

Finland 2026

Information from: Finnish National Human Rights Institution (FINHRI): Human Rights Centre (HRC), its Human Rights Delegation and the Parliamentary Ombudsman

Executive summary

While the situation in Finland remains relatively good, further measures are needed to ensure that the rule of law is protected and promoted also in the future. Civic space continued to shrink due to substantial funding reductions for civil society organisations, risks of politicisation in funding decisions, and fewer opportunities to participate in legislative drafting. The Parliament adopted legislative proposals pertaining to national security and austerity measures on Finland's social security system which kept raising debate on the prioritisation of political goals over conformity with the Constitution, EU law and international human rights conventions and on the Constitutional Law Committee's role in the ex-ante constitutional review. As for the FINHRI, long-term planning of activities has become difficult as the reductions to its budgets have been presented in a piecemeal manner.

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NHRIs' establishment, independence, effectiveness and resilience

International accreditation status and SCA recommendations

The Finnish National Human Rights Institution (FINHRI) is comprised of the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Human Rights Centre and its Human Rights Delegation. All the three parts that together form the FINHRI have their own specific legal duties. The Ombudsman oversees the implementation of fundamental and human rights by investigating complaints, taking own initiatives, conducting inspection visits and issuing statements related to legislation. The Human Rights Centre promotes and monitors the

implementation of fundamental and human rights by various means, including drafting reports, taking initiatives, issuing statements and building cooperation. The HRC takes part and represents the FINHRI in international and European human rights co-operation among its statutory tasks. The Human Rights Centre's Human Rights Delegation acts as a national cooperative body for actors in the field of fundamental and human rights. It needs to be emphasised that despite the three-part structure of FINHRI, there is only one NHRI in Finland.

The FINHRI was last [reaccredited](#) with A-status in March 2025.

Firstly, the SCA encouraged FINHRI to continue to advocate for legislative amendment that would clearly stipulate the Finnish NHRI as one institution with three distinct parts. In addition, the SCA encouraged the FINHRI to advocate for the HRC to have an explicit right to table reports to the Parliament for discussion, as is required for the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

Being of the view that NHRIs must be provided with an appropriate level of funding to guarantee its independence and to function effectively, the SCA recommended that the FINHRI advocates to continue to receive an appropriate level of funding, and for its financial autonomy to be enshrined in the enabling law.

Further, welcoming the Ombudsman's Office's plan on non-discrimination and equality in the recruitment process and noting the institution hires staff through open and transparent competitions, the SCA recommended that the FINHRI continue to take measures to ensure the broad representation of national society in its staffing, including in the context of gender, ethnicity or minority status.

With regard to the selection and appointment of FINHRI leadership and HRD members, the SCA noted that the relevant provisions are not sufficiently broad, although it recognised that the process is transparent in practice. The SCA further encouraged the FINHRI to advocate for amendments to its enabling law to provide limits to reappointment of NHRI leadership. It also recommended the Finnish NHRI to develop guidance and procedures in the instance of conflict of interest for members of the HRD.

Follow-up to recommendations on NHRIs and relevant developments

FINHRI's follow-up to SCA recommendations

In September 2025, the FINHRI met with the representatives of Ministry of Justice to discuss on the accreditation recommendations received in March 2025. As a result of this meeting, the FINHRI aims to provide concrete

proposals on the required amendments to the Parliamentary Ombudsman Act. These changes include stipulating the structure of the NHRI and adding a mandate to submit the Human Rights Centre's report to the Parliament. The Human Rights Centre will also carry out other advocacy efforts to include the amendments recommended by SCA in the next government's programme 2027–2031, with the support of the HRC's Human Rights Delegation.

While the concrete follow-up to certain recommendations has been initiated, some of the other recommendations require further consideration, especially as regards their adaptability to the Finnish legal culture. The FINHRI continues discussions with relevant stakeholders.

Findings from European actors regarding the FINHRI

In the 2025 EU Rule of Law Report, no specific recommendations regarding the FINHRI were provided. Based on the information submitted by the Government, the report notes a slight increase in the NHRI's budget for 2025. The FINHRI wishes to point out that for the years 2025–2027, the budgets of the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Human Rights Centre have been and will be reduced. These cuts are in line with the Government's general aim to produce savings in the State's economy and FINHRI is not specifically targeted by them. However, long-term planning of FINHRI's activities has become difficult as the considerable budget reductions have been presented in a piecemeal manner.

Regulatory framework and mandates

There have been no changes in the regulatory framework of the FINHRI. Besides the NHRI, the FINHRI (or its specific parts) carries out the mandate of Ombuds (carried out only by the Parliamentary Ombudsman), NPM (carried out only by the Parliamentary Ombudsman), CRPD national monitoring mechanism (carried out by the NHRI as a whole), EU Artificial Intelligence Act - Article 77 Body (carried out only by the Parliamentary Ombudsman) and Monitoring Body on EU funds compliance with fundamental rights (carried out only by the Human Rights Centre, which participates as an independent expert to the monitoring of EU funds).

Challenges faced by FINHRI in implementing its multiple mandates

Implementing the FINHRI's broad human rights mandate in parallel with specific mandates requires careful strategic planning, coordination and more importantly, sufficient resources.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman was named as one of the Finnish authorities protecting fundamental rights under the AI Act in 2025. However, the Government did not allocate any additional resources to the oversight of the AI Act (to the Parliamentary Ombudsman or the other named supervisory

authorities). Time will tell how the supervision will function in practice and how the Parliamentary Ombudsman can implement this new mandate.

According to the Human Rights Centre's experience, involvement in the monitoring committees of EU funds continues to remain abstract. It is not clear how to promote human rights compliance in the work of the committees, as no information on projects is available before funding decisions. Awareness of committee members of obligations regarding Fundamental Rights Charter and other relevant international conventions, including CRPD should also be strengthened. However, this requires resources and cannot be the primary responsibility of the Human Rights Centre.

While resources remain crucial for the accomplishment of the FINHRI's various tasks, other measures are also needed to support the national human rights structures in general. Human rights actors, including FINHRI, should be consulted at the earliest possible stage on legislation impacting on their mandates. At the regional level, ENNHRI can support - and has supported this.

NHRI structural challenges, threats and resilience

The FINHRI has faced **structural challenges in the last year**, namely due to budget-related uncertainty.

For the years 2025-2027, budgets of the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Human Rights Centre have been and will be reduced. These cuts are in line with the Government's general aim to produce savings in the State's economy and FINHRI is not specifically targeted by them. However, long-term planning of FINHRI's activities has become difficult as the considerable budget reductions have been presented in a piecemeal manner.

The FINHRI submits annually long term (four years) operational and financial plans to the Parliament. The plans are separately drafted by the Office of Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Human Rights Centre. They reiterate the context in which the FINHRI operates, the objectives of the FINHRI and present the possible needs for changes in resourcing, including staffing needs of the FINHRI. These form the framework within which the annual budgets are presented.

In the plans the FINHRI has highlighted that changes in its operating environment, including the economic and security situation and challenges to the international rule-based order, have an impact on the realisation of human rights and require that the institution is able to carry out its legislative duties effectively.

Measures to ensure that the FINHRI can respond to threats seeking to undermine its independence and effectiveness

FINHRI has adopted various measures to ensure its effectiveness when encountering exceptional situations. A working group was established in 2022 to plan and implement continuity management in the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman (including the Human Rights Centre), and to strengthen preparedness for different types of threats the institution might face. A preparedness plan was adopted in 2024. Trainings and lectures have also been organised to support staff members' capacities to cope in emergency or crisis situations.

In addition, the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman has internal guidelines for dealing with situations of targeting. Targeting refers to systemic harassment of a person in the form of mass actions on e.g. online platforms because of their work or social duties.

In the event of a "mass complaint" situation, where a large number of complaints on the same issue are received within a short time, the Parliamentary Ombudsman may decide on exceptions to normal complaint registration procedures. In extreme cases, emails may not be formally registered but answered with a standard reply indicating, for example, that the matter will be examined on the Ombudsman's own initiative or that it will not be investigated, with communications support used as needed.

At the end of 2024, the Rules of Procedure of the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman were updated to include a possibility for legal advisors to respond to a complaint after review by the head of the division. This is possible only in certain cases where based on established oversight of legality, there are no prerequisites for the admissibility of the complaint. This was done in response to the general increase in the number of complaints the Parliamentary Ombudsman receives. A broader delegation of decision-making powers would require legislative amendments, which have been brought to the attention of the Ministry of Justice. Such a change would free up more time for the Ombudsman and Deputy-Ombudsmen to deal with more legally challenging cases.

Moreover, there is currently an ongoing working group called "Rule of Law Guarantees and Development of the Judicial System" which is amongst its other tasks considering how to strengthen the position and independence of the Parliamentary Ombudsman. The working group has recently asked the Venice Commission for a statement on the constitutional guarantees of the independent judiciary and the prosecution system. The Commission visited Finland in February 2026 and adopted its [opinion regarding the independence of the judiciary](#) in March 2026.

Should the FINHRI be subjected to threats to its independence, the Human Rights Centre regards coordination with regional actors as essential. For this purpose, ENNHRI's Policy to Support NHRIs Under Threat and the Contact

Group of Partners to Support NHRIs under Threat provide a useful framework.

Approaches to strengthening the FINHRI's resilience against increasing or newly emerging challenges in the national context

The Human Rights Centre's overall approach to strengthening its resilience builds on monitoring changes in its operating environment, engaging in cooperation with a broad network of national and international stakeholders, planning its activities over the long term and defining priorities and competence needs.

For the past years, the Human Rights Centre has developed its foresight capacities to understand the status and situation of human rights in the long term and to consider possible action towards the preferred future for human rights. In 2023, [a report on human rights foresight](#), resilience and preparedness during transformations in society was published. The report explores foresight in the field of human rights and describes foresight methods and the Finnish foresight system. In the report, different human rights scenarios are outlined for the year 2040.

The report has provided a basis for the HRC's foresight related cooperation. On the one hand, the aim is to promote foresight in the work of other national human rights actors. On the other hand, the Human Rights Centre identifies needs and methods to better integrate human rights perspectives in the well-developed Finnish foresight system.

Other foresight and resilience building materials are also used to support the HRC's strategic planning and organisational development. As an example and following its participation in the ODIHR's resilience focal point network, the HRC will assess its resilience by using ODIHR's resilience building tools tailored for NHRIs. Regional cooperation therefore forms an important part of the Human Rights Centre's resilience building. In this regard, coordination between different regional actors, including ENNHRI, is important to identify complementary measures to support NHRIs' resilience building.

NHRI's recommendations to national authorities and regional authorities

The FINHRI recommends to national authorities to:

1. Introduce following amendments to the Parliamentary Ombudsman Act:
 1. Explicitly stipulate the three components (Parliamentary Ombudsman, Human Rights Centre, and its Human Rights Delegation) as the Finnish National Human Rights Institution.
 2. Include in the HRC's tasks a duty to table its reports to the Parliament for discussion.

3. Include the right of the Ombudsman to delegate decision-making authority to his/her legal advisers, and the conditions for such delegation of authority.
2. Ensure the resources of the FINHRI to carry out its broad mandate even in times of austerity measures.

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Human rights defenders and civil society space

Challenges for human rights defenders and restrictions to civil society space

Narrowing civic space

Overall, the situation of HRDs and their enabling environment in Finland is relatively good. As a rule, civil society actors can operate safely and without interference, and they participate actively in public debate and decision-making processes. However, there has been worrying trends indicating narrowing civic space in the last couple of years, including in 2025.

During the government term 2023–2027, public funding for civil society organisations (CSO) is being radically reduced as part of the ongoing austerity measures. Many organisations have had to reduce staff and cut down on services and activities. While the Government’s [stated objective](#) to develop fundraising opportunities and thus diversify the funding base of CSOs is welcome, the sudden and radical cuts cannot be considered as a sustainable way to achieve this. In 2025, there were also worrying cases indicating politicisation of funding decisions. These measures have significantly impacted CSOs’ ability to function and raised concerns about the impact on their independence and on the risk of self-censorship.

CSOs have also brought forward that decision-making processes have become less transparent and participatory and that [consultations of CSOs are decreasing](#). When consultation rounds are held, deadlines are often too tight and many CSOs feel their input is not reflected in the outcome. The Government’s updated [Guide to Consultation in Law Drafting](#) provides comprehensive instructions on how to involve stakeholders in the different stages of law drafting processes but is not legally binding.

Furthermore, the HRC is concerned that increased polarisation may have a chilling effect on public debate and notes that hate crimes, hate speech and harassment continue to be an issue which needs to be monitored. [Statistics](#) reveal suspected hate crimes are on the rise. In 2025, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) [urged the authorities to take action](#) to counter racist and LGBTI-phobic hate speech, expressing concern for such speech now being perpetrated also by politicians.

Structural challenges for CSOs and HRDs

The FINHRI identified several structural challenges for CSOs and HRDs, such as lack of adequate funding for CSOs and HRDs, barriers in access to law/ policy making and meaningful public consultation as well as laws and/or policies which negatively impact the right to association or assembly and to protest.

Lack of adequate funding for CSOs and HRDs

Whereas CSOs have an important role as service providers, their role as watchdogs contributing to plurality in public debate and expertise in decision-making processes has been less recognised in the debate on CSO funding. When additional funding cuts were prepared by the Government in the summer and autumn 2025, the focus seemed to be on directing them especially towards CSOs' advocacy work. In the HRC's opinion, this raises the question of whether the democratic function and role of CSOs is properly understood and valued.

Furthermore, an increased risk of politicisation in funding decisions is related to the [plans to merge](#) the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in 2027. STEA is a separate authority affiliated with the ministry which prepares and submits proposals for funding decisions to the ministry for approval. While the minister ultimately approves the decisions, civil society actors [have pointed out](#) that political steering may increase when funding proposals are not only approved but also prepared under the ministry.

The politicisation of CSO funding was also debated following a [decision by the minister for foreign trade and development](#) to reduce the funding of a development cooperation organisation of the Finnish trade union movement (SASK) by almost 40 percent (six million euros). The money was redirected to other organisations. The civil servants who had prepared the original funding proposal submitted a dissenting opinion claiming the decision did not respect the principle of non-discrimination of applicants and was in contradiction with the Administrative Procedure Act. SASK [aims to appeal](#) the decision.

Overall, the sudden decrease in funding of CSOs and the increased risks of politicisation pose challenges to the civil society sector's autonomous position. No comprehensive impact assessments have been made on the consequences

of the funding cuts.

Barriers in access to law/policy making and meaningful public consultation

In addition to the short consultation rounds organised during legislative drafting, the openness of political processes and possibility of civil society and media to scrutinise decision-making was also more broadly discussed in 2025. The Government [proposed](#) to restrict public access to certain documents prepared as background material for government programme negotiations while the negotiations are ongoing. Public access to such documents has been contested before, but a [ruling by the Supreme Administrative Court](#) in December 2025 confirmed that documents become public at the point when they are handed to the parties of the negotiations. However, if the Government's legislative proposal proceeds, this would change, rendering government negotiations less transparent. During the first public consultation round, the proposal was criticised by stakeholders for not sufficiently specifying the compelling reasons required by the Constitution that justify a restriction of the principle of public access to official documents.

Laws and or policies which negatively impact on the right to association or assembly and to protest

Disrupting traffic and refusing to comply with police orders at protests often leads to judgements of insubordination to the police in accordance with the Criminal Code. The effect of such sentences on future civic action was raised when the National Police Board [denied the environmental CSO Just Shift a fundraising permit](#) as one of the CSO board members had been sentenced four years back following an Extinction Rebellion protest. Just Shift is not affiliated with Extinction Rebellion and has not applied civil disobedience in its advocacy work. The decision by the National Police Board has been appealed, and the outcome remains to be seen.

Recently, there have also been several court decisions regarding cases of civil disobedience at environmental protests. In one prominent case the district court concluded that a protected natural spring would have been destroyed by forest logging without the activists resorting to civil disobedience. The charges against the activists were dropped, and [new ones raised](#) towards public officials and contractors responsible for the logging. Another prominent case, however, resulted in seven activists being [sentenced to pay almost 35 000 euros](#) in compensation and legal fees for blocking a road and delaying forest logging in an area where protection measures were under consideration. The activists are trying to appeal the decision.

Threats to CSOs and HRDs

In addition, FINHRI has identified other issues that negatively impact CSOs and HRDs nationally, such as online threats or harassment or surveillance by state

actors.

Online threats or harassment

Overall, online hate speech and harassment continue to be a problem in Finland, targeting e.g. ethnic minorities and women. While there are no statistics on threats and harassment targeting HRDs, this also occurs regularly. For example, a [report](#) released in 2025 showed that incidents of harassment occurred at 60 per cent of the Pride events organised in Finland in 2024.

Regarding harassment of journalists, an important development in 2025 was the [Prosecutor General's decision](#) to continue the criminal investigation in a case, where a [journalist was subjected to threats and smear](#) following a column on the Finns Party's far-right connections. The investigation of suspected defamation was first discontinued, but the Prosecutor General overturned the decision, noting that the investigation cannot be terminated in this case on the basis of the minor nature of the crimes or the costs incurred in investigating them. The decision specifically highlighted that harassment of journalists may reduce or prevent certain issues from being covered in the media.

Online harassment of researchers and experts who appear in media seems also to be a growing issue. The phenomenon is linked to the broader concerns regarding the state of academic freedom. For example, Finland's ranking in the [Academic Freedom Index](#) has dropped by 38 spots in the last two years. In addition to increased online harassment, uncertainty of funding is one contributing factor. Another concern is political steering of academic research. During the [amendment process of the Government Decree on the Academy of Finland](#) in spring 2025, the Government's proposal contained a controversial formulation according to which research funded by the Academy would be required to be aligned with the state's foreign and security policy. The formulation was later deleted after facing heavy critique.

Surveillance by state actors

In 2025, [telephone surveillance of four environmental HRDs](#) active in Extinction Rebellion was debated and its legality examined in court. The police had sought permission for tele surveillance based on suspicion that the activists would strike against an upcoming rally event. The permission was granted and surveillance conducted during five days in 2024. To obtain permission for tele surveillance to prevent a crime, the crime must be grave enough to potentially result in four years' imprisonment. The police must provide concrete details behind the suspicion to the court.

In the present case, the police suspected that the activists would cause aggravated criminal damage, for which the maximum sentence is four years. On the previous year, the activists had been apprehended at the same rally event, but no indications were found of plans to commit crimes amounting to

aggravated criminal damage. Despite this, the application for tele surveillance claimed that the activists were now planning to strike against rally cars and cause damages amounting to a million euros.

The activists argue that the police had submitted misleading information to the court when requesting surveillance permission. The police have denied these allegations in a [public statement](#). Three of the activists submitted complaints to the Court of Appeal, which [dismissed the complaints](#). The activists are planning to make a complaint to the Supreme Court. The HRC sees that it would be important to clarify the legal requirements for tele surveillance noting that, in principle, the threshold for conducting surveillance should be high.

Scrutinising powers of the police and the legitimacy of decisions to apply coercive measures is topical, as the Government is planning to significantly broaden both [police](#) and [military intelligence](#) powers to conduct surveillance, as well as the [Finnish Border Guard's](#) powers to carry out searches and check documents (legislative proposals to be given in spring 2026). The Ministry of Justice is also [preparing an amendment to Article 10 of the Constitution](#) to allow broader limitations to the right to privacy in order to combat serious crime and obtain information on military activities and other activities that seriously threaten national security. The aim of the Government is to declare the amendment as urgent (requiring a 5/6 majority in the Parliament) to allow it to be passed during the 2023–2027 government term. The legislative amendments planned by the Government would allow, among other changes, the police to gather criminal intelligence in cases where there is no specified and concrete suspicion of a crime, which means an amendment of the Constitution is required.

National frameworks to support and protect human rights defenders and civil society organisations

Specific practical protection mechanisms for civil society and/or HRDs

In 2025, Finland hosted the first two HRDs as part of the pilot programme for the temporary protection and support for human rights defenders. The HRDs, who came from Tunisia and Georgia, stayed in Finland for three months respectively.

The aim of the programme is to provide temporary relocation for foreign HRDs in need of rest and respite. The length of the stay in Finland is maximum three months, and the visa can be renewed only in exceptional cases. The objective is to provide an opportunity for HRDs to continue their work for the promotion of human rights, to network, to access training opportunities, and to rest. All costs of the participating HRD (including travel costs, accommodation, and monthly stipend) are covered through the programme.

The pilot programme was funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and coordinated by Artists at Risk. The next phase is to evaluate the pilot and decide about its continuation. The HRC will potentially participate in the evaluation and advocate for the programme to be further developed and established as a permanent protection mechanism.

Inclusion of HRD protection in human rights policies

Support for activities of HRDs is one of the priorities in Finland's [Government Report on Human Rights Policy](#) adopted in 2022. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs updated their [guidelines on supporting HRDs](#) in 2023. The guidelines are intended especially for Foreign Service employees in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in Finland's missions abroad. The guidelines have a special focus on women HRDs. The HRC does not have information about how the guidelines have been applied in practice.

Activities of NHRIs to support civil society space and human rights defenders

The FINHRI has taken and is planning initiatives to **promote** civil society space and HRDs, including capacity building for HRDs and general promotion work.

General promotion work

The Human Rights Centre has consistently brought attention to the shrinking civil society space in its speeches and presentations. In December 2025, the HRC and its Human Rights Delegation started planning advocacy work for the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2027. Based on workshop discussions with the members of the Human Rights Delegation, a statement has been drafted by the HRC and is adopted by the Human Rights Delegation in the spring 2026. One of the themes covered by the statement with recommendations is the protection of civil society space. The objective is that this theme will be included in the next government programme along with concrete measures.

Capacity building for HRDs

As the rule of law and concerns about its resilience in Finland has been much debated the past two years, the HRC and the Union of Journalists in Finland planned and developed a rule of law-training for journalists interested in strengthening their knowledge about the topic. The objective of the training was to broaden the understanding among journalists of different aspects of the rule of law, including its link to human rights and current rule of law threats. The first training was organised in January 2026 and the HRC plans to organise similar trainings also in the future.

Capacity building of CSOs working on human rights issues has also been on the agenda of the Human Rights Centre. The HRC and the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs have planned a training for CSO representatives on participation in the monitoring cycles of different international human rights monitoring bodies. The aim is to strengthen the voice of civil society in the monitoring processes. The project is included in the [National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights 2024-2027](#).

Needs for the FINHRI to advance the protection of HRDs nationally

In the Finnish context, it should be further considered how to collect information on the situation of national HRDs. If the Human Rights Centre would have access to more data concerning civic space and more specifically, the human rights defenders this would allow better analysis of development and trends.

NHRI's recommendations to national and regional authorities

The FINHRI recommends to national authorities to:

1. Conduct a comprehensive impact assessment of all funding cuts directed to CSOs and monitor the application of the updated Guide on Participation in Law Drafting.
2. Further develop the protection mechanism of foreign HRDs based on lessons learnt from the pilot and establish it as a permanent mechanism.
3. Take concrete measures to combat hate speech and harassment, in accordance with recommendations given by different human rights monitoring bodies.

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Democracy - checks and balances, disinformation, and other topics

Law-making processes

Based on the human rights monitoring and reporting, the FINHRI identified challenges affecting law-making processes nationally, including limited time of consultations, lack of mechanisms and processes in place to facilitate both

general and targeted participation in the law-making process and the inconsistency in the quality of human rights impact assessments.

As noted in [the previous rule of law reports](#), stringent, politically set timetables have hampered stakeholders, including human rights and civil society actors' capability to provide input, despite their consultative and vital role in the legislative drafting process. Alarming, HRC has also remarked that some government proposals for new legislation have omitted or ignored critical feedback received during consultation periods. This has been the case especially with proposals with significant consequences for fundamental rights, such as social rights. Moreover, the HRC has been informed that Ministries have considerably reduced or suspended roundtable events or similar consultative discussions with civil society organisations.

These challenges are aggravated by deficiencies related to human rights impact assessments in law-drafting, a problem HRC has equally pointed out in the FINHRI's previous rule-of-law reports. As an example, [the Ministry for Social Care and Health's memorandum](#) on the combined effects of the 2024–2025 budget cuts for social security paints a bleak picture on weakened situation of many vulnerable groups, such as growing economic deprivation among families with children, elderly and people with disabilities. For example, [the number of children living in poverty is estimated to grow](#) to circa 150 000, as the number in 2023 was approximately 120 000. Such effects could have been tackled or diminished by better proactive consideration of the cumulative impacts of the several austerity measures carried out by the current Government on the realisation of social rights, enshrined in the Finnish Constitution. The practice of compiling such impact assessments in an after-the-fact manner is useful only in hindsight, when the negative effects have already accrued.

Actions taken by FINHRI to address challenges identified in the context of law-making processes

The FINHRI makes regular note of the quality of legislative proposals in its statements and other work. The HRC seeks to especially highlight needs pertaining to human rights impact assessments and sufficient consultation times for the civil society. For example, in its [own-initiative statement](#) on the proposal to amend the regulation concerning biometric data stored in the registers of the police and the Finnish Immigration Service, the Centre noted that the impact assessment should be extended to the realisation of legal protection and right to a fair trial. Furthermore, while the human rights assessment was well conducted in the proposed legislation on the primacy of electronic communication in official matters, the Centre [highlighted in its statement](#) that sufficient measures to prevent or reduce negative impacts were not presented.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman has, for example, [in its statement](#) to the

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health on the proposed amendments to the Social Assistance Act, pointed out that there was no comprehensive assessment of how the various legal changes, taken together, would affect the realisation of fundamental rights.

NHRI's recommendations to national and regional authorities

The FINHRI recommends to national authorities to:

1. Ensure that national guidelines and standards for law-drafting procedures are followed and that political expediency does not impede on the quality of legislative proposals and their preparation.
2. Commit to properly conducted and systematic human rights impact assessments in law drafting by allocating sufficient personnel and time resources for them.

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Other challenges to the rule of law and human rights

Structural human rights issues which reflect persistent challenges for the rule of law.

Discussion on the ex-ante constitutional review in Finland

The Parliament adopted in 2025 legislative proposals pertaining to national security and austerity measures on Finland's social security system which continued to raise debate on the prioritisation of political goals over conformity with the Constitution, EU law and international human rights conventions. Besides presenting notable implications to the rights of persons or groups in a vulnerable position, the adopted acts highlight the need to consider whether the Constitutional Law Committee's role in the ex-ante constitutional review requires further guarantees¹. In [a public event](#) on the constitutional review system in Finland, the Director of the Human Rights Centre pointed out that legislative proposals with significant problems regarding human rights have passed the Constitutional Law Committee's review and that many of the

practices supporting the Committee's legal consideration are based on custom, not on stronger provisions.

The legislative proposals related to the discussion are elaborated below.

Extension of the Act on Temporary Measures to Combat Instrumentalised Migration (Border Act)

As the Border Act adopted in 2024 was in force for only one year, in March 2025 the Government proposed to extend it until the end of 2026, again as an exceptive act to the Constitution. According to the Border Act, the Government can, in cooperation with the President, decide to restrict the reception of asylum applications on Finland's national border under certain situations of instrumentalised migration.

Rule-of-law issues and incongruities with international human rights obligations were again observed in stakeholder statements. The HRC too maintained its critical view towards the act and its continuation. In [its statement on the draft proposal](#), it also noted that the impacts of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum in relation to the Border Act were not adequately assessed. While the act was once more approved of by Finland's supreme guardians of law, the Chancellor of Justice did, however, [stress that](#) the act must continue to be regarded as exceptional and should not be utilised as recourse for passing exceptive legislation in the future, or as grounds for weighing the value of different fundamental and human rights to one another.

During the parliamentary deliberations, the Constitutional Law Committee [concluded](#) that there are still necessary and compelling reasons for the continued validity of the Border Act to ensure Finland's sovereignty and national security. Parliament adopted the extension of the act with 5/6 majority in June 2025. To become enforceable, the act must be separately activated by the Government. This has yet to occur, as no mass migration has been detected at the Russo-Finnish border since December 2023, i.e. since the border has been closed from people.

Austerity measures to Finland's social security system

As mentioned already [in the 2024 rule of law report](#), the cuts to Finland's social security system have raised increased concerns on the realisation of social rights. The Government has repeatedly utilised the state economy as the acceptable reason behind the social security cuts, including recently with [last-resort benefits provided in the form of social assistance](#).

The Constitutional Law Committee has adopted a favourable disposition regarding the constitutionality of the cuts ([see e.g. the Committee's statement from 2025](#)). It has a central role in demarcating what the Finnish Constitution and its Section 19 means by affording everyone the right to receive

indispensable subsistence and care to obtain the means for “a life of dignity”. In determining what the “minimum core” on social security benefits may entail in the Finnish system for fundamental rights, the Committee has increasingly taken to interpret the notion of “a life of dignity” in terms of minimal means for basic subsistence. In assessing the cuts, the Committee has tended to afford little to no consideration on their targeting, which has led to a disproportionate effect on groups already suffering economic hardships.

The Human Rights Centre is of the view that Finland’s compliance with its international obligation for the progressive realisation of social rights is rendered suspect by the ongoing cuts. Same is true for Finland’s compliance with the doctrine against retrogressive measures and the obligation to prioritise, in its policies, social rights with maximum available resources.

Other persisting challenges or key developments for the rule of law in 2025

Developments related to court cases against journalists

In 2025, the legal proceedings continued regarding the case where two journalists were found guilty of disclosing state secrets in an article published by the newspaper Helsingin Sanomat in 2017. In the original verdict one of the journalists were sentenced to pay fines. However, the [Court of Appeal applied a stricter approach](#) and sentenced the journalist to four months conditional imprisonment and the other journalist to pay fines. Both were now also found guilty of the attempt to disclose state secrets, as they had also planned a follow-up article.

The Supreme Court did not grant permission to appeal and Helsingin Sanomat is thereby [filing a complaint](#) to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The complaint focuses on the decision to sentence the journalists also for attempting to disclose state secrets, based on news article drafts which were never published. The media sector is concerned that this will have a chilling effect on journalists. A significant part of the court proceedings was confidential, and the judgment leaves it unclear when the gathering of material and preparation of an article may become criminal conduct.

Another aspect of the same case, concerning the Supreme Administrative Court’s judgement maintaining that legal expenses accrued in the criminal proceedings and paid by the employer are taxable income, was earlier taken for examination to the ECtHR (see the FINHRI’s rule of law report 2024 and ECtHR [communicated case](#)). The application concerns the impact of the Supreme Administrative Court’s decision on freedom of expression. However, in January 2026 an [amendment in tax legislation](#) came into force, eliminating the risk of employees having to pay taxes due to costly legal proceedings faced as a consequence of their work.

NHRI's recommendations to national and regional authorities

Concerning structural human rights issues which reflect persistent challenges for the rule of law

The FINHRI recommends to national actors:

1. Through parliamentary cooperation, to assess the need to develop ex-ante constitutional review.
2. To strengthen commitment to the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as to the practise of the European Committee on Social Rights.

The FINHRI recommends to national and European actors:

1. In responses to the suspected phenomenon of instrumentalised migration, avoid exceptive legislation and prioritise the use of existing border management measures that comply with EU law and other international law on migration and asylum. Allocate sufficient resources for the independent monitoring mechanism pursuant to the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

References

This list of references covers the whole country report.

¹ *The Finnish Constitution designates responsibility for constitutional review to the Parliament and its Constitutional Law Committee. Section 74 of the Constitution provides that the Constitutional Law Committee shall also consider international human rights conventions while assessing the constitutionality of legislative proposals. The Committee is comprised solely of elected MPs.*

