

Fronet national contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2025

Part 1: Political participation and equality in elections

Part 2: Protecting women victims of violence

Finland

Disclaimer

This document was commissioned under contract as background material for a comparative analysis by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the project 'FRA Fundamental Rights Report 2025'. The information and views contained in the document do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of FRA. The document is made publicly available for transparency and information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or legal opinion.

Franel national contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2025

Political participation and equality in elections

Finland

Contractor: Institute for Human Rights, Åbo Akademi University

Authors: Katarina Frostell and Raija Hanski

Disclaimer

This document was commissioned under contract as background material for a comparative analysis by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the project 'FRA Fundamental Rights Report 2025'. The information and views contained in the document do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of FRA. The document is made publicly available for transparency and information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or legal opinion.

Contents

1. Inclusiveness of the 2024 elections	3
2. Violence and intimidation during 2024 elections	10
3. Attempts at online and offline disinformation and manipulation of voters during 2024 elections	14
Annex 1 – Promising practice	16

1. Inclusiveness of the 2024 elections

In 2024, the following elections were organised in Finland: presidential election (1st round: 28 January, 2nd round: 11 February), European Parliament elections (9 June) and Sámi Parliament elections (3 June – 1 July). The voter turnout in the presidential election was 71.5 % in the first round and 67.6 % in the second round, and in the European Parliament elections 40.4 %.¹ Statistics Finland has published reports on the voter turnout and the composition of the voters after both the presidential and European Parliament elections. The reports include information on age, gender, level of education, activity, income, language, and background. The data used in the reports cover all persons who voted in advance in the whole country and persons who voted on the election day in electoral districts that used an electronic voting register. This means that complete data on votes cast were available for 54 % of the electorate in the presidential election and 57 % in the European Parliament elections.² With respect to both elections, the findings show that the voter turnout was higher in higher income brackets, high education increased the probability of voting, women voted more actively than men in most age groups except the highest, Swedish speakers had the highest voter turnout among the language groups, turnout was low in young age groups and in the groups of foreign-language speakers and persons with a foreign background.

Looking more closely at the group of persons with a foreign background, the difference between persons with a Finnish and a foreign background was in the first round of the presidential election 31.6 % and in the second round 29.4 %. The corresponding figure in the European Parliament elections was 22.6 %. In the presidential election there were more female voters compared to male voters in the groups foreign background and foreign-language speakers. The opposite was the case in the European Parliament elections.³

¹ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [Election specific information and result pages](#), web page, accessed on 23 October 2024.

² Finland, Statistics Finland (*tilastokeskus/statistikcentralen*) (2024), '[Voting turnout decreased clearly among young men in the second round of the Presidential election 2024](#)', press release, 19 April 2024, and '[Pensioners active voters in the elections to the European Parliament](#)', press release, 5 September 2024.

³ Finland, Statistics Finland (*tilastokeskus/statistikcentralen*) (2024), '[Pensioners active voters in the elections to the European Parliament](#)', press release, 5 September 2024.

To facilitate the participation of persons who are not able to visit polling stations or advance polling stations on their own, the Election Act (714/1998) includes provisions on special arrangements, including home voting, voting in residential care units, and assistance in polling stations.⁴ In addition, section 190 of the Election Act stipulates with respect to persons with disabilities that transportation to polling stations is covered by the transportation services regulated in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance (380/1987).⁵ In connection with the presidential election, the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman conducted four unannounced inspections to institutional care units where advance voting was organised. In the inspection report it is noted that the election legislation does not impose direct obligations on the staff of care units in the implementation of voting. However, based on observations made during the inspections, the Deputy Ombudsman notes that the staff has in practice a central role in informing the clients of the voting and ensuring that everyone can exercise their voting right.⁶

A parliamentary working group, appointed on 14 November 2023, for the development of practices linked to voting and elections continued its work in 2024.⁷ The working group is tasked with ensuring the accessibility of polling stations through legislation and improved training and guidance of municipalities as well as raising the awareness of the possibility to vote at home. In the memorandum establishing the working group also transportation is addressed. Accordingly, transportation to the polling station should be offered to persons receiving transportation services under general social welfare provisions without this affecting the entitlement to regular services, such as number on monthly trips awarded. This should be applicable also in the context of transportation services of electoral candidates in conducting political work. The term of the working group ends on 31 December 2025.

⁴ Finland, [Election Act \(vaalilaki/vallagen\)](#), Act No. 714/1998, 2 October 1998, sections 46, 55, 57, 58, and 73. See also Vainio, K. (2024), [The right to political participation of persons with disabilities ahead of the 2024 European Parliament elections](#), Published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, January 2024.

⁵ Finland, [Election Act \(vaalilaki/vallagen\)](#), Act No. 714/1998, 2 October 1998, section 190. See Act on Disability Services and Assistance ([laki vammaisuuden perusteella järjestettävistä palveluista ja tukitoimista/lag om service och stöd på grund av handikapp](#)), Act No. 380/1987, 3 April 1987, and new revised act entering into force on 1 January 2025, Disability Services Act ([vammapalvelulaki/lag om funktionshinderservice](#)), Act No. 675/2023, 14 April 2023.

⁶ Finland, Parliamentary Ombudsman (*oikeusasiamies/justitieombudsman*), [Tarkastus: presidentinvaalien laitosaänestyspaikat 2024](#) [Inspection: Institutional voting facilities in the 2024 presidential election], EOAK/8012/2023, 22 January 2024, p. 18.

⁷ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [Parlamentaarinen työryhmä kehittämään eräitä äänestämiseen ja vaaleihin liittyviä käytäntöjä](#) [Parliamentary working group on the development of practices linked to voting and elections], Project OM137:00/2023.

As to the nomination of candidates for presidential and European Parliament elections, the Election Act stipulates that political parties are obliged to “secure the possibilities of the party members to exercise democratic influence as determined in the rules and regulations of the party”.⁸ Based on the reading of selected party statutes, this could in practice mean the right of party members to propose candidates, participate in internal elections regarding the nominations, and/or decide on the nominations as member of the relevant decision-making body of the political party. Most political parties in Finland apply some form of gender quota in the appointment of members to internal decision-making bodies, such as a minimum of 40 % representation of both sexes.⁹ Further, 5 % of government granted subsidies to political parties is earmarked for women’s political activities. Political parties may use the funds for their own activities or transfer them to a predefined organisation outside the party engaged in women’s political activities.¹⁰

Political parties are generally not specifying in their statutes how different groups should be represented on the list of candidates in any given election. However, in the context of nominations to the European Parliament elections at least one political party’s statutes include a provision on the need to observe a versatile distribution of candidates across regions, gender, age and occupation.¹¹

Only with respect to parliamentary elections are political parties obliged to organise a secret vote by members when deciding on nominations. However, this is not required if the number of candidates that the party nominates in a given electoral district does not exceed the maximum number of candidates that can be nominated by law.¹² In a draft legislative proposal sent for consultation on 23 April 2024, votes by members are removed as a mandatory feature of parliamentary elections, leaving it up to the political parties to regulate the nomination procedure in their statutes.¹³ The finalised legislative

⁸ Finland, [Election Act \(vaalilaki/vallagen\)](#), Act No. 714/1998, 14 July 1998, sections 129 and 168.

⁹ Suutari, J., Kanner, J. (2024), [Jäsentensä näköiset. Puolueiden sisäinen demokratia Suomessa](#) [Looking like the members. The internal democracy of political parties in Finland] Puolueiden kansainvälinen demokratiayhteistyö - DEMO Finland, Sokkeli, pp. 12–14.

¹⁰ Finland, National Audit Office of Finland (*Valtiontalouden tarkastusvirasto/Statens revisionsverk*), [Puoluerahoituksen valvonta 2023 – Valtiontalouden tarkastusviraston kertomus](#) [Monitoring of party financing 2023 – Report of the National Audit Office], K 5/2024 vp, 19 March 2024, pp. 55–56.

¹¹ Finland, National Coalition Party (*Kokoomus/Samlingspartiet*), [Puolueen säännöt 2024](#) [Party statutes 2024], adopted by the party meeting on 14–16 June 2024.

¹² Finland, [Election Act \(vaalilaki/vallagen\)](#), Act No. 714/1998, 14 July 1998, section 112.

¹³ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [Lausuntopyyntö luonnoksesta hallituksen esitykseksi eduskunnalle ehdokkaan vaalirahoituksesta annetun lain, puoluelain, vaalilain sekä kansalaisaloitelain muuttamisesta](#) [Request for opinion concerning

proposal amending section 112 of the Election Act (714/1998),¹⁴ as described above, was tabled in Parliament on 21 November 2024.¹⁵ To enhance the transparency of elections, the above proposal includes also amendments to the Act on a Candidate's Election Funding (273/2009).¹⁶ Thus, the names of persons and entities providing loans above € 1500 (€ 800 in municipal elections) to election campaigns must be made public. At present only names of donors supporting election campaigns with other contributions than loans must be disclosed. If approved these revisions are expected to enter into force on 1 July 2025.

In 2024, there were in total nine candidates in the presidential election and 232 in the European Parliament elections. The number of female candidates were three and approx. 100 in the respective election.¹⁷ No information on the ethnic or social origin, language, religion, sexual orientation, or disability of the candidates have been found. In connection with the nomination of candidates, the Election Act stipulates that the following information must be submitted to the election authorities for each candidate: name, title, profession and municipality of residence.¹⁸

In accordance with the current government programme,¹⁹ a draft democracy programme was submitted for consultation on 14 October 2024.²⁰ It lists 15 goals,

draft government bill on the amendment of the act on the candidate's election financing, the party act and the act on citizenship initiatives], lausuntopalvelu.fi, 23 April 2024.

¹⁴ Finland, [Election Act \(vaalilaki/vallagen\)](#), Act No. 714/1998, 14 July 1998, section 112.

¹⁵ Finland, Government bill HE 190/2024 on the amendment of the Act on a Candidate's Election Funding, the Act on Political Parties, the Election Act and section 10 of the Citizens' Initiative Act ([hallituksen esitys HE 190/2024 eduskunnalle laeiksi ehdokkaan vaalirahoituksesta annetun lain, puoluelain, vaalilain sekä kansalaisaloitelain 10 §:n muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition RP 190/2024 till riksdagen med förslag till lagar om ändring av lagen om kandidaters valfinansiering, partilagen, vallagen och 10 § i lagen om medborgarinitiativ](#)), 21 November 2024.

¹⁶ Finland, [Act on a Candidate's Election Funding \(laki ehdokkaan vaalirahoituksesta/lag om kandidaters valfinansiering\)](#), Act No. 273/2009, 24 April 2009.

¹⁷ Finland, Ministry of Justice (oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet), [Information and Result Service](#), web page, accessed on 31 October 2024.

¹⁸ Finland, [Election Act \(vaalilaki/vallagen\)](#), Act No. 714/1998, 14 July 1998, sections 133 (presidential election) and 172 (European Parliament elections).

¹⁹ Finland, Finnish Government (2023), [A strong and committed Finland. Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, p. 214.

²⁰ Finland, Ministry of Justice (oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet), [Luonnos valtioneuvoston periaatepäätökseksi kansallisesta ohjelmasta demokratian ja osallistumisen edistämiseksi \(demokratiohjelma\)](#) [Request for opinion concerning the government's decision of principle on the national programme for promoting democracy and participation (democracy programme)], lausuntopalvelu.fi, 14 October 2024.

including mobilisation of young voters, efforts to equalise differences in voting patterns between population groups and regions, information to children and youth on elections together with opportunities to practice voting, and strengthened democracy training for conscientious objectors, persons in military service and immigrants taking part in integration activities and multilingual civic orientation. With the new Integration Act (681/2023), which entered into force on 1 January 2025, multilingual civic orientation is a mandatory element of integration services organised by municipalities.²¹

In parallel with these measures, there are also developments that may have a negative impact on the political participation of persons with a foreign background. This is the case with the revision of the Citizenship Act (359/2003),²² which was adopted on 5 July 2024 and entered into force on 1 October 2024. According to the amended section 13, the continuous period of residence required for naturalisation has been extended from five to eight years.²³ This revision postpones the right of persons with a foreign background to vote in parliamentary elections and presidential election, where citizenship is a requirement.

Following the Supreme Administrative Court's decision of 27 March 2024 concerning the 2023 Sámi Parliament elections and the exclusion of 65 persons from the voting register, the elections had to be repeated in 2024.²⁴ The repeat elections were held during the period 3 June and 1 July.²⁵ The key legal question leading to the court's conclusion on the need to repeat the elections concerned who has the right to vote in accordance with section 21 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament (974/1995). Whereas the provision stipulates that only Sámi people have voting rights, section 3 of the same Act defines who is a Sámi.²⁶

²¹ Finland, Integration Act (*laki kotoutumisen edistämisestä/laq om främjande av integration*), Act No. 681/2023, 14 April 2023, section 25, as amended by Act No. 1100/2024, 30 December 2024 (*laki kotoutumisen edistämisestä annetun lain muuttamisesta/laq om ändring av lagen om främjande av integration*).

²² Finland, *Citizenship Act (kansalaisuuslaki/medborgarskapslagen)*, Act No. 359/2003, 16 May 2003.

²³ Finland, Act on the amendment of the Citizenship Act (*laki kansalaisuuslain muuttamisesta/laq om ändring av medborgarskapslagen*), Act No. 474/2024, 5 July 2024.

²⁴ Finland, Supreme Administrative Court (*Korkein hallinto-oikeus/Högsta förvaltningsdomstolen*), *KHO:2024:46*, 27 March 2024.

²⁵ Finland, Sámi Parliament (*saamelaiskäräjät/sametinget*) (2024), *'The Council of State has appointed the members and deputy members to the Sámi Parliament in Finland – The Sámi Parliament can now start organising its constituent meeting'*, press release, 26 August 2024.

²⁶ Finland, *Act on the Sámi Parliament (laki saamelaiskäräjistä/sametingslag)*, Act No. 974/1995, 17 July 1995, sections 3 and 21.

In addition to a subjective requirement (self-identification), the person has to fulfil one of the objective requirements listed in section 3, namely learned Sámi language as first language or at least one of the parents or grandparents have done so, or descendant to a person who is marked in a land, taxation or population register as a Lapp, or at least one parent who was or could have been marked as an elector in an election to the (then) Sámi Delegation or Sámi Parliament.

Over the years the Supreme Administrative Court has addressed the question of who should be included on the electoral roll in connection with several elections. It has also been considered in decisions by international treaty monitoring bodies,²⁷ such as the Human Rights Committee²⁸ and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.²⁹ Finland has been found in breach of the two conventions for applying an overall consideration test when assessing a person's right to be included on the electoral roll, instead of specifying the relevant objective criteria applicable in the case.

With reference to the above international decisions, the Electoral Committee of the Sámi Parliament excluded from the 2023 electoral register persons, who they considered did not fulfil the objective criteria in section 3. This was so even if the same persons in previous decisions of the Supreme Administrative Court, linked to earlier elections, had been considered fulfilling the requirements in section 3.

In a decision concerning an individual complainant, who was included in the 2015 register, but removed from the 2023 register, the majority of the Supreme Administrative Court judges viewed that the legal circumstances continued to be essentially the same and that there was no legal ground to reassess the previous ruling concerning the inclusion of the person in the electoral register.³⁰ In a dissenting opinion, two judges argued that a reassessment should have been conducted with respect to decisions where the court previously had applied an overall consideration of the objective requirements without identifying the specific requirement applicable to the case. As noted by the dissenting judges, the overall consideration test has not been

²⁷ Scheinin, M. (2024), [*Kansainväliset alkuperäiskansaoikeudet ja niiden toteutuminen Suomessa. Selvitys saamelaisten totuus- ja sovintokomissiolle*](#) [International rights of Indigenous peoples and their realisation in Finland – Report to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sámi People], Helsinki, Publication of the Finnish Government 2024:25.

²⁸ United Nations (UN), Human Rights Committee (HRC) (2018), *Communication No. 2950/2017, Klemetti Näkkäljärvi et al. v. Finland*, 2 November 2018 and *Communication No. 2668/2015, Tiina Sanila-Aikio v. Finland*, 1 November 2018.

²⁹ United Nations (UN), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (2022), *Communication No. 59/2016, Anne Nuorgam et al. v. Finland*, 22 April 2022.

³⁰ Finland, Supreme Administrative Court (*Korkein hallinto-oikeus/Högsta förvaltningsdomstolen*), [*KHO:2024:44*](#), 27 March 2024.

applied by the Supreme Administrative Court after the Human Rights Committee's decisions published in 2019.³¹

To find a solution to this legal conundrum, it is largely acknowledged that a revision of section 3 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament (974/1995) is needed. Based on negotiations between the Finnish government and the Sámi Parliament a revised section 3 has been inserted in the government bill that was tabled in the Finnish Parliament on 14 December 2023.³² Rather than defining who is a Sámi the new provision addresses who has the right to be inserted in the election register of the Sámi Parliament elections. Further, the second objective requirement is removed, while the language requirement is extended to encompass also great-grandparents. Once adopted the electoral register will be established afresh.

³¹ United Nations (UN), Human Rights Committee (HRC) (2018), *Communication No. 2950/2017, Klemetti Näkkäläjärvi et al. v. Finland*, 2 November 2018 and *Communication No. 2668/2015, Tiina Sanila-Aikio v. Finland*, 1 November 2018.

³² Finland, Government bill HE 100/2023 vp on the amendment of the Sámi Parliament Act and Chapter 40, section 11 of the Criminal Code (*hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laeiksi saamelaiskäräjistä annetun lain ja rikoslain 40 luvun 11 §:n muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lagar om ändring av sametingslagen och 40 kap. 11 § i strafflagen*), 14 December 2023.

2. Violence and intimidation during 2024 elections

In Finland, the Constitution Act (731/1999) and election legislation guarantee all Finnish citizens who have reached 18 years of age the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in national elections and in European Parliament elections. Citizens of other EU Member States who have reached 18 years of age and are residing in Finland have the right to vote and stand as a candidate on certain conditions in elections to the European Parliament and in county and municipal elections (but not in presidential and parliamentary elections).³³

Chapter 14 of the Criminal Code (39/1889) regulates offences against political rights. Two of the offences also cover violence and intimidation against voters or candidates. A person who, by using or threatening to use violence, influences or attempts to influence the voting or candidacy of another person in general elections shall be sentenced for an electoral offence to a fine or imprisonment for at most two years.³⁴ A person who, by using violence or threat of violence, prevents or attempts to prevent another person from expressing their opinion on public affairs in public, or likewise makes or attempts to make another person, against their will, express an opinion on public affairs, shall be sentenced for a violation of political freedom. The sentence is a fine or imprisonment for at most two years.³⁵ The Criminal Code does not include “hate speech” as a crime category. However, hate speech against a person may be punishable as, for example, defamation, illegal threat, or stalking. In addition, hate speech in the context of elections may constitute harassment on grounds of a person’s political activity which is prohibited as discrimination under the Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014).³⁶

³³ Finland, [Constitution Act \(perustuslaki/grundlagen\)](#), Act No. 731/1999, 11 June 1999, sections 14 and 27; [Election Act \(vaalilaki/vallag\)](#), Act No. 714/1998, 2 October 1998, sections 2, 3 and 164; Act on Wellbeing Services Counties ([laki hyvinvointialueesta/lag om välfärdsområden](#)), Act No. 611/2021, 29 June 2021, sections 28 and 76, [Local Government Act \(kuntalaki/kommunallag\)](#), Act No. 410/2015, 10 April 2015, sections 20 and 71.

³⁴ Finland, [Criminal Code \(rikoslaki/strafflag\)](#), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 14, section 1.

³⁵ Finland, [Criminal Code \(rikoslaki/strafflag\)](#), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 14, section 5.

³⁶ Finland, [Criminal Code \(rikoslaki/strafflag\)](#), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 24, sections 9 and 10, and Chapter 25, sections 7 and 7a; [Non-discrimination Act \(yhdenvertaisuuslaki/diskrimineringslag\)](#), Act No. 1325/2014, 30 December 2014, section 14. Mäkinen, K. (2019), [Words are actions: More efficient measures against hate speech and cyberbullying](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of the Interior 2019:30, p. 16.

The National Police Board (*Poliisihallitus/Polisstyrelsen*) informs, that in January-June 2024 (the time period covering both the presidential and EU Parliament elections), there were two reported cases of an electoral offence and two cases of a violation of political freedom.³⁷ The statistics on offences reported to the police do not specify whether suspected cases of illegal threat, defamation, or stalking relate to hate speech against election candidates or voters.

The Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*) provides reliable information about elections and voting on an official election website, which is addressed to both voters, candidates, and election officials.³⁸ It informs, for example, about the general principles of holding elections, election secrecy, personal voting, and various forms of election interference. Election officials and political parties have been trained on election interference (online and offline), including threats, hate speech, and disinformation.³⁹ Any suspicion of a crime during elections can be reported to the police at a low threshold.

The government has appointed a parliamentary working group (2023–2025) with the task of assessing and developing existing voting and election practices.⁴⁰ The working group has also addressed the issue of election interference. It is planning to arrange training for political parties on countering election interference against candidates, particularly with regard to campaigning in the upcoming regional and municipal elections in 2025.⁴¹

During the European Parliament election run-up, a fact-checking and digital information literacy service, Faktabaari (Factbar), and a software company, CheckFirst, monitored various social media platforms, including TikTok. They collected data on TikTok's search suggestions when searches were made for videos on political topics (in Finnish) or based on the names of Finnish politicians and MEP candidates. Faktabaari and CheckFirst found that the retrieved search suggestions on TikTok contained harsh and hostile

³⁷ Information obtained from the National Police Board (*Poliisihallitus/Polisstyrelsen*) per email on 1 November 2024.

³⁸ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [election website](#), accessed on 5 November 2024.

³⁹ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [election website](#), accessed on 5 November 2024; Rekola, T. (2022), [Vaalijärjestelmän resilienssi](#) [Resilience of the election system], Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Reports and guidelines 2022:14, p. 61.

⁴⁰ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), ['Parlamentaarinen työryhmä kehittämään eräitä äänestämiseen ja vaaleihin liittyviä käytäntöjä'](#) [Parliamentary working group on the development of practices linked to voting and elections], Project OM137:00/2023.

⁴¹ Information obtained from the Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*) per email on 5 November 2024.

expressions towards Finnish female politicians, ethnic minorities, and sexual minorities, and were likely to contribute to sustaining negative stereotypes. Approximately one-third of Finnish candidates for the European Parliament elections actively communicated on TikTok. However, TikTok is not a popular digital media platform in Finland: only about 21 % of the Finns use the app.⁴²

In April 2024, the Supreme Administrative Court made a precedent decision by which it struck off the far-right nationalist Blue and Black Movement (*Sinimusta liike*) from the official party register.⁴³ The Ministry of Justice sought the party to be struck off after it turned out that the party had given misleading information about its programme. When applying for registration, the party had initially submitted a party programme which the Ministry of Justice considered as anti-democratic and incompatible with fundamental and human rights. The programme was then revised to become acceptable, and the party was entered in the party register in 2022. However, later on, the party reverted to the earlier programme which had originally been rejected by the ministry. According to the party programme, the Blue and Black Movement strives for an ethnically homogenous Finland. It suggests, for example, that persons of foreign origin residing in Finland should not be entitled to the same rights as Finnish citizens and should be registered, isolated, and removed from the country. Also, any communication which does not support the party's goals should be declared unlawful. In the parliamentary elections of 2023, the Blue and Black Movement gained 0.1 % of voters and no seats.⁴⁴

The Supreme Administrative Court found that the Blue and Black Movement had intentionally misled the officials of the Ministry of Justice during the registration process. The updated party programme was clearly discriminatory. The claim that any opinions deemed harmful to the party and its programme should be suppressed would completely nullify the right to freedom of expression. The court ruled that the party's rules and regulations do not guarantee that democratic principles are abided by in its decision-making and activities and therefore, it does not meet the requirements laid down in law for registration as a political party.⁴⁵ The court concluded that the ministry's

⁴² Knuutila, A., Havula, P. (2024), [The TikTok Effect: How the app shaped political discourse during Finnish European elections 2024](#), Helsinki, Faktabaari; Reunanen, E., Alanne, N., Hubara, K., Kauppinen, P., Mäkinen, E., Shingler, N., Silberberg, K. (2024), [Uutismedia verkossa 2024. Reuters-instituutin Digital News Report – Suomen maaraaportti](#) [Reuters-Institute Digital News Report – Finland], Tampere, Tampere University, p. 66.

⁴³ Finland, Supreme Administrative Court (*Korkein hallinto-oikeus/Högsta förvaltningsdomstolen*), [KHO:2024:63](#), 23 April 2024.

⁴⁴ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), election results, [parliamentary elections 2023](#), accessed on 6 November 2024.

⁴⁵ Finland, [Act on Political Parties](#) (*puoluelaki/partilaa*), Act No. 10/1969, 10 January 1969, section 2.

decision to enter the party to the party register was based on an error and that the public interest requires the decision to be annulled.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Finland, [Administrative Judicial Procedure Act](#) (*laki oikeudenkäynnistä hallintoasioissa/lag om rättegång i förvaltningsärenden*), Act No. 808/2019, 5 July 2019, section 117.

3. Attempts at online and offline disinformation and manipulation of voters during 2024 elections

In order to improve election preparedness and strengthen cooperation among authorities, the Ministry of Justice has appointed an intersectoral cooperation group on election security (*Vaaliturvallisuuden yhteistyöryhmä/Samarbetsgruppen för valsäkerhet*).⁴⁷ In addition to the Ministry of Justice, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Defence Security Committee, the National Cyber Security Centre, and the Police are represented, among others. The cooperation group follows domestic and international debates and developments related to election interference and election security. It also aims to improve the exchange of information on occurrences that may affect the conduct of or confidence in elections.

The authorities have interacted with major social media companies to inform them about the Finnish electoral system and legislation and to find ways by which authorities, political parties, and individual candidates can prepare for and protect themselves against harassment through social media platforms.⁴⁸ However, as independent actors, social media companies make their own decisions on content published on their platforms. To counter disinformation and uphold public confidence in elections, the Ministry of Justice maintains an official election website which provides information on national and European Parliament elections in all national languages (including minority languages, easy-to-read language and sign language) as well as in several foreign languages.⁴⁹

During the Finnish presidential election and European Parliament elections in 2024, a fact-checking and digital information literacy service, Faktabaari (Factbar), and a software company, CheckFirst, monitored social media platforms and internet search engines, including their search suggestions and content recommendations to Finnish users on political topics. The monitoring covered YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Google

⁴⁷ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [Cooperation group on election security](#), Project OM188:00/2023.

⁴⁸ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [election website](#), accessed on 5 November 2024.

⁴⁹ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [election website](#), accessed on 5 November 2024.

News, Mastodon, as well as Google, Bing, and DuckDuckGo. Some of the findings were related to disinformation and a potential risk of shaping voters' views. For example, in the run-up to the Finnish presidential election, when searching for YouTube videos on political topics, the results did not show any significant difference between the presidential candidates. However, in YouTube's video recommendations ("Up Next"), there was a large disparity in favour of right-wing parties, particularly the Finns Party and its politicians. According to Faktabaari and CheckFirst, this suggests potential bias in the algorithm. Users viewing a wide variety of videos related to politics are steered by the recommendation system towards a limited set of video channels. This narrows the range of views users are exposed to and potentially influences their perspectives. In their report, Faktabaari and CheckFirst do not study in more detail the reasons why YouTube's current recommendation system selects specific videos. They propose that the algorithm bias may be an unintentional consequence of a system that prioritises videos anticipated to maximise clicks and watch time, rather than highlighting content that receives positive response from diverse audiences. Faktabaari and CheckFirst also state that further research would be needed to find out whether the undesired effects of the recommendation system apply in the context of the Finnish presidential election 2024 only or whether such effects replicate across other elections as well.⁵⁰

In the context of the presidential election, Faktabaari and CheckFirst monitored Google's search predictions by using a set of keywords (in Finnish). Google is the most commonly used search engine in Finland. One of the keywords was "*vaalivilppi*" (election fraud), which is a term also used, for example, in news media. However, when accessed from Finland, Google's search engine predictions for "*vaalivilppi*" led to misleading election fraud claims, spread by a small group of pro-Russian and far-right people. No evidence of such election fraud has been found in Finland.⁵¹

According to the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (*suojelupoliisi/skyddspolis*) and the observations by the fact-checking service Faktabaari, no foreign information manipulation and interference campaigns were detected that would have specifically been targeting the presidential and European Parliament elections in Finland.⁵²

⁵⁰ Knuutila, A., Havula, P., Kuster, G., Lesplinart, A. (2024), [*"Up Next", biased politics? YouTube Recommendations and Political Bias in the Finnish Presidential Election 2024*](#), Helsinki, Faktabaari.

⁵¹ Jantunen, S., Havula, P., Knuutila, A., Kuster, G. (2024), [*Politics online: Algorithms, election-related content and Finns*](#), Helsinki, Faktabaari and CheckFirst.

⁵² Finland, Finnish Broadcasting Company (*Yleisradio/Rundradion*) (2024), [*'Supo: No signs of election interference by foreign powers'*](#), YLE News, 1 February 2024; Knuutila, A., Havula, P. (2024), [*The TikTok Effect: How the app shaped political discourse during Finnish European elections 2024*](#), Helsinki, Faktabaari, p. 24.

Annex 1 – Promising practice

Promising practice	
Title (original language)	Nuorten äänestysaktiivisuuden lisääminen tekstiviesteillä ⁵³
Title (EN)	Mobilizing young voters with short text messages
Organisation (original language)	Oikeusministeriö, Valtioneuvoston kanslia, SITRA ja Turun yliopisto
Organisation (EN)	Ministry of Justice, Prime Minister's Office, SITRA and University of Turku
Government / Civil society	Government
Funding body	Government
Reference (incl. URL, where available)	https://valtioneuvosto.fi/-/tutkimus-nuorten-aaanestysaktiivisuutta-voidaan-tukea-tekstiviesteilla
Indicate the start date of the promising practice and the finishing date if it has ceased to exist	The practice was used for the first time in connection with the county elections in 2022 and second time in the parliamentary elections in 2023.
Type of initiative	Voter mobilization
Main target group	Youth in the age of 18–29.
Indicate level of implementation: Local/Regional/National	National

⁵³ No official title of this promising practice has been identified.

Promising practice	
Brief description (max. 1000 chars)	An experiment involving sending reminders of upcoming elections to voters in the age group 18–29 was carried out in connection with the 2022 county elections and 2023 parliamentary elections. Based on a prediction model assessing the likelihood of voting activity in different groups, the results show an increase of 2.1 % in the voting activity among persons in the targeted age group, whose likelihood of voting was assessed to be low. Further, the results show a 3.5 % increase in the voting of persons living in the same household with the young voters having low likelihood of voting. In the group with high likelihood of voting the reminders did not significantly affect the voting activity. The target group was established based on data from the Digital and Population Data Services Agency (<i>Digi- ja väestötietovirasto/ Myndigheten för digitalisering och befolkningsdata</i>). In addition to the age requirement, accessibility to a phone number had to be fulfilled. In total 49,866 persons were identified. Around 30,000 persons in the group received two SMS messages, the first message was sent when the advance voting started and the other the day before the election day. The others formed a control group.
Highlight any element of the actions that is transferable (max. 500 chars)	Provided that a country has an electronic voting register and access to phone numbers of young voters, the system can be transferred also to other locations. In Finland, the practice has been used in connection with two elections, and it could be extended also to other elections.
Give reasons why you consider the practice as sustainable (as opposed to ‘one off activities’)	The government has been closely involved in carrying out the experiment. The draft policy programme on democracy and participation puts strong emphasis on the mobilisation of young voters.⁵⁴ Funding will be sought for implementing the practice in the municipal elections of 2025.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*), [Luonnos valtioneuvoston periaatepäätökseksi kansallisesta ohjelmasta demokratian ja osallistumisen edistämiseksi \(demokratiohjelma\)](#), [Request for opinion concerning the government’s decision of principle on the national programme for promoting democracy and participation (democracy programme)] lausuntopalvelu.fi, 14 October 2024.

⁵⁵ Information obtained from the Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/ justitieministeriet*) per email on 29 October 2024.

Promising practice	
Give reasons why you consider the practice as having concrete measurable impact	The experiment has been carried out in close collaboration with academic researchers. A research paper together with a policy brief have been published showing how the experiment has affected various groups. New information has also been obtained on how the experiment has affected others in the same household. ⁵⁶
Give reasons why you consider the practice as transferable to other settings and/or Member States?	According to the research conducted in connection with the experiment, text message-based mobilization experiments have previously been conducted in US, Denmark and Norway. The researchers observe that “the Finnish electoral system and voter mobilization environment closely resembles the other Nordic countries”. ⁵⁷ Consequently, it can be held that the experiment could easily be conducted also in other EU Member States with similar systems.
Explain, if applicable, how the practice involves beneficiaries and stakeholders in the design, planning, evaluation, review assessment and implementation of the practice	n.a.
Explain, if applicable, how the practice provides for review and assessment	The experiment has been carried out in close collaboration with academic researchers, who have had the task of conducting scientific research on the experiment’s effect on the voting activity in young age groups.

⁵⁶ Hirvonen, S., Lassander, M., Sääksvuori, L., Tukiainen, J. (2024), [Mobilizing young voters with short text messages in nationwide field experiments](#), Turku, Aboa Centre for Economics, Discussion paper No. 166, and Prime Minister’s Office (*valtioneuvoston kanslia/statsrådets kansli*) (2024), [Eduskuntavaalien 2023 tekstiviestikokeilu](#) [The text message experiment in connection with the 2023 parliamentary elections], Policy brief 1/2024, Käyttätymistieteellinen ennakkointi ja tieto tulevaisuuden hallinnossa (KETTU), Prime Minister’s Office.

⁵⁷ Hirvonen, S., Lassander, M., Sääksvuori, L., Tukiainen, J. (2024), [Mobilizing young voters with short text messages in nationwide field experiments](#), Turku, Aboa Centre for Economics, Discussion paper No. 166, p. 5.

Franet national contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2025

Effectively protecting women victims of violence

Finland

Contractor's name: Institute for Human Rights, Åbo Akademi
University

Author's name: Katarina Frostell

Disclaimer: This document was commissioned under contract by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) as background material for the project 'FRA Fundamental Rights Report 2025'. The information and views contained in the document do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of the FRA. The document is made publicly available for transparency and information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or legal opinion.

Contents

1. Legal and Policy measures to address violence against women including its criminalisation	3
2. Standing of victims of gender-based violence during criminal proceedings	13
3. Annex 1 – Promising practice	20
4. Annex 2 - Case law	23

1. Legal and Policy measures to address violence against women including its criminalisation

If relevant, please describe what measures were taken to ratify or implement the Istanbul Convention or prepare for the transposition of the VAW Directive. If relevant, please describe particular aspects of these measures relating to:

- Technology-facilitated gender-based violence, specifically non-consensual sharing of intimate or manipulated material (Art. 5 VAW Directive), cyber stalking (Art. 6 VAW Directive), cyber harassment (Art. 7 VAW Directive) and cyber incitement to violence or hatred (Art. 8 VAW Directive).
- Reporting crimes of violence against women, including third party reporting and/or the use of technology to report (online or in-app reporting) (Art. 14(1) VAW Directive).
- Secondary victimization (e.g. negative treatment of victims by the police/criminal justice system) and repeat victimisation (e.g. common in intimate partner relationships), including adoption of immediate response measures such as barring orders (Art. 50 - 52 of the Istanbul Convention and Art. 16 (5) and 19 VAW Directive), restraining and protection orders (Art 53 Istanbul Convention and Art. and 19 VAW Directive), and other measures such as protecting victims against intimidation (Art. 56 Istanbul Convention and Art. 18, 20 and 21 VAW Directive).
- Women victims of violence who are public representatives, journalists or human rights defenders (for example allowing this to be regarded as an aggravating circumstance, Art. 11 (n) VAW Directive).

Table 1 – Legislative and policy measures

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
Finland, Act amending the Criminal Code (laki rikoslain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av strafflagen), Act No. 923/2024, 19 December 2024.	Criminal Code Chapter 21, sections 6b and 6c and Chapter 8,	The Government bill was tabled in Parliament on 13 June 2024. It introduces female genital mutilation as a new offence in the Criminal

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
and Finland, Government bill No. 69/2024 on amending the Criminal Code and related laws (hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi rikoslain muuttamisesta ja siihen liittyviksi laeiksi/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om ändring av strafflagen och till lagar som har samband med den), 13 June 2024.	section 2, Chapter 34, section 1	Code (<i>rikoslaki/strafflagen</i>) ¹ (Chapter 21, section 6b), with sentencing ranging from 1 to 10 years of imprisonment. Additionally, preparing for female genital mutilation, such as by bringing a woman or girl abroad or forcing or inciting her to undergo the procedure, is criminalised under Chapter 21, section 6c, with sentencing ranging from four months to five years. Furthermore, female genital mutilation is added to the list of offences that can be committed with a terrorist intent in Chapter 34, section 1, paragraph 6. For victims under 18 years of age, the legislative proposal specifies that the limitation period to bring charges for female genital mutilation offences and their preparation begins only when the victim turns 18 (Chapter 8, section 2). The amendments were approved in Parliament on 26 November 2024 ² and entered into force on 1 January 2025.
Finland, Act amending Chapter 25, section 3 of the Criminal Code (laki rikoslain 25 luvun 3§:n)	Criminal Code	The Government bill was tabled in Parliament on 7 June 2024. The proposed amendment to Chapter 25, section 3 of the Criminal Code

¹ Finland, [Criminal Code](#) (*rikoslaki/strafflagen*), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889.

² Finland, Parliament (*eduskunta/riksdagen*), Parliament's response to the Government bill HE 69/2024, [EV 128/2024 vp](#), 26 November 2024.

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av 25 kap. 3 § i strafflagen), Act No. 696/2024, 5 December 2024. and Finland, Government bill No. 65/2024 on amending Chapter 25, section 3 of the Criminal Code (hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi rikoslain 25 luvun 3 §:n muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om ändring av 25 kap. 3 § i strafflagen), 6 June 2024.	Chapter 25, section 3	introduces an explicit reference to forced marriage or any other comparable union in the provision on human trafficking. In the past forced marriage has been treated as a human trafficking offence when the purpose is to subject the victim to conditions that violate the person's human dignity. With the amendment, forced marriage or any other comparable union will be a distinct purpose of the human trafficking offence. According to the Government bill, the concept of forced marriage includes both entering into and being able to leave formal (legally valid) as well as informal marriages.³ Sentencing ranges from four months to six years. The amendment was approved in Parliament on 12 November 2024⁴ and entered into force on 1 January 2025.
Finland, Act amending the Act on Conciliation in Criminal and Certain Civil Cases (laki rikosasioiden ja eräiden riita-asioiden	Section 3a	The Government bill was tabled in Parliament on 23 September 2024. The bill introduces a new provision in the Act on Conciliation in Criminal and Certain Civil Cases, ⁵ prohibiting mediation for violent

³ Finland, Government bill No. 65/2024 on amending Chapter 25, section 3 of the Criminal Code ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi rikoslain 25 luvun 3 §:n muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om ändring av 25 kap. 3 § i strafflagen](#)), p. 53.

⁴ Finland, Parliament (*eduskunta/riksdagen*), Parliament's response to the Government bill HE 65/2024, [EV 104/2024 vp](#), 12 November 2024.

⁵ Finland, [Act on Conciliation in Criminal and Certain Civil Cases](#) ([laki rikosasioiden ja eräiden riita-asioiden sovittelusta/lag om medling vid brott och i vissa tvister](#)), Act No. 1015/2005, 9 December 2005.

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
<u>sovittelusta annetun lain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lagen om medling vid brott och i vissa tvister</u>), Act No. 966/2024, 19 December 2024. and Finland, Government bill No. 130/2024 on amending the Act on Conciliation in Criminal and Certain Civil Cases (<u>hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi rikosasioiden ja eräiden riita-asioiden sovittelusta annetun lain muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om ändring av lagen om medling i brott och i vissa tvister</u>), 23 September 2024.		offences committed against individuals in intimate relationship with the perpetrator. These offences include violent crimes, sexual crimes, homicide and bodily injury offences, criminal deprivation of liberty, trafficking, illegal threat, stalking, coercion, and robbery. Attempts to commit these offences are also covered under the new provision (section 3a). An exception is made for complainant offences, where the prosecutor cannot bring charges without a request from the injured party. These offences may still be subject to conciliation. The amendment entered into force on 1 January 2025.
Husso, M., Piippo, S., Houtsonen, J., Mela, M., Tihveräinen, S., Haapanen, J., Hakkarainen, L., Knihtilä, A. (2024), <u>Naisiin kohdistuvaan digitaaliseen väkivaltaan puuttumisen haasteet poliisin työssä, rikosprosessissa ja tukipalveluissa</u> (Challenges of tackling digital violence against women in police work,	The whole publication is relevant.	The government-commissioned study examines the challenges of addressing digital violence against women within police work, criminal procedure and support services. The study utilises police crime reports, focus group interviews with prosecutors and support service personnel, and online surveys from victims of digital violence. The report presents five major categories of recommendations: training, research and awareness-raising; systematic use of

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
criminal procedure, and support services), Helsinki, Publications of the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities 2023:65.		documentation and concepts; development of the use of digital evidential material and ICT support; communication and sensitive treatment during criminal investigation; and forms for screening and initial mapping of violence. ⁶
Willman-Koistinen, M., Sahramäki, I., Kankaanranta, T. (2024), Ihmiskaupparikosten esitutkinnan käsikirja (Handbook on criminal investigation of human trafficking crimes), Tampere, Police University College textbooks.	The whole publication is relevant.	The Police University College (<i>poliisiammattikorkeakoulu/ polisyrkeshögskolan</i>) has published a handbook on the criminal investigation of human trafficking offences. The handbook was written by experts from the police, Police University College, the National Prosecution Authority, other authorities and civil society organisations. It addresses various forms of human trafficking, including labour exploitation, sexual abuse, child sexual abuse, forced marriages and context-specific forms of human trafficking, including those occurring online. ⁷ Chapter 7 focuses on the treatment of victims in criminal investigations, emphasising victim-sensitive working methods, cultural sensitivity, the support system for trafficking victims, the assessment of protection needs of the

⁶ Husso, M., Piippo, S., Houtsonen, J., Mela, M., Tihveräinen, S., Haapanen, J., Hakkarainen, L., Knihtilä, A. (2024), [Naisiin kohdistuvaan digitaaliseen väkivaltaan puuttumisen haasteet poliisin työssä, rikosprosessissa ja tukipalveluissa](#), Helsinki, Publication of the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities 2023:65, pp. 146-149.

⁷ Willman-Koistinen, M., Sahramäki, I., Kankaanranta, T. (eds) (2024), [Ihmiskaupparikosten esitutkinnan käsikirja](#), Tampere, Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun oppikirjoja 32, Tampere.

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
		injured party, and other protection measures in line with the victim directive. It also covers the use of legal counsel and support persons during criminal investigation and court proceedings, as well as special protection of child victims. The final chapter discusses the police's preventive work in the context of human trafficking, explicitly addressing honour-related violence against women. ⁸
Finland, Ministry of Justice (<i>oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet</i>), Victim policy action programme (uhripoliittinen toimenpideohjelma /brottsofferpolitiskt åtgärdsprogram)	n.a.	Under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice (<i>oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet</i>), the work with a new victim policy action programme commenced on 8 January 2024. The result of the work will be published in two phases. Phase one focuses on support services for crime victims, including the financing of these services, and will be completed by May 2025. Phase two, which aims to improve the status of crime victims within the criminal procedure, will be finalized by May 2026. In this context, the Ministry conducted a consultation from 6 September to 11 October 2024 on the victim support provided by organisations to ensure a smooth and efficient criminal process. The Ministry requested views on the relevance of support services for vulnerable groups, including children, victims of intimate partner

⁸ Willman-Koistinen, M., Sahramäki, I., Kankaanranta, T. (eds) (2024), [Ihmiskaupparikosten esitutkinnan käsikirja](#), Tampere, Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun oppikirjoja 32, Tampere, pp. 344-347.

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
		violence, sexual offences, human trafficking (incl. forced marriages), and honour-related violence. ⁹
Korkman, J. (2024), Handbook for forensic child interviews in presumed cases of trafficking , The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations (HEUNI), Stockholm, Council of the Baltic Sea States.	The whole publication is relevant.	The handbook is designed to assist professionals in conducting investigative interviews in suspected cases of child trafficking. Authored by a researcher at the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI), it addresses the needs of both girls and boys. The handbook includes specific examples of interviewing girls, including in contexts of sexual trafficking and forced marriages.¹⁰ Drawing on research and practical experiences from practitioners, the handbook features case examples and interview excerpts. It incorporates evidence-based interview protocols and techniques for investigating suspected child trafficking cases.

⁹ Finland, Ministry of Justice (*oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet*) (2024), '[Uhripoliittisen toimenpideohjelman rahoitustyöryhmän kysymykset koskien järjestöjen tuottamien rikoksen uhrien tukipalveluiden merkitystä rikosprosessin sujuvuuden ja tehokkuuden näkökulmasta; lausuntopyyntö](#)' (The questions of the victim policy working group on funding concerning the importance of the victim support services produced by organisations for a smooth and efficient criminal process), VN/24181/2023, lausuntopyyntö (request for opinions), 6 September 2024.

¹⁰ Korkman, J. (2024), [Handbook for forensic child interviews in presumed cases of trafficking](#), Stockholm, Council of the Baltic Sea States/The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, pp. 21 and 27.

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
Haapakangas, K., Lipasti, L. (2024), Naisiin kohdistuvien väkivaltarikosten eteneminen rikosprosessissa – Tilast selvitys (Statistical study of the progression of cases of violent crime against women in criminal proceedings), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Reports and guidelines 2024:3.	The whole report is relevant.	Commissioned by the Ministry of Justice (<i>oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet</i>) and conducted by researchers at Statistics Finland, the study examines the processing of violent crimes against women in criminal proceedings, tracking the progression of offence reports from the police to the courts. This is, presumably, the first study of its kind in Finland. The study analyses statistics on offences and coercive measures from 2013 to 2022, and court decisions from 2019 to 2022. By linking these datasets, the researchers have been able to identify the relationships between the victims and perpetrators. The crimes are categorised into intimate partner violence, domestic violence, and all forms of violence. Intimate partner violence covers persons who are or have been married, cohabitating or living in registered partnerships, or who have a common child. Domestic violence refers to violence where the victim and perpetrator are, in relationship to each other, a child, parent, sibling, cousin, aunt or uncle. The final category includes intimate partner violence, domestic violence and other forms of violence reported to the police or processed in district courts.¹¹

¹¹ Haapakangas, K., Lipasti, L. (2024), [Naisiin kohdistuvien väkivaltarikosten eteneminen rikosprosessissa. Tilast selvitys](#) (Progression of cases of violent crimes against women in criminal proceedings. Statistical study), Helsinki, Publication of the Ministry of Justice, Reports and guidelines 2024:3, pp. 7-9.

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
		The findings reveal that by the end of 2022, approximately 40 % of intimate partner violence cases reported by female victims in 2019 had reached a final judgment. Less than 10 % of charges involving intimate partner violence against a female victim were rejected. Fine is the most common punishment for domestic violence offences, whereas they are rarely used in intimate partner cases.
Lidman, S. (2024), <i>"Ei mitään kertatoimenpiteitä". Naisiin kohdistuvan väkivallan torjuntaohjelman 2020-2023 arviointi</i> ("No one-off measures". Evaluation of the action plan for combating violence against women 2020-2023), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Memorandums and statements 2024:34.	The whole report is relevant.	Commissioned by the Ministry of Justice (<i>oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet</i>), the study provides an overall assessment of the Action plan for combating violence against women 2020-2023, including an analysis of its general impact. The material used is composed of responses (n=56) in an online survey and eight semi-structured interviews with key informants. The persons who answered the survey represented organisations, authorities, universities, shelter homes, research institutes, ministries and others. Drawing on these findings, the report presents four key recommendations: A preventive programme to combat violence against women is necessary also in the future; training of professionals working with violence against women should be included in degrees and continuing education as obligatory courses, whenever possible; preventive work focusing on persons with risk of committing violence and sexual education should be increased; and

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
		the evaluation of preventive measures to combat violence should be developed based on expert advice. ¹²
Finland, Police University College (<i>Poliisiammattikorkeakoulu/Polisyreshögskolan</i>), Course on intimate partner violence and the police (<i>Lähisuhdeväkivalta ja poliisi-koulutus</i>)	n.a.	The online course is organised by the Police University College and is mandatory for police officers and police degree students in Finland. It was opened on 5 June 2024. ¹³ For a description of the course, see promising practice.

¹² Lidman, S. (2024), [*"Ei mitään kertatoimenpiteitä". Naisiin kohdistuvan väkivallan torjuntaohjelman 2020-2023 arviointi*](#) ("No one-off measures". Evaluation of the action plan for combating violence against women 2020-2023), Helsinki, Publication of the Ministry of Justice, Memorandums and statements 2024:34, pp. 51-56.

¹³ Information obtained from the National Police Board (*poliisihallitus/polisstyrelsen*) via email on 6 June 2024.

2. Standing of victims of gender-based violence during criminal proceedings

Please briefly elaborate on the standing of victims of gender-based violence in 2024 during criminal proceedings (as witness, civil party, damaged party, auxiliary prosecutor or party to the proceedings).

In Finland, the victim or the injured party plays a central role in criminal proceedings.¹⁴ While most violent offences are subject to public prosecution – meaning the prosecution does not depend on the injured party’s prior request – certain offences, known as complainant offences (*asianomistajarikos/målsägandebrott*), require the injured party to make a prosecution request.

Complainant offences include sexual harassment (*seksuaalinen ahdistelu/ sexuell antastande*) and non-consensual dissemination of a sexual image (*seksuaalisen kuvan luvaton levittäminen/olovlig spridning av sexuell bild*) when directed at persons above 18.¹⁵ However, if there is an important general interest, the prosecutor may bring charges without the injured party’s approval.¹⁶ Petty assault (*lievä pahoinpitely/lindrig misshandel*)¹⁷ is also a complainant offence. In cases where the victim is under 18 years, a close family member of the defendant, or targeted due to their professional capacity (and the defendant is not part of the workplace staff), the prosecutor has the right and obligation to bring charges regardless of the injured party’s prior request.¹⁸

Additionally, the dissemination of information violating personal privacy (*yksityiselämä loukkaava tiedon levittäminen/spridande av information som kränker privatlivet*) and

¹⁴ Helenius, D., Linna, T. (2024), *Siviili- ja rikosprosessioikeus*, Helsinki, Alma Talent, p. 391.

¹⁵ Finland, [Criminal Code \(rikoslaki/strafflagen\)](#), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 20, sections 6 and 7.

¹⁶ Finland, [Criminal Code \(rikoslaki/strafflagen\)](#), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 20, section 24.

¹⁷ Finland, [Criminal Code \(rikoslaki/strafflagen\)](#), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 21, section 7.

¹⁸ Finland, [Criminal Code \(rikoslaki/strafflagen\)](#), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 21, section 16.

defamation (*kunnianloukkaus/ärekränkning*) are complainant offences.¹⁹ In such instances, the Prosecutor General (*valtakunnan-syyttäjä/riksåklagaren*) may order prosecution if the offence has been committed through the mass media and there is a significant public interest in bringing charges.²⁰ Other offences that generally require a prosecution request by the injured party include negligent criminal deprivation of liberty (*tuottamuksellinen vapaudenriisto/frihetsberövande av oaktsamhet*), illegal threat (*laiton uhkaus/olaga hot*) and coercion (*pakottaminen/olaga tvång*).²¹ Exceptions to this are situations where a lethal instrument has been used to commission illegal threat or coercion, or a very important public interest requires that charges are brought. Further, identity theft (*identiteettivarkaus/identitetsstöld*) requires the injured party to report the offence for prosecution.²²

The primary right to prosecute lies with the public prosecutor and it is applicable to both public prosecution offences and complainant offences. The injured party holds only a secondary right to prosecute. This right is activated when the prosecutor decides to waive charges, or if the criminal investigation authority or prosecutor decides that no criminal investigations will be conducted, or that such an investigation will be interrupted or discontinued. The injured party may also bring charges if the head of investigation decides to postpone the performance of criminal investigation measures.²³ Chapter 7 of the Criminal Procedure Act (689/1997) outlines the procedures for when the injured party initiates legal action independently.²⁴ Due to the financial risks involved, prosecutions brought solely by the injured party are relatively uncommon.²⁵

The injured party may also join the charges brought by the prosecutor or another injured party and, in such situations, may refer to new circumstances in support of the charges. Additionally, the injured party can request a review of a court decision issued in the

¹⁹ Finland, [Criminal Code](#) (*rikoslaki/strafflagen*), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 24, sections 8 and 9.

²⁰ Finland, [Criminal Code](#) (*rikoslaki/strafflagen*), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 24, section 12.

²¹ Finland, [Criminal Code](#) (*rikoslaki/strafflagen*), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 25, section 9.

²² Finland, [Criminal Code](#) (*rikoslaki/strafflagen*), Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 38, sections 9a and 10.

²³ Finland, [Criminal Procedure Act](#) (*laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa/lag om rättegång i brottmå!*), Act No. 689/1997, 11 July 1997, Chapter 1, section 14 (1).

²⁴ Finland, [Criminal Procedure Act](#) (*laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa/lag om rättegång i brottmå!*), Act No. 689/1997, 11 July 1997.

²⁵ Helenius, D., Linna, T. (2024), *Siviili- ja rikosprosessioikeus*, Helsinki, Alma Talent, p. 400.

matter, regardless of whether they have exercised the right to be heard.²⁶ An injured person who does not have any claims in the matter shall be heard as a witness in the proceedings. If the person refuses to testify in such a situation, no coercive measures (i.e., fine, coercive imprisonment) are applied.²⁷

Regarding civil law claims, the Criminal Procedure Act (689/1997) stipulates that “the prosecutor shall, in connection with the charge, pursue the injured party’s civil claim against the defendant arising from the offence for which the prosecutor has brought the charge, if this is possible without essential inconvenience and if the claim is not manifestly unfounded”.²⁸

Regarding other procedural rights, in cases involving sexual offences, and offences against life, health or liberty, the court may appoint a legal counsel for the injured party under special conditions.²⁹ These include that the injured party has his or her own claims in the matter, such as a private law claim that the prosecutor is not pursuing, own penalty claims or a new own element in a matter where the injured party otherwise supports the prosecutor’s claims.³⁰ Furthermore, in the context of sexual offences³¹, the appointment of a legal counsel must not be deemed unnecessary. Based on legislative drafting material³², this is the case when the injured party is already granted services by

²⁶ Finland, [Criminal Procedure Act \(laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa/lag om rättegång i brottmål\)](#), Act No. 689/1997, 11 July 1997, Chapter 1, section 14 (2).

²⁷ Finland, [Code of Judicial Procedure \(oikeudenkäymiskaari/rättegångsbalk\)](#), Act No. 4/1734, 1 January 1734, Chapter 17, sections 29 and 63.

²⁸ Finland, [Criminal Procedure Act \(laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa/lag om rättegång i brottmål\)](#), Act No. 689/1997, 11 July 1997, Chapter 3, section 9.

²⁹ Finland, [Criminal Procedure Act \(laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa/lag om rättegång i brottmål\)](#), Act No. 689/1997, 11 July 1997, Chapter 2, section 1a, as amended by Act No. 926/2024 ([laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa annetun lain 1 luvun 10§:n ja 2 luvun 1 a §:n muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av 1 kap. 10§ och 2 kap. 1a § i lagen om rättegång i brottmål](#)), 19 December 2024.

³⁰ Helenius, D., Linna, T. (2024), *Siviili- ja rikosprosessioikeus*, Helsinki, Alma Talent, p. 478.

³¹ Finland, Criminal Code ([rikoslaki/strafflagen](#)), Act No. 39/1889, Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 20.

³² Finland, Government bill HE 82/1995 on reforming the criminal law procedure in courts of first instance ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle rikosasioiden oikeudenkäyntimenettelyn uudistamista alioikeuksissa koskevaksi lainsäädännöksi/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lagstiftning om revision av rättegångsförfarandet i brottmål i underrätterna](#)), 15 September 1995, p. 48.

an attorney under another law, such as the Legal Aid Act (257/2002).³³ For specified offences against life and health³⁴, an appointment is made when this is considered justified in view of the relationship between the injured party and the defendant. Additionally, the seriousness of the offence, the personal circumstances of the injured party and other relevant factors may justify the appointment of a legal counsel in cases concerning other than the above listed offences against life, health or liberty. An injured party to be heard in person in a matter concerning any of the above offences may also be entitled to a qualified support person.³⁵ The fees for legal counsels and support persons appointed under Chapter 2 of the Criminal Procedure Act (689/1997) are covered by public funds.³⁶

Furthermore, depending on the economic situation of the party, he or she may, irrespective of the type of offence, be entitled to state funded legal aid, which can cover the provision of legal advice, representation before the court and waiver of expenses related to the consideration of the matter.³⁷ The criminal investigation authorities are obliged to inform injured parties of their rights in the criminal process, including the right to legal counsel, support person and legal aid.³⁸

When the injured party is under 18 and the suspected offence is a sexual offence or an offence against the life, health, liberty, privacy, peace, or honour, the consideration of charges and the court proceedings must be concluded urgently. The main hearing must

³³ Finland, Legal Aid Act ([oikeusapulaki/rättshjälpslagen](#)), Act No. 257/2002, 5 April 2002.

³⁴ Finland, [Criminal Code \(rikoslaki/strafflagen\)](#), Act No. 39/1889, Act No. 39/1889, 19 December 1889, Chapter 21, sections 1-6 or 6a.

³⁵ Finland, [Criminal Procedure Act \(laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa/lag om rättegång i brottmåll\)](#), Act No. 689/1997, 11 July 1997, Chapter 2, section 3.

³⁶ Finland, [Criminal Procedure Act \(laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa/lag om rättegång i brottmåll\)](#), Act No. 689/1997, 11 July 1997, Chapter 2, section 10.

³⁷ Finland, Legal Aid Act ([oikeusapulaki/rättshjälpslagen](#)), Act No. 257/2002, 5 April 2002, section 1.

³⁸ Finland, Criminal Investigation Act ([esitutkintalaki/förundersökningslag](#)), Act No. 805/2011, 22 July 2011, Chapter 4, section 18 (2) and (3).

commence within 30 days of the criminal matter becoming pending.³⁹ A similar urgency requirement applies to the criminal investigation phase.⁴⁰

The right of the injured party to access trial documents is specified in the Act on the Publicity of Court Proceedings in General Courts (370/2007). The Act stipulates that court proceedings and trial documents are generally public, unless otherwise specified. Even when trial documents are classified as confidential, the parties involved in the court proceeding, including the injured party, generally have the right to be informed about their contents, with some exceptions.⁴¹ The main exceptions include the contact information of defined individuals, details of secret investigation measures, and documents prepared in the court before they become public or to the extent they contain information on the court's deliberations.

A party whose native language is Finnish or Swedish has the right to interpretation and translation as provided in the Language Act (423/2003), when a different language is used in the judicial proceeding. Additionally, the Act on the Use of the Sámi Language before the Authorities (516/1991) includes provisions on the use of Sámi languages in the proceedings.⁴²

In criminal matters charged by the prosecutor, an injured party, whose native language is neither Finnish, Swedish nor Sámi, has the right to free interpretation services. Regarding translations, the injured party is entitled, upon request and within a reasonable time, to a written translation of the judgment insofar as it concerns him or her, as well as the notice of the time and place of the session.⁴³ The injured party may

³⁹ Finland, [Criminal Procedure Act](#) ([laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa/lag om rättegång i brottmål](#)), Act No. 689/1997, 11 July 1997, Chapter 1, section 8a and Chapter 5, section 13.

⁴⁰ Finland, [Criminal Investigation Act](#) ([esitutkintalaki/förundersökningslag](#)), Act No. 805/2011, 22 July 2011, Chapter 3, section 11.

⁴¹ Finland, [Act on the Publicity of Court Proceedings in General Courts](#) ([laki oikeudenkäynnin julkisuudesta yleisissä tuomioistuimissa/lag om offentlighet vid rättegång i allmänna domstolar](#)), Act No. 379/2007, 30 March 2003, section 12.

⁴² Finland, [Criminal Procedure Act](#) ([laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa/lag om rättegång i brottmål](#)), Act No. 689/1997, 11 July 1997, Chapter 6a, section 2. See Language Act ([kielilaki/språklagen](#)), Act No. 423/2003, 6 June 2003 and Act on the Use of Sámi language before the Authorities ([laki saamen kielen käyttämisestä viranomaisissa/lag om användningen av samiska hos myndigheter](#)), Act No. 516/1991, 8 March 1991.

⁴³ Finland, [Criminal Procedure Act](#) ([laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa/lag om rättegång i brottmål](#)), Act No. 689/1997, 11 July 1997, Chapter 6a, section 3.

also be entitled to translations of other documents if necessary to protect the rights of the injured party. In some cases, an oral translation may suffice.

Except in the rare case where a criminal matter is pursued solely by the injured party (see above), the public prosecutor is responsible for presenting evidence in criminal proceedings.⁴⁴ In accordance with the Code of Judicial Procedure (4/1734), the injured party also has the right to present evidence in court and to comment on each piece of evidence presented, unless otherwise provided by law.⁴⁵ Additionally, the injured party may be heard for the purpose of obtaining evidence.⁴⁶

In case the party is under 15 years of age or mentally impaired, the person may be heard for evidentiary reasons only if the court deems it appropriate and if the hearing is of essential significance for clarifying the matter and would likely not cause harm to the person.⁴⁷ The hearing may take place behind a screen or without the presence of a party or other person if the court considers it appropriate and necessary to protect the party in specific situations.⁴⁸ Hearing can also be conducted via video conference or other suitable technical means of communication when deemed appropriate for protective and other reasons.⁴⁹

An amendment to the Code of Judicial Procedure (4/1734) was adopted on 19 December 2024, extending the discretionary power of the courts to decide on remote hearings.⁵⁰ Starting 1 March 2025, the appropriateness criteria will be applied independently when assessing the conduct of remote hearings. The additional requirements listed in the current provision, such as the need to protect the person being heard, have been removed from the revised Chapter 17, section 52. Instead, such considerations are

⁴⁴ Helenius, D., Linna, T. (2024), *Sivili- ja rikosprosessioikeus*, Helsinki, Alma Talent, p. 505.

⁴⁵ Finland, [Code of Judicial Procedure \(oikeudenkäymiskaari/rättegångsbalken\)](#), Act No. 4/1734, 1 January 1734, Chapter 17, section 1.

⁴⁶ Finland, [Code of Judicial Procedure \(oikeudenkäymiskaari/rättegångsbalken\)](#), Act No. 4/1734, 1 January 1734, Chapter 17, section 26.

⁴⁷ Finland, [Code of Judicial Procedure \(oikeudenkäymiskaari/rättegångsbalken\)](#), Act No. 4/1734, 1 January 1734, Chapter 17, section 27.

⁴⁸ Finland, [Code of Judicial Procedure \(oikeudenkäymiskaari/rättegångsbalken\)](#), Act No. 4/1734, 1 January 1734, Chapter 17, section 51.

⁴⁹ Finland, [Code of Judicial Procedure \(oikeudenkäymiskaari/rättegångsbalken\)](#), Act No. 4/1734, 1 January 1734, Chapter 17, section 52.

⁵⁰ Finland, Act amending the Code of Judicial Procedure ([laki oikeudenkäymiskaaren muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av rättegångsbalken](#)), Act No. 886/2024, 19 December 2024, section 52.

integrated into the overall appropriateness assessment. According to the legislative proposal, this means that in practice the difference to the current legislation will not be significant.⁵¹ Furthermore, in line with the current Code of Judicial Procedure, remote hearings may still be conducted using an audio connection only under specific conditions. However, the revised section 52 stipulates that this cannot be applied to the hearing of persons under 15 years of age or those who are mentally impaired.

⁵¹ Finland, Government bill HE 63/2024 on legislation to promote the use of remote connections in court proceedings in general courts ([*hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle etäyhteyksien käytön edistämistä oikeudenkäynneissä yleisissä tuomioistuimissa koskevaksi lainsäädännöksi/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lagstiftning om främjande av anlitandet av fjärranslutningar vid rättegång i allmänna domstolar*](#)), 6 June 2024, pp. 41-42.

3. Annex 1 – Promising practice

Promising practice	
Title (original language)	Lähisuhdeväkivalta ja poliisi -koulutus
Title (EN)	Course on intimate partner violence and the police
Organisation (original language)	Poliisiammattikorkeakoulu
Organisation (EN)	Police University College ⁵²
Government / Civil society	Government
Funding body	Government
Reference (incl. URL, where available)	https://polamk.fi/en/front-page https://polamk.fi/en/front-page
Indicate the start date of the promising practice and the finishing date if it has ceased to exist	The course opened in this format on 5 June 2024. ⁵³
Type of initiative	Training
Main target group	Police officers and police students
Indicate level of implementation: Local/Regional/National	National

⁵² Information on the course obtained from the Police University College (*poliisiammattikorkeakoulu/polisyrykeshögskolan*) via email on 7 and 9 October 2024.

⁵³ Information obtained from the National Police Board (*poliisihallitus/polisstyrelsen*) via email on 6 June 2024.

Promising practice	
Brief description (max. 1000 chars)	The course is a self-study continuing education course offered online in the intranet of the Finnish police administration. The course is composed of six substantive modules: identifying intimate partner violence; means to intervene in violence; multi-professional cooperation; risk assessment; police officer's coping; and integrative perspectives on intimate partner violence. The course is obligatory for police officers. In addition, voluntary courses are offered in various topics, such as vulnerable clients, digital violence and honour-related violence. The training is integrated also in the police degree programme.
Highlight any element of the actions that is transferable (max. 500 chars)	The concept of organising continuing education for police officers and the structuring of the course are transferable. However, the course content cannot as such be used outside the Finnish police. It has been agreed with the persons participating in the videos produced for the course that they will only be used in training within the Finnish police.
Give reasons why you consider the practice as sustainable (as opposed to 'one off activities')	The practice is an integrated part of the continuing education programme offered by the Police University College and is also included in the police degree programme.
Give reasons why you consider the practice as having concrete measurable impact	The expectation is that the police work in intimate partner violence cases will improve with the training. However, there are no specific indicators to measure this.
Give reasons why you consider the practice as transferable to other settings and/or Member States?	The experiences gained within the Police University College in planning, designing and implementing the training could potentially be shared with other member states. However, as indicated above the course content as such cannot be used by others outside the Finnish police.
Explain, if applicable, how the practice involves beneficiaries and stakeholders in the design, planning, evaluation, review assessment and implementation of the practice	N/a.

Promising practice	
Explain, if applicable, how the practice provides for review and assessment	The police officers' fulfilment of the learning objectives set for the training is measured through a final exam. The degree students, on the other hand, are assessed based on a written essay that is examined by a teacher. There is no review mechanism for the education as a whole.

4. Annex 2 - Case law

Case law	
Deciding body (in original language)	No case law has been identified for this thematic area.
Deciding body (in English)	
Case number (also European Case Law Identifier ECLI , where applicable)	
Parties	
Decision date	
Web link to the decision (if available)	
Which fundamental right(s) were referred to in the case?	
Key facts of the case (max. 250 words)	
The key legal question raised by the Court	
Result of the case in terms of factual outcome, and in terms of assessment of the legal question raised	