

ROMA POPULATION IN FINLAND

- Approx 10,000 Roma in Finland (since 16th Century)
- Consider themselves “Firstly Finnish, secondly Roma”
- Social Housing crucial for assimilation and settlement
 - Since 1970’s
 - Low rental fees, “Nordic welfare state model”
- Right to language and culture protected in the Constitution
- Still widespread prejudice and discrimination in all fields of life
- Both authorities, companies and private persons discriminate
- 10 % of all discrimination complaints to the Ombudsman concern Roma and the most common area of life is housing

KEY ELEMENTS IN ESTABLISHING DISCRIMINATION OF ROMA IN HOUSING

- National anti-discrimination legislation covers housing
- Clear national legislation for Social Housing
 - Strict rules for qualification based on need: homelessness, low income, weak economy
- Guidelines for municipalities and renting companies
- Decisions by Parliamentary Ombudsman directing municipalities / rental companies
- Court cases establishing discrimination
- Ombudsman for Minorities can help:
 - Investigate (right to information, also secret)
 - Mediate
 - File a court case (Discrimination board and/or Municipal Court)

Roma family vs. Himanka Municipality

Ombudsman for Minorities



Discrimination Board
(Quasi-judicial)



District Court of Kokkola



Vaasa Court of Appeal



Supreme Court of Finland

MAIN POINTS

- Compensation claim
- Ombudsman repres. Roma family
- Thought to be a "clear case" – Municipality advised homeless family to seek housing elsewhere
- New grounds presented in District Court (disturbing life, etc) which were accepted!
- KEY EVIDENCE:
 - relevant rental applications
 - email from Municipality
- Final Ruling: Municipality not able to overturn Burden of Proof
- Court of Appeal awarded compensation: 3 x € 3000

Roma couple (1/2) vs. Järvenpää Municipality & Rental Company owned by Municipality

Ombudsman for Minorities



Discrimination Board
(Quasi-judicial)



District Court of Tuusula



?

MAIN POINTS

- Compensation claim
- Roma wife & “Finnish” husband
- Approval to move in asked from Roma community – using unofficial “Roma Spokesperson”
- spreading of info conc. private life
- application rejected because of opposition from Roma community!
- Discrimination by association
- KEY EVIDENCE:
 - oral testimony from claimants
 - records establishing use of “unofficial spokesperson”
- unwillingness to pay compensation