

Civic space in the EU: Mapping of national approaches to civic space monitoring, participation and protection

Finland

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Contractor: Institute for Human Rights, Åbo Akademi University and
Faculty of Law, University of Turku

Authors: Susanna Lundell, Katarina Frostell, Raija Hanski

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1. MONITORING AND REPORTING ON CIVIC SPACE

1.1. Monitoring initiative from the side of the State

Has there been any initiative from the side of the State (government/parliament) to observe/monitor the restrictions/challenges/threats for civic space actors in your country in the last three years?

No dedicated monitoring mechanism specifically targeting civic space has been identified. However, the Finnish government launched a website¹ with national indicators for monitoring fundamental and human rights, generally, on 5 March 2024.² The indicators were developed as part of Finland's third National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights 2020–2023.³ They are grouped into nine categories, out of which two are of special relevance to the civic space.⁴ The indicators covered under the freedom of expression and opinion include free media, promotion of freedom of expression, and restrictions on the freedom of expression due to a person's position. Those covered under participation and influence include participation in political decision-making and in organisations, experiences of social inclusion, and self-determination of the Sámi people.

The website gathers information from public records, as well as data provided by organisations and expert studies. The data will be regularly updated, and the indicators continue to be developed based on user feedback.

¹ Finland, Prime Minister's Office (*valtioneuvoston kanslia/statsrådets kansli*), [Perus- ja ihmisoikeusindikaattorit/Indikatorerna för de grundläggande och mänskliga rättigheterna](#) (Fundamental and human rights indicators), website, accessed on 17 February 2025.

² Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2024), '[Uudelta verkkosivustolta tietoa perusoikeuksien toteutumisesta](#)' (New website provides information on the implementation of fundamental rights), press release, 5 March 2024.

³ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2021), [National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights 2020–2023: Developing the monitoring of fundamental and human rights](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2021:59.

⁴ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2022), [Perus- ja ihmisoikeusindikaattoreiden taustamuistio](#) (Background memorandum on the fundamental and human rights indicators), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2022:53.

1.2. Other monitoring initiatives

Has there been any other actor/body/mechanism that has observed/monitored civic space restrictions/challenges/threats in your country in the last three years?

The main bodies engaged in civic space monitoring include:

- The **Finnish National Human Rights Institution**,⁵ consisting of the Parliamentary Ombudsman⁶ and the Human Rights Centre⁷ along with its Human Rights Delegation,⁸ have a broad mandate when it comes to monitoring human rights,⁹ including the protection of civic space. The Parliamentary Ombudsman oversees the legality of actions taken by public authorities. When considering complaints submitted by individuals, the Ombudsman also addresses issues related to fundamental rights, such as freedom of association, assembly and expression, and right of participation. The Human Rights Centre is engaged in general monitoring of fundamental and human rights in Finland. It collects information, conducts studies and drafts reports. It also follows up the implementation of recommendations and conclusions issued by international monitoring bodies. The Human Rights Delegation functions as a national cooperative body of fundamental and human rights actors, including civil society representatives. It deals with fundamental and human rights issues of far-reaching and significant importance. The Delegation has permanent divisions on the rights of persons with disabilities and on the rights of the elderly.
- The **Chancellor of Justice**¹⁰ is an independent supreme guardian of the law alongside the Parliamentary Ombudsman. The Chancellor decides, for example, on matters concerning the government and its ministries, including law drafting.

⁵ Finland, [National Human Rights Institution \(NHRI\)](#), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

⁶ Finland, Parliamentary Ombudsman of Finland (*eduskunnan oikeusasiamies/riksdagens justitieombudsman*), [The Parliamentary Ombudsman supervises and promotes the legality and the implementation of fundamental and human rights in the activities and actions of the authorities and of private parties performing public tasks](#), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

⁷ Finland, Human Rights Centre (*Ihmisoikeuskeskus/Människorättscentret*), [Human Rights Centre monitors and promotes fundamental and human rights](#), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

⁸ Finland, Human Rights Centre (*Ihmisoikeuskeskus/Människorättscentret*), [Human Rights Delegation](#), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

⁹ Finland, [Parliamentary Ombudsman Act \(*laki eduskunnan oikeusasiamiehestä/lag om riksdagens ombudsman*\)](#), Act No. 197/2002, 14 March 2002, Chapter 1, Chapter 3, sections 19d, 19e.

¹⁰ Finland, Chancellor of Justice (*valtioneuvoston oikeuskansleri/justitiekanslern i statsrådet*), [What does the Chancellor of Justice do?](#), web page, accessed on 19 February 2025.

- The **Non-Discrimination Ombudsman**¹¹ is an independent authority responsible for supervising compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014)¹² and for promoting equality and preventing discrimination more broadly. Another supervisory authority of the Non-Discrimination Act is the **National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal**.¹³ It handles complaints brought by persons who consider that they have been discriminated against or victimised. As of 1 June 2023, a matter can be brought also by communities promoting non-discrimination and by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman without the need to identify a victim.¹⁴ This reform gives civil society organisations a broader mandate to litigate under the Non-Discrimination Act.

¹¹ Finland, [The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman](#) (*yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu/diskrimineringsombudsmannen*), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

¹² Finland, [Non-Discrimination Act](#) (*yhdenvertaisuuslaki/diskrimineringslag*), Act No. 1325/2014, 30 December 2014.

¹³ Finland, [Non-Discrimination Act](#) (*yhdenvertaisuuslaki/diskrimineringslag*), Act No. 1325/2014, 30 December 2014, section 18 and [National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal of Finland](#), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

¹⁴ Finland, [Non-Discrimination Act](#) (*yhdenvertaisuuslaki/diskrimineringslag*), Act No. 1325/2014, 30 December 2014, section 21(3).

2. PARTICIPATION

2.1. Rules on participation

Are there any binding rules in place in your country for the participation/consultation of civil society organisations for developing/implementing/monitoring laws and policies?

In 2016, the government issued a Guide to consultation in statute drafting.¹⁵ Consultation is for hearing the views of stakeholders and citizens. The guide is not legally binding and leaves room for discretion by ministries. Public authorities have an obligation to guarantee the observance of fundamental and human rights.¹⁶ This has been emphasized both by the Chancellor of Justice and the Constitutional Law Committee of Parliament regarding law drafting and consultation.¹⁷ The guide also lists law drafters' statutory duties, including, for example, the duty to negotiate with the Sámi Parliament (*Saamelaiskäräjät/Sametinget*) on measures significantly affecting the Sámi people.¹⁸

The guide encourages authorities to employ a variety of consultation methods, such as discussion events, surveys, online forums, and written statements. For projects of broader significance, preparatory committees may also include CSO representatives. Most draft bills are circulated for comments in lausuntopalvelu.fi, a service for responding electronically to official consultations.¹⁹ Requests for feedback are sent also directly to key stakeholders. In lausuntopalvelu.fi anyone, including citizens, CSOs and experts can provide input. The minimum timeline for commenting is six weeks. Requests, related materials, and submitted statements are accessible in lausuntopalvelu.fi. The final bill contains a summary of the consultations.

¹⁵ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [Säädösvalmistelun kuulemisopas /Hörande vid författningsberedning](#) (Guide to consultation in statute drafting).

¹⁶ Finland, [The Constitution of Finland](#) (*Suomen perustuslaki/Finlands grundlag*), Act No. 731/1999, 11 June 1999, section 22.

¹⁷ Finland, Chancellor of Justice (*valtioneuvoston oikeuskansleri/justitiekanslern i statsrådet*) (2024), Decision [OKV/1772/10/2023-OKV-6](#), 29 January 2024.

¹⁸ Finland, Act on the Sámi Parliament ([laki saamelaiskäräjästä/sametingslag](#)), Act No. 974/1995, 17 July 1995, section 9.

¹⁹ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), lausuntopalvelu.fi/utlåtande.fi, website, accessed on 20 February 2025.

2.2. Consultative/participatory bodies

Are there any consultative/participatory bodies in your country that ensure the participation of civil society in developing/implementing/monitoring laws and policies?

The Advisory Board on Civil Society Policy (KANE)²⁰ (*Kansalaisyhteiskuntapolitiikan neuvottelukunta/Delegation för medborgarsamhällspolitik*) is tasked to promote cooperation and interaction between civil society and public authorities and enhance the operating conditions for civil society. The Board consists of representatives of civil society, research, ministries and municipalities.

The Advisory Board for Non-Discrimination²¹ (*Yhdenvertaisuusasioiden neuvottelukunta/Delegationen för likabehandlingsärenden*) is an independent body working with the office of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman. The tasks of the Advisory Board include promoting equality in general, acting as a channel for dialogue and information exchange between those working to prevent discrimination, and to address issues related to equality. The Board consists of representatives of civil society organisations, ministries and other authorities, business and municipalities.

The Council for Gender Equality (Tane)²² (*Tasa-arvoasiain neuvottelukunta/Delegationen för jämställdhetsärenden*) works to promote gender equality in society. Tane has an advisory role in state administration. It drafts proposals and makes statements to develop legislation and other measures that affect gender equality. The members of the Council represent political parties. Representatives of four civil society organisations act as permanent experts in the Council.

The National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs (RONK)²³ (*Romaniasiain neuvottelukunta / Delegationen för romska ärenden*) is tasked to promote the equal participation of the Roma population in society, improve their living conditions and socio-economic position, and promote their culture. In addition, there are four regional advisory boards on Romani affairs which operate under the Regional State Administrative Agencies (*aluehallintovirasto/regionförvaltningsverket*). Romani organisations are members of both the national and

²⁰ Finland, [Advisory Board on Civil Society Policy](#) (*Kansalaisyhteiskuntapolitiikan neuvottelukunta/Delegation för medborgarsamhällspolitik*), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

²¹ Finland, [Advisory Board for Non-Discrimination](#) (*Yhdenvertaisuusasioiden neuvottelukunta/Delegationen för likabehandlingsärenden*), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

²² Finland, [Council for Gender Equality](#) (*Tasa-arvoasiain neuvottelukunta/Delegationen för jämställdhetsärenden*), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

²³ Finland, [National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs](#) (*Romaniasiain neuvottelukunta/Delegationen för romska ärenden*), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

regional Advisory Boards together with representatives of ministries, other national and regional authorities and municipalities.

The Sámi Parliament²⁴ (*Saamelaiskäräjät/Sametinget*) is the supreme political body of the Sámi in Finland. Its main tasks are to look after the Sámi language and culture, take care of matters relating to their status as an indigenous people, present initiatives and proposals to authorities, and issue statements. One of its main functions is to negotiate with authorities on significant issues that may directly and specifically impact the status of the Sámi as an indigenous people.

The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO)²⁵ (*Etnisten suhteiden neuvottelukunta/Delegationen för etniska relationer*) forms a network of experts specialising in questions related to migration, integration, equality, participation and influencing opportunities of immigrants, and dialogue between different population groups. ETNO has an advisory role, and it serves as a national forum for dialogue between immigrants, ethnic minorities, authorities, political parties and civil society organisations. Besides the national Advisory Board, there are seven regional advisory boards for ethnic relations.

The Child Advisory Board²⁶ (*Lapsiasiain neuvottelukunta/Barnombudsmannadelegationen*) is tasked to promote the position and rights of children and cooperation between authorities related to them. Different administrative branches, the regional and local level as well as organisations are represented in the Board.

The Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (VANE)²⁷ (*Vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien neuvottelukunta/Delegationen för rättigheter för personer med funktionsnedsättning*) is the national coordinating mechanism for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). As part of its special task, the advisory board promotes the national implementation of the CRPD at various sectors and levels of central government and society. The members of the Advisory Board represent disability organisations, ministries, trade unions and business.

²⁴ Finland, [Sámi Parliament](#) (*Saamelaiskäräjät/Sametinget*), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

²⁵ Finland, [Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations](#) (*Etnisten suhteiden neuvottelukunta/Delegationen för etniska relationer*), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

²⁶ Finland, [Child Advisory Board](#) (*Lapsiasiain neuvottelukunta/Barnombudsmannadelegationen*), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

²⁷ Finland, [Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (*Vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien neuvottelukunta/Delegationen för rättigheter för personer med funktionsnedsättning*), web page, accessed on 18 February 2025.

2.3. Awareness raising and capacity building on participation

Does your Member State fund or carry out meaningful awareness raising and/or capacity building to support participation in your country?

Within the framework of Finland's membership in the international Open Government Partnership²⁸ the fifth Open Government Action Plan 2023–2027,²⁹ developed under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance, was published on 10 October 2023. It lists as its key commitments: 1) national dialogues and encounters with public services, 2) reliable information and cooperation strengthening competence and participation, and 3) support for open government actors in Finland and internationally. Measures adopted to implement the Action Plan include the continued arrangement of National Dialogues³⁰ in cooperation between citizens, communities and authorities, expansion of the Civil Society Academy³¹ model with the aim of increasing mutual understanding, dialogue and networking between administration and civil society organisations, and the establishment of a new Open Democracy Network³² for sharing information and good practices. These initiatives involve civil society organisations in various roles, such as organisers and participants of events. The theme of the National Dialogues in the spring of 2024 was security and trust, 111 dialogues were organised throughout the country with a total of 1,130 participants.³³ There have been seven national Civil Society Academies so far.³⁴ In 2024, the topic of the academy was the new civil society strategy.

²⁸ Information obtained from the website of the [Open Government Partnership](#), accessed on 10 February 2025.

²⁹ Finland, Ministry of Finance (*valtiovarainministeriö/finansministeriet*) (2024), [Open Government Action Plan 2023–2027 Finland](#), 1 October 2024.

³⁰ Finland, Ministry of Finance (*valtiovarainministeriö/finansministeriet*), [National Dialogues](#), web page, accessed on 6 February 2025.

³¹ Finland, Ministry of Finance (*valtiovarainministeriö/finansministeriet*), [Civil Society Academy](#), web page, accessed on 6 February 2025.

³² Finland, Ministry of Finance (*valtiovarainministeriö/finansministeriet*), [Open Democracy Network](#), web page, accessed on 6 February 2025.

³³ Henttonen, E., Kareinen, J., Alhainen, K. (2024), [Turvallisuus ja luottamus. Kevään 2024 Kansallisten dialogien kokemusraportti](#) (Security and Trust. Spring 2024 National Dialogues Summary Report).

³⁴ Finland, Ministry of Finance (*valtiovarainministeriö/finansministeriet*), [Kansalaisjärjestöakatemia](#), web page, accessed on 14 February 2025.

3. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTION

3.1. Civil society strategy

Does your country have a general civil society strategy / civil society development strategy in place?

The government adopted for the years 2023–2027 a new civil society organisations strategy on 6 June 2024³⁵ and an implementation plan on 22 October 2024.³⁶ Based on the government programme,³⁷ the CSO Strategy³⁸ outlines the government’s approach to developing the civic space.

- The strategy focuses on improving the preconditions for fundraising opportunities, streamlining government grant processes, supporting access to EU funding, encouraging civic and voluntary activities and building a knowledge base on civil society policy.
- The strategy provides recommendations for municipalities and wellbeing services counties to support civic engagement at the local level.
- As part of implementing the strategy, the Ministry of Justice has initiated a study to examine ways to dismantle bureaucracy burdening organisations and volunteer activities and reform the administrative practices to facilitate participation. The study will be published in early 2025.³⁹
- A cross-administrative working group appointed by the Ministry of Justice is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the strategy. The working group reports to the ministerial working group on internal security and administration of justice. A final monitoring report assessing what kind of measures were used to promote the objectives set in the strategy and what was achieved will be prepared.

³⁵ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), ‘[The Civil Society Organisations Strategy outlines the development of the operating conditions of non-governmental organisations](#)’, press release, 6 June 2024.

³⁶ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*) (2024), [Kansalaisjärjestöjen toimintaedellytysten kehittäminen. Kansalaisjärjestöstrategian toimeenpanosuunnitelma 2023–2027](#), (CSO strategy implementation plan 2023–2027), OM140:00/2023, 22 October 2024.

³⁷ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo’s Government](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60.

³⁸ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*) (2024), [CSO Strategy 2023–2027: Government resolution on the development of civic space](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Memorandums and statements 2024:22.

³⁹ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*) (2024), [‘Järjestö- ja vapaaehtoistoiminnan lainsäädännöllisiä esteitä selvitetään’](#) (Legislative obstacles to organization and volunteer activities are being investigated), press release, 26 August 2024.

The implementation of the strategy will be supported by separately funded analysis and research on the activities of CSOs.⁴⁰

3.2. Protecting an enabling environment

Is there a dedicated policy/framework (or support measures) in place in your country to enhance and protect an enabling environment for civil society to work on fundamental rights?

In Finland, there is no dedicated policy to enhance and protect an enabling environment for civil society to work specifically on fundamental rights. Instead, civic space protection is mentioned in various fundamental rights, democracy, and rule of law strategies and policies. In addition to the strategies and action plans mentioned above (sections 2.1, 2.3 and 3.1), for example, the National Democracy Programme 2025,⁴¹ which is an umbrella for democracy-related projects carried out during the government period 2019–2023, covers numerous measures related to civil society and participation. Examples of such measures include the following:

- The Transparency Register Act was adopted in 2023 and came into force on 1 January 2024.⁴² Legal persons and private entrepreneurs have a duty to report to the register any long-term and systematic lobbying that targets Parliament or the ministries. The purpose of the register is to combat inappropriate lobbying. Registrations can be browsed online, which makes it possible for the citizens to follow the dialogue around political decision-making. The use of the register is overseen by the National Audit Office of Finland (*Valtiontalouden tarkastusvirasto/Statens revisionsverk*).
- The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (*Etnisten suhteiden neuvottelukunta/Delegationen för etniska relationer; ETNO*) has produced materials on elections and election participation in different languages to increase voter turnout in municipal

⁴⁰ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [CSO Strategy 2023–2027. Government resolution on the development of civic space](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice 2024:22, p. 15.

⁴¹ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [National Democracy Programme 2025](#), project OM036:00/2019. Männistö, L. (2023), [Kansallinen demokraatiohjelma 2025 – Seurantaraportti: Hallituskauden 2019–2023 toimenpiteet ja vaikuttavuuden arviointi](#) (National Democracy Programme 2025 – Follow-up report: Measures during the 2019–2023 government term and assessment of their effectiveness), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice 2023:12.

⁴² Finland, Transparency Register Act ([avoimuusrekisterilaki/lag om öppenhetsregistret](#)), Act No. 430/2023, 23 March 2023; National Audit Office of Finland (*Valtiontalouden tarkastusvirasto/Statens revisionsverk*), [The Finnish Transparency Register](#), website, accessed on 14 February 2025.

and county elections among immigrants and multilingual Finns.⁴³ In 2022, ETNO and the Ministry of Justice also published a study examining the barriers to active participation of immigrants and multilingual Finns.⁴⁴

- The *Vapaa! — Fri! (Free!)* project, run under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice in 2021–2023, studied the state of volunteering in Finland and the various administrative, legislative, and other challenges facing civic and voluntary activities. It sought ways to support voluntary engagement in a changing operating environment, which involves the aging population structure, the professionalization of associations and the challenges related to their funding. The project reports recommend, for example, that municipalities take a more active role in supporting civic and voluntary activities and that particular efforts are made to encourage persons representing all age groups, as well as immigrants, to participate in voluntary activities.⁴⁵

⁴³ Männistö, L. (2023), [Kansallinen demokraatiohjelma 2025 – Seurantaraaportti: Hallituskauden 2019–2023 toimenpiteet ja vaikuttavuuden arviointi](#) (National Democracy Programme 2025 – Follow-up report: Measures during the 2019–2023 government term and assessment of their effectiveness), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice 2023:12, p. 49–50.

⁴⁴ Seikkula, M., Maury, O. (2022), [Korjataan maahanmuuttaneiden ja monikielisten suomalaisten demokratiavaje: Työryhmän raportti ja suositukset](#) (Addressing the democratic deficit among immigrants and multilingual Finns: Working group report and recommendations), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Memorandums and statements 2022:27.

⁴⁵ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [Vapaa! - Fri! -hanke](#), OM011:00/2021; Lahdenperä, S. (2023), [Vapaaehtoistoimintaa vahvistamalla kohti ikääntyvän yhteiskunnan mahdollisuuksia](#) (Harnessing the potential of ageing society by expanding voluntary activities), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Reports and guidelines 2023:1; Jousilahti, J., Alanko, L., Faehnle, M., Mäenpää, P. (2023), [Kohti kansalaistoiminnan kukoistusta: miten verkostojärjestöt sekä kunnan ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan yhteistyö tukevat vapaaehtoistoimintaa?](#) (Towards a thriving civil society: How do network organisations and cooperation between municipalities and civil society support voluntary work?), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Reports and guidelines 2023:2; Alanko, L., Kilpi, J., Ahola, N., Mäenpää, P., Faehnle, M. (2024), [Alueelliset erot kansalais- ja vapaaehtoistoiminnassa: tukemisen tarpeet ja verkostojärjestöjen rooli hyvinvointialueuudistuksessa](#) (Regional differences in civic and voluntary activities: Needs for support and the role of network organisations in the wellbeing services county reform), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Reports and guidelines 2024:2.

3.3. Law on recognition and protection of defenders

Is there a dedicated law (and/or guidelines) in your country dealing specifically with the recognition and/or protection of human rights defenders?

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland published new guidelines on the support of human rights defenders on 3 November 2022.⁴⁶ The guidelines are intended for Foreign Service employees in Finland and in missions abroad, when dealing with human rights defenders around the world. Explicit reference is made to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in the foreword and text of the guidelines.⁴⁷ Issues covered include:

- Description of the work of human rights defenders, challenges they face and changes in the operating environment, including digital environment;
- Support to human rights defenders through Finnish missions abroad, collaboration with intergovernmental organisations (e.g., EU and UN), and funding for human rights organisations;
- Monitoring and reporting by the diplomatic missions on the situation of human rights defenders;
- Recommended measures for supporting the work of human rights defenders in relation to defenders themselves, Finnish missions, Foreign Service, communication and the private sector; and
- Lists of questions for monitoring and reporting by diplomatic missions, indicators on support for human rights defenders, and potential partners and information sources.

3.4. Support and funding for protection of defenders

Is there any dedicated support/funding by the State for the protection of (individual) human rights defenders in your country?

The following publicly-funded initiatives with potential relevance for human rights defenders operating in Finland have been identified:

Victim support. Victim Support Finland provides support services for victims of crime, including human rights defenders who face digital violence, targeted harassment, stalking

⁴⁶ Finland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs (*ulkoministeriö/utrikesministeriet*) (2023), [Supporting Human Rights Defenders Together. Guidelines of the Finnish Foreign Service](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2023:11.

⁴⁷ Finland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs (*ulkoministeriö/utrikesministeriet*) (2023), [Supporting Human Rights Defenders. Guidelines of the Finnish Foreign Service](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2023:11, pp. 7 and 11.

and other acts that might constitute a crime.⁴⁸ It offers services free of charge, including legal advice, online chat, support person, and witness support. Victim Support Finland is funded through the state budget.

Disturbing feedback. As of 23 May 2019, the website *'häiritsevä palaute'* provides information and advice to experts, their managers and work environment, in situations where experts face disturbing feedback and hate speech in public media.⁴⁹ The website is intended for prevention, immediate response and education. The development of the site has been funded by the Finnish Work Environment Fund (*Työsuojelurahasto/Arbetarskyddsfonden*) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (*opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö/undervisnings- och kulturministeriet*).

Social media harassment. The Centre for Occupational Safety (*Työturvallisuuskeskus/Arbetarskyddscentralen*) offers advice to employers and employees facing targeted harassment through social media. It is noted that sectors engaged in advocacy work among others are prone to targeted harassment.⁵⁰

Scholars at Risk. All Finnish universities (n=13), operating within the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture, are members of the Scholars at Risk Finland section, offering academic sanctuary to scholars suffering threats to their lives, liberty and well-being in their country of residence.⁵¹ Since 2020, the Council of Rectors of Finnish Universities (*Suomen yliopistojen rehtorineuvosto/Finlands universitetsrektorers råd*) coordinates the Scholars at Risks work in Finland. The Finnish section forms part of the international Scholars at Risk network.⁵²

Scholar Rescue Fund. In Finland, the Scholar Rescue Fund programme offers grants to early career scholars who are threatened or persecuted in their home country, and who are looking for a safe environment at a Finnish university or university of applied sciences.⁵³ The programme is coordinated and co-funded by the Finnish National Agency for Education

⁴⁸ Information obtained from the website of the [Victim Support Finland](#) (*Rikosuhripäivystys/Brottsofferjouren*), accessed on 10 February 2025.

⁴⁹ Finland, Federation of Finnish Learned Societies (*Tieteellisten seurain valtuuskunta/Vetenskapliga samfundens delegation*), [Häiritsevä palaute](#), website, accessed on 6 February 2025.

⁵⁰ Finland, Centre for Occupational Safety (*Työturvallisuuskeskus/Arbetarskyddscentralen*), [Somehäiritä ja maalittaminen työssä](#), website, accessed on 10 February 2025.

⁵¹ Finland, Council of Rectors of Finnish Universities (*Suomen yliopistojen rehtorineuvosto/Finlands universitetsrektorers råd*), [Scholars at Risk](#), web page, accessed on 5 February 2025.

⁵² Information obtained from the website of the [Scholars at Risk Network](#), accessed on 6 February 2025.

⁵³ Finland, Finnish National Agency for Education (*opetushallitus/utbildningsstyrelsen*), [Partnership with IIE-Scholar Rescue Fund](#), web page, accessed on 10 February 2025.

(*opetushallitus/utbildningsstyrelsen*) since 2016. It is established by the US-based Institute of International Education and operates worldwide.