roma, see: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma: Finland’s Handbook on the European Policy on Roma*, Working group report, 2011.

#### **4. Significant developments in the country during the period under review**

Significant political changes have occurred in the year covered by this report. Parliamentary elections were held in April 2011 and the new government was formed in June 2011. The presidential elections were held in January and February 2012 and the President began his term in March 2012.<sup>9</sup>

The new Act on Promotion of Integration for immigrants (1386/2010)<sup>10</sup> came into effect in September 2011. This Act aims to promote equality between all residents of Finland (immigrants and those born in Finland), and to better facilitate integration in the early stages of immigration.<sup>11</sup> The new Act amends the Nationality Act which has seen the following changes: five years instead of six years of residence in Finland required in order to obtain Finnish nationality; and the consideration of temporary residence whilst awaiting results about Finnish citizenship applications.<sup>12</sup>

There have also been developments at governmental levels in regard to human rights protection. In March 2012 the Government met to discuss the Finnish National Human Rights Action Plan. A Human Rights Centre will begin operations later in 2012. The Centre will be a place of training and research on fundamental human rights. The National Human Rights Action Plan will mean that more legislative projects will be formed to protect individuals and minority groups.<sup>13</sup> For example, the Action Plan includes projects to improve the rights of the indigenous Sámi people to take part in policymaking and in particular in the decisions of how the lands and waters are used in the State-owned areas of their homeland.

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<sup>9</sup> See **Section 6.6** of this report for a more extensive explanation about the Parliamentary and Presidential elections.

<sup>10</sup> ‘The scope of application of the Act has been extended to cover all immigrants residing in Finland. However, the persons eligible for measures to promote integration are defined specifically in each provision. The objective of the Act is to support and promote the integration of immigrants and to improve their opportunities to take an active part in Finnish society. Moreover, the Act is intended to promote equality, non-discrimination and positive interaction between different population groups. The aim is to enable immigrants to reach an equal position with the rest of the population in respect of both rights and obligations. The integration measures aim at helping immigrants to acquire the essential knowledge and skills that they need for participating in society and working life, while at the same time supporting their opportunities to maintain their own language and culture.’ See: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*, 2011. p.2.

<sup>11</sup> For further information about this new Act see: Asa, Riikka, *Annual Policy Report Finland 2011*, p.6-7.

[http://www.google.fi/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CGQQFjAA&url=http%3A%2Fwww.emn.fi%2Ffiles%2F579%2FAnnual\\_EMN\\_Policy\\_Report\\_2011\\_Finland-eng.pdf&ei=ETsVUJPNJ\\_Ok4AT\\_54C4Dw&usg=AFQjCNG2TK2qg1ebvALOLmePq99n2MFnFQ](http://www.google.fi/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CGQQFjAA&url=http%3A%2Fwww.emn.fi%2Ffiles%2F579%2FAnnual_EMN_Policy_Report_2011_Finland-eng.pdf&ei=ETsVUJPNJ_Ok4AT_54C4Dw&usg=AFQjCNG2TK2qg1ebvALOLmePq99n2MFnFQ), accessed 15 June 2012.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> For further information see: *Universal Periodic Review of The United Nations Human Rights Council second National report by the Government of Finland*, <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=247767&culture=en-US>, accessed 20 July 2012.

There has been another significant development with regard to the land rights of the Sámi; the new Mining Act and Water Act that came into effect in March 2011. These laws are intended to enable the Sámi to ‘engage in their culture and related traditional livelihoods.’<sup>14</sup> There are also ongoing efforts to revitalise the Sámi languages.

2011 saw important reforms concerning Cybercrime. An extra protocol came into effect (TSF 84/2011) criminalising the commission of racist acts or acts of a xenophobic nature via computer systems. In addition, an amendment was made to the Criminal Code (511/2011) to give officials more power to intervene against racist speech, other forms of hate speech and racist crimes.<sup>15</sup>

In general, there has been an increase in awareness of racism, discrimination and xenophobia on the internet in the year covered by this report. Police officers have also increased their online presence. They now not only monitor various online forums and service providers but have become actively present as virtual officers in the social media.<sup>16</sup>

Amendments to the Aliens Act came into effect on 1 July 2011. This concerned, for example, the return of Ingrian Finns, who after July 2011 could only apply to move to Finland through the same migration channels as everyone else. Previously, since the early 1990s Ingrian Finns have been able to move to Finland under a specific return migration system.<sup>17</sup> It is estimated that 30,000 people have migrated from the Soviet Union as returning Ingrian Finns since the 1990s.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the Act on the Reception of Persons Seeking International Protection (746/2011) took effect in 2011. The purpose of the Act is to secure

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<sup>14</sup> For more information see the *Universal Periodic Review of The United Nations Human Rights Council second National report by the Government of Finland*, <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=247767&culture=en-US> p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.12. Public display or dissemination of opinions or other messages that threaten, slander or insult any group on grounds of race, skin colour, national or ethnic origin, religion or conviction, sexual orientation or disability, or on other corresponding grounds is punishable. The amended penal provision now also applies more clearly to hate speech disseminated using information technology (computer systems). The general grounds for increasing the severity of sanctions were also clarified to enable the foregoing grounds to be cited as aggravating circumstances.'

<sup>16</sup> For example view the facebook pages of virtual officers Marko Fobba Forss & Juha-Matti Vahtermaa: <http://www.facebook.com/Helsinginpoliisilaitos#!/marko.f.forss>, <http://www.facebook.com/Helsinginpoliisilaitos#!/juhamatti.vahtermaa.5>, also see: *Universal Periodic Review of The United Nations Human Rights Council second National report by the Government of Finland*, p.12 for more information.

<sup>17</sup> For more information see: Asa, Riikka, *Annual Policy Report Finland*, 2011, p.14-15.

<sup>18</sup> This quantity is taken from: *Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*, November 2011. p. 14. However, as Vesna-Laine Huttunen from the Ingrian Centre discusses, it is very difficult to determine how many Ingrian Finns there are in Finland. Many ethnic Ingrian Finns who have migrated to Finland have spent their entire lives in Russia or elsewhere in the former Soviet Union and are married to Russian speakers.

the immediate means of support and care for persons seeking international protection, persons receiving temporary protection and victims of trafficking. The Act clarifies the legislation around the reception of persons seeking protection and promotes uniformity of reception services.<sup>19</sup>

The same period in 2011 saw a 20 per cent decrease in the number of asylum seekers coming to Finland. 3,088 people applied for asylum in Finland in 2011. The decline included reduced numbers of applicants by European Union citizens and a decline in the number of Syrian asylum seekers applying, most likely due to the Arab Spring. As a result of the decline there were changes made to the reception centres for asylum seekers with fewer beds available and closures of reception centres in the capital city. More housing has been made available in apartments throughout Finland as temporary accommodation for asylum seekers waiting for their applications to be processed.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Universal Periodic Review of The United Nations Human Rights Council second National report by the Government of Finland, p.15-16.

<sup>20</sup> For further details see: Asa, Riikka, Annual Policy Report Finland 2011, p. 6-7. (For information about immigration trends of recent years see p.15). And for more information about the shut down of reception centres refer to **Section 6.3** of this report.

## 5. Special focus: Islamophobia

As well as presenting findings from the period of March 2011- March 2012 this report aims to present an informed view of the Muslim communities living in Finland. The particular focus of this report is Islamophobia and the experience of Muslim communities and individuals living in Finland.

A common misconception seems to be that there is one homogenous Muslim community in Finland, yet, the Muslim communities of Finland (let alone the rest of the world) are heterogeneous, diverse and culturally rich. There are approximately 45,000 to 50,000 Muslims currently living in Finland.<sup>21</sup> The first Muslims to arrive in Finland were the Tatars between 1870-1920. The Tatars are of Turkic origin and arrived in Finland via Russia. They are considered to be well integrated in Finland. Other Muslim groups arrived predominately in the 1990s and 2000s as asylum seekers and refugees after the collapse of the Iron Curtain.

The largest Muslim groups living in Finland are Somalis, Iraqis and Afghans. Of these groups the Somalis are the largest with about 13,000 Somalis living (mostly) in the Helsinki region. A group of Somalis also live in the North-Eastern Finnish town of Lieksa. As stated in the results of the TNS Gallup survey<sup>22</sup> Somalis in Finland are one of the groups most vulnerable to discrimination.

Many people have also moved to Finland in order to reunite with family members and to undertake work and find a more stable life through refugee status. Somalis for example have the highest proportion of applications for residence permits in connection with family ties. The statistics from 2011 show that there were 9,300 applications processed by the Finnish Immigration Service for residence permits in connection to family ties and 6,300 of these were applications from Somalis.<sup>23</sup>

Statistics show that in 2009 Muslims living in Finland spoke the following as their mother tongue: Somali (11 681); Arabic (9 682); Kurdish (7 135); Albanian (6736); Turkish (5 068); Persian (4 548); Bosnian (1 701); Bengali (1 596); Urdu (1 058); Pashto (Afghani) (493); Chechen (276); Turkmen (219); Uyghur (83).<sup>24</sup> This list demonstrates the linguistic and cultural diversity of Muslim communities in Finland.

<sup>21</sup> 45,000 is the number most frequently cited, however some estimates are higher for example Anas Hajjar of SINE ry estimates that there are between 50,000 to 60,000 Muslims living in Finland. This number may also take into consideration Muslims who are born in Finland and have converted to the Islamic faith.

<sup>22</sup> See **Section 3** (introduction) of this report.

<sup>23</sup> These statistics are cited in: Asa, Riikka, *Annual Policy Report Finland*, 2011, p.23, [http://www.google.fi/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CGQQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.emn.fi%2Ffiles%2F579%2FAnnual\\_EMN\\_Policy\\_Report\\_2011\\_Finland-eng.pdf&ei=ETsVUJPNJ\\_Ok4AT\\_54C4Dw&usg=AFQjCNG2TK2qg1ebvALOLmePq99n2MFnFQ](http://www.google.fi/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CGQQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.emn.fi%2Ffiles%2F579%2FAnnual_EMN_Policy_Report_2011_Finland-eng.pdf&ei=ETsVUJPNJ_Ok4AT_54C4Dw&usg=AFQjCNG2TK2qg1ebvALOLmePq99n2MFnFQ)

<sup>24</sup> These statistics were taken from Muhammed, Husein, *Yhtä Erilaiset: Islam ja Suomalainen Kulttuuri*, Kustannusosakeyhtiö Teos, Helsinki, 2011. p. 59.

Many of the interviewees affirmed that while Muslims may share the core Islamic faith, they are *more* influenced by their specific geographical and cultural origins. Each country of origin itself may also have many different customs and traditions.

There are Islamic societies and associations located throughout Finland which accommodate the growing Muslim communities living in Finland.<sup>25</sup> Many are very active in promoting awareness of rights and encourage Muslims to be active agents within the broader Finnish community.

Last year's Shadow Report noted that in the previous decade there has been an increasingly negative attitude towards the Muslim community in Finland. As the report stated, 'this was clearly illustrated by the Minister of the Interior, Ms. Päivi Räsänen, when she urged Finland to seek Christian refugees that can better adapt to our society rather than those of the Islamic faith.'<sup>26</sup>

In the last year, Islamophobia in Finland has predominately manifested itself via online forums and in comments made by representatives of right wing political party the True Finns. The media, in general, appears to maintain a positive to neutral position in regard to representing general issues of immigration and does not actively condone direct discriminatory or Islamophobic views and attitudes. However, as discussed by Anas Hajjar of the Islamic Council of Finland:

Sometimes we have good relations with the media, and sometimes not so good. It depends perhaps about what is exciting for the media. The Ramadan for example has been popular here in Finland, there is an interest in how one can fast for such long days. So it sparked a lot of interest, and so the media put forward that it is positive. These are things they are interested in. However when circumcision and building a mosque are in question these are negative to the media. Even the minaret is viewed negatively, why? Islamophobia is expressed, for example, in respect to plans to build a mosque, people say 'we don't want Muslims here, let them go back.' Well, what about the 2,500 Muslims who are Finnish, where do you send them? There are about fifty to sixty thousand Muslims already in Finland, mostly in the Helsinki region.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For example there are umbrella organisations such as the Islamic council of Finland (SINE) that promote dialogue between different Islamic societies and associations in Finland as well as collaborating with the government, in particular with the advisory board for ethnic relations (ETNO) and the Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities. SINE has, for example, participated actively in the organisation of the forum for religious cooperation (<http://uskot-resa.blogspot.fi>) which has organised the belief forum (USKOT-foorumi) which has brought together five different religious umbrella organisations: the Islamic council of Finland, Suomen Ekumeeninen Neuvosto (SEN), the Lutheran Church, the Tatars and the Jewish council.

<sup>26</sup> Mäkilä, Annastiina, Selkälä, Toni, *ENAR Shadow Report: Racism and related discriminatory practice in Finland*, 2011, p. 9-10.

<sup>27</sup> Interview: Hajjar, Anas, SINE, Helsinki 14 August 2012.

Hajjar explains that it is hurtful to listen to one's religion being talked about in this way, especially when people suggest that Islam is based on violence. Concerning racist remarks made towards Muslims (mainly those from the True Finns political party) Hajjar expressed his relief that many statements were taken by the District Attorney to the courts and were found discriminatory.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Refer to **Section 6.6** and **Section 6.7** for further details about incidents of racist speech by representatives of the True Finns party.

## **6. Access and full participation in all collective areas of society**

The following sections provide information about discriminatory practices in various areas of collective life.

### **6.1 Racism and related discrimination in employment**

In theory, with the introduction of the Finnish Non-Discrimination Act in 2004, Finnish law safeguards the equal rights of everyone in their working life. In practice discrimination in employment is difficult to determine, particularly in the recruitment stages. Discrimination in employment can occur both directly and indirectly. In Finland, it is estimated that unemployment levels among foreign citizens are three times higher than among Finnish citizens.<sup>29</sup>

The Ministry of Employment and Economy<sup>30</sup> produced a report that covers three areas of discrimination in employment: recruitment, discrimination in working life (well-being, career advancement, salary, social inclusion), and discrimination in the stages of termination of employment. The report findings show that ‘ethnic discrimination was found in all studied cities and occupational categories, no differences were found between cities or occupations.’<sup>31</sup> In particular:

In some ethnic groups, such as the Somalis, the Vietnamese and those from the Middle East, women were much less likely to work than men [...]; immigrant women – especially Muslim women – are less likely than any other group (native or immigrant women or men) to be employed, regardless of education. This may possibly be due to multiple discrimination against immigrant women (based on gender and ethnicity), but cultural characteristics may influence these results. The larger number of children in immigrant families (compared to the average Finnish family) ties many immigrant women to the home and keeps them outside the labor market.(sic).<sup>32</sup>

This indicates that Muslim women are specifically vulnerable when trying to access the workforce in Finland due to the multiple levels of discrimination they face.

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<sup>29</sup> This is based on estimates given by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy from the end of 2010. Published in: *Discrimination in the Finnish Labor Market: An Overview and a Field Experiment on Recruitment*, [www.tem.fi/files/32827/TEMjul\\_16\\_2012\\_web.pdf](http://www.tem.fi/files/32827/TEMjul_16_2012_web.pdf), p. 53, accessed 29 July 2012.

<sup>30</sup> The report *Discrimination in the Finnish Labor Market: An Overview and a Field Experiment on Recruitment* is connected to the YES 4 – Equality is Priority project. The report was published in May 2012 and covers research material up until October 2011.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

In the recruitment stage there are many instances of direct and indirect discrimination. For example, in the recruitment process many jobs are not even advertised, particularly where the contract lasts for less than one year. As networking plays an important role in gaining access to jobs in Finland, immigrants are often disadvantaged simply because they may know fewer people in the workforce.

Finnish language requirements are a serious obstacle facing immigrants seeking employment. There appears to be a trend among many employers to demand not only adequate Finnish language skills but total fluency even in jobs that only require basic language competency. The OFM Annual Report<sup>33</sup> has highlighted job advertisements that discourage immigrants from applying. For example, an airport cleaning company advertised a position for an employee specifically of Finnish origin. Many positions also advertise the requirement that complete Finnish fluency is needed even when it is not necessary for the position. Some companies even promote themselves as being '100% Finnish.' Husein Muhammed confirms this tendency, stating that:

In many workplaces they demand better language skills than are actually necessary. There are examples of cooks, tram drivers, bus drivers, even cleaners, who have not been employed because the opinion of the employer is that their language skills are not good enough (i.e. perfect). The employer has the right to demand what is necessary but often they go beyond that which is necessary.<sup>34</sup>

It appears that in Finland a person's name may affect one's chances of being invited to an interview. Studies have been undertaken involving fictional job seekers that have Russian and Finnish names, those with Russian names had to apply to twice as many positions as those with a Finnish name in order to receive an interview.

Our results show that having a Russian name and accent significantly decreases a job applicant's chance of getting interviewed for a vacant position in Finland. Discrimination against Russian-named applicants was found in 45% of all recruitment situations in the second stage.<sup>35</sup>

A report by the OFM notes a similar trend:

According to the interviewees, people with an immigrant background experience difficulty in finding a job or a trainee placement, even in cases where their language and professional skills match the requirements of the job. According to the responses, the clients often

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<sup>33</sup> Ombudsman for Minorities, *Annual Report 2011*, p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Interview: Muhammed, Husein, Helsinki, 13 July 2012.

<sup>35</sup> *Discrimination in the Finnish Labor Market: An Overview and a Field Experiment on Recruitment*, 2012, p.179.

report that they lose their chances of getting the job the moment they state their name.<sup>36</sup>

This indicates that immigrant job seekers that participated in the OFM's interviews felt that stating their name immediately jeopardises their chance of gaining employment. Similarly Sugulle Mohammed Abdirazak who arrived in Finland from Somalia in 1992 and is training to be an interpreter 'says finding work is tough "When you go to an interview and they see that you are an immigrant they say it's been taken, even though it's free."<sup>37</sup>

Another area of employment discrimination is discrimination during one's working life. The specific challenges faced by Muslims in their working life include: 1) allowance for religious observance, such as Islamic prayer, during break times, and 2) Muslim women wearing a headscarf at work that covers their hair. The OFM Annual Report states that they have been contacted with questions and complaints from both employees and employers in regard to religious observance and clothing. They advise that religious observance should be allowed during the normal rest breaks and the choice of clothing should not be restricted 'unless it has an adverse effect on the performance of duties or contact with customers and co-workers or is against safety requirements.'<sup>38</sup> By law in Finland prayer is permitted during break times.<sup>39</sup>

Discrimination at the stage of termination is another area that could be better monitored. A case documented by the OFM involves a caretaker who was dismissed by a local residents' association in Salo whilst on trial, without any official reason. 'The association admitted that this was to do with prejudices and attitudes.'<sup>40</sup>

The Roma people are also highly discriminated against in employment. A questionnaire in the capital city revealed that only half of the businesses would even consider hiring a Roma person even if they are skilful and experienced employees.<sup>41</sup>

Younger people with an ethnic background searching for summer employment have also been noted as facing recruitment challenges. According to the OFM young people with an ethnic background rarely manage to secure a summer job unless a municipal quota arrangement has been

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<sup>36</sup> See: The Ombudsman for Minorities, *Regional Development of Anti-Discrimination Advisory Services: Experience from the implementation of advisory services and results on the identification and tackling of discrimination*, 2011, p. 28-29.

<sup>37</sup> Shah, Ritula, BBC News, *Norway attacks fuel Finland immigration debate* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14425816?print=true>, accessed 6 June 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Ombudsman for Minorities, *Annual Report 2011*, p. 23.

<sup>39</sup> Muhammed, Husein, *Yhtä Erilaiset: Islam ja Suomalainen Kulttuuri* (Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Teos, 2011). p.21. Translation by S. Kivinen.

<sup>40</sup> Ombudsman for Minorities, *Annual Report 2011*, p. 23.

<sup>41</sup> This information can be found in the report: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: *Finland's Romani People. Brochures of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2004*: 2, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, [http://www.stm.fi/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?folderId=28707&name=DLFE-3777.pdf&title=Finland\\_s\\_Romani\\_People\\_Finitiko\\_Romaseele\\_en.pdf](http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=28707&name=DLFE-3777.pdf&title=Finland_s_Romani_People_Finitiko_Romaseele_en.pdf) p. 9, accessed 10 July 2012 – translation by Sari Kivinen.

enforced. An example of one municipality was given where, over a period of two years, only two young people with an immigrant background were hired for a summer job.<sup>42</sup>

### **6.1.2 Facilitating factors or protective measures to combat employment challenges**

New Governmental policies such as new Act on the Promotion of Integration (1386/2010) aim to improve the employment rate of immigrants by ‘promoting integration training and improving the status of immigrants in vulnerable situations (young persons, women, asylum-seekers).’<sup>43</sup> The new Act took effect in 2011 and was amended on 1 January 2012 to include provisions aiming specifically to improve integration of immigrants in the labour market. This Act emphasises the particular importance of broadening employment opportunities for immigrants, which is vital for successful integration in Finland. One specific project called the *Participative Integration in Finland Project* has been initiated by the new Integration Act and aims to ‘improve the efficiency of integration training by testing new client oriented contents of the training.’<sup>44</sup>

Through employment people are better able to actively participate in their community. Many of the organisations interviewed for this report actively provide resources aimed at skills training for minority groups. NGO networks such as Moniheli, play an important role by providing various types of training for other organisations. Many multicultural associations working in Finland effect positive change by raising awareness and thus promoting (and creating) new possibilities for employment. The Ingrian Centre in Helsinki (Inkerikeskus) also provides workplace trainee opportunities, language development and general resources aimed at assisting members to gain employment opportunities.

Womento-project is a mentorship project that aims to specifically improve the integration of immigrant women into Finnish society. Having begun in January 2011 ‘the main focus is in facilitating the entry of immigrant women into social networks and working life through personal mentoring by a Finnish volunteer woman.’<sup>45</sup>

The new Government considers immigrant integration, improved employment rates and combating discrimination against immigrants to be vital aspects of

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<sup>42</sup> See: The Ombudsman for Minorities, *Regional Development of Anti-Discrimination Advisory Services: Experience from the implementation of advisory services and results on the identification and tackling of discrimination*, 2011, p. 28-29.

<sup>43</sup> Universal Periodic Review of The United Nations Human Rights Council second National report by the Government of Finland,  
<http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=247767&culture=en-US> p. 9, accessed 15 June 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*, November 2011, p.3.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.vaestoliitto.fi/monikulttuurisuus/womento/womento-in-english/>, accessed 24 September 2012.

its current term.<sup>46</sup> Officially all migrant workers should enjoy the same constitutional protections as citizens.<sup>47</sup>

A project specifically aimed at supporting the employment opportunities of the Roma is discussed in a report published by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.<sup>48</sup> The three year project has focused on providing support for long-term unemployed and undereducated Roma people to access opportunities, education and training opportunities. ‘This type of support and guidance has been found valuable in enhancing the Roma population’s access to the labour market.’<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See: *Universal Periodic Review of The United Nations Human Rights Council second National report by the Government of Finland*, p.9.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.15.

<sup>48</sup> Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma: Finland’s Handbook on the European Policy on Roma*, Working group report, March 2011, p.24.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

## **6.2 Racism and related discrimination in education**

### **6.2.1 Manifestations of racism and related discrimination in education**

This section will provide an overview of the discrimination in education in the period covered by this report. Last year's Shadow Report discussed discrimination at two distinct levels of the education system: structural discrimination and discrimination by peers or teachers.<sup>50</sup>

Structural discrimination includes segregation and the availability of services such as language services for the Sámi and the Roma who, according to section 17 of the Constitution of Finland,<sup>51</sup> have the right (along with other groups) to services in their own language and to develop their own culture. Discrimination by peers or teachers may involve bullying by fellow students (based on ethnic difference) or a teacher who treats an immigrant student differently to a Finnish student.

In terms of structural discrimination, the following paragraphs will consider segregation and resources, availability of the Sámi and Roma languages in schools, availability of cultural and religious teachings, and the consideration of teachers and personnel hired within the education sectors.

Public discussions about school funding have considered the possibility that funding could be allocated so as to take into account the particular needs of each school. For example schools with large numbers of immigrant pupils could receive more funding accordingly. The Helsinki Times reported the plans of the Finnish Education Minister Jukka Gustafsson (SDP), regarding reforms to school funding. Gustafsson acknowledged that in the previous decade the differences between schools have increased. He stated that 'The worst situation is in the capital region. There are areas there where as many as half the pupils are immigrants.'<sup>52</sup> Whilst schools have been receiving from two to three million euros annually Gustafsson aims to improve equality in education reforming the way funds are distributed amongst the schools.

Secondly, the rights to services in one's own language (i.e. Sámi and Roma languages) is not always achieved in practice. Only 8.5% of Roma children are able to benefit from the Roma language education to which they are entitled.<sup>53</sup> School drop-outs amongst the Roma children are a continuous

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<sup>50</sup> Mäkilä, Annastiina, Selkälä, Toni, *ENAR Shadow Report: Racism and related discriminatory practice in Finland*, 2011, p. 25.

<sup>51</sup> Direct quote from Section 17 of the constitution of Finland: 'The Sámi, as an indigenous people, as well as the Roma and other groups, have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. Provisions on the right of the Sámi to use the Sámi language before the authorities are laid down by an Act.' (sic).

<http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/fi00000.html>, accessed 25 August 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Helsinki Times, *Finland mulls extra funding for schools with immigrant pupils* Thursday, 29 December 2011, <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/htimes2/domestic-news/politics/17645-finland-mulls-extra-funding-for-schools-with-immigrant-pupils-.html>, accessed 10 June 2012.

<sup>53</sup> See: brochures published by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

challenge. Simultaneously there are many initiatives that are working towards bridging the gaps between the Roma and the rest of the society.

In some schools in Finland staff with a Romani background have been employed to provide role models that encourage Roma children to stay in school. As discussed in *The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma* (OFAEPR):

This kind of support promotes Roma children in their studies and reduces absenteeism and school drop-outs. A special needs assistant with a Roma background is also an inspiring role model for Roma children in terms of reconciliating Romani identity with the demands of working life.<sup>54</sup>

The OFM have processed complaints regarding inadequate services in day-care centres in the Sámi language. An example is that 'a Saami child who is a resident of a municipality had been discriminated against on grounds of her ethnic background.' (sic).<sup>55</sup> The Act states that 'Saami-language daycare should be available outside the Saami homeland.' (sic).<sup>56</sup>

Several interviewees raised concerns about education and segregation. One concern is that children who have moved to Finland, who are not yet fluent in the Finnish language, are often placed in separate classrooms. It is difficult to clearly state that this is a form of indirect discrimination and may even be a practical solution intended as a form of positive discrimination.<sup>57</sup> However, separating students clearly emphasises a divide between fluent Finnish speaking students and immigrant students. This specific issue is present only in some schools and is largely dependent on the headmaster of individual schools.

In interviews with the Finnish Association of Russian-speaking Organizations (FARO) and with the Ingrian Centre (Inkerikeskus), both representatives commented on cases where children have been placed into separate classrooms due to their not-yet-fluent Finnish language skills. A related concern was expressed during the interviews that children who are not taught their mother tongue as part of their schooling have difficulty in fully mastering a language at all. Under section 17 of the Constitution of Finland the 'Sami, as an indigenous people, as well as the Roma and other groups, have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture.'<sup>58</sup> As an 'other group' the children of the Russian speaking minority of Finland have the right to

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<sup>54</sup> Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma: Finland's Handbook on the European Policy on Roma*, Working group report, 2011. [www.951291\\_romanispol\\_en\\_Osa1.pdf](http://www.951291_romanispol_en_Osa1.pdf), p.23, accessed 10 August 2012.

<sup>55</sup> The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, *Annual Report 2011 of the Ombudsman for Minorities*, p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Positive discrimination, according to Finland's Equality Act (2004), is acceptable if a person is deemed to be in need of special protection on the basis of his or her ethnic origin, age or social status.

<sup>58</sup> [http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/fi00000\\_.html](http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/fi00000_.html), accessed 24 September 2012.

some teaching of their own language within their schooling. Representatives at FARO discuss this in the following way:

In some schools there is very good Russian language teaching and in some there is not. It depends largely on the resources. If a child comes to Finland without knowing a language (any language) the best is to teach them their mother tongue, otherwise the child may be a bit lost, and put into special class.<sup>59</sup>

Whilst it is recognised by the organisations interviewed that resources in most schools are insufficient to accommodate teaching students of larger minority groups their mother tongue, there is a clear hope, especially for Russian speakers, that more services of this nature will be made available in the future.<sup>60</sup>

In regard to Muslim communities and education a concern arose during an interview with SINE that whilst Islamic studies are increasingly available in many schools, the teachers that teach Islamic studies are generally not themselves Muslim.<sup>61</sup>

A study by Liisa Kosonen reveals that among second generation immigrant adolescents (those with both parents born outside of Finland and who were themselves either born in Finland or arrived as a young child), Muslim girls tend to underachieve in secondary school whilst students with an east-Asian background tend to achieve higher in school yet often drop-out later in their schooling.<sup>62</sup>

Some young people encounter racial hatred at a personal level in their everyday lives. For example early in 2012, 15 year old Rebecka Holm shared her experiences of racism that occurred during her journey to and from school. Though she explained that it is mainly adult men who are publicly racist towards her due to her darker complexion (she has been called: mudface, a negro, and an ape), she believes that racism should be talked about more in schools in as part of health education: 'They talk about bullying, but not about racism.'<sup>63</sup> Similarly 15-year-old Marc Patterson has encountered

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<sup>59</sup> Interview: Faro ry, Helsinki, 6 August 2012. Interviewer: Kivinen, Sari.

<sup>60</sup> There are approximately 50,000 Russian speakers living in Finland.

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<sup>62</sup> Kosonen, Liisa, *Children, adolescents and families - Integration into a new society*, [http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCUQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fblogs.helsinki.fi%2Fjasinska%2Ffiles%2F2010%2F11%2FCC\\_Kosonen\\_Children-Adolescents-and-Families.pdf&ei=ZYhgUK\\_MKNKX0QWZyYDIDA&usq=AFQjCNHI4qteda9ZB9Wwx2xt0yJ0qRW5Dw](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCUQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fblogs.helsinki.fi%2Fjasinska%2Ffiles%2F2010%2F11%2FCC_Kosonen_Children-Adolescents-and-Families.pdf&ei=ZYhgUK_MKNKX0QWZyYDIDA&usq=AFQjCNHI4qteda9ZB9Wwx2xt0yJ0qRW5Dw), p.53, accessed 19 September 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Quote taken from an article by: Nenonen, Säde

<http://www.hs.fi/english/print/1329103696527>, accessed 7 August 2012.

verbal aggression on the streets, for example being called ‘neekeri’,<sup>64</sup> which is considered a racial slur. The offenders were often older people.<sup>65</sup>

In a text titled *Everyday Racism in School. An Ethnographic Study of Group Relations between Finnish and Immigrant Youths* Anne-Mari Souto discusses a study which demonstrates the presence of racism within Finnish schools. Souto says that: ‘From the perspective of immigrant youths everyday racism is made concrete in peer relations in limits on their freedom of movement, social isolation and the obligation to continuously prove that they are good and reliable people.’<sup>66</sup>

### **6.2.2 Facilitating factors or protective measures to combat education challenges**

Addressing racism more openly in the school systems will enable children to recognise and respond to racist attitudes.

Police officers have a long tradition of being involved in local schools and this is an important aspect of community policing. In the English version of the Annual Police Report 2011 it is stated that: ‘police involvement at schools is a central instrument in the prevention of school shootings, for example. The objective is to further develop the dialogue with young people with immigrant backgrounds.’<sup>67</sup>

The OFM has been an expert member of a steering group that works on revitalising the Sámi languages and will continue to monitor the implementations throughout 2012.

Whilst the KiVa project is focused on anti-bullying, it fundamentally promotes awareness about shared responsibility for bullying behaviour and power play. Christina Salmivalli is a core researcher in the KiVa project that focuses on anti-bullying and has involved more than 30 000 children involved and 234 schools since beginning in 2009. The schools are spread across Finland. ‘The point is first of all to raise awareness about all of us being responsible for stopping bullying. To enhance the role that the group plays in allowing or not

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<sup>64</sup> Whilst technically ‘neekeri’ means negro, it is used as a racial slur to the same effect as ‘nigger’.

<sup>65</sup> See: Yle Uutiset, *Racism In Finland Increasingly Aimed At Children & Teens*, [http://yle.fi/uutiset/racism\\_increasingly\\_aimed\\_at\\_children\\_and\\_teens/2708824](http://yle.fi/uutiset/racism_increasingly_aimed_at_children_and_teens/2708824), accessed 22 September 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Nuorisotutkimusseura ry, <http://www.nuorisotutkimusseura.fi/en/node/638>, accessed 22 September 2012.

<sup>67</sup> Tiainen-Broms, Aija (ed), *Police Annual report 2011*, p. 5, <http://www.poliisi.fi/>, accessed 25 August 2012. The wording in this excerpt of the English version published, seems to link the prevention of school shooting with the objective dialogue with young people with immigrant backgrounds, which could be interpreted as immigrant young people are connected to school shootings in Finland. This is not the case, whilst there have been several school shootings in recent years in Finland, none have involved immigrant young people. In the Finnish language version of the same report the distinction is made more clearly that these are two different topics concerning the police and their presence in Finnish schools.

allowing bullying to occur.<sup>68</sup> In cases involving racist bullying, a similar awareness training scheme in the school system could play an important role.

Classes that focus on a shared ‘doing’ can also go a long way to promote awareness for diversity in the classroom. For example a music or theatre class where students interact at a creative level can go a long way to break down the barriers of difference.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Salmivalli, Christina, speech <http://youtu.be/x6FkNkDp018>, accessed 7th August 2012. (<http://www.kivakoulu.fi/>)

<sup>69</sup> A suggested made by Petr Potchinchchikov of FARO ry during an interview on 6 August 2012, based on his previous experience in the school system in Finland and the effects produced by undertaking a shared creative task within the school curriculum.

## 6.3 Racism and related discrimination in housing

### 6.3.1 Manifestations of racism and related discrimination in housing

According to the report *Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination* (IICERD) 'One fourth of all immigrants have experienced discrimination in housing.'<sup>70</sup> This section will map out the general situation in Finland during March 2011-March 2012 with regard to discrimination and housing in Finland with a focus on four areas relevant to this time period: discrimination in the process of securing housing; residential difficulties faced; homelessness; and temporary housing for asylum seekers.

The rental market in general is challenging terrain for many immigrants. The public rental services have long waiting lists whilst the private rental market is difficult to access. Discrimination in this area is difficult to determine and many simply say that because landlords can afford to choose their tenants, generally they will chose a Finnish person. The OFM Annual Report concurs that it is difficult to investigate discrimination in the private rental sector and that homelessness is not necessarily the result of socio-economic difficulties. However, 'it has emerged that lessors have admitted the applicant's immigrant background being the reason for a home not being let to that specific person.'<sup>71</sup>

Several interviewees expressed concern about the issue that many new immigrants cannot apply for housing until they receive a Finnish identity number. The Ingrian Centre, for example, indicated that this is the case for many who are moving to Finland from Russia, some of whom are returning Ingrian-Finns. Previously Ingrian-Finns were provided opportunities to access housing upon arrival. However, this has changed so that when Ingrian-Finns first arrive in Finland they must apply for the Finnish identity number before they can apply for housing and other services.<sup>72</sup> The requirement of identity documents from one's country of origin in order to be issued a Finnish identity card is a serious challenge for many asylum seekers. These people become especially vulnerable in many areas of society. For example they cannot apply for rental housing, cannot open a Finnish bank account and they cannot access social services or health care.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*, 2011, <http://www.google.fi/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CF4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fformin.finland.fi%2Fpublic%2Fdownload.aspx%3FID%3D86517%26GUID%3D%257BCF55173C-BE5E-45F6-B17D-DC8EAA818EF1%257D&ei=z5AyUJ-mHMbE4gSMkYCQAw&usg=AFQjCNGyVhO0fKsR3FPVJwJ5oZ6iMO3fq&sig2=CITVQSSYD1xDH2wlwgxDIA>, p.14, accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>71</sup> The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, *Annual Report 2011 of the Ombudsman for Minorities*, p. 20.

<sup>72</sup> Interview: Huttunen, Vesna-Laine, Inkerikeskus Helsinki, 31 July 2012.

<sup>73</sup> This specific problem is detailed further in **Section 6.5**.

Language also plays a crucial role in finding housing. The RDAAS report reveals that:

Renting an apartment is also difficult for immigrants who are not fluent in Finnish. One organisation handled some 5 to 10 cases like this per year. In such cases, the clients are instructed to bring a support person to any meetings with the employer or landlord. With reference to housing, one organization also stated that immigrants are often directed to live in areas that already have a significant immigrant population.<sup>74</sup>

Specific problems faced by the Muslim communities living in Finland include the challenge of housing large families in small apartments. Whilst the rental homes in Finland are generally very small, many Muslim families, especially Somali families, are often larger than the average Finnish family. Refugees in particular, do not have the chance to purchase their own homes and rely on the public rental market.

In the following quote Husein Muhammed discusses some of the challenges faced by Muslim families seeking housing in Finland:

People usually live very narrowly, with a lot of people in same space. People do not usually have the possibility to rent houses in the private market because of the attitudes of the owners. Many owners understandably choose those who have the possibility to pay more. So if you have a large family of eight persons, which is not very unusual for instance with Somalis, living in a two or three room flat, then it does have its problems. If you have eight people in the same small flat then it is understandable that there will be noise that will cause problems with neighbours.

Ali Qassim elaborates:

Many Somalis are getting problems of living in their neighbourhoods, neighbours are reporting things. When a person is not educated and does not know how to live according to Finland's rules, he finally realises at some point that he gets an eviction. When I hear the feedback from the community I hear a lot of alarming things.

In order to reduce and eliminate discrimination and prejudice in the housing sector local cooperation is vital. Training for the managers of apartment buildings is important to promote intercultural skills and awareness. Resident meetings are important as a potential way of promoting exchange between residents. Some municipalities also include residence training for immigrants in their plans.

During an interview with the Islamic multicultural Dawa Centre a challenging experience was discussed that its members have had since purchasing the

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<sup>74</sup> The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, *Regional Development of Anti-Discrimination Advisory Services: Experience from the implementation of advisory services and results on the identification and tackling of discrimination*, 2011, p.28-29.

basement of a residential building in a suburb of Helsinki. For the last 12 years the basement has operated as a mosque and a cultural centre. During this period the members have attempted to participate in the resident meetings, but faced a number of challenges. Decisions about the whole building and what the Centre should and should not do have been decided without the input of the Centre even though technically the Centre is entitled to vote in the decision making process.

There have been a number of incidents over the years including racist hate mail, and the removal of the Centre's sign from outside the building.<sup>75</sup> The difficulties faced by the Islamic multicultural Dawa Centre indicate that more attention needs to be paid to training and awareness raising among civil society actors.

Homelessness amongst the immigrant population is another important issue. During the previous year the rate of immigrant homelessness has increased slightly in Finland.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, the amount of homelessness of the general population has decreased. According to the ARA<sup>77</sup> housing report in 2011 there were 1020 individual homeless immigrants and 166 homeless immigrant families (out of a total of 7 572 homeless individuals and 423 homeless families). A majority of these homeless are in the capital city of Helsinki. There are 750 homeless immigrant individuals in Helsinki and 300 of these are recorded as being long-term homeless. This has increased from 420 homeless immigrant individuals in 2010. In Helsinki there were 140 homeless immigrant families in 2011 compared to 115 in 2010. The quantity of homeless immigrant individuals and families has steadily risen since 2003 when there were 243 homeless immigrant individuals and 79 families.

The new government has introduced a number of changes to refugee reception centres. The changes concern the accommodation of asylum seekers while their applications are being processed. Each year Finland receives the quota of 750 refugees in cooperation with the UN, UNCHR. This has remained the same with the new government. In the past, people who are waiting for asylum in Finland were housed in refugee reception centres. However in the previous year there have been dramatic changes to the situation of refugee reception centres.

Päivi Räsänen<sup>78</sup> as the new Ministry of the Interior along with the Finnish Immigration Service has aimed to lower the costs related to refugees in general. This has meant that services provided by refugee reception centres in Helsinki have been reduced or shut down completely<sup>79</sup> and instead many

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<sup>75</sup> This incident was discussed during interviews at the Islamic multicultural Dawa Centre (Masjid Al-Imaan) in August 2012.

<sup>76</sup> This is already an issue discussed in the 2010-2011 Shadow report. See p.20.

[http://www.enar-eu.org/Page\\_Generale.asp?DocID=15294&la=1&langue=EN](http://www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=15294&la=1&langue=EN), accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>77</sup> Ara (Asumisen rahoitus ja kehittämiskeskus), *Asunnottomat 2011*, Selvitys 1/2012, ISSN 1237-1288. p.4.

<sup>78</sup> See **Section 6.6** Political participation for further information about Päivi Räsänen.

<sup>79</sup> See the following articles for further information: Interior Minister Päivi Räsänen: Some reception centres will be facing closure,

refugees arriving in Finland are being housed in rental apartments throughout the country. The aim has been to lower the costs of housing refugees (by 20 million euros) and simultaneously to put more money into processing the applications more quickly.<sup>80</sup> This change means that asylum seekers and refugees are now spread around Finland instead of being centralised in the capital city. While the full results of this change are yet to be seen, it may mean that some immigrants will be more likely to remain in the areas where they were initially housed. A likely outcome of this reform will be a reduction of concentration of the migrant population within the capital and, as a result, less segregation.

### **6.3.2 Facilitating factors or protective measures to combat housing challenges**

In recent years there have been focused collaborative efforts by the central and local governments, private enterprises, and by organisations to reduce homelessness.<sup>81</sup> In combating the challenge of homelessness there are organisations and programmes such as The Feantsa plan<sup>82</sup> (2008-2011) and The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) that are working towards reducing long term homelessness. Whilst the Ministry of the Environment is officially responsible for improving homelessness in Finland the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (MSAH) support strategies for ending homelessness through benefits and services.<sup>83</sup>

At the NGO level *No Fixed Abode NGO* (Vva) is an important association which was founded by homeless people themselves in 1986. The aim of Vva is 'to improve living conditions of the homeless: a chance to live independently belongs to everyone.'<sup>84</sup>

A large proportion of the Roma population face housing difficulties and homelessness. The Roma people are dependent mainly on state-subsidised

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<http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Interior+Minister+P%C3%A4ivi+R%C3%A4nen+Soome+reception+centres+will+be+facing+closure/1135269052237>, accessed 20 August 2012.

Asylum-seekers to be housed in empty apartments around Finland,

<http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Asylumseekers+to+be+housed+in+empty+apartments+around+Finland/1135269925729>, accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Räsänen has also been involved with amendments to the family reunification regulations of the Aliens Act by the end of February 2012. 'According to Räsänen, the aim of the changes to the family reunification regulations is to reduce the costs of refugee reception activities.

Another goal is to save EUR 20 million by accelerating the processing of asylum applications. Family reunification means that an asylum seeker who has been granted a residence permit can then bring to Finland his or her family from the country of origin. It is possible that Finland will also start to require that the applicant, for example, has a proper residence here.' See: Helsingin Sanomat, *Interior Minister promises cost-savings from tightened immigration regulations*, <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Interior+Minister+promises+cost-savings+from+tightened+immigration+regulations/1135269660703>, accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>81</sup> For more information about homelessness see: *Universal Periodic Review of The United Nations Human Rights Council second National report by the Government of Finland*, p.8.

<sup>82</sup> See the report at <http://www.fentsa.org> for further details.

<sup>83</sup> See: [http://www.stm.fi/en/welfare/social\\_protection](http://www.stm.fi/en/welfare/social_protection), accessed 11 July, 2012.

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.vvary.fi/>, accessed 21 August 2012.

housing due to the combination of low economic status and prejudice that they frequently experience.

Some Roma still live in owned or rental housing acquired with a special grant allocated for the improvement of the Roma housing situation. [...]

In some localities, services have been developed such as projects regarding housing advice for the Roma. The aim has been to develop cooperation between various bodies, as well as the creation and training of a network of housing advisors and housing company social managers to act between the owners of the rental housing, social welfare and health services and the third sector.<sup>85</sup>

Both the national and municipal level governments are aiming to balance residential settlements as much as is possible, taking actions to avoid the possibility of segregation. This particular problem is recognized in the objectives of the National Policy on Roma, which includes a number of proposals aimed at tackling housing problems.

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<sup>85</sup> Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma: Finland's Handbook on the European Policy on Roma*, 2011, p.25-26.

## 6.4 Racism and related discrimination in health

### 6.4.1 Manifestations of racism and related discrimination in health

Changes in regard to health within the last year include the introduction of the new Health Care Act (1326/2011). The new Act aims to reduce segregation of healthcare and to improve access to mental healthcare for people under the age of 18.<sup>86</sup> Previous segregation in healthcare has meant that residents could not choose which medical centre they went to. Last year's Shadow Report indicated that 'the main form of discrimination in the health sector in Finland is based on the socio-economic standing of the citizen rather than their "race", ethnicity, or culture.'<sup>87</sup> It was also discussed in last years report that all legal residents of Finland are entitled to social and health care services, yet, for various reasons immigrants tend to use social and health care services less than those born in Finland.

Difficulties faced by Muslims in the healthcare system in Finland include confusion about the legality of male circumcision and the availability of appropriate translators (especially with regard to mental health services). Maryan Abdulkarim,<sup>88</sup> a multicultural consultant who specialises in Islamic culture, has researched Muslim families and their healthcare in Finland. Abdulkarim explains that it is challenging for many people to navigate the services available in Finland. The reasons suggested include language barriers, difficulty in adapting to the Finnish culture, and different norms in regard to raising children. Language in particular makes it very difficult to make phone calls, fill in forms and lodge complaints about the services.

Muslim boys are particularly affected in the Finnish health sector due to a lack of information and knowledge about circumcision. It can be difficult find competent doctors who are willing to carry out a circumcision.<sup>89</sup> Whilst circumcision is legalised in Sweden, confusion as to its legal status in Finland remains. Husein Muhammed says that 'the problem now is that everyone is unsure whether it is criminalised or not. Both the parents and the physicians are confused.'<sup>90</sup> Similarly, Anas Hajjar of the Islamic Council of Finland reveals that there are many cases where the lower court (the District Attorney) has filed a report in response to male circumcision, accusing the doctor or

<sup>86</sup> See: Mäkilä, Annastiina, Selkälä, Toni, *ENAR Shadow Report: Racism and related discriminatory practice in Finland*, 2011, p. 34.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>88</sup> Abdulkarim, Maryan, Muslimiperheiden sosiaaliset ja terveydelliset haasteet ja voimavarat, luento pdf. (Muslim families social and health challenges and strengths), [http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hus.fi%2Fdefault.asp%3Fpath%3D1%2C28%2C2530%2C15595%2C22984%2C29357%2C43380%2C43382&ei=ShFaUJOOllez0QXQooHYDA&usg=AFQjCNHSPpx6hgJxBqA2WNEFmmiPF\\_6T5Q](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hus.fi%2Fdefault.asp%3Fpath%3D1%2C28%2C2530%2C15595%2C22984%2C29357%2C43380%2C43382&ei=ShFaUJOOllez0QXQooHYDA&usg=AFQjCNHSPpx6hgJxBqA2WNEFmmiPF_6T5Q), accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>89</sup> This is discussed in: Muhammed, Husein, *Yhtä Erilaiset: Islam ja Suomalainen Kulttuuri*, (Kustannusosakeyhtiö Teos: Helsinki, 2011). p. 21. (Titled: Just as Different: Islam and the Finnish Culture'). This was also discussed during an interview with Anas Hajjar.

<sup>90</sup> Interview: Muhammed, Husein, Helsinki, 13 July 2012.

parent of assaulting the child. However in all cases the higher court has overruled the District Attorney and found that the act did not constitute assault. As Hajjar says:

The doctors need to have their legal rights guaranteed and so do the children and the parents. And each time the public or police actually find that someone has done something against the law, the higher court has found it is not against the law. So this is the main issue: that certain doctors including Jewish doctors have been accused of this assault of the child and so on. [...] In addition there is this Sexpo säätiö who is pressing to make circumcision illegal.<sup>91</sup>

The age at which circumcision is carried also varies between cultures. For example, in a number of Middle Eastern countries it is normal for boys to be circumcised as babies whereas in the Indonesian culture it is more typical for boys to be approximately ten years of age when they are circumcised.

While Finland does not keep official records of people with disabilities it is important to note, according to the periodic report of IICEFRD, there is:

a remarkable number of disabled persons among the refugees, as well as persons suffering from long-term illnesses and persons in mental health rehabilitation. The study found that the Finnish disability and social service systems are comprehensive, but complicated. Information should be accessible and comprehensive, so that also disabled persons with a refugee background could be informed and their ability to use relevant support services would develop.<sup>92</sup>

Immigrants encounter difficulties in accessing mental healthcare. In particular, those who have arrived in Finland from war torn countries may require specialist psychological or psychiatric care. The problem is that many individuals do not possess the language skills required to communicate their emotions, needs and experiences. And whilst interpreters are generally available, many have not been trained to translate personal and deeply difficult feelings.<sup>93</sup>

The amount of staff with immigrant backgrounds hired in social welfare and health care services in Finland are minimal. Statistics of the number of foreign citizens and people of foreign descent working in various social welfare and health care services in Finland were published in the *Statistical Yearbook on*

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<sup>91</sup> Interview: Hajjar, Anas, SINE, Helsinki 14 August 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*, 2011, <http://www.google.fi/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CF4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fformin.finland.fi%2Fpublic%2Fdownload.aspx%3FID%3D86517%26GUID%D%257BCF55173C-BE5E-45F6-B17D-DC8EAA818EF1%257D&ei=z5AyUJ-mHMbE4gSMkYCQAw&usg=AFQjCNGyVhO0fKsR3FPvVJwJ5oz6iMO3fq&sig2=CITVQSSYD1xDH2wlwgxDIA>, p.11, accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>93</sup> This issue was discussed during an interview with Husein Muhammed.

*Social Welfare and Health Care 2011.*<sup>94</sup> In a section entitled the *Percentage of foreign nationals or persons originally from outside Finland in certain occupations in the social welfare and health care services, 2000–2008*, the percentage of foreign citizens employed by social welfare and health care sectors in 2008 is listed as 1.4% and the percentage of people of Finnish citizens with a foreign descent in 2008 is listed as 3.2%. These have percentages doubled since 2000.

Due to shortages of health care workers in recent years across Finland recruitment has included attracting professionals from outside of Finland. For example, the international recruitment firm Opteam has recruited a large number of nurses from the Philippines to work in Finland. Before arrival the nurses are provided intensive Finnish language courses. Similarly, *The Work in Western Finland project*<sup>95</sup> is involved in recruiting people trained in a variety of professions including healthcare, agriculture and welding. The recruitment is being targeted at EU countries and is funded by the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment in the province of Satakunta. The aim is to fill labour shortages in certain fields with professionals from other EU countries. The plan includes training new employees in language skills and other tools for integration. Meanwhile, many people of foreign descent who already reside in Finland struggle to find employment.

In an online forum discussing prospects of finding work in the nursing profession in Finland Amandine.K states:

I have graduated in 2009, have never worked as a nurse, I tried a lot, barely got one interview and that was about it. I know others that were more lucky but that was confined to elderly care. most of my foreign classmates moved abroad. [...] There is another member on this forum that is a nurse and she couldn't find work too despite years of experience and good Finnish.<sup>96</sup>

Since the early 2000s a shortage of doctors in Finland has meant that Finland has increasingly granted licenses to doctors outside of the European Economic Area (EEA).<sup>97</sup> Initially these were primarily granted to doctors coming from Russia and Estonia (before Estonia became part of the European Union), however increasingly doctors from a range of other countries have come to work in Finland. According to the 2012 statistics, there are 19 642 physicians of working age in Finland, of whom 18 758 are Finnish nationals. Among these the most common mother tongues are: Finnish

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<sup>94</sup> This can be accessed from: <http://www.thl.fi/thl-client/pdfs/aab19516-a923-42e9-9430-fa2564c504d0>, accessed 21 August 2012. For more detailed statistics see p.187.

<sup>95</sup> Yle Uutiset, *Flood of immigrant nurses to Finland*, [http://yle.fi/uutiset/flood\\_of\\_immigrant\\_nurses\\_to\\_finland/3266729](http://yle.fi/uutiset/flood_of_immigrant_nurses_to_finland/3266729), February 2012, accessed 23 August 2012.

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.finlandforum.org/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=60167>, accessed 23 August 2012.

<sup>97</sup> See: <http://www2.hs.fi/english/archive/news.asp?id=20031006IE6>, accessed 23 August 2012.

(17,536), Swedish (747), Russian (215), Estonian (25), German (22) and Arabic (31).<sup>98</sup>

While researching this section, the author was surprised to find that on the official homepage for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health<sup>99</sup> the only publications available in the section for ‘Immigrants – information material’ relate to female circumcision and oral health. There were also links to the Information bank<sup>100</sup> and to the National Institute for Health and Welfare.

The OFAEPR<sup>101</sup> report outlines that the Roma experience a higher morbidity rate than the majority population. The Roma often receive insufficient healthcare due to the lack of health information. These issues are connected to wider communication gaps and problems related to cultural and linguistic differences between the Roma and health care personnel.

#### **6.4.2 Facilitating factors or protective measures to combat health inequalities**

The Finnish Association for Mental Health (FAMH) is an NGO whose projects respond to social changes by creating new models for promoting mental health in different spheres of life. The Centre organises services for immigrants and their families and provides support to immigrant adolescents. In addition, FAMH launched the online programme SELMA in autumn 2011 which is designed to help people overcome difficult periods in their life. To accommodate immigrants, the information is in English, Russian, Somali and Sorani (Kurdish) and provides information about the mental adjustment process specific to immigration. FAMH’s OVI project also offers mental health information to immigrant associations and people with an immigrant background. According to project manager of OVI Sari Nyholm ‘many immigrants need new coping methods to replace those left in their home countries.’<sup>102</sup>

Another project that has focused on providing peer support is the VertaisKoto<sup>103</sup> project. The project provided peer support as well as courses for immigrants, aiming specifically to cater to newly arrived refugees and immigrants to Finland. In the VertaisKoto’s groups, everyday matters are discussed to assist integration in Finland.

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<sup>98</sup> For further details please refer to: Finnish Medical Association, *Physicians 2012*, <http://www.laakariliitto.fi/e/statistics/>, accessed 23 August 2012.

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.stm.fi/julkaisut/maahanmuuttajat>, accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.infopankki.fi/>, accessed 10 July 2012.

<sup>101</sup> Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma: Finland’s Handbook on the European Policy on Roma*, Working group report, 2011, [www.951291\\_romanipol\\_en\\_Osa1.pdf](http://www.951291_romanipol_en_Osa1.pdf), p. 26.

<sup>102</sup> Nyholm, Sari, The Finnish Association for Mental Health, *Newsletter*, 2011, p.5. See also [www.mielenterveysseura.fi/en](http://www.mielenterveysseura.fi/en) and [www.e-mielenterveys.fi](http://www.e-mielenterveys.fi).

<sup>103</sup> The VertaisKoto project ended in February 2012 and was financed by the European Refugee Fund, the social services of the city of Helsinki and the social and health care services of the city of Espoo. See: [www.pakolaisapu.fi/en/our-work-in-finland/vertaiskoto.html](http://www.pakolaisapu.fi/en/our-work-in-finland/vertaiskoto.html)

Whilst challenges continue to exist with the Roma's access to public health care, guide booklets have been developed to better prepare social welfare professionals for working with the Roma. See the OFAEPR<sup>104</sup> report for more information.

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<sup>104</sup> Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma: Finland's Handbook on the European Policy on Roma*, Working group report, 2011, [www.951291\\_romanipol\\_en\\_Osa1.pdf](http://www.951291_romanipol_en_Osa1.pdf), p. 27.

## **6.5 Racism and related discrimination in access to goods and services**

### **6.5.1 Manifestations of racism and related discrimination with access to goods and services in the public and private sector**

The issues raised concerning discrimination in relation to goods and services in last year's Shadow Report remain relatively up to date. For example, in the private sector it appears that ethnic minority groups continue to be refused entry to some private bars and clubs, while many members of ethnic minority groups feel that they are under surveillance in shops.<sup>105</sup>

The following paragraphs will firstly outline general issues that are relevant to all immigrants when accessing goods and services, for example access to the Finnish identity number and services such as access to interpreter services. Secondly, this section will outline aspects relevant to the access of goods and services specific to Muslim communities in Finland.

A Finnish identity number is required to access a number of services in Finland. As it takes some time to receive an identity number, those who arrive in Finland are initially unable to access social services, housing and banking services. Increasingly bank codes are also used to access many services that are not even related to banking.<sup>106</sup> In particular, asylum seekers who do not have documents from their country of origin risk remaining in limbo for an extended period of time often encountering considerable hardship. Vesna-Laine Huttunen from the Ingrian Centre has stated that this is also a frequent problem for many people arriving to Finland as returned Ingrian-Finns,<sup>107</sup> for whom it may take some weeks to obtain a Finnish identity number.

The availability of interpreters is very important for many immigrants. The OFM has revealed that some municipal units are unwilling to provide interpreters.<sup>108</sup> An interesting example of discrimination in this context is

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<sup>105</sup> For further details see: The Ombudsman for Minorities, Annual Report 2011, p.17. Refer also to: Mäkilä, Annastiina, Selkälä, Toni, ENAR Shadow Report: Racism and related discriminatory practice in Finland, 2011, p.42.

<sup>106</sup> For further information see: The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, *Annual Report 2011 of the Ombudsman for Minorities*, p.17-18. & The Ombudsman for Minorities, *Regional Development of Anti-Discrimination Advisory Services: Experience from the implementation of advisory services and results on the identification and tackling of discrimination*, 2011, p.28-29.

<sup>107</sup> The Ingrians are ethnic Finns whose ancestors moved to an area of what is now Russia on the southeast shore of the Gulf of Finland since the 17th century. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, surviving Ingrian Finns and their Russified descendants have been allowed to migrate to Finland. Up until mid 2011 those with Ingrian heritage were allowed to apply to relocate to Finland.

<sup>108</sup> The Ombudsman for Minorities, *Regional Development of Anti-Discrimination Advisory Services: Experience from the implementation of advisory services and results on the identification and tackling of discrimination*, 2011, p. 24.

outlined in the OFM Annual Report.<sup>109</sup> An individual who had been granted asylum in Finland encountered difficulties when visiting the municipal social services because the interpreter had connections with the authorities and the embassy of his country of origin. During the sessions, the interpreter criticised him for ‘ruining the reputation of the country of origin’.<sup>110</sup> Structural discrimination appears to be an issue concerning municipal social services (although this is more difficult to identify than other forms of discrimination). For example English speakers are on occasion hung-up on when trying to make phone calls to social services.<sup>111</sup>

Within the private sector many reports are made to the OFM when ‘members of ethnic minorities find themselves “under observation” in locations such as shops’.<sup>112</sup> The OFM Annual Report reveals a specific incident in which a bus driver refused to allow a man of African origin and his pregnant wife to board the bus.<sup>113</sup>

Specific goods and services of particular importance for Islamic and Muslim communities include access to mosques, halal food, specific clothing such as headscarves for women, an Islamic graveyard and Islamic teaching available within the school system.

While there are several Islamic cultural centres spread across Finland which function as mosques and prayer houses, most of them are not purpose built, and are generally converted spaces such as old banks, cinemas, basements of residential buildings and so forth. There are ‘sizeable Muslim masjids’,<sup>114</sup> used as prayer houses. The only purpose built mosque in Finland is in the city of Järvenpää and was built in the 1940s. The Järvenpää mosque belongs to the Islamic congregation of Finland’s Tatars, established in 1925.

The establishment of an Islamic graveyard is one of the priority projects of the Islamic Council of Finland (SINE). As Anas Hajjar stated, ‘the graveyard is under the Finnish law, we are now just trying to find a suitable place. There is political will from the government and there is financial support.’<sup>115</sup> Securing a purpose built mosque in Helsinki is more challenging due to both the attitudes of the general public and the media, and because of issues relating to city planning. However, there are not enough places planned in the city planning for purposes of religious compounds.

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<sup>109</sup> The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, *Annual Report 2011 of the Ombudsman for Minorities* 2011, p.16.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> The Ombudsman for Minorities, *Regional Development of Anti-Discrimination Advisory Services: Experience from the implementation of advisory services and results on the identification and tackling of discrimination*, 2011, p. 24.

<sup>112</sup> The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, *Annual Report 2011 of the Ombudsman for Minorities* 2011, p.17.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> For further information see: Rajamäki, Tiina, *Finland’s only proper mosque is in Järvenpää*, Helsingin Sanomat, 2009, <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/1135251157120>, accessed 13 August 2012.

<sup>115</sup> Interview: Hajjar, Anas, SINE, Helsinki 14 August 2012.

Access to halal food is important for many Muslims. There are many halal food shops in Finland however these are mainly located in the capital city of Helsinki and nearby city of Espoo. Specific Muslim clothing such as headscarves are available in many shops in Helsinki in addition to stores in Oulu, Rovaniemi, Kuopio, Savonlinna, Turku and in Tampere.<sup>116</sup>

### **6.5.2 Facilitating factor or protective measures to promote equality in accessing goods and services**

The Ombudsman for Minorities interviewed 37 NGOs as part of their research on the regional development of anti-discrimination advisory services. The research gathered information about the kinds of services and support that the NGOs themselves offer and what could be done to improve their own abilities to handle cases of discrimination. 83% of the NGOs acknowledged that discrimination is an issue in the work that they do. The majority of NGOs were able to direct clients to the relevant actors in society. This was in contrast to most of the regional authorities who often do not even recognise discrimination when they encounter it. Many NGOs stated that they have either undertaken discrimination awareness training or that they want to undertake training to improve their knowledge of how best to assist clients.<sup>117</sup>

An important factor in promoting access to goods and services to Muslim communities in Finland is the pro-activeness of the Muslim communities themselves. For example, centres such as the Islamic multicultural Dawa Centre provide space and services for religious observance and also provide important support services. They provide counselling to their own members, classes about a variety of topics and mentorship for individuals adjusting to living in Finland. The centre also promotes itself as a club for members to turn to for support when they encounter race related problems. Classes held at the Islamic multicultural Dawa Centre include subjects such as the importance and the meanings of laws in Islam, Muslim food, Arabic classes for children and young people, football tournaments, IT programming classes and presentations specific to Muslim women.

Islamic multicultural Dawa Centre is merely one example of a centre in Finland providing support and services to their community. These kinds of services are invaluable for strengthening equality and promoting integration. The services provided by network organisations are also vital for facilitating positive change. For example: the Islamic Council of Finland (SINE), Moniheli and FARO (along with many others), provide resources, training and support for their member associations.

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<sup>116</sup> For information of where specific stores are located see:

[http://www.shiaislam.info/linkit/yritykset\\_yhteisot.php](http://www.shiaislam.info/linkit/yritykset_yhteisot.php), accessed 01 August 2012.

<sup>117</sup> For more information refer to the The Ombudsman for Minorities, *Regional Development of Anti-Discrimination Advisory Services: Experience from the implementation of advisory services and results on the identification and tackling of discrimination*, 2011, p.25.

Information services such as Virka Info<sup>118</sup> operate in the capital city of Helsinki with the aim to provide general information to native Finns and immigrants. With many languages available Virka Info answers questions via the phone, internet or in person.

With regard to combating the structural availability and suitability of interpreters, the situation is now being improved by increased awareness training about the vital role of interpretation.

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<sup>118</sup> <http://www.virka.fi/en/info/english>, accessed 20 September 2012.

## 6.6 Racism and related discrimination in political participation

### 6.6.1 Manifestations of racism and related discrimination in the realm of political participation

In the year covered by this report, March 2011-March 2012, Finland experienced significant political changes. First, the Parliamentary elections were held on 17 April 2011 and saw a 15% increase in the popularity of the True Finns party whose Parliament seats rose from five to 39. The True Finns now have the third largest share of seats in parliament. The National Coalition Party (NCP) has the most seats at 44 and the Social Democrat Party (SDP) has the second most at 42.<sup>119</sup> The Centre Party of Finland suffered the most significant loss of support in the 2011 elections, falling from 23.1% of votes to 15.8%. Jyrki Katainen from the NCP became the new Prime Minister of Finland and appointed the new government.

Secondly, Finland's Presidential elections occurred in January and February 2012. Sauli Niinistö of the National Coalition Party won the majority of votes, and he began his term in March 2012.

The ruling coalition headed by Niinistö has emphasised that all of Finland's residents are entitled equally to all services in Finland regardless of gender, age, origin, language, faith, political views, health, disability, sexual orientation, etc. The new government has publicly emphasised its commitment to overcoming racism and other types of discrimination.

The most notable change in parliament in the last year has been the increase in power of the True Finns party. This is alarming because of their anti-immigration position. The True Finns party campaign has promised to lower the refugee quotas and to cut foreign aid and to reduce Finland's financial contribution to the EU. All of these have been viewed as possible obstacles to coalition talks.

Päivi Räsänen of the Christian Democrats was appointed by Katainen as Minister of the Interior. She has been mentioned already in **Section 6.3** of this report due to the changes she has made to Refugee reception centres and in **Section 5**, for her statements about preferring that Finland accept Christian refugees instead of those with an Islamic faith.<sup>120</sup> Räsänen holds

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<sup>119</sup> For a complete list of statistics see: [http://www.stat.fi/til/evaa/2011/evaa\\_2011\\_2011-04-29\\_tie\\_001\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/evaa/2011/evaa_2011_2011-04-29_tie_001_en.html), accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>120</sup> Mäkilä, Annastiina, Selkälä, Toni, *ENAR Shadow Report: Racism and related discriminatory practice in Finland*, 2011, p.9-10. See also: Helsinki Times, Bishop: Church welcomes refugees of all faiths, <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/htimes2/domestic-news/general/13069-church-says-welcomes-refugees-of-all-faiths-.html?tmpl=component&print=1&layout=default&page=>, accessed 24 September 2012. In regard to the closing of reception centres see: Aamulehti (morning newspaper), Neljä vastaanottokeskusta ajetaan alas,

'responsibility for immigration, the police, rescue services and the Border Guard, with the exception of matters under the Integration Unit'.<sup>121</sup>

In early 2012, in an effort to improve on the open labour market of immigrant employment, the government transferred Immigrant integration affairs from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. The Minister of Labour Lauri Ihälainen is responsible for matters related to the integration unit, with the aim of improving the situation of immigrants within the workforce.

During a keynote speech in August 2011 Erkki Tuomioja (Minister of Foreign Affairs) emphasised that Finland has many challenges in facing the reasons for social discontent, which have come to the public fore in recent years largely due to immigration discussions and the anti-immigration views of the True Finns party. Tuomioja considers that there is a general desire for change in Finland but he questions what form change will take. In Tuomioja's view the 'broadest desire was for change to the ongoing trend towards growing inequality, including inequality in incomes and wealth, and the continued diminishment of the welfare state'.<sup>122</sup> Simultaneously Tuomioja discusses what is referred to in Finland as 'immigration criticism' stating that in Finland it is:

a euphemism for what is elsewhere called racism and xenophobia. This question undoubtedly led to the election of a number of very prominent The Finns Party (as the Perussuomalaiset now want to be called in English) candidates [...] For now at least, "immigration criticism" remains confined to an extreme nationalist wing of the party. However, the party leadership cannot put off indefinitely the task of taking a stand against its own extremist elements.<sup>123</sup>

Tuomioja is referring to representatives of the True Finns party, for example Jussi Halla-aho, who wants to be considered 'immigration-critical' (in Finnish: *maahanmuuttokriittiset*). James O'Connor states that 'This is a double euphemism: claiming to be against certain immigration policies, rather than against certain sorts of immigrant'.<sup>124</sup> In particular Halla-aho has received much attention in recent years for expressing his 'immigration critical' views specifically toward immigration from Muslim countries.

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<http://www.aamulehti.fi/Kotimaa/1194706950667/artikkeli/nelja+vastaanottokeskusta+ajetaan+alas.html>, accessed 24 September 2012.

<sup>121</sup> Asa, Riikka, *Annual Policy Report Finland*, 2011, [http://www.google.fi/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CGQQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.emn.fi%2Ffiles%2F579%2FAnnual\\_EMN\\_Policy\\_Report\\_2011\\_Finland\\_eng.pdf&ei=ETsVUJPNJ\\_Ok4AT\\_54C4Dw&usg=AFQjCNG2TK2qg1ebvALOLmePq99n2MFnFQ](http://www.google.fi/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CGQQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.emn.fi%2Ffiles%2F579%2FAnnual_EMN_Policy_Report_2011_Finland_eng.pdf&ei=ETsVUJPNJ_Ok4AT_54C4Dw&usg=AFQjCNG2TK2qg1ebvALOLmePq99n2MFnFQ), accessed 15 June 2012, p. 6-7.

<sup>122</sup> Helsinki Times, August 2011, *The tasks facing Finland in the new decade*, <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/news/index.php/archive>, accessed 15 August 2012.

<sup>123</sup> Helsinki Times, August 2011, <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/news/index.php/archive>, accessed 20 July 2012.

<sup>124</sup> O'Connor, James, Helsinki Times, *The language of bigotry*, August 2011, <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/news/index.php/archive>, accessed 15 August 2012.

In the previous year many of the members of the True Finns party have incited alarming public acts of discrimination. For example True Finns councilman in Kotka, Freddy Van Wonterghem received a 420 Euro fine for provoking ethnic hatred against Muslims in a blog entry.<sup>125</sup> A larger fine of 1424 Euro was imposed on True Finns member of parliament James Hirvisaari in December for committing act/s of hate speech. According to the OFM Annual Policy report.<sup>126</sup> ‘the court found that Hirvisaari had written disparagingly about Muslims in his blog, labelling people belonging to a certain population group as criminals.’ Another member of parliament Teuvo Hakkarainen publicly expressed opinions in a video interview with Helsingin Sanomat in April 2011, which the Ombudsman for Minorities state as ‘racist and offensive to human dignity’.<sup>127</sup> Hakkarainen provoked much online discussion and debate due to statements he made which are considered racist and inappropriate for a member of parliament. He was ‘reprimanded by his parliamentary group and given a stern talking-to by True Finns party chairman Timo Soini.’<sup>128</sup>

Another newsworthy incident involved Ulla Pyysalo, assistant to Member of Parliament Juho Eerola (of the True Finns), when it was reported that she had applied to become a member of the Finnish Resistance Movement. The movement is considered to be neo-Nazi with an anti-immigrant agenda.<sup>129</sup>

Ilona Tikka, is a researcher at the University of Helsinki whose work focuses on immigrant issues and their opportunities to influence social and political change. Tikka also sits on the board of The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO)<sup>130</sup> and during an interview indicated that ‘In every party there’s someone against immigration except maybe the greens, but even they are too mild.’<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> TS (online newspaper), *Perussuomalaisen valtuutettu sai sakot rasistisista puheista* (True Finn delegate receives a fine for racist speech),

<http://www.ts.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/329185/Perussuomalaisen+valtuutettu+sai+sakot+rasistisista+puheista>, accessed 24 September 2012. The blog entry is also mentioned in the OFM ten year report, the following is an unofficial translation of an excerpt from the report: ‘Councilman in Kotka Freddy Van Wonterghem wrote in his blog alarming statements such as: ‘It isn’t our business how the Saudi’s behave in their own country, I think they can do however they like. We can keep as a positive thing that each time a Muslim girl is killed, we have one less potential birth giving Muslim out of the game.’ See: The Ombudsman for Minorities, *In Finland har vi this thing called reilu meininki*, Kuopio 2011, ISBN 978-952-491-687-5 (pdf / online).

p.137.

<sup>126</sup> The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, *Annual Report 2011 of the Ombudsman for Minorities*, 2011, p.16-17.

<sup>127</sup> Ombudsman for Minorities Annual Report 2011, p. 19

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> See: Yle Uutiset (news), *Finns Party assistant admits national-socialist link*, [http://yle.fi/uutiset/finns\\_party\\_assistant\\_admits\\_national-socialist\\_link/5446553](http://yle.fi/uutiset/finns_party_assistant_admits_national-socialist_link/5446553), &

*Controversial MP's aide resigns over Nazi link*, [http://yle.fi/uutiset/controversial\\_mps\\_aide\\_resigns\\_over\\_nazi\\_link/5447995](http://yle.fi/uutiset/controversial_mps_aide_resigns_over_nazi_link/5447995), accessed 24 September 2012.

<sup>130</sup> <http://www.intermin.fi/en/etno>, accessed 20 September 2012.

<sup>131</sup> Interview: Tikka, Ilona, Moniheli, Helsinki, 20 August 2012.

## **6.6.2 Facilitating factor or protective measures to promote equality in political participation**

The Swedish People's Party has been one of the few political parties to actively promote issues relevant to immigrants in Finland. From their own stance as a minority (the Swedish speaking minority) the party initiated the association Multicultural Finland. The association aims to promote themselves to immigrants and refugees in Finland and to use their own status as a minority group to reach out to other minority groups to become more politically involved.<sup>132</sup>

The network of associations Moniheli works largely with immigrant issues and is currently undertaking a project which aims to encourage members of minority groups to realise their political rights and assume an active role in society, with particular emphasis on voting. For example the I-Count initiative is currently underway with the aim of raising awareness about voting rights and about the importance of voting.

Moniheli has also organised a peaceful march called 'breaking the silence.' Ilona Tikka was an initiator of *Breaking the Silence* which occurred for the first time in July 2011 and included over 2 000 people marching down the main street of Helsinki. The title came from several events that had occurred during the 2011 summer including an event where a group of Somali's had been attacked when celebrating the Finnish Ice Hockey win, the tragedy in Norway, and the news of Pekka Sauri who, as Tikka explains: 'had been on the tram in Helsinki and had stopped some racist comments. He was rewarded. It came from here that you have to break the silence when the tolerant majority doesn't say anything.'<sup>133</sup> *Breaking the Silence* is one example of events that are occurring at NGO levels that are promoting discussion about racism experienced within the wider community and are highlighting the positive diversity of multiculturalism.

A government initiated project aiming to promote equality at many levels is the YES project: Equality is Priority. Which is an EU funded project that has seen several projects initiated that aim to improve equality in Finland. For example, the 'objectives of the YES 5 Project in 2012 include awareness raising on discrimination in working life, especially in recruitment, and promoting diversity management in public and private sectors.'<sup>134</sup> The project is now in its fifth project year.

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<sup>132</sup> For more information see: annual\_reportMCF\_2011\_www.pdf, accessed 23 August 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Interview: Tikka, Ilona, Moniheli, Helsinki, 20 August 2012.

<sup>134</sup> <http://www.tem.fi/index.php?l=en&s=3128>, accessed 21 August 2012. Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions (OIK-40), Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, November 2011.

<http://www.google.fi/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CF4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fformin.finland.fi%2Fpublic%2Fdownload.aspx%3FID%3D86517%26GUID%D%257BCF55173C-BE5E-45F6-B17D-DC8EAA818EF1%257D&ei=z5AyUJ-mHMbE4gSMkYCQAw&usg=AFQjCNGyVhO0fKsR3FPvVJwJ5oz6iMO3fg&sig2=CITVQSSYD1xDH2wlwgxDIA>, accessed 22 August 2012. P.6-7.

Finnish citizenship can be automatically attained on the basis of birth, marriage, adoption or place of birth. A person can apply for Finnish citizenship if they meet certain requirements such as having lived in Finland for five years continuously and being proficient in either Finnish, Swedish or Finnish sign language. If a person is married to (or in a registered partnership with) a Finnish citizen, they can apply after four years of continuous residence.

Since 1 June 2003 dual nationality is accepted in Finland. There are however long waiting periods to receive answers to applications. Refugees applying for citizenship, for example, may have a two year waiting period.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> For more information see:  
[http://www.suomi.fi/suomifi/english/services\\_by\\_topic/law\\_and\\_legal\\_protection/nationality\\_languages\\_and\\_minorities/index.html](http://www.suomi.fi/suomifi/english/services_by_topic/law_and_legal_protection/nationality_languages_and_minorities/index.html), accessed 23 August 2012. See also:  
[http://www.migri.fi/services/customer\\_bulletins/1/0/queues\\_of\\_citizenship\\_applications](http://www.migri.fi/services/customer_bulletins/1/0/queues_of_citizenship_applications), about queues for waiting for citizenship decision, accessed 24 September 2012.

## 6.7 Racism and related discrimination in media

### 6.7.1 Manifestations of racism and related discrimination in the media, including the internet

The Finnish public media (newspapers, radio and television), in general, represent multiculturalism in Finland in neutral to positive ways. Several English language newspapers published in the capital city such as SixDegrees and Helsinki Times are informative resources in English for many non-Finnish speakers residing in Finland and promote a positive perspective on multiculturalism. Online forums such as blogs and Facebook pages are less neutral. There are several anti-immigration online discussion forums in Finland where racist and xenophobic behaviour are blatant and alarming.<sup>136</sup>

In July 2011 Anders Breivik's actions in Norway brought increased attention to anti-immigration media sites in Finland. For example, an article by Social Democrat Maarit Feldt-Ranta discusses how the tragedy has prompted Finnish people to re-think their perceptions about immigration:

The tragic massacre that took place in Norway in the summer, the motives of which were a mixture of political and racist hate, has had an effect on both the ongoing discussion and people's attitudes. A growing number of Finns have said aloud that intolerance has crossed the line and should be tackled en masse.<sup>137</sup>

The tragedy brought more focused attention to efforts at countering anti-immigration in all Nordic countries. In Finland this has meant that online forums have been surveyed with greater perseverance in respect to right-wing extremists. There have also been calls to tighten legislation on the use of firearms.<sup>138</sup>

Heightened awareness of extremist nationalism in Finland has resulted in increased online surveillance as discussed in **Section 4** of this report.

As discussed in **Section 5** in the experience of SINE representative Anas Hajjar the media generally represent Muslims positively (for example in relation to the Ramadan). However, when the topic in discussion is something that is perceived negatively, for example plans to build mosques or male circumcision, then the media tend to represent Muslims and Islam in a more negative light.

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<sup>136</sup> See **Section 6.8.3** (Hate Speech) for further information about online forums and blogs in Finland that represent Islamophobic perspectives.

<sup>137</sup> Feldt-Ranta, Maarit, *Entirely racist country?* September 2011,

<http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/news/index.php/archive>, accessed 10 July 2012.

<sup>138</sup> See articles such as: BBC News, 5 August 2011, *Norway attacks fuel Finland immigration debate*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14425816?print=true>, accessed 6 June 2012.

Husein Muhammed considers that the media in general represent Muslims quite well however he feels that more varied representation could improve matters. For instance, television coverage often focuses on a Muslim public figure (such as an Imam) who is invited to speak on behalf of all Muslims in Finland, leaving the diversity of the Muslim communities and individuals unrepresented.

### **6.7.2 Facilitating factor or protective measures in the media**

General awareness of online discrimination in Finland has grown in recent years. In the period covered by this report police have increased monitoring of the internet. In addition, citizens are now encouraged to report incidents of hate speech and other online offences. With the Cybercrime law and a strong presence in social media, local Finnish police are now present online as virtual police offices.

Many members of Islamic and Muslim communities are also active in producing media and publications that raise awareness about their culture. For example the quarterly publication Salam is a journal in the Finnish language published by Resalat ry. Salam highlights positive action in Muslim communities. SINE also produces publications in collaboration with associations that are members of their umbrella organisation. For example their youth committee publishes its own magazine. These kinds of publications actively increase awareness about Islamic and Muslim communities living in Finland, in the Finnish language.

The media in general play an important role in promoting the activities of minority groups. For example, in Helsingin Sanomat on National Women's Day in March 2012<sup>139</sup> an article reported a special event organised by Brishna Isar Qazi for the Afghani women living in Helsinki. The event aimed both to celebrate Afghani women in Finland and to raise funds towards helping Afghani women in Afghanistan. This is an example of media promoting a positive narrative about a group of women that are actively promoting their culture, supporting each other and raising awareness.

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<sup>139</sup> Tulonen, Hannele, Helsingin Sanomat, *Afgaanit viettilivät naisten päivää: Kotimaan naisia halutaan auttaa Suomesta käsin*, March 2012, <http://www.hs.fi/juttusarja/penaali/artikkeli/Afgaanit+viettiliv%C3%A4t+naisten+p%C3%A4iv%C3%A4%C3%A4/1329103555512>, accessed 13 August 2012.

## **6.8 Racism and related discrimination in criminal justice**

### **6.8.1 Policing and ethnic profiling<sup>140</sup>**

The OFM have been contacted several times each year in relation to suspected cases of ethnic profiling by authorities.<sup>141</sup> Ethnic profiling in Finland constitutes prohibited ethnic discrimination and is included in international agreements.<sup>142</sup> The OFM have been in discussion with the Finnish Border Guard to work out guidelines and training for the future handling of suspected cases of ethnic profiling.

### **6.8.2 Racist violence and crime**

While the 2011 annual report published by the Finnish Police<sup>143</sup> reveals that the quantity of crimes that are ‘classified as racist’ have decreased by 13% since 2010, a study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) indicates that street violence towards Somali immigrants is *higher* in Finland than anywhere else in Europe even though, the proportion and quantity of Somalis living in Finland is the lowest compared to the rest of Europe.<sup>144</sup>

According to the Police in Finland the focus of crime prevention is on ‘the identification and handling of violent offences against vulnerable groups of people.’ (2011, p.7). The importance of educating of police officers in the recognition and investigation of racist and hate crimes has been noted in the Police report. Raising awareness of what constitutes discrimination (at various levels) is of primary importance. Whilst hate crimes persist, the Police are increasingly paying more attention to how they handle acts of violence against vulnerable groups.

### **6.8.3 Hate speech**

In Finland hate speech is punishable by law. Within the period covered by this report several cases have gone to court relating to acts of hate speech. As outlined in **section 6.6.1** several members of the True Finns party have

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<sup>140</sup> The Open Society Institute defines “ethnic profiling” as the “use of generalisations grounded in ethnicity, race, national origin, or religion - rather than objective evidence or individual behaviour - as the basis for making law enforcement and/or investigative decisions about who has been or may be involved in criminal activity” .

<sup>141</sup> The Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities, *Annual Report 2011 of the Ombudsman for Minorities*, p. 17.

<sup>142</sup> The international agreements include the non-discrimination clause of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

<sup>143</sup> Tiainen-Broms, Aija (ed), Police Annual report 2011, <http://www.poliisi.fi/>, p.7.

<sup>144</sup> This was reported in the following article: Kouros, Alexis, Helsinki Times, *Self-denial won’t save Finland*, Wednesday, July 2011, accessed 10 August 2012.

recently been found guilty of committing acts of hate speech and have subsequently been fined. For example, members of parliament James Hirvisaari and Teuvo Hakkarainen were convicted. Jusesi Halla-aho has recently (outside of the period of time covered by this report) been charged with committing hate speech and of defaming religion in a blog article he wrote in 2008.<sup>145</sup>

Online blogs and forums are rich soil for anonymous acts of hate speech, xenophobia and other forms of racist crime. Especially in the later part of 2011 the topic of online hate speech has received much attention in regard to anti-immigration movements and growing extremism. This became particularly apparent following the tragic massacre that took place in Norway.

In Finland there are several online forums and blogs that focus on anti-immigration, similarly to some online forums in Norway. Many of these focus largely on generating animosity and fear towards the Islamic and Muslim communities. It has been said that:

These forums have a wide array of members and audiences. Most of them see immigration, Islam and multiculturalism as the most pressing problem in their country and even their own lives. A small, but not insignificant group of these see violence as the only – or the best – solution to this problem.<sup>146</sup>

Many people who research immigration and multiculturalism in Finland are reluctant to publish their names with their research due to the risk of intimidation through hate mail and threats.<sup>147</sup> In support of this concern is the (now revised) manifesto called Operation Out (Operaatio Ulos), which is:

concerned with the Islamification and multiculturalisation of Finland and suggested targeted killing of – in addition to African and Middle Eastern immigrants – “traitors”, i.e. those Finns who publicly promote multiculturalism. The paper even included a hit-list of 50 Finnish public figures, among them ministers, politicians, NGO leaders and writers.<sup>148</sup>

The page that had listed the ‘hit-list’ has since been removed. However the manifesto can still be downloaded online.

In recent years a particular discourse about anti-immigration has been developed by several key actors. Online forums and blogs have attracted varying degrees of attention. Most notable for their anti-immigration and anti-multicultural perspectives are the Suomen Sisu Association, which previously

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<sup>145</sup> See: Helsingin Sanomat, *Finns Party MP Jussi Halla-aho resigns as chairman of Parliament's Administration Committee*

<http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Finns+Party+MP+Jussi+Halla-aho+resigns+as+chairman+of+Parliament%E2%80%99s+Administration+Committee/1329104305987>, accessed 26 August 2012.

<sup>146</sup> Kouras, Alexis, Helsinki Times, *Self-denial won't save Finland*, Wednesday, July 2011, accessed 10 August 2012.

<sup>147</sup> This is discussed in: Kouras, Alexis, Helsinki Times, *Self-denial won't save Finland*, Wednesday, July 2011, accessed 10 August 2012.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

produced the page ‘Kansallismieliset keskustelusivut’ (nationalistic discussion pages),<sup>149</sup> Jussi Hallo-aho with his Scripta blog<sup>150</sup> and Hommaforum.<sup>151</sup> Additional forums worth noting in the same vein include, Suojeluskunta,<sup>152</sup> Finnish Defence League (only in Facebook), Suomen Vastarintaliike,<sup>153</sup> Tundra Tabloids<sup>154</sup> and Musta Sydän.<sup>155</sup>

Suomen Sisu is a Finnish association that defines itself as nationalist and patriotic, and is critical of immigration and multiculturalism. Whilst the association is not affiliated with a political party, several of its members have operated in political parties as individuals. Several are members of the True Finns party and have been elected into parliament in April 2011. For example: James Hirvisaari, Juho Eerola, Olli Immonen and Jussi Hallo-aho.

#### 6.8.4 Counter terrorism

The counter terrorism section of the *Finnish Security Intelligence Service* (FSIS) Annual Report 2011, discusses the possibility of threat to Finland from Islamic terrorist attacks. In September 2011 a pre-trial investigation related to terrorist offences in Finland was conducted. According to the Finnish Security Intelligence Service ‘the persons under investigation have links to al-Shabaab in Somalia.’<sup>156</sup> However, the report states that ‘the overall threat posed by radical Islamist or other kinds of terrorism to Finnish state structures, critical infrastructure or population seems insignificant.’<sup>157</sup>

Since the attacks in Norway (July 2011) the FSIS have begun to focus more on the activities of the extreme right movements that are active in Finland.

The attacks spurred more discussion on radical political ideology and the possible illegal forms of action it may take. The Finnish Security Intelligence Service has found it important to take part in the discussion of counterterrorism and extreme movements.<sup>158</sup>

The FSIS report that there seem to have been no important changes with the extreme right movements in Finland in 2011 aside from some isolated illegal and violent actions. Some of the illegal and violent actions are said in the report to be of a xenophobic or racist motivation, which they noted had ‘increased to some extent since 2010.’<sup>159</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Now extinct but can be found via web archives:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20090221034848/http://www.suomensisu.org/>

<sup>150</sup> <http://www.halla-aho.com/scripta/>, operating since 2003. Accessed 26 August 2012.

<sup>151</sup> <http://cms.hommaforum.org/>, accessed 26 August 2012.

<sup>152</sup> <https://suojeluskunta.com/>, accessed 26 August 2012.

<sup>153</sup> <http://www.patriootti.com/>, accessed 26 August 2012. Also see:

<http://www.mustasydan.com/> & <http://takkirauta.blogspot.fi/>, accessed 26 August 2012.

<sup>154</sup> <http://tundratabloids.com/>, accessed 26 August 2012.

<sup>155</sup> <http://www.mustasydan.com/>, accessed 20 September 2012.

<sup>156</sup> *Finnish Security Intelligence Service Annual Report 2011*, p.5.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, p.9.

### **6.8.5 Facilitating factor or protective measures in criminal justice**

Surveys show that the general attitudes of Finnish people towards immigrants have become less sympathetic in recent years. As mentioned throughout this report, acts of racism and other related discrimination occur most in their most blatant form on the internet and in the attitudes expressed by members of the political party the True Finns. Subsequently the monitoring and the penalisation of these types of crime have also hardened in recent years.

As discussed in **Section 4** of this report, the previous year has seen several legal amendments - such as the Criminal Code (511/2011) and Cybercrime (TSF 84/2011) - for the specific purpose of protecting citizens vulnerable to discrimination, xenophobia and acts of hate speech. Police have also stepped up their virtual presence in social media such as Facebook in order to better monitor online crime and online hate speech.

## **7. Civil society assessment and critique in ensuring protection of fundamental rights**

In September 2011 a survey was undertaken by Referenssi Oy in order to examine the capacity of regional authorities to recognise incidents of discrimination and their ability to deal with discrimination from a perspective of equality and equality planning. The survey was commissioned by the Ombudsman for Minorities. The efforts by the OFM to research regional development of anti-discrimination advisory services is was important in that it revealed that many authorities currently do not adequately recognise discrimination in the course of their work. Very few of the authorities interviewed in the survey were aware of their workplaces' mandatory equality plan. The results of the research report that 'In the light of our findings, information is not reaching the people that need to know about discrimination and discriminating practices.'<sup>160</sup>

On a more positive note, the findings about NGOs within this same body of research many regional NGOs are conscientious about discrimination and seem to have the ability required to provide advisory services and support.'(Ibid, p.6).<sup>161</sup> The report notes that:

Training targeted at authorities and the creation of peer support groups were also recommended. The establishment of multi-professional working groups and the handling of discrimination cases in groups were experienced as being a pragmatic and educational approach. The respondents were also of the opinion that a liaison between the state level and regional level should be appointed. (Ibid, p.33).<sup>162</sup>

NGOs are generally more approachable for many members of minority groups than authorities, particularly those NGOs which are connected to the individual's culture. NGOs are able to operate as contact points at a grassroots level.

Network organisations for NGOs are particularly important for fostering communication between NGOs and are valuable for providing resources such as skills training. One example is the Helsinki based Moniheli ry who have over 30 member associations whose needs they gear their programming towards. Similarly FARO provides services and support for Russian speaking organisations, and SINE, the Islamic Council of Finland, is an umbrella organisation for over 20 Islamic societies and associations all around Finland.

Several associations in Finland have organised events specifically for the week against racism in both March 2011 and March 2012. Events have

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<sup>160</sup> The Ombudsman for Minorities, *Regional Development of Anti-Discrimination Advisory Services: Experience from the implementation of advisory services and results on the identification and tackling of discrimination*, 2011, p.36.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, p.6.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, p.33.

ranged from sporting events in Helsinki organised by the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation ENGSO, to events in Oulu organised by Multicultural and Equality Work - Centre of Youth Affairs, to a cultural event in Kuopio organised by Student Union of University of Eastern Finland. The week is in connection to the European-wide Action Week Against Racism<sup>163</sup> and will occur again in March 2013.

There are several information website for those who have or are moving to Finland with helpful advice. For example Bridge<sup>164</sup> is an information and advice site for foreigners. And information bank (infopankki)<sup>165</sup> which is particularly useful for its multilingual information in 15 languages.

"The Action Plan has been drafted in as transparent interaction as possible with the different counterparts like NGOs. The working group that drafted the Action Plan was supported in its work by a panel consisting of human rights organisations and representatives of fundamental and human rights research and of the different ombudsmen. Citizens' views were heard in a discussion organised in the web forum of the state administration, Otakantaa.fi.

The National Board on Romani Afairs is working towards improving equality amongst the Roma within Finnish society. The board is taking part in international cooperation in order to work towards enhancing the rights of and improving the conditions of the Roma people.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/pages/act12arw.htm#FIN>, accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>164</sup> <http://bridge.luckan.fi/en/welcome/>, accessed 20 August 2012.

<sup>165</sup> [www.infopankki.fi](http://www.infopankki.fi), accessed 24 September 2012.

<sup>166</sup> See: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma: Finland's Handbook on the European Policy on Roma*, Working group report, 2011, p.34-35.

## 8. Good practices

### Example of NGO Good Practice in Employment

**The Finnish Refugee Council's** work in Finland is informative, educational and practical. The Finnish Refugee Council aims to support the integration and participation of refugees in everyday Finnish life by solving possible conflict situations in residential areas and by helping the immigrants to deal with everyday issues through peer support groups. The FRC also offers support and information for immigrants to establish and run associations.

<http://www.pakolaisapu.fi/en>

**Immigrant's Success at Work** is a project by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. Currently the project is in the stage of collecting data from 2010-2012 with 1000 participants of the largest immigrant groups in Finland: Russians, Somalis and Kurds.

[http://www.ttl.fi/en/research/research\\_projects/changing\\_work\\_life/immigrants success at work/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.ttl.fi/en/research/research_projects/changing_work_life/immigrants_success_at_work/Pages/default.aspx)

### Example of NGO Good Practice in Education

**Maailman Koulu** (The World School) aims to bring forward different kinds of good aspects and tested global materials into the school life. The World school is located in the Finnish cities: Turku, Oulu, Helsinki and Kokkola.

<http://www.maailmankoulu.fi/>

### Example of NGO Good Practice in Housing

**No Fixed Abode NGO (Vva)** was founded by the homeless people themselves in 1986. The aim of Vva is to improve living conditions of the homeless: a chance to live independently belongs to everyone.

<http://www.vvary.fi/>

### **Example of NGO Good Practice in Health**

**The Finnish Association for Mental Health (FAMH)** is an NGO whose projects respond to social changes by creating new models for promoting mental health in different spheres of life. Amongst the aims of their many projects the Centre organises services for immigrants and their families and provides support to immigrant adolescents. In addition FAMH launched the online programme SELMA in autumn 2011 which is designed to help people overcome difficult periods in their life. To accommodate immigrants, the information is in English, Russian, Somali and Sorani (Kurdish) and provides information about the mental adjustment process specific to immigration.

FAMH: [www.mielenterveysseura.fi/en](http://www.mielenterveysseura.fi/en)

SELMA: <http://www.e-mielenterveys.fi>

**The VertaisKoto project**, which ended in February 2012, was financed by The European Refugee Fund, the social services of the city of Helsinki and the social and health care services of the city of Espoo. The project provided peer support as well as courses for immigrants, aiming specifically for newly arrived refugees and immigrants in the country. In the VertaisKoto's groups, everyday matters are discussed to assist integration in Finland.

<http://www.pakolaisapu.fi/en/our-work-in-finland/vertaiskoto.html>

### **Example of NGO Good Practice in Access to Goods and Services**

**Bridge** provides services for immigrants in Finland. They organise information sessions such as how to start a business in Finland, how to write a CV in Finland, how to search for housing and so forth.

<http://bridge.luckan.fi/en/>

### **Example of NGO Good Practice in Promoting Political Participation**

**iCount!** Is a project by Moniheli, a network organisation of multicultural associations. iCount! is a project that specifically aims to raise awareness of immigrants about the municipal elections and their participation in voting.

[www.moniheli.fi](http://www.moniheli.fi)

### **Example of NGO Good Practice in Media**

**Resalat ry** produces Salaam, a magazine that promotes awareness about Islam in Finland. Salaam magazine is a quarterly publication in Finnish that provides informative and up to date information about Islam in Finland. The word Salaam means peace and is used as a greeting in most of the Muslim world.

[www.resalat.fi](http://www.resalat.fi)

### **Electronic Frontier Finland ry**

<http://www.effi.org/>

### **Example of NGO Good Practice in Criminal Justice**

**Ulrik project of Victim Support Finland** provides support for those affected by crime by offering practical advice and support to victims. Information is available in several languages including Finnish, English, Chinese, Somali and Arabic. Ulrik is run by carefully selected volunteers.

<http://www.riku.fi/fi/victim+support/>

## **9. National recommendations**

### **Special Focus: Muslim Communities**

#### **Employment**

- Changes in regulations to improve recognition of qualifications achieved in countries outside of the European Union.
- Improvement of recruitment policies in each Municipality so as to place skilled immigrant workers positions appropriate to their talents and skills.
- Better skills development resources for immigrants seeking to enter the workforce.
- Awareness training for employers and other authorities in regard to discrimination.

#### **Education**

- Changes in regulations to improve recognition of qualifications achieved in countries outside of the European Union.
- Greater governmental responsibility for human rights education in the future.<sup>167</sup>
- Improved resources for encouraging children to learn their native language.
- Increased employment of minority representatives in the schools in order to support minority group students.

#### **Housing**

- Training for residential housing committees about discriminatory practices.
- Improved laws regarding the guidelines for landlords providing housing in the private market.

#### **Health**

- More skilled interpreters, especially in mental health sectors.
- Better awareness about the custom of circumcision for Muslim boys.
- Review the legal position on male circumcision.

#### **Access to goods and services**

- The possibility of access to services without having a Finnish Identity number (access to banking, housing applications).
- The provision and published guides on discrimination issues should be increased to improve general knowledge about what discrimination is.
- Anti-discrimination advisory services should be free of charge.

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<sup>167</sup> This recommendation is also give in the: *Universal Periodic Review of The United Nations Human Rights Council second National report by the Government of Finland 2011*, p.22.

**Criminal justice**

- Increased training for police and related authorities on how to better recognise and deal with acts of discrimination.

**Media**

- A greater emphasis on diversity when representing Muslim communities living in Finland in the media.

## **10. Conclusion**

This report has provided an overview of racism and related discriminatory practices in Finland over a one year focus. Since this is the first shadow report to focus on the topic of Muslim communities living in Finland, this report has provided context about the cultural diversity of the Muslim minority groups of Finland and the specific challenges experienced.

Many of the discriminatory challenges are related to structural discrimination in recruitment, availability of housing, restricted access to goods and services due to the bureaucracy involved with gaining a Finnish identity number and subsequent access to services such as a bank account, access to translators and language services in the health care sectors, awareness of authorities in recognising discrimination as well as their ability to effectively deal with instances of discrimination.

Most of the suggestions made within this report focus on re-considering many of the structures in place that hinder integration of immigrants in Finnish society. For example many credentials (work experience and education) gained outside of the European Union are simply not recognised. This is one example of the layers of structural discrimination in place in Finland. In order to improve the current situation of discrimination related to ethnicity, more needs to be done to acknowledge the skills of immigrants in order to promote a positive multicultural future in Finland.

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## **Annex 1: List of abbreviations and terminology**

Please include any abbreviations which are frequently used in the text as well as any terminology used in the text which you feel may need elaboration or clarification.

ARA – The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland

ETNO – Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations

FAMH – The Finnish Association for Mental Health

FARO – Finnish Association of Russian-speaking Organizations

FSIS – Finnish Security Intelligence Service

IICEFRD – *Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*

MSAH – Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

OFM – Ombudsman for Minorities

OFAEPR – *The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma*

RDAAS – *Regional Development of Anti-discrimination Advisory Services*

SINE – Islamic Council of Finland



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