

# AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION OF INTEGRATION AND GOOD RELATIONS POLICIES IN FINLAND



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# **AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION OF INTEGRATION AND GOOD RELATIONS POLICIES IN FINLAND**

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# Abstract

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**T**he purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the current situation of integration and good relations policies in Finland within the framework of the EU / CoE joint project "Building an Inclusive Integration approach in Finland" and to help the actors of the project to understand the current state of affairs in Finland in the fields of integration and inter-group relations policies, how they are connected, how they differ from each other, where the gaps are, and to give an idea of where should the project start. Integration and the promotion of good inter-group relations are connected, because the promotion of integration builds inter-group relations, and the promotion of those relations also promotes integration. However, the perspective of the policy for inter-group relations is broader than the perspective of integration, because inter-group relations concern the relations between all social groups.

The report consists of two parts. The first chapter examines integration policy and provides integration definitions, legislation, levels of activity and key actors, funding and evaluation. It was written by Senior researcher Pekka Kettunen and the second chapter of the report discusses good relations policies by examining Finnish legislation, the key actors and their roles and recent policies promoting good relations in national, regional and municipal levels. The second chapter was written by Miriam Attias and Panu Artemjeff, researchers at MAP Finland, a think tank specializing in good relations policy.

The number of immigrants in Finland has increased rapidly reaching about eight percent in 2022. However, most immigrants live in southern Finland, approximately half of them in the Uusimaa region and in absolute numbers, most in Helsinki. The largest language groups spoken by the immigrants are Russian, Estonian, Arabian and Somali.

The Finnish integration policy started in 1999, when the first act on integration was adopted, and hence some common principles and practices were put into effect. The current law is from 2010, and the Finnish parliament is currently handling a new act that would further transfer more responsibility and tasks to the local authorities.

Finnish integration policy can be argued to have both a narrow and a broader scope. The first one is directed at newly arrived, unemployed adults. Firstly their skills are assessed, followed by an individual integration plan, and the next step is a one-year training which contains both language studies, and orientation in Finnish society and work life. Ideally the immigrants

would thereafter continue vocational studies. The integration training courses are truly multi-organisational as they are organised by the state labour administration with contents that are partly regulated by the state educational administration and implemented by both municipal and market actors.

The larger scope of integration concerns the municipal responsibility and whether their services are fit for immigrants. Municipalities ought to coordinate local integration activities, facilitate cooperation amongst relevant actors including state administration and civil society. In addition, municipalities should make an integration program which deals with issues such as the inter-relation between integration and the municipality's strategy, ways of reaching immigrants who are not in the work force, and the monitoring and evaluation of the program.

What do we know about the degree of integration of immigrants in Finland? Seen from different perspectives, it can be noted that the employment rate of immigrants is lower, their quality of housing is lower, and the political engagement of immigrants, in terms of voting, is below the national turnout. There is however variation between different language groups. In addition, integration processes may take time.

Conclusively, integration services are rather dispersed, and serve different audiences. For immigrants coming to work or study in Finland or moving to Finland on the basis of family relationships, integration services are missing, and for language studies are dependent on the immigrants themselves. This also means that the third sector plays a role, so do enterprises, and the larger audience. If immigrants are not welcomed, or are treated badly, the end result is lacking. Furthermore, because of aging and declining birth rates there are plans to double the amount of work and study-based immigration by 2030. In this case, well-working integration services and welcoming society are a necessity. If the Government's proposal to reform the Act supporting integration is adopted, it will also be compulsory for municipalities to promote good relations.

According to authors, the good relations policies can be identified in three different ways: by assessing the impact of mainstream policies on different population groups, by reviewing non-discrimination and minority rights policies and finally by focusing on policies with special aim at promotion interaction (good relations policy) between different groups of society. The report focuses on minority rights and special good relations policies.

The legislation relevant to good relations policy consists of the Constitution, the Criminal Code, non-discrimination legislation, the Act on the Promotion of Integration, and the laws regulating participation rights and linguistic and cultural rights. In addition, Finland has legislation on the autonomy of the Åland Islands and the language and cultural autonomy of the Sámi people.

The different forms of good relations policies can be found in various policy fields. The report examines the special good relations policy, internal security and crime prevention policies, practices of mediation, neighbourhood and neighbourhood-based community work, integration work and Roma policy. All these policy areas have special aim at increasing interaction between population groups and building trust. Conflict prevention, mediation and conflict resolution, as well as the fight against crimes related to group relations

are also among the objectives of these policy areas and in the activities that are currently underway.

Good relations are also enhanced through activities promoting equality and inclusion of different population groups. In Finland, equality and non-discrimination is promoted for example through anti-racism work, diversity policy, language rights policies, the promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples and minority policies (e.g. policies on Roma, people with disabilities, and sexual and gender minorities).

The report presents the objectives and measures of the ongoing action plans and programmes with activities targeting good relations, such as the Action Plan against Racism and Good Relations, the Internal Security Report, the Roma Policy Programme and the Action Plan on Cultural Policy, Immigrants and the Promotion of Cultural Diversity at national, regional and local level.

# Introduction

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**T**he Council of Europe, together with the EU-funded project “Building an Inclusive Integration Approach in Finland”, commissioned a two-part report on integration and good relations policy in Finland. This report aims to provide an overview of the legislation, actors and their roles in the field of integration and inter-group relations, as well as ongoing activities at national, regional and local level. Integration and good relations are considered separately, because although the promotion of good inter-group relations partly contributes to the promotion of integration, it is much more than that.

The report has two parts. The first chapter examines policies promoting integration. It was written by Senior Researcher Pekka Kettunen.

The second chapter of the report discusses good relations policies. The second chapter was written by Miriam Attias and Panu Artemjeff, researchers at MAP Finland, a think tank specialising in good relations policy.

The purpose of the report is to serve as an easily accessible information package for planning the activities of the “Building an Inclusive Integration Approach in Finland” project.

## PART I

# Promoting integration in Finland

*Pekka Kettunen*

Immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon in Finland. Until the 1990s, Finland was a country of emigration rather than of immigration. This began to change with the arrival of refugees from Chile and Vietnam in the 1980s and then Somalia in the 1990s. (Saukkonen 2020). In 2021, foreign-born population made up around 8% of the Finnish population. Approximately half of the foreign-born population lives in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Examined by municipality, the share of foreign-born population is highest in Vantaa, 23.4%, Espoo, 20.1% and Närpiö, 19.6%. (Statistics Finland). In absolute numbers, however, most immigrants live in Helsinki. Immigration to Finland can be divided into three categories according to the reason for arrival: refugee and asylee immigration, work-based immigration and family-based immigration ([www.migri.fi](http://www.migri.fi)). Their proportions vary from year to year; for example, in 2015 and 2016, the number of asylum seekers was high due to population movements caused by various global conflicts, while in 2022, work-based immigration was the most common reason. In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on work-based immigration due to Finland's negative demographic trends and skills shortages in many sectors. Increasing immigration contributes to the need to promote integration. In Finland, there have also been various efforts to address the challenges of ageing. For example, the Talent Boost programme aims to streamline the recruitment of international talent. In addition, a labour market roadmap prepared by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (TEM 2022) includes a wide range of measures to increase work-based immigration and the number of international students in Finland.

Integration means settling in. According to the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010, Section 3), “*integration* means interactive development involving immigrants and society at large, the aim of which is to provide immigrants with the knowledge and skills required in society and working life and to provide them with support, so that they can maintain their culture and language”. According to Saukkonen (2020, 19–20), a distinction can be made between structural, cultural, interactive and

identificational integration (see also Heckmann 2005). The issues of structural integration are linked to the role of immigrants in the different structures of society and the realisation of equality and equity. Cultural integration is about changes in knowledge, behaviour, values and attitudes. Interactive integration is mainly about building social relationships, and identificatory integration will progress when the immigrant begins to feel included as a full and equal member of their current society.

This suggests that the majority of integration promotion actions through public services is related to structural integration, while other aspects of integration are less visible. Integration can be examined through various indicators (work, housing, participation) (Kaihovaara et al. 2020), but integration is also a subjective experience. Integration is also influenced by the openness and receptiveness of the surrounding society. The various integration promotion services can be seen as a starting point, while integration as a subjective experience is usually a more long-term process.

### Background to immigration and integration policies

With the gradual increase in the number of migrants, and in particular those in need of international protection, Finland began to consider the regulation of operational and financial principles in the 1990s. In 1995, the Finnish Government set up a Commission for Migration and Refugee Policy, which in 1997 published its report “Controlled immigration and effective integration”. The programme also included a call for the development of legislation so that Finland would have a separate law on the reception of asylum seekers and measures to promote the integration of immigrants. (Saukkonen 2020, 70–71).

The first legislative act on integration was adopted in 1999. The act thus defined for the first time the roles of the various actors and the principles of funding. The current Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) came into force in 2011 and emphasised the responsibility of municipalities in promoting



integration. The reception of asylum seekers was now regulated by a separate act, which reinforced the desire to see integration as a matter for all immigrants (Saukkonen 2020, 73). In spring 2023, Parliament approved a new legislative proposal on promoting integration, which will enter into force in 2025. The proposal is to enact a new Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration and at the same time repeal the existing Act. The proposed Act aims to accelerate and enhance the integration and employment of immigrants by improving access to guidance and counselling, speeding up access to services, reaching immigrants more comprehensively at the initial stage of immigration, and developing comprehensive services at the initial stage of integration. (HE 208/2022). According to the Government's proposal, the changes include an increased role for municipalities and efforts to better reach population groups outside the labour force and influence inter-group relations. The wellbeing services counties established at the beginning of 2023 will also shape the organisational landscape for promoting integration.

In early 2023, the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) was amended by two different amendments. The Act amending the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (936/2022) provides for the role of wellbeing services counties. The changes are related to the transfer of responsibility for organising health and social services from municipalities to wellbeing services counties from January 1, 2023. The Act entered into force on January 1, 2023. Following the Act amending the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1083/2022), the legal provisions on assigning persons to municipalities are extended to apply to beneficiaries of temporary protection. The central government can pay compensation to municipalities and wellbeing services counties for the provision of services promoting integration when the person receiving temporary protection has a municipality of residence. In addition, according to the Act, a child or young person who has arrived

in Finland without a parent or guardian and who is a beneficiary of temporary protection may receive housing and support services, similarly to a quota refugee who has arrived as an unaccompanied minor. The Act entered into force on March 1, 2023. These amendments particularly affect people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

The main focus of the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) is on immigrants with refugee background. Migrants entering the country for work and those entering through family reunification are not specifically covered by this law. However, a municipality's general responsibility for the welfare of its inhabitants and access to services also applies to immigrants (Kettunen 2020).

However, the right to integration services only applies to people who have been granted a residence permit. In reception centres, which are the responsibility of the Finnish Immigration Service (MIGRI) and the Ministry of the Interior, we can talk about pre-integration. Pre-integration activities are activities carried out in reception centres prior to obtaining a residence permit. These activities strengthen the asylum seeker's capacity to act, and at the same time support the asylum seekers' integration capacities if they are granted a residence permit. The activities include work and study activities, referral of applicants to activities outside the centres, solutions for gainful employment (payment card) and transition to the municipality, as well as strengthening the applicants' autonomy in managing their daily lives (<https://kotoutuminen.fi/nopeutetaan-kotoutumisen-kaynnistymista>).

### Implementation and key actors

The field of actors involved in promoting integration is broad, ranging from the national to the local level. Table 1 gives a brief overview of the actors at different levels, followed by a more detailed description of their roles and the relationships between them.

Table 1. Actors		
Levels	Actors	Area of responsibility
National	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Education and Culture	Operational guidelines and funding, monitoring and evaluation
Regional	ELY Centres, TE Offices, wellbeing services counties, Regional State Administrative Agencies	Integration training, health and social services, supervision of activities
Local	Municipalities	Coordination of activities, primary and secondary education
	Organisations	Complementary services
	Companies	Organisation of integration training

The field of integration is diverse. There are many different actors involved in promoting integration, and their focus on the lives of immigrants varies. Promoting integration can be viewed in organisational terms, starting with the tasks of ministries and moving on to grassroots actors and tasks. On the other hand, promoting integration can also be seen from the immigrants' point of view; integration or settling in means, in the first instance, for each immigrant, choosing where to live and obtaining rights to municipal services. If the settlement period is at least a year or so, the immigrant should apply for a municipality of residence that allows access to a range of welfare services. According to the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010), municipalities should take immigrants into account in their services. It should be noted that basic education is also available to children of asylum seekers and those who have been refused asylum.

### Actors involved in promoting integration at national level

The national organisation of integration promotion has varied somewhat over the past few decades. Since 2011, the main actor involved has been the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (TEM). The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's tasks include both issues related to work-based immigration and the promotion of integration. The Ministry has a Centre of Expertise in Immigrant Integration, with publications, guides and statistics available on its website.

Labour migration is a way to promote the availability of skilled labour, the growth and internationalisation of companies as well as research, development and innovation activities. Finland's integration policy aims to meet the needs of people who have moved to the country for various reasons as well as the needs of a society that is becoming increasingly diversified. The needs of the immigrant population are taken into account in the organisation of all public services and in separate integration measures and services. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for the policy, legislation and administration of issues related to immigration of workers, entrepreneurs, students, researchers and trainees. Important work is being done to improve the situation of vulnerable children, quota refugees and others in need of protection, and workers who have been exploited. The Ministry is also responsible for the general development, foresight, planning and management of integration policies, legislation and services. (<https://tem.fi/tyovoiman-maahanmuutto-ja-kotouttaminen>).

The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education guide the actors in the field of education. For example, in the field of

immigration, the Ministry of Education and Culture defines the content of integration training (see ELY Centres), basic adult education, and various forms of support for teaching pupils with foreign backgrounds. The content and structure of integration training has been changed in recent years to make it more relevant to working life and societal objectives. To accelerate the educational pathways of immigrants, language requirements in vocational education were made more flexible, adult basic education was reformed and literacy training for immigrants was introduced in non-formal adult education institutions. The reforms entered into force on January 1, 2018. (okm.fi)

### Regional level

The ELY Centres, the TE Offices and the Regional State Administrative Agencies operate under the authority of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The wellbeing services counties, which are responsible for promoting integration in health and social services, started operating at the beginning of 2023. The ELY Centres and TE Offices are responsible for organising integration training and measures to promote employment. The Act on the Promotion of Immigration Integration (1386/2010) sets tasks for the state labour administration (note that local government pilots on employment are examined at municipal level). An unemployed adult, recently arrived in the country, can apply for the services of the TE Office. An initial assessment is carried out to determine their previous knowledge and readiness to study. The initial assessment looks at both learning capabilities and competences, but in practice the assessment remains rather superficial (Shemeikka et al. 2021). For example, the Helsinki Skills Center spends much more time on a similar mapping exercise (Kettunen 2020).

After the initial assessment, the person may be referred to integration training. The training is managed by the ELY Centres, which put the service providers out to tender at regular intervals. The service providers include both enterprises and public, corporate organisations. In large cities, there are different levels in terms of education, while in smaller municipalities this is generally not possible. Long waiting times for training have also been identified as a problem (Shemeikka et al. 2021; Owal Group 2018). The purpose of the training is to learn Finnish or Swedish and to get to know Finnish society and working life. The content of integration training is defined by the Finnish National Agency for Education. The training takes about a year and the results vary quite a lot, although no uniform assessment framework has been developed. The quality of the training varies depending on the teacher, the dynamics of the group and the learning ability and motivation of the participants. (Shemeikka et al. 2021: Ahmad 2021).

Integration training provides a good example of the multi-organisational nature of integration promotion; the activities are steered by both the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education and Culture and implemented by municipalities and private actors. There is also a municipal pilot scheme, which transfers employment services from central government to municipalities.

## Local level

Municipalities are key actors in promoting integration and their role has grown over the last couple of decades. For example, the OECD (2018) has highlighted the role of the local level, especially cities, in promoting integration. The Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) requires the municipality to coordinate local activities. According to Section 30 of the Act, "Municipalities have overall and coordination responsibility for the development, planning and monitoring of integration at local level". Municipalities must also draw up an integration programme.

The municipal integration programme may contain:

- 1) a report on how the programme is linked with the strategic planning and monitoring of the municipality;
- 2) a plan on how the general services provided by the municipality can be adjusted to the needs of the immigrants and a plan specifically covering measures promoting and supporting integration;
- 3) details of the municipal authority responsible for the coordination of the integration and parties responsible for the different measures;
- 4) a plan on the promotion of the integration and social empowerment of children and young persons;
- 5) a plan on the promotion of the integration and social empowerment of groups outside the workforce;
- 6) a multi-year plan on the assigning of the persons referred to in section 2(2–3) to the municipality and on the promotion of integration;
- 7) a plan on the promotion of good ethnic relations and a dialogue between cultures;
- 8) a plan on the monitoring and updating of the municipal integration programme.

The forms of cooperation between the municipality and civil society may also be laid down in the municipal integration programme.

According to Koskimies and Kettunen (2022), not all municipalities in mainland Finland have developed a programme and the content and scope of the programmes vary widely. In particular, the programmes

have not given much attention to monitoring, leaving the results of their activities unexamined.

Municipalities should treat new residents equally. Increasing immigration increases the need for municipalities to provide information about municipal services in several languages. Guidance services are therefore a key service for people who have recently arrived in Finland. The largest municipalities have developed various multilingual and multi-agency help desks (Helsinki International House, customer service centre Monitori in Turku, etc.) (Kettunen 2020). Overall, the readiness of municipalities to welcome citizens and clients from foreign backgrounds is largely about communication. More broadly, there is also the issue of diversity in the public workforce. This could, for example in police work or youth work, lower the threshold for reaching and serving people from foreign backgrounds, especially young people.

An essential part of services for people from foreign backgrounds is education in various forms. In the case of integration training, the municipalities are responsible for adult basic education. During the initial assessment, the immigrants' previous studies and learning abilities are examined, and, if necessary, they are guided to complete basic studies. Municipalities have organised this task in different ways and the long waiting times, especially in smaller municipalities, have proved to be a challenge.

In terms of basic education, it is about integrating foreign-language children and young people into the school system. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education have defined different forms of support for foreign-language learners, such as preparatory education. Municipalities can decide how education for foreign-language children and young people is implemented. Teaching can be provided separately or partially or fully integrated with other teaching. The number of foreign-language pupils varies widely and is high, for example, in the capital region and large cities. Various forms of support are also available for secondary education.

The aim is to increase the share of immigrants among higher education students by developing preparatory education, language training and information services for immigrants. Universities of applied sciences and universities offer a wide range of foreign-language courses to which immigrants can apply. The aim of the SIMHE services (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland) is to streamline the identification and recognition of the prior learning of highly educated migrants arriving with different statuses as well as to facilitate their access to higher education at the national and regional levels. The objective is to ensure that the prior learning and previously completed qualifications of highly educated

migrants arriving in Finland would be identified and recognised in accordance with national practices as soon as possible, giving these persons access to appropriate education and career paths. (<https://okm.fi/maahanmuuttajien-koulutuksen-kehittaminen>).

Many services also have an equity objective, which is difficult to achieve. A variety of biases have emerged, both in relation to secondary education (especially upper secondary education), employment and housing. This may be due to a poor school history, lack of family support, the demanding nature of the Finnish school system, language difficulties and low income. Some of these issues are also common to people of Finnish background. (Kettunen 2020). Although services for people with a refugee background are mainly the responsibility of the state, the exception is the so-called quota refugees. Finland is committed to accepting a certain number of refugees each year, and the Ministry of the Interior agrees with the municipalities on how refugees will be assigned to the municipalities. The host municipality has an obligation to provide housing and other necessary services and to guide the newcomers from the start.

Municipalities also have responsibilities in the area of employment. Responsibility for the long-term unemployed is shared between the state and the municipalities. Municipalities have had to pay a share of the labour market support for the long-term unemployed since 2006. Today, the share is half of those unemployed for more than 300 days and 70% of those unemployed for more than 1,000 days. The municipal pilots on employment started on March 1, 2021 and ended on June 30, 2023. In the pilots, municipalities are partly responsible for providing employment and economic development services (TE services) in their area. The pilots aim to increase the effectiveness of employment services by integrating central and local government resources, skills and services. A total of 25 areas and 118 municipalities participated in the municipal pilots (<https://tem.fi/tyollisyyskoikeilut>).

### Third sector and enterprises

The third sector acts both as a service provider and as a point of contact for people from foreign backgrounds. Non-formal education institutions (folk high schools, community colleges, summer universities and study centres) organise literacy education for adult immigrants, as well as other training in Finnish/Swedish for immigrants. The training is free of charge for the student if the TE Office or the municipality has approved it in the integration plan (<https://okm.fi/maahanmuuttajien-koulutuksen-kehittaminen>).

Broadly speaking, integration is a task for the whole society. This is necessary due to lack of resources in the public administration. Examples of third sector activities include language teaching, friendship groups and various counselling services. A welcoming atmosphere

has an impact on both employment and subjective perception of integration. So how does civil society work? Organisations have played a major role in the running of reception centres, while the role of organisations is less important for integration promotion services. However, the importance of organisations as a complement to public services should not be underestimated. Organisations such as the Finnish Red Cross, Folkhälsan and NMKY have organised counselling services and various language learning and familiarisation events. In the case of organisations, account should also be taken of the various associations of people with foreign backgrounds, which both strengthen cohesion and help convey the voice of the members more widely. In large municipalities, there are special multicultural councils and similar bodies that convey the voice of immigrants.

Enterprises also have a role to play in promoting integration. Both public organisations and companies are providers of integration training organised by the ELY Centres. In addition, the role of enterprises is linked to employment and job creation. Research shows that employers can have a high threshold for employing immigrants. A project on immigrants' education and employment pathways suggested taking the following measures:

- ▶ Encouraging employers to recruit immigrants and supporting employers that employ immigrants.
- ▶ Creating incentives for employers to recruit immigrants, for example by providing support or compensation for employees to attend language training during working hours.
- ▶ Informing employers about services to support the employment of immigrants. Examples of these services include employer-employee support services such as job coaching, subsidy for arranging working conditions and international work community coaching.
- ▶ Organising national campaigns with the prominent involvement of workers' and employers' organisations to promote a more equal and diverse working life. The campaign may concern, for example, recruitment discrimination and the eradication of so-called juniorisation. Juniorisation is the phenomenon whereby a professional who has already made a career in another country can be repeatedly recruited for jobs where they are on a par with newcomers. (Shemeikka et al. 2021, 162)..

### Funding for promoting integration

Integration funding is difficult to define. For the central government, it consists mainly of appropriations from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education and Culture, which are

allocated, for example, to imputed compensation for refugees, other municipal compensation for refugees, the costs of initial assessments and the promotion of integration and employment (TEM), as well as to preparatory teaching in basic education, support for first language and Finnish/Swedish language teaching and other teaching in basic education, and state allowances and grants for vocational education.

If the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's integration expenditure and the Ministry of Education and Culture's integration expenditure (2019–2020) are added together, the total amount is approximately four hundred million euros (Saukkonen 2020, 116). For the municipalities, the main factor is the imputed state contribution of the municipalities, which takes into account the share of the foreign-language population. On the other hand, this does not necessarily indicate how the municipalities use the state contribution in question for services for foreign-language speakers, as this is a matter of municipal autonomy. However, the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) requires municipal services to meet the needs of immigrants and this is expected to entail costs. Municipalities also support organisations and buy services.

## Assessing integration

Integration is, as mentioned above, a multifaceted process. Integration measures and outcomes are evaluated in different ways. Examples include the Migrant Integration Policy Index ([www.mipex.eu](http://www.mipex.eu)), which compares integration indicators in 52 countries, including EU Member States; the periodic Finnish Integration Review (Kazi et al. 2019); and the Integration Indicators Database (<https://kotoutuminen.fi/kotoutumisen-indikaattorit-tietokanta>), which helps monitor the state of integration in Finland.

Employment is the most commonly used indicator of successful integration, but it needs to be complemented by indicators covering other aspects of life. The different aspects of integration are closely interrelated, and experiences of discrimination, for example, have an impact on wellbeing and health. Similarly, good individual health and a society with minimal discrimination have a positive impact on the labour market opportunities of people with a foreign background. (Kaihoavaara et al. 2021).

In terms of the labour market, the employment and wage levels of people of foreign origin are lower than those of Finnish origin. There is variation depending on the country of origin or how long you have lived in Finland. It should also be noted that the share of people with a foreign background is higher in low-wage sectors, where the threshold for employment is lower. This differs from so-called seasonal employment, where the remuneration is related to

the country of origin (Saukkonen 2020). Finland's exceptionally segregated labour market is a significant barrier to employment for women with foreign background, because in many female-dominated sectors language skills are clearly more important than in male-dominated sectors (Kaihoavaara et al. 2021). The link between employment and labour policy measures has also been studied (see Kiviholma & Karhunen, 2022; Pesola & Sarvimäki 2022; Sarvimäki & Hämäläinen 2016; Sarvimäki 2017).

At the same time, it has been recognised in recent years that immigration is necessary to maintain a certain level of employment. For example, Alho et al. (2023) find that the economic impact of increased immigration differs relatively little, regardless of whether the average immigrants are EU immigrants or non-EU immigrants. The educational structure of immigrants (Finnish educational structure vs. basic education) also had surprisingly little effect. This is probably at least partly due to the fact that the life-cycle wage profiles of workers with primary and secondary education do not differ much in Finland.

In terms of housing, it has been found (Saukkonen 2020) that people with foreign background live in more crowded conditions on average than people with Finnish background. The Finnish housing market emphasises owner-occupied housing, which requires equity and usually a loan. The debate on housing for immigrants in Finland has largely focused on the issue of segregation, for example in municipal integration programmes, rather than on improving the quality of housing (Koskimies & Kettunen 2021).

Political participation is also a broad issue, but data are mainly available on voting and standing for election (Kettunen 2022). Immigrants are entitled to vote in municipal and regional elections after about two years of residence, while national elections require citizenship. The employed vote more than the unemployed, the high-income earners more than the low-income earners and the married more than the unmarried. In all groups, the turnout of voters with a foreign background is lower than that of native-born voters. (Valaste & Wass 2019; Sipinen & Kestilä-Kekkonen 2022). According to a recent study, the strongest predictor of voting by people with foreign background is the time spent in the country; the longer the time, the more people vote (Kettunen et al. 2023).

Immigrants' interest in Finnish society and their attachment to it have also been studied by Pitkänen et al. (2019). According to the authors, the interest and trust of different language groups in Finnish political institutions and the political process varies. For example, large linguistic minorities such as Estonian and Russian speakers have less interest and trust than people with a Somali background, for example.

However, foreign-born men and especially women are less likely than the general population to feel their health is good or fairly good. A particular challenge to health and wellbeing is posed by very common experiences of being discriminated against (Kaihovaara et al. 2021). Discrimination in the workplace is a key barrier to integration, but it is important to recognise that discriminatory practices also arise in everyday speech. The way we talk about immigrants and immigration in everyday life creates the ground for successful two-way integration. (Kaihovaara et al. 2021).

Overall, it should be noted that many immigrants face major adaptation challenges, so both employment and social integration are likely to take a long time. In Finland, the effectiveness of integration promotion has not yet been examined very comprehensively. This would require commonly agreed definitions of integration and indicators to monitor progress towards integration at the individual level. This could be difficult, so it is understandable that indicators of integration such as employment, housing, political participation and social relations are used instead.

## Conclusions

The Finnish system for promoting integration works, but it also has weaknesses. Overall, the Finnish system for promoting integration does not reach all immigrants, but only some. The new law on promoting integration aims to broaden the target group. According to the legislative proposal, municipalities will be obliged to reach out to the population outside the labour force in particular. According to Saukkonen (2020), the Finnish system can be described as a funnel. Despite the broad objectives, only a small proportion of immigrants are offered integration services in the first place. Attention has been paid, for example, to family members at home who may be excluded from society. Similarly, there has been a reflection on how to get companies to support language learning for workers with a foreign background. Integration promotion services are thus confined by law to a relatively small group. Work-based and family-based immigration are excluded. Under the new Integration Act, municipalities can also draw up a plan for others, but it depends on the municipality. However, promoting integration must be seen in a broad sense.

It is important to consider the services and functioning of integration promotion, especially if there is increasing immigration to Finland. According to the roadmap, the aim is to double the amount of work-based immigration and increase the proportion of international students who want to stay in Finland (TEM 2022). This requires a range of public and private services to support this growth. Employment and language learning are the main issues, but they are the starting point of integration rather than the end.

A societal debate on integration and immigration is difficult without sufficient data. Saukkonen (2020, 211) calls for resources to be focused on the right targets. There are serious gaps in our understanding of which integration measures are truly effective. Integration is not something that is only a task or an obligation of the immigrant, but its success also, and perhaps above all, depends on how the host society enables equal treatment and equal status of immigrants in society. (Kaihovaara et al. 2021). It is also worth noting that the success of promoting integration also depends to a large extent on different everyday situations at work and in leisure time. According to the definition of integration, the aim is for a person to feel like a full member of society.

Becoming Finnish is, of course, largely a matter for immigrants and their children, but the surrounding society has a big influence on whether it is easy or difficult. A nation that welcomes new members of society gives everyone the opportunity to be part of a national "us". If, on the other hand, a large proportion of Finns believe that you can never be a (real) Finn if you come from another country, especially if you are, for example, a dark-skinned person or a Muslim, the development of a sense of belonging will be severely hampered. (Saukkonen 2020, 241).

## PART II

# An overview of good relations policies in Finland

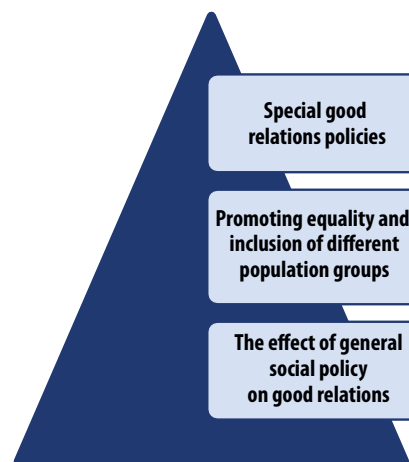
Miriam Attias & Panu Artemjeff

### Definition of good relations policy

*Inter-group relations* refer to the relationships between different social groups. In this report, we refer to population groups and define it as: a group of people categorised together who share something that affects their daily lives, shapes their reality and potentially influences their social status, e.g. ethnic, national or social origin, skin colour, language, religion, conviction, political activity, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, membership of a minority, property, wealth, health, disability or other reason. These people do not necessarily feel that they are part of a group, but that the categorisation comes from outside. From the point of view of inter-group relations, we can therefore look at the relations between the majority population and minorities, as well as the relations between different population groups. Inter-group relations are considered good if different population groups and people from different population groups treat each other with respect, are able to interact, and if society and their participation in it are perceived as safe and equal, regardless of background.

The aim of policies linked with good relations is to increase positive interaction and trust between population groups and to prevent and resolve conflicts over social relations. Good relations policies also pay attention to the social position of different groups and possible inequalities. Promoting good inter-group relations is not just about promoting positive interaction or harmony between different groups. It is also about promoting equality, inclusion and political participation and challenging power relations. It is therefore about maintaining peace or resolving conflict through different methods. Good relations policies also pay attention to issues such as *population groups, their position in society, forms of grouping (identity politics), relations between groups and their impact on society and people's lives.*

Good relations policies can be approached from either **a broad or a narrow perspective** (see Figure 1). Special good relations policies directly influence inter-group interactions, tensions and conflicts. However, good relations policies are also implemented through policies that promote equality and inclusion between groups, creating the conditions for good and fair interaction. If we look at it from an even broader perspective, almost all social policies can have an impact on inter-group relations.



**Figure 1:** Levels of good relations policy analysis

### The effect of general social policy on good relations

Broadly speaking, good relations policies can be any social policy that has an impact on population relations and the interaction between population groups. For example, education, housing and labour policies have direct or indirect effects on the encounter of children from different backgrounds, on the segregation of neighbourhoods and on the chances of jobseekers from different backgrounds to find work in Finland.

## Promoting equality and inclusion of population groups

Several policy areas aim to prevent and address discrimination and negative attitudes towards certain groups and to safeguard and promote the equality and inclusion of groups. The perspective of good relations policy is present in policies on linguistic and cultural minorities, sexual and gender minorities, people with disabilities, Roma and indigenous peoples, for example, and is also an important part of equality, immigration, integration and anti-racist policies.

## Special good relations policies

Special good relations policies refer to activities that promote effective interaction between groups. They have been developed in different countries, particularly as part of the resolution of ethnic, cultural and religious conflicts (see for example Wigfield & Turner 2013). Special good relations policies draw on behavioural science (e.g. social psychology research, see Mäkinen & Nortio 2020) to understand group behaviour and achieve effective action.

Good relations policies that aim to promote interaction can be divided into four areas: measurement, preventive interventions, conflict resolution and mediation, and the prevention of crimes related to inter-group relations

TABLE 1: Good relations policy areas			
Measurement	Preventive interventions	Conflict resolution and mediation	Prevention of crimes related to inter-group relations
For example: Group surveys (attitudes, security, interaction, inclusion)	For example: Activities that promote interaction (horizontal and vertical)	For example: Relationship-building practices, including restorative mediation	For example: Combating extremism and hate crime

## A framework for good inter-group relations as a basis for the development of good relations policies

The development of special good relations policies in Finland started with the Good Relations project led by the Ministry of the Interior in 2012 (see Ministry of the Interior 2014). In the project, the authorities from different sectors familiarised themselves with the framework for good relations developed in the UK and developed a version suitable for the Finnish context (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: A framework for good relations



According to the framework, the state of inter-group relations can be monitored and developed in four areas (interaction, inclusion, security and attitudes). The framework for good relations policies has since been developed through the Ministry of Justice's good relations policy development projects (e.g. TRUST projects) and monitoring of inter-group relations is part of the discrimination monitoring system maintained by the Ministry of Justice. The projects coordinated by the Ministry of Justice to combat hate speech and hate crime have also included aspects of good relations policy. They have also experimented with the use of mediation as part of the implementation of good relations policies.

In late 2022, the ongoing Drivers of Equality project published a guide for municipalities on promoting good inter-group relations. The guide contains a concise material bank on the main guidelines published by different projects for the development of good relations policies at different levels of society (see Ministry of Justice 2022).

In addition to the Ministry of Justice, the Kone Foundation has funded a six-year development project (depolarize.fi), which has brought together expertise and good practices to prevent social polarisation and improve inter-group relations. The book "Me ja ne: välineitä vastakkainasettelujen aikaan" (Attias & Kangasoja 2020), published in the framework of the project, presents a broad overview of good relations policies from different perspectives. In addition, the project has developed expertise in mediation for good relations, which has been compiled in the book "Identiteetit, konflikti ja sovittelu" (Attias, 2020) and in the article "Sovittelu väestösuhteiden rakentamisessa" (Attias, 2022, in "Sovittelu ja sen sovellukset", Ervasti & Attias, 2022).

### Restorative justice and mediation practices as tools for special good relations policies

The aim of good relations policies is close to the basic principles of restorative justice and mediation. The core values of restorative justice are respect, inclusion, active participation, dialogue, empowerment, restoration and transformation. Restorative justice and mediation start from the premise that violence strains relationships between individuals and communities, in addition to breaking the law. The international Alternative research project led by the European Forum for Restorative Justice sees restorative justice as an important mechanism for building a functioning diverse community, where relationships do not necessarily emerge and remain functional on their own (Biffi & Chapman, 2015). The use of mediation in

conflict situations increases the social capital of the community, as conflict is seen as a place for learning and mediation as a mechanism for repairing relationships between individuals and groups, as well as within communities (Albrecht, 2010). The aim of mediation is to increase an individual's self-understanding and thus find different ways of connecting with others and living side by side in everyday life.

In practice, mediation that builds equality between population groups and functional inter-group relations can take at least three forms. Firstly, it can be a way of dealing with inter-group conflicts, using co-mediation methods. Secondly, it can be the mediation of conflicts between individuals or groups where people meet and live together: in neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces, leisure communities and other communities. Mediation can help to defuse culturalised and ethnicised situations, which, if left unresolved, can have wider repercussions on inter-group relations and interactions. And thirdly, inter-group mediation can also be thought of as a process of looking at the relationship of institutions to different groups of people. Mediation between individuals and institutional representatives is needed to deal with experiences of racism and discrimination, for example. It can look at both the experiences of individuals in relation to the functioning of the institution and the experiences of the institution's representatives in relation to the situation.

## Legislation, actors and resources

### Legislation relevant to good relations

In Finland, the legislation relevant to good relations policy consists of the Constitution, the Criminal Code, the Non-discrimination Act, the Language Act, the Act on the Sámi Parliament, and the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration.

**The Constitution** safeguards fundamental rights such as equality, freedom of religion and conscience, the right to one's own language (three other national language groups are mentioned separately in the Constitution, namely Sámi, Romani and sign language) and culture, the right to participate and the right to personal integrity. Fundamental rights are also central to relations between population groups. For example, the political rights protected by the Constitution, as well as the freedoms of assembly and association, are important in the context of struggles against injustice between population groups.

**The Non-Discrimination Act** defines the forms of prohibited discrimination and is therefore part of the key legislation in the field of good relations policy. It aims to promote equality and prevent discrimination and to enhance the legal protection of victims of discrimination. According to the Non-Discrimination

Act, a public authority must assess how its activities affect different population groups and how equality is otherwise achieved in its activities, and take the necessary measures to promote equality. According to the preamble to the Non-Discrimination Act, the assessment should also cover circumstances beyond the control of the authority that impede the realisation of equality in its field of activity. Such circumstances can be caused by negative and hostile attitudes towards a particular group in society, for example. The Non-Discrimination Act also allows for positive discrimination, which means proportionate differential treatment aimed at promoting de facto equality or preventing or eliminating disadvantages resulting from discrimination against a group of people.

**The Criminal Code** contains several prohibitions relevant to good relations. These include prohibitions on the preparation and commission of genocide, prohibitions on incitement against an ethnic group, prohibitions on public incitement to commit a crime and prohibitions on discrimination in the Criminal Code. A discriminatory motive can also be a ground for increasing the penalty in criminal proceedings.

**The Language Act** clarifies the constitutional definition of the status of Finnish and Swedish as national languages. It concerns the responsibility and obligation of public authorities to take the initiative to ensure that language rights are respected and services are provided in people's own language. There are also language provisions in a few other specific laws, such as education legislation (Basic Education Act, Act on General Upper Secondary Education, Universities Act), health and social legislation (on the linguistic rights of patients and social care clients), the Local Government Act, legislation on Sámi regions, the Act on Disability Services and Assistance, the Act on the Institute for the Languages of Finland, refugee legislation, the 2002 Administrative Procedure Act, the Non-Discrimination Act and even the Electrical Safety Act.

The purpose of **the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration** is to support and promote integration and the possibility of active participation in Finnish society, while enabling the preservation of one's own language and culture. It also aims to promote equality and equity and positive interaction between different population groups. The municipality or several municipalities must jointly draw up an integration programme that strengthens multidisciplinary cooperation. It is approved by each municipality's municipal council and reviewed at least once every four years. According to the law, the programme must include a plan to promote good ethnic relations and intercultural dialogue.

**The Government's proposal to reform the Integration Act** is currently under discussion in Parliament and contains significant changes in terms

of good relations policy. Among other things, the proposal defines inter-group relations as relationships based on positive attitudes, effective interaction, a sense of security and participation in society. The legal definition builds on the framework for good relations presented earlier in this report and gives concrete expression to the objectives of good relations policy. According to the proposal, in planning the promotion of integration, the municipality must at least set objectives concerning the employment, education, wellbeing and health, housing, inclusion, equality and equity of immigrants, opportunities to maintain one's own language and culture, and the promotion of good relations, as well as measures, responsibilities, cooperation and monitoring to support them. The municipality must record the above in a separate programme of measures or include them in another municipal planning document with indicators.

According to the **Municipal Act**, residents and service users have the right to participate in and influence the activities of the municipality. Residents and communities in the municipality have the right to take initiatives in matters concerning the municipality's activities, and the municipal council must ensure that there are diverse and effective opportunities and methods for participation and influence. According to the law, such methods include discussion and consultation meetings and local councils, surveys of residents' opinions, involving service users in the development of services and economic planning, and supporting residents and organisations in their own initiative planning and preparation. Municipalities are also obliged to set up a youth council, an elderly council and a council for the disabled. The aim of the Act is to ensure that these population groups have the opportunity to influence the planning, preparation, implementation and monitoring of the activities of the various municipal departments in matters that affect the wellbeing, health, studies, living environment, housing, mobility and other everyday matters of the municipality's residents.

**The Act on Wellbeing Services Counties** also safeguards residents' opportunities to participate and have a say. According to the law, residents and service users have the right to participate in and influence the activities of the wellbeing services county. The regional council must ensure that there are diverse and effective opportunities and methods for participation and influence. The regional government must set up a youth council or a similar youth influence group, a council for the elderly and a council for the disabled to ensure participation and influence. A bilingual wellbeing services county must have a National Languages Board, and a wellbeing services county that includes a municipality belonging to the Sámi homeland area must have a Sámi Language Board.

In accordance with **the Act on the Sámi Parliament**, as an indigenous people, the Sámi have autonomy over their own language and culture in the Sámi homeland area. For the purposes of this self-government, the Sámi elect a Sámi Parliament from among themselves.

The province of Åland also has self-government based on **the Åland Self-Government Act**. The Parliament of Åland represents the people of Åland in matters concerning autonomy. The general management and administration of the province is vested in the Government of Åland and its subordinate authorities.

## Implementation and key actors

The range of actors involved in good relations policy is broad and the overall picture requires the identification of actors at national, regional and local level. NGOs play a key role in promoting good inter-group relations, although legally speaking, maintaining good relations is the responsibility of the public authorities in particular. Additionally, the role of active citizens and social media influencers should not be forgotten.

LEVELS	Authorities	Organisations and clubs	Citizens
<b>National</b>	Ministries	Central organisations, international organisations	Members of the parliament
<b>Regional</b>	Wellbeing services counties, Regional State Administrative Agencies, Ely Centres, regional councils	District and regional organisations	Regional associations
<b>Local</b>	Municipalities	Local organisations, volunteers	Activists, pressure groups, regional/community actors, associations, companies

## Good relations policy actors at national level

In the following section, we look at the actors and objectives of good relations policy in different policy areas. Table 3 shows which actor has had the main responsibility for coordinating and promoting which policy area, and also shows the most recent policy programmes, which are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Policy area	Main responsibilities/coordination		Policy programmes
<b>Equality and non-discrimination policy</b>	All ministries in their respective fields	Ministry of Justice	An Equal Finland: Government Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups
<b>Promoting integration</b>	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Justice (Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations, Etno)		Report of the Finnish Government on the need for a reform in integration promotion
<b>Internal security policy</b>	Ministry of the Interior		Report on Internal Security, regional and local policies for national security planning

<b>Crime prevention</b>	Ministry of Justice Ministry of the Interior		National Crime Prevention Programme Finland's Strategy on Preventive Police Work
<b>Diversity policy</b>	All ministries in their respective fields	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Education and Culture	Working Life Diversity Programme Art, Culture and Diverse Finland: Final Report of the Working Group for Cultural Policy, Immigrants and Promotion of Cultural Diversity
<b>Housing desegregation</b>	Ministry of the Environment		Suburban Development Programme
<b>Promoting linguistic rights</b>	Ministry of Justice		Government report on application of language legislation
<b>Open government</b>	Ministry of Finance		Public Governance Strategy
<b>Roma policy</b>	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health		Roma Policy Programme
<b>Self-government of Åland</b>	Ministry of Justice		Åland Strategy
<b>Sámi policy</b>	Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Environment		Government programme entries on Sámi
<b>Other groups: Rights of sexual and gender minorities</b>	Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health		Towards a more inclusive Finland for LGBTIQ people: Situational assessment of the fundamental and human rights of sexual and gender minorities in Finland 2021
<b>Religious minorities</b>			Act on Legal Recognition of Gender
<b>Disability policy</b>	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health		Disability Policy Programme

As shown in Table 3, **the Ministry of Justice** plays a major role in good relations policy. It has developed a specific policy on good relations as part of its work on equality and anti-discrimination and has coordinated the preparation and implementation of the Marin government's action plan against racism and for good relations. The Ministry of Justice is also responsible for strategic guidance on crime prevention, the promotion of linguistic rights and the rights of indigenous Sámi people. The Ministry of Justice also has an Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations.

**The Ministry of the Interior** is responsible for preparing internal security policy and has developed a policy on good relations as part of this. The Strategy on Preventive Police Work also includes a good relations perspective. **The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment** is responsible for policies and legislation concerning labour migration and integration. It has

also developed a diversity policy which aims, among other things, to influence employers' attitudes towards workers from different minority backgrounds. **The Ministry of Finance** is responsible for the strategic development of public administration and its focus in recent years has been on strengthening participation, for example by developing communication skills.

**The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health** is responsible for Roma policy, the coordination of disability policy and the promotion of the rights of gender minorities, among other things. **The Ministry of Education and Culture** has been working on policies to promote cultural diversity during this term of government, and the education, youth and sport sectors are key players in terms of interaction. **The Ministry of the Environment** is responsible for housing-related issues, such as preventing housing segregation.

## Regional actors and their role in promoting good relations

Regional government actors also have a role to play in implementing good relations policies, particularly in the areas of regional policies on minorities, integration, security and crime prevention. The main task of the **ELY Centres** in relation to integration is to implement the Integration Act and monitor its implementation at regional level, as well as to coordinate regional integration measures in line with national policies. The ELY Centres are responsible for promoting ethnic equality and have seven regional advisory boards for ethnic relations (see specific bodies for more details). One of their tasks is to promote interaction between different population groups in Finland. The ELY Centre for Uusimaa has also coordinated the national pilot project Good Relations, which implements the Government Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups at regional and local level.

**The Regional State Administrative Agencies** safeguard fundamental rights and legal certainty, access to basic services, environmental protection, sustainable use of the environment, internal security and a healthy and safe living and working environment in their respective regions. Their tasks may also include assessing services from an equality perspective or the experiences of complainants from different backgrounds with regard to the lack of implementation of fundamental rights in different population groups.

The statutory tasks of **the wellbeing services counties** include the organisation of social welfare, health care and rescue services. From the point of view of good relations policy, the structural social work perspective can provide information on phenomena that affect inter-group relations and the position of people belonging to different groups. The systematic collection of wellbeing data can also provide the information needed to measure the state of good relations. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2021; Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2022)

## The role of municipalities

Encounters between different population groups occur in places where people live and work, and the importance of the local level in the development of inter-group relations cannot be overemphasised. As local actors, municipalities have statutory obligations, which we discussed in more detail in the chapter on legislation. According to the Ministry of Justice's guide "Municipalities as promoters of good relations between population groups", inter-group relations are related to the work of municipalities in promoting equality, integration, the vitality of the municipality and the wellbeing and security of its citizens (see Ministry of Justice 2022). The aim of the good relations

policy is to increase positive interaction between the population groups living in the municipality. In addition to local authorities, there is a wide range of other actors in municipalities, such as organisations, associations, parishes, sports clubs, residents' committees and businesses, whose activities can influence the development of inter-group relations.

The strategic promotion of good relations policies can be linked to a broad range of different local government tasks and strategic plans drafted by municipalities, including the following:

- ▶ Municipal strategy
- ▶ Language strategy
- ▶ Wellbeing report and plan
- ▶ Equality and non-discrimination plans
- ▶ Plans to promote immigrant integration
- ▶ Security plan
- ▶ Interaction plan

The good relations policy perspective can also be viewed through the core tasks of municipalities. After the health and social services reform, these include the promotion of knowledge and culture, the promotion of vitality, the promotion of local identity and democracy, and the development of the living environment. Municipal democracy ensures that the wishes and concerns of different population groups are made visible. Therefore, the role of political groups in shaping inter-group relations is important. Political discourse that perpetuates discriminatory and racist attitudes has a negative impact on the attitudinal climate and inter-group relations in the municipality. Municipalities have a number of bodies whose task is to pay attention to the issues of specific population groups. The statutory bodies under the Local Government Act are the Council for the Disabled, the Council for the Elderly and the Youth Council. In many municipalities there are also immigrant or multicultural councils. The promotion of good inter-group relations is included in the tasks of councils in several municipalities (see for example the integration programmes in Oulu and Forssa<sup>1</sup>).

## The role of NGOs

NGOs have a key role to play in promoting interaction, equality and inclusion between groups. They also create a framework in which people from different backgrounds can work together towards common goals. The Finnish organisational landscape operates at all levels: national,

1. City of Oulu's integration programme: <https://www.ouka.fi/documents/52058/1408043/Kotoutumisohjelma.pdf/cf9d9bbf4-793b-4ce1-a0f9-6df033e4103b>  
City of Forssa's integration programme: <https://www.forssa.fi/client/forssa/userfiles/2021200-4-4109-1.pdf>

regional and local. Alongside NGOs, sports and leisure clubs and associations also play a key role in the field of good relations policy.

### Specialised bodies

Finland also has a number of **specialised bodies** whose tasks are directly or indirectly related to the promotion of good inter-group relations. The national institutions operate within the Finnish Government and their role is to promote communication and the participation of each group. For example, the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations has, as its name suggests, focused on the development of ethnic relations. Advisory boards or similar bodies often act in an advisory capacity, seeking to bring the experiences

of particular groups of people into the wider policy process.

Table 4 shows institutions specialising in good relations and minority policies at national, regional and local level. As an indigenous people, the Sámi have a linguistic and cultural self-governing body (the Sámi Parliament), which has the task of dealing with matters concerning the Sámi's own language and culture and their status as an indigenous people. The autonomy of Åland can also be examined from the perspective of good relations policy. The autonomy of the province of Åland is governed by the Act on the Autonomy of Åland.

	<b>National</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>Local</b>
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations	Regional advisory boards for ethnic relations (Etnos)	Immigrant or Multiculturalism Councils
<b>Roma</b>	Advisory Board on Romani Affairs	Regional advisory boards on Romani affairs	Local Roma working groups
<b>Sámi people</b>	Sámi Parliament (language and cultural self-government body)	Sámi Education Institute	
<b>Disabled persons</b>	Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, VANE	Disability councils in wellbeing services counties	Local disability councils
<b>Language groups</b>	Advisory Board on Language Affairs		
<b>Sign language</b>	Advisory Board on Sign Language Affairs		

### Truth and Reconciliation Commissions

In addition to specialised bodies, good relations policies may include temporary structures or operational models to deal with issues relating to inter-group relations. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are bodies that aim to address and expose injustices, human rights violations and oppression in history. They are based on the idea of “transitional justice”. Transitional justice involves redressing historical wrongs through remedies, criminal prosecutions, territorial or state policy reforms and other measures, both legal and non-legal, such as reparations programmes and various institutional reforms. (See for example Richards & Wilson 2018)

The preparation of **the Sámi truth and reconciliation process** was initiated by the Sámi Parliament and

the Government in October 2017. Its purpose is to identify and assess historical and current discrimination, including state integration policies, and rights violations, to examine how these affect the Sámi and their community in the present situation, and to suggest how to promote contact between the Sámi and the Finnish state and among the Sámi themselves. As part of the preparation of the truth and reconciliation process, a broad consultation of the Sámi people took place, and a report was published (see [the Finnish Government and Prime Minister's Office Publication Series 14/2018](#)). The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission started in October 2021. ([Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sámi People](#))

Preparations are underway to launch **a reconciliation process for deaf and sign language users**. In

October 2022, the Prime Minister's Office appointed a working group on the truth and reconciliation process for deaf and sign language speakers. The working group is tasked with preparing the launch of a national reconciliation process, as laid out in Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government Programme, concerning the historical violations of the rights of the deaf in Finland. The reconciliation process is built on the research project "Signed Memories". (The Finnish Association of the Deaf, 2022)

## Funding channels

The possible funding channels for good relations policies are a whole that is not possible to explore in detail in this report. As the chapter discussing activities shows, good relations policy is carried out across a wide range of administrative and policy areas, and much of the work relies on the efforts of various public authorities, organisations and volunteers. Financial instruments from different sectors of government can also fund activities aimed at promoting good inter-group relations. Financial instruments or channels exist at different levels such as international institutions (e.g. the Council of Europe), the EU, national, regional or local level.

The EU funding programmes relevant to good relations policy are the EU Social Fund, the ERASMUS+ programme, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV), which is linked to anti-discrimination policy, the Justice Programme for the legal protection of victims of crime, and the Structural Funds ESF+ and AMIF, which are linked to integration policy. The EU Internal Security Fund can also support activities relevant to good relations policy.

At national level, funding channels are also linked to different policy areas. There are several possible channels to support good relations policies. At the national level, activities in organisations, such as mediation by NGOs and activities promoting equality and inclusion of groups or anti-racism, are supported through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA). The Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taika) has awarded annual grants to promote cultural diversity and combat racism. Municipalities have also funded local anti-racism work.

The Government Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups has supported the promotion of grassroots good relations through the HVS project. One of the action plan's objectives is to improve civil society's access to funding for anti-racism work through national and EU funding.

## Action to promote good inter-group relations

### Good relations policies with special aim at promoting interaction

We now look at the most important recent activities at national, regional and local level in the field of special good relations policies that directly affect interaction. We have extracted here all mentions of special good relations policies from the various policy programmes. These were found in the Marin government's action plan for an equal Finland (An Equal Finland: Government Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups), as well as in the fields of internal security, crime prevention and police preventive action. In this chapter, we also present three methodological approaches that are directly aimed at interaction: mediation, neighbourhood-based community work and other community work.

### Action plan for an equal Finland and promotion of good inter-group relations

"An Equal Finland: Government Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups" is, as its name suggests, a national policy programme for the development and implementation of good relations policy. Two of the programme's objectives<sup>2</sup> are directly related to the development and implementation of a special good relations policy in Finland. According to the Action Plan, more positive interaction between different groups is needed to foster relations. The programme will apply the model of good relations at local level through a series of measures. The measures are grouped under the headings of which the following are of particular relevance to good relations policy:

- ▶ Developing tools to promote good inter-group relations, especially for municipalities and other local actors, and promoting local dialogue;
- ▶ Promoting anti-racism and good relations in the field of culture and the arts;
- ▶ *Developing more accessible consultation structures and tools to ensure that groups at risk of discrimination have a voice.*

Under the policy on promoting good inter-group relations, seven measures are being implemented and are summarised in Table 5.

<sup>2</sup> Objective 5: Further developing good relations policies and ensuring a safe everyday life for all, and Objective 7: Addressing hate speech through systematic action and cooperation

**TABLE 5: Developing tools to promote good inter-group relations, especially for municipalities and other local actors, and promoting local dialogue**

Measure	Responsible party	Partner
Clarify and strengthen the regulation on the promotion of good relations as part of the reform of the Integration Act.	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	
Produce a guide for municipalities on promoting good relations as part of integration programmes and equality planning.	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	Ministry of Justice, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Association of Finnish Municipalities, Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (Etno)
Produce a separate summary of the Action Plan for municipalities, with information on issues of particular relevance at local level and on training and materials available to municipalities. The package was marketed at the Kuntamarkkinat municipal fair in 2021 and 2022.	Ministry of Justice	Association of Finnish Municipalities, Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (Etno), regional advisory boards for ethnic relations, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment
Increasing the knowledge of diversity management in municipalities through training and the dissemination of materials on the subject.	Ministry of Justice	Association of Finnish Municipalities, Federation of Local and Regional Authorities (FCG), local government employers, regional advisory boards for ethnic relations
Producing local hate crime monitoring indicators and a guide for municipalities and other local actors.	Ministry of Justice	Ministry of the Interior, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Victim Support Finland (RIKU), Anti-racist Forum
Supporting the role of the actors of the regional advisory boards for ethnic relations as local experts: additional resources to 1) organise training for different target groups, 2) provide information to the authorities on the situation of racism, 3) carry out communication activities in different parts of Finland, 4) organise local/regional discussions on good inter-group relations, linked to a local/regional topical issue.	Ministry of Justice	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, YLE, Timeout Foundation, Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (Etno), regional advisory boards for ethnic relations
Strengthening equality and anti-racism skills in urban planning: Dissemination of the results of the City of Helsinki pilot project at national level as part of the Suburban Development Programme: a national seminar will be organised.	Ministry of the Environment	City of Helsinki, Ministry of Justice

As can be seen from the measures, the Action Plan's approach to good relations policy focuses in particular on promoting integration policies, equality planning, the skills of local authorities, minority employment, the fight against hate crime, channels for inclusion and empowerment, and the fight against segregation. The measures of the Action Plan have been implemented in accordance with the implementation plan and are monitored by the Action Plan Steering Group, which

includes representatives of key ministries and NGOs representing different population groups. (See [the Government Action Plan](#))

### **Regional and local implementation**

In order to translate the objectives of the Action Plan into regional and local level, a pilot project on good inter-group relations (the HVS project) has been launched, coordinated by the ELY Centre for



Uusimaa. The aim of the HVS pilot project has been to strengthen the capacity of regional advisory boards for ethnic relations (in particular organisations) to engage in local and regional work to promote good inter-group relations, equality and anti-racism, to support the strengthening of cooperation structures between local authorities and civil society, and to support the development, implementation and testing of tools and models to promote good inter-group relations at local level.

The pilot project has developed regional action plans for the implementation of an anti-racism and good relations agenda in all areas of operation of the advisory boards. The action plans bring together specific regional and local issues for all the objectives of the National Action Plan, as well as measures taken by different actors to achieve the objectives. The HVS project has also included organising data collection events on the state of inter-group relations in different parts of Finland, and decision-makers' meetings to present the data collected and find solutions to the problems identified. The project has also funded projects by organisations to promote good relations. Regional action plans have been developed jointly by officials and organisations, and the role of the NGO sector is central in organising activities to increase interaction.

## Internal security policy

Special good relations policies are also pursued as part of the promotion of internal security. The Government's Internal Security Report 2021 mentions polarisation as one of the most significant drivers of change. It is seen as linked to social illfare, hate speech and a loss of trust in society. The aim is to combat polarisation by promoting trust towards authorities and administrations, good relations between people, and greater use of democratic means to resolve problems and tensions. The report aims, among other things, to increase the skills of security authorities so that they can work to reduce confrontations that undermine security and to deal with different minorities and victims of crime and accidents.

The Government's internal security policy and strategy are primarily based on prevention through broad cooperation, implemented at national level within the framework of a [national interoperability model for internal security](#). At local and regional level, promoting safety and a sense of security are promoted by means of [safety planning](#). Promoting good relations is one of the priorities outlined in the national guidelines for local and regional security planning published in 2019 (Ministry of the Interior, 2019). The guidelines follow the principles of a special good relations policy (see Table 7).

(1)The authorities and NGOs are familiar with the state of relations between the main population groups in the region, particularly as regards inter-group tensions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ the municipality is able to identify phenomena that have a negative impact on inter-group relations and security, such as polarisation and conflicts</li> <li>▶ the municipality monitors the situation regularly in cooperation with other authorities and organisations and communities representing different population groups</li> </ul>
(2)The inter-group conflicts identified will be resolved through systematic mediation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ the municipality has agreed procedures for defusing tensions and dealing with conflicts and building preventive interaction</li> <li>▶ the municipality organises the necessary community mediation services in cooperation with organisations, regional mediation offices for criminal and civil cases and other authorities.</li> </ul>

As regards the **prevention of crimes** related to inter-group relations, the Ministry of the Interior has launched the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism 2019–2023. Broadly speaking, the whole action plan is a good relations policy, but specific actions to promote interaction between population groups include:

- ▶ Strengthening the involvement of business and industry in the prevention of violent radicalisation at local level. For example, companies can be involved in campaigns to prevent violent radicalisation at an early stage by combating hate speech and incitement to violence and

to promote positive interaction, dialogue and understanding between different groups.

- ▶ Ensuring that publicly funded facilities are not used for activities that promote antagonism between different groups and incite hatred and violence. Establishing procedures to ensure that those renting municipal facilities have sufficient up-to-date information about violent groups engaged in these activities so that publicly funded facilities are not used for activities that violate constitutional rights. Public authorities have a legal duty to promote equality, and the actions of violent extremist groups are an anti-equality violation.

- Religious communities can contribute to finding solutions to local conflicts, which, if they escalate, can lead to further confrontation between population groups and violent radicalisation.

As part of the prevention of violent radicalisation, the Action Plan mentions, among other things, peaceful conflict resolution skills and dialogue and interaction skills.

## Crime prevention

The latest national crime prevention programme ran from 2016 to 2020 (Ministry of Justice, 2016). The objectives of the programme itself did not yet directly address inter-group relations, but one of the related measures was to raise awareness of dialogue-promoting, restorative and problem-solving methods that can be used in municipalities or areas where residents have specific concerns or where a crime has been committed and both parties want to reconcile.

A report on the implementation of the programme in 2021 (Ministry of Justice, 2021) highlighted the work of the Trust project, coordinated by the Ministry of Justice, on inter-group relations and training in reception centres. The work aimed to improve both communication within the centres and relations with the surrounding area. The project also supported a community mediation process in a locality where there had been a confrontation between local young people and asylum seekers. This mediation led to the development of the “Forssa approach”, which was awarded the main prize in the Finnish national and European crime prevention competition in 2018. The community mediation approach was developed at the Community Mediation Centre, which collected information about the experiences of mediation participants during the crime prevention programme. According to the results, 71% of the respondents reported an improved feeling of security as a result of mediation. The National Council for Crime Prevention also funded the publication of a handbook on community mediation (“Naapurussovittelun käsikirja”) in 2017.

As regards the fight against hate crime, the report on the implementation of the crime prevention programme mentioned the No Hate Speech Movement campaign, coordinated by the Council of Europe, which raised the profile of the issue in Finland, and the Against Hate project, coordinated by the Ministry of Justice, which mapped the activities against hate crime and hate speech in different organisations and administrative sectors. The results of the report were published in autumn 2019. The project included training for public authorities on the identification of hate crime and hate speech, discrimination and equality, and the production of a checklist for internet users to help them identify punishable hate speech.

Crime prevention is carried out at grassroots level. According to the report, many actors do not feel that they are working on crime prevention or that their potential is not yet being exploited. For example, housing associations and providers of housing services responded to the Council’s questionnaire that they had not been involved in the implementation of the measures, although they had used dialogue-promoting and restorative procedures, or at least had referred residents to these services. The evaluation of the measures shows that there is still a need to focus on communication in order to take advantage of the services. The same may be true for good relations policy; actors may not think they are promoting good inter-group relations, so more information and communication is needed.

## Preventive work by the police

Finland’s Strategy on Preventive Police Work 2019–2023 mentions the importance of good inter-group relations for security, a sense of security, the fight against polarisation, social harmony and trust. The cornerstone of promoting good relations in the preventive police work strategy is interaction with minority groups. Active interaction will strengthen equality, promote good relations and increase the confidence of minority groups in the police and society at large. Interaction is seen as a way of helping the police to become more aware of the concerns of minority groups, of security problems and of the factors that affect the security and feelings of insecurity of different minority groups.

In addition, the police are seen as contributing to good relations and equality in their own work “by implementing the general principles of police work, which include proper conduct, impartiality, conciliatory attitude and the requirement that the police must treat all individuals in an impartial manner”.

## Mediation practices

Mediation is already a recognised and accepted method in our society for promoting good relations between members of different population groups. The use of mediation services is recommended in the regional and local security planning guidelines implementing the Internal Security Strategy, in crime prevention, especially in the work to improve security in residential areas, and also in good relations work in the context of immigration and integration.

Mediation services are provided by several different actors and their availability varies, except for statutory mediation services, which are nationwide. These include family mediation under the Marriage Act, available through municipal family counselling centres or family law units, mediation in criminal and

civil cases, available through regional criminal and civil mediation offices, and court mediation (although in court mediation the use of assistants is paid for by the parties to the conflict in non-family disputes), available through district and appeal courts. For other applications, service providers range from NGOs to companies and sole traders. The professional backgrounds and training of mediators vary, as do the methods they use and the funding mechanisms that make mediation possible.

In the field of mediation, the aspect of mediation that promotes good relations has been highlighted in the depolarize.fi project and the biennial Sovittelijapäivät event, which brings together actors in the field. [Mediation and population relations - Sovittelijapäivät \(sovittelijapaivat.fi\)](#). The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare's crime and dispute mediation unit has also developed expertise on inter-group relations by training mediation professionals and producing in-depth training material on the subject.

### **Suburban Development Programme and community work**

The Suburban Development Programme 2020–2022 puts the emphasis on reducing the segregation of residential areas and strengthening their social sustainability. The programme measures set out to address the root causes of segregation and to promote residents' inclusion, wellbeing, education and job skills. The programme states that residential areas will be developed as good places to live and work for all groups of people.

According to the programme, resident participation, resident action and doing things together will strengthen the identity of communities and sense of belonging and community among residents. Residents and local organisations will be involved in the development of neighbourhoods and in the planning and implementation of community activities. Facilities and activities that enable residents to meet and participate in the development of their neighbourhoods also foster good relations between different groups and create trust and security in neighbourhoods, but also improve the wellbeing of residents.

In addition to indoor spaces that promote encounters between residents and different population groups, outdoor spaces will also be created to support encounters. Neighbourhoods act as a living platform for art, culture and sporting events. Events and cultural services enliven neighbourhoods and bring people together. Library services are the most used cultural service in municipalities, and libraries ensure access to information and digital inclusion also in the suburbs. As places for encounters and diverse activities, libraries also promote inclusion and support early childhood education, school activities, local community and neighbourhood development

objectives. Libraries, like other arts and cultural institutions, also provide an opportunity for other actors and communities to meet and interact.

### **Community-based action**

Good relations work aimed at promoting interaction also includes developing a culture of interaction in the communities where people live and interact with each other. Community-based activities have been developed in many places, but only two are mentioned here by way of example. In particular, work on housing for stigmatised groups has included developing methods for cooperation between communities and local actors. At its best, such work builds good regional relations between different groups of residents. The method has been developed at the Blue Ribbon Foundation (Sininauhasäätiö), and two works have been written on the method (in Finnish): "Erlainen naapuri – asuinaluelähtöisen ympäristötyön menetelmiä ja kokemuksia" (2016) and "Askeleita asukaslähtöiseen naapurustotyöhön" (2019). The Deaconess Foundation has also developed methods that can promote good inter-group relations, although they are not labelled as such. One example is CABLE training, a community development training that aims to strengthen the sense of community and the agency of community members.

### **Roma policy**

The Roma Policy Programme aims to tackle anti-Roma sentiment by influencing local inter-group relations. In the context of housing, anti-Roma manifestations include discrimination in the housing market and racist behaviour from other residents. The context of housing creates the opportunity to influence and build effective relations between neighbours, while at the same time developing structures that support the maintenance of these relations. The proposed action is to increase the equality skills of housing actors and their capacity to deal with housing problems through mediation.

The use of mediation is justified on the grounds that it is "a process based on consultation and recognition of each party, which increases the chances of fair decisions without, for example, conscious and unconscious prejudices influencing the way in which issues are dealt with". There is a need for community mediation, as Roma individuals experience discrimination in housing matters, both when moving in and when dealing with situations related to housing problems. Housing disturbances and problems hinder relations between neighbours and make the living environment uncomfortable and sometimes unsafe.

## Promoting equality and inclusion of population groups

Action to promote equality and inclusion is being taken across a range of policy areas. Minority policies often seek to increase equal opportunities for groups by highlighting discrimination, crime and negative attitudes towards groups and their impact on the safety and experience of inclusion in society for people belonging to these groups. Next, we will look at policies for different population groups through recent policy programmes.

## Work against racism

The government's action plan for an equal Finland (An Equal Finland: Government Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups) was already partly introduced in the chapter on the special good relations policy. The majority of the objectives of the Action Plan focus on promoting equality and inclusion of groups and combating racism (see Table 8).

**TABLE 8: Objectives of the anti-racism and good relations action plan**

Objective 1: Identifying and dismantling structures of inequality in society
Objective 2: Promoting diversity and non-discrimination in Finnish working life
Objective 3: Strengthening the equality expertise of public authorities at different levels
Objective 4: Raising awareness of racism and its different forms
Objective 6: Encouraging municipalities to actively promote equality and anti-racism
Objective 8: Developing research and data collection on racism

The anti-racism programme includes a number of measures to identify and combat the effects of racism in different areas of society. These include training for different authorities, campaigns to influence attitudes among the general public, funding to support the capacity of organisations working against racism, work placement programmes for people from minority backgrounds, and making attitudes, racism and hate crime visible through surveys and monitoring indicators.

### Promoting diversity

#### Working Life Diversity Programme

Based on Marin's Government Programme, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment prepared a Working Life Diversity Programme, which was published in spring 2021. The programme aims to ensure that businesses and organisations benefit from diversity and that immigrants have access to jobs and career opportunities that match their skills. The programme includes measures to tackle structural discrimination in the labour market and reducing racism by raising awareness of diversity and its benefits in workplaces and by increasing recruitment, management and other skills in the workplace to promote diversity and inclusiveness. The programme will also help to increase diversity skills in employer and job-seeker services and promote diversity and inclusiveness in the public sector.

The programme contains five target areas and 19 measures.

- 1) Organising communication campaigns to highlight the benefits of diversity and the available resources.
- 2) Systematically integrating workplace diversity and internationalisation promoting services into business and employer services.
- 3) Promoting diversity and inclusiveness in the public sector and organisations.
- 4) Strengthening domestic research on the benefits of diversity and the application of international good practices.
- 5) Fighting recruitment discrimination and promoting equality in working life.

#### Final Report of the Working Group for Cultural Policy, Immigrants and Promotion of Cultural Diversity

In autumn 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture set up a working group to prepare a report on how to strengthen the social inclusion and participation of people with foreign backgrounds through arts and culture in order to increase communication and understanding between different population groups. The working group completed its work in 2021 and published a report entitled Arts, Culture and Diverse Finland, which included proposals for thematic policies and measures, as well as cross-cutting principles that should be taken into account in all arts and culture policies. Table 9 gives examples of thematic measures.

TABLE 9: Examples of measures	
Cultural policy	Culture for all In the strategic planning and development of the arts and culture sector, as in the forthcoming strategy on cultural heritage and other similar documents, one of the underlying principles is that culture belongs to everyone and should be equally accessible to all. Everyone has the right to enjoy and contribute to the enrichment of cultural heritage, and to create and consume art and culture. (Ministry of Education and Culture and municipalities)
Financing culture	Preparation of the national budget The need to promote diversity and equality must be taken into account when assessing the funding needs of arts and culture in national budgets and deciding on the allocation of funding. Part of the implementation of the proposals of this working group also requires funding to be allocated to them. (Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Finance)
Employment	Increasing the linguistic and cultural diversity of professional and managerial staff in arts and cultural organisations. For example, libraries should actively use the new provisions of the Public Libraries Act (1492/2016) regarding the qualification of employees. (Municipalities, arts and cultural institutions and organisations, libraries)
Professional development	Getting to know the world of work and work placements: Arts and cultural institutions and organisations and educational establishments offer opportunities for immigrants in the process of integration to get work experience and learn about working life. Those who have come to study in the arts and culture sector in Finland from abroad must also be offered opportunities to enter the Finnish working life in the cultural sector. (Art and culture sector)
Cultural services	Cultural services in many languages: Increasing artistic and cultural activities in the main minority languages and in other languages where possible. Organising multilingual events and activities. Supporting minority groups in organising cultural activities that are open to everyone, both in the group's own language and in Finnish or Swedish. (Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike), arts and cultural institutions, festivals and events, audiovisual sector)
Intercultural dialogue	Interaction and communication: Taking advantage of the opportunities already offered by libraries, museums, theatres and other arts and cultural institutions to promote communication and interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds. (Arts and culture institutions, multicultural centres and libraries)
Statistics and research	Diversity Barometer: Developing a barometer on cultural diversity and equality in cultural policies to support the monitoring of cultural diversity and equality. The barometer will be carried out periodically and its results will be used to plan and implement diversity and equality policies. (Ministry of Education and Culture, Cupore)

The Ministry of Education and Culture has drawn up a programme of measures in cooperation with the administrative sector, which takes into account the guidelines and proposed measures of the working

group. The implementation of the programme will be monitored as part of the governance and management of the sector, using indicators, studies and surveys, among other things.

## Promoting the rights of linguistic groups

The Government's report on the application of language legislation is submitted once a parliamentary term. In addition to Finnish and Swedish, the report covers at least the Sami language, Romani and sign language and, where appropriate, the language situation in the country more generally. The report examines the application of language legislation, the implementation of language rights, language relations in the country and the development of the Finnish and Swedish languages. The language report does not deal directly with inter-group relations, or even "language relations", but it does deal with equality, which is closely linked to inter-group relations, i.e. the realisation of linguistic rights, the opportunities for linguistic groups to influence and participate, and the language climate.

## Rights of indigenous Sámi people

The Finnish government has stated in its Government Programme that it will respect and promote the realisation of the linguistic and cultural rights of all Sámi people and Sámi groups in a way that takes the relevant international conventions into account. As part of this work, the conditions for ratification of the ILO 169 Convention have been examined and a government proposal to amend the Act on the Sámi Parliament has been drafted. The law is currently under review in Parliament.

The Prime Minister's Office has coordinated the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sami People. The Commission is investigating past and present discrimination experienced by the Sami. The work of the Commission should strive to unpack and help address the traumas that the Sámi people have experienced both as a people and as individuals. In addition, the Government Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups includes measures to promote equality for the Sámi. One of the measures is to develop and implement pilot training for regional and local authorities on Sámi issues. The pilot training started in December 2022 with the training of land use authorities in the Lapland region.

The Ministry of Justice has organised annual consultation days on Sámi issues, to which various authorities, the Sámi Parliament and NGOs representing Sámi have been invited. The Sámi Parliament has launched a teacher training project with funding from the Finnish National Board of Education, together with Roma organisations. Experience has already been gained from various school projects (e.g. the Dihtosis project) where Sámi youth have visited schools and adult education centres to educate students about Sámi culture.

## Promoting the rights of other groups

In this report, we have examined the situation of all specific groups for which a government policy programme exists. Thus, the promotion of the rights of religious groups and the promotion of the rights of sexual and gender minorities are excluded. However, this does not mean that nothing is being done for these groups. Religious groups have their own cooperation organisation, USKOT-foorum, which promotes social peace and religious freedom by fostering inter-faith dialogue and mutual respect. The forum also liaises with the authorities. In addition, certain authorities, including cities and municipalities, may have networks of religious groups and religious leaders.

The Ministry of Justice carried out an assessment of the implementation of the fundamental and human rights of gender and sexual minorities in 2021. ([Towards a more inclusive Finland for LGBTIQ people: Situational assessment of the fundamental and human rights of sexual and gender minorities in Finland 2021](#) (valtioneuvosto.fi))

The assessment covered the following areas: 1) attitudes and inclusion, 2) hate crime and security, 3) self-determination and family law, 4) health and wellbeing, 5) employment and livelihoods, 6) education, sport, youth and culture. In addition, the study assessed the structures of LGBTIQ policy, such as coordination between different ministries and data collection on the subject. It contains proposals for LGBTIQ policy objectives and measures for 2021–2024 in all the above-mentioned areas.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to serve as a baseline for the Council of Europe project "Building an Inclusive Integration Approach in Finland" and to help the actors of the project to understand the current state of affairs in the field of good relations policy, where the gaps are, and where to start.

We decided to give an overview of what is meant by good relations policy and what are its similarities and differences in relation to promoting integration. The report also outlines how good inter-group relations are currently promoted in government policy programmes at different levels. We chose this approach because there are already many proposals at programme level on where good relations policies and activities are and could be linked, but there is no comprehensive information on the implementation of the programmes.

As can be seen from the report, integration is only one part of the promotion of good inter-group relations, as inter-group relations concern relations between all social groups and integration refers only to supporting the integration of immigrants. The demographic dimension has gradually been integrated into the work on integration. If the Government's proposal to reform the Act supporting integration is adopted, it will also be compulsory for municipalities to promote good relations.

We have restructured the whole concept of good relations policy and considered it as a three-level concept, as a special good relations policy that directly affects interactions, as a policy on

equality and inclusion of groups, and as a general social policy that has an impact on inter-group relations. We decided on this solution because we wanted a holistic approach that would help us to understand that the work is very complex and that it is not enough to focus on just one level. Until now, the main focus of good relations work has been on work to strengthen equality and inclusion of groups, and special good relations policies have been somewhat neglected, although their importance is recognised and justifying policies can be found in government policy programmes. .

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