



Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö

Undervisnings- och kulturministeriet

Ministry of Education and Culture

# Meaningful in Finland Action Plan

**Action Plan to prevent hate speech and racism and  
to foster social inclusion**



The Government's long-term objective is that in 2025 Finland will be a good country for everyone. This means that the country will be welcoming and international with people representing many different languages and cultures and displaying a positive attitude towards one another and the rest of the world making Finland a unique place to live in.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is launching an Action Plan to prevent hate speech and racism and to foster social inclusion. The funding will be EUR 6 million.

# Open society

The Government's long-term objective is that by 2025 Finland will be a country where everyone can feel at home. This means a country that is welcoming and international, populated with people representing different languages and cultures, who interact in a positive way, making Finland a unique place to live in.

The current economic situation, fast changes in society that create uncertainties, and the refugee crisis are a fertile breeding ground for hostile speech, extremism and sharp polarisation. Hate speech is directed at different population groups, minorities and individuals. It shakes the foundations of trust and safety. Hate speech and a sense of threat have made people react negatively towards immigrants and anyone perceived as different.

Public authorities secure the rule of law, democracy and human rights. Trust and mutual respect between people and strong institutions are the cornerstones of wellbeing in Finland. Hate speech and racism mean that certain population groups have to live in an atmosphere where their status as equal members of the community is openly questioned. A decent life must be safeguarded for everyone, which means that no one should have to experience violence, threats or hostility.

A large number of immigrants have arrived in Finland over a short period of time. Most Finns have only little experience of interaction with immigrants. The underlying causes behind hate speech and racist behaviour may actually stem from a sense of social injustice, exclusion, irrelevance and in some cases the experience of bullying. We therefore need stronger inclusion and interaction, dissemination of information and knowledge, and more empathy. The best way to tackle hate speech and racism is rapid action and preventive measures against negative phenomena.

In Finland, racism and hate speech towards different population groups, religions or convictions have been studied mainly from a legal point of view. The focus has been on the relation between hate speech and freedom of expression, the grounds for criminalisation of hate speech, the regulation of information networks and places where hate speech occurs.

In March 2016, the Ministry of Justice published a report on hate speech directed at different minority groups.

The report shows that we need to prevent and intervene in harassment and hate speech concretely at the grassroots level. We need to encourage people to be active and aware and to intervene by means of different campaigns. NGOs must have a strong role in the protection of human rights and be able to provide services with a low threshold.

Various organisations must invest in human rights education and equality planning, and these should be an integral part of all work involving children and young people.

# Ten actions

## **1. Administrative mechanisms. We focus on tackling hate speech and racism and strengthening multiculturalism, inclusion and equality in the Ministry of Education and Culture, its agencies, bodies and other organisations.**

Work under scope of supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture affects people's success and wellbeing in many ways. This administrative branch is close to the daily lives of people. The ministry's activities relate to all children and young people living in Finland. Education, culture, physical activity and youth policy create the foundation for a sense of social belonging, trust, mutual respect between people, openness and multiculturalism. Education, culture, physical activity and youth policy are building blocks for creating a sense of social belonging, trust, mutual respect between people, openness and multiculturalism.

Our administrative branch already actively promotes multiculturalism, inclusion and equality and participates in the fight against hate speech and racism. It also seeks to do things in new ways so that others can also benefit from it.

We work to improve citizens' multiliteracy. Our multiliteracy programme for children in early childhood education and their families promotes the language development of children. The programme strengthens the structures and procedures in early childhood education, libraries and cultural fields so they can better support learning of multiliteracy. Children and children of immigrants are the specific target groups, because they need to be encouraged to develop their multiliteracy and linguistic awareness. Working together with families is also important. The programme is being implemented between 2016 and 2018. We will also help create media education materials for young people and educators.

## **2. Money to fight racism. We supplement the selection criteria for the Ministry of Education and Culture's discretionary government-subsidised projects and European Social Fund (ESF) measure packages.**

The Ministry's selection criteria for government-subsidised projects and forthcoming project application rounds in the ESF packages are multiculturalism, a sense of community and inclusion.

They will be taken into account in a way that suits each project's theme during the dissemination of existing ESF projects and in seminars.

### **3. The library as a meeting point. We help enable public libraries to encourage active citizenship and democracy.**

Public libraries foster trust and wellbeing. They also encourage people to participate in social life. They are open and accessible to everyone. They serve as a living room of knowledge, where people can work and study. It is also a natural place for people to meet up. The materials in libraries are multilingual, versatile and reliable.

Local and regional development grants are allocated for financing public libraries that promotes multiculturalism. The purpose is to encourage people to respect plurality and dialogue between cultures.

### **4. ABCs for adults. We develop the education of teaching staff and other professionals who work with children and young people.**

We fund education for people who work with children and young people. It gives new skills for working in a multicultural environment. Teaching staff and other professionals are trained to spot signals related to hate speech, racist behaviour and radicalisation and how to address these issues.

This ensures those working with children and young people are equipped to strengthen democratic values, awareness of human rights and a sense of inclusion among children and young people. We organise events that feature good international and national models and methods that help materialise these goals and provide tangible tools for educational institutions. Multiliteracy, media criticism and critical thinking are other educational themes. These are taken into account in the development programme for basic and continuing education of teachers prepared by the Teacher Education Forum.

Higher education institutions implement recommendations for democratic and human rights education in teacher training in universities and polytechnics (Democracy and Human Rights: Objectives and content in teacher education). Higher education institutions are formulating new curricula for teacher education, safeguarding parity in society and updating the operating procedures in teacher training. Teacher education units are cooperating more closely with human rights experts.

**5. Power from peer networks. We challenge youth, student, pre-teen organisations and other youth-oriented organisations to create opportunities for multicultural, communal and equal participation.**

We invite student, youth, pre-teen organisations and other organisations to plan and organise ideas for student-oriented ways to increase student interaction and joint activities. The objective is to activate students to create multicultural learning environments and strengthen national activities and cooperation between organisations.

**6. The future lies in young people. We support experts in the youth sector to promote human rights and equality to tackle hate speech.**

We foster the expertise of actors in youth organisations to advocate human rights and equality and tackle hate speech. The outcomes of training projects designed for actors in municipal youth organisations will help expand and deepen activities. The purpose is to make sure that all those who work with young people know how to prevent and address racism and hate speech. We want to make sure that the promotion of human rights and prevention of discrimination are included in youth sector education programmes at all education levels.

**7. No more hate speech. A special government grant application process for municipal youth services serves to curb hate speech and strengthen equality.**

The special government grant application process for municipal youth services prevents hate speech and promotes equality. The projects financed apply to all young people. The emphasis is on supervised interaction and community activities between young people from different groups where youth works are applied. Projects include both events, training, and production and distribution of materials and involve the organisation of joint recreational activities for young people belonging to different ethnic groups.

## **8. Show Racism the Red Card! We help disseminate the project in football and other team sports and promote equality work in the field of physical activity.**

We expound the 'Show Racism the Red Card' project in football and other team sports. It is incorporated in the Finnish Schools on the Move programme included in one of the government programme's key projects.

The project is implemented by Football Players' Association - FPA, the Finnish Multicultural Sports Federation (Fimu), the Association for Promoting Multiculturality Walter, the Foundation for Sport and Health Sciences Likes and sports federations.

Projects in municipalities and organisations that promote equality in the field of physical activity, such as the expansion of equality work by sports associations into the planning, development and realisation of operational equality will be further supported.

## **9. Let's talk. A government grant for the promotion of dialogue between religions is available.**

Members of religious minorities are often the target of hate speech. It generates stigmatising generalisations about members of a given religious group.

One of the main ways of tackling hate speech aimed at religious groups is dialogue between different religions. Government grants help finance such activities.

## **10. Let's campaign. We have launched the "Meaningful in Finland" challenge.**

The "Meaningful in Finland" challenges majority population and migrants and other minorities and special groups to interact more and get to know one another by engaging in joint activities and recreational activities. Projects that challenge people to participate in joint activities that create shared joy will be launched regularly. Our aim is for the campaign to be visible and audible extensively in the media and online. We want the campaign to be widely seen and heard in the media and online.

- 1 We will focus on tackling hate speech and racism and strengthening multiculturalism, inclusion and equality throughout the Ministry of Education and Culture, its agencies, bodies and other organisations.
- 2 We will promote multiculturalism, a sense of community and inclusion in the Ministry's government-subsidised projects and in the selection criteria of the whole range of ESF measures.
- 3 We will help public libraries to promote active citizenship, multiculturalism and democracy.
- 4 We will improve the skills of teaching staff and other professionals who work with children and young people.
- 5 We will invite early teen, youth, student and other organisations to create equal opportunities for participation in multicultural activities and community life.
- 6 We will encourage actors in the youth sector to promote human rights and equality and to fight hate speech.
- 7 We will launch a special government grant application process for youth services in local government. This will help curb hate speech and foster equality.
- 8 We will help spread the 'Show Racism the Red Card' project in football and other team sports and we will support equality work in all areas of physical activity.
- 9 We will introduce a government grant application process to advocate dialogue between different religions.
- 10 The "Meaningful in Finland" challenge is being launched.