



Human rights education must be strengthened in accordance with the Government Programme – human rights content is needed for teacher training

According to the Constitution of Finland, public authorities must ensure the fulfilment of fundamental and human rights. Under international human rights conventions, Finland is committed to ensuring that education promotes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights education and awareness of one's own rights are essential prerequisites for the fulfilment of human rights and prevention of human rights violations (UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, 2011).

The Government has set itself the objective of enhancing democracy and human rights education and inclusivity at schools (Government Programme 2019–2023, 3.7.1). In order to achieve this objective, the basic and further training of teachers and educators needs more human rights content and a human rights perspective.

Already in 2014, the Human Rights Delegation recommended that the human rights competence of teachers and other persons performing public tasks should be strengthened and that human rights education should be monitored, evaluated and further developed. These recommendations are still very current. Finland has repeatedly received recommendations to strengthen human rights education also from international actors supervising human rights conventions and in the UPR process, for example.¹ The often mentioned autonomy of universities, schools and municipalities in matters related to education does not justify ignoring the government's obligation to promote fundamental and human rights and human rights education.

The rule of law, democracy and human rights are increasingly being challenged by the public. Conflict, hate speech, discriminatory social norms (such as based on gender or ethnic background) or attitudes also affect schools. Teachers need abilities to work in an increasingly diverse environment with different human rights issues, such as equality and discrimination, the climate crisis as well as minorities and the Sámi. In a 2019 survey, 96% of teacher students replied that democracy and human rights education should be part of teacher education.

Currently, human rights are not a compulsory subject in teacher training, even though human rights are included in the value base, obligations and content of the national curricula. Even good curricula are not enough to guarantee the practical implementation of human rights education. Human rights education is a field of education requiring special expertise and permanent structures. It cannot be replaced by individual education projects.

¹ A universal periodic review is conducted for each member state of the UN in intervals of four and a half years at the session of the UN Human Rights Council.



Finland's internationally recognised education system could be a pioneer in human rights education, if permanent structures and sufficient resources are created for human rights education. Unfortunately, this is not the case at the moment.

Human Rights Delegation urges the Government and especially the Ministry for Education and Culture without delay to

- strengthen long-range basic and further training on human rights for teachers and
- ensure permanent funding, permanent structures and adequate personnel for human rights education.

The Human Rights Delegation functions as a statutory national cooperative body of fundamental and human rights actors and deals with fundamental and human rights issues of a far-reaching significance and principal importance. Finland's National Human Rights Institution consists of the Human Rights Centre, the Human Rights Delegation and the Parliamentary Ombudsman.