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AUTHOR	Katarina Frostell, Susanna Lundell, Kristiina Vainio, Johanna Vanto
TITLE	Franet National contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2024: Finland
YEAR	2024
VERSION	Publisher's PDF
CITATION	Katarina Frostell, Susanna Lundell, Kristiina Vainio, Johanna Vanto 2024, Franet National contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2024: Finland. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. https://fra.europa.eu/en/country-data/2024/fundamental-rights-report-2024-country-research
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Franel National contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2024

Finland

Contractors:

Institute for Human Rights, Åbo Akademi University and
Faculty of Law, University of Turku

Authors:

Katarina Frostell, Susanna Lundell,
Kristiina Vainio, Johanna Vanto

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1. Impact of the cost-of-living crisis and rising poverty in the EU

1.1. Legal measures impacting on vulnerabilities of persons affected by the rising costs of living and energy.

Due to the rapid increase in electricity prices in the second half of 2022,¹ various support measures have been adopted, including lowering of the value added tax for electricity, compensation for electricity costs, tax credit, and assistance with electricity bills. A temporary amendment of the Value Added Tax Act lowered the VAT for electricity from 24 % to 10 % during the period 1 December 2022 to 30 April 2023.² Further, under the Act on the temporary retroactive compensation for electricity costs, consumers are under certain conditions entitled to compensation for high electricity bills.³ This requires that they have an electricity supply agreement with a price of more than 10 cent per kilowatt hours (kWh) or an agreement with a dynamic pricing of electricity. The compensation is paid automatically by the energy company, i.e., no separate application is needed. It is paid in two instalments, and the amount of compensation is calculated based on the consumer's electricity bills in November and December 2022 for the first instalment, and January 2023 as multiplied by two, for the second instalment. The compensation is 50 % of the sum that exceeds the own-liability threshold of € 90 per month, however, at most the compensation can be € 700 per month. Based on data collected from the energy companies, Statistics Finland reports that the total

¹ Finland, Statistics Finland (*tilastokeskus/statistikcentralen*) (2023), '[Average consumer price of electricity rose to a new record level in the last quarter of 2022](#)', press release, 9 March 2023.

² Finland, Act on the temporary amendment of the Value Added Tax Act ([laki arvonlisäverolain väliaikaisesta muuttamisesta/lag om temporär ändring av mervärdesskattelagen](#)), Act No. 870/2022, 28 October 2022, section 85 a.

³ Finland, Act on the temporary retroactive compensation for electricity costs ([laki takautuvasti maksettavasta väliaikaisesta sähköyivityksestä/lag om temporär retroaktiv elpriskompensation](#)), Act No. 275/2023, 3 March 2023, sections 3 and 4.

compensation paid amounted to € 255 million.⁴ Further, with respect to electricity bills covering the consumption of electricity during the period 1 January to 30 April 2023, the consumers may also be entitled to an extended payment period for electricity bills.⁵ The extension can be max. 120 days for consumer customers (natural persons) and 60 days for business customers.

In addition, consumers of electricity may be entitled under section 127 g of the Income Tax Act to tax credit for household expenses in the 2023 taxation. This covers the cost of electricity for the period January to April 2023 that exceeds € 2,000 but is below € 6,000.⁶ The tax credit is 60 % of the costs. The maximum credit is € 2,400 per dwelling. For households that cannot benefit from the tax credit due to low income, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (*Kansaneläkelaitos/Folkpensionsanstalten*) can assist in the payment of electricity bills.⁷ The assistance can be awarded to cover costs that have been incurred during the period 1 January – 30 April 2023 for a permanent dwelling in Finland. The assistance is 60 % of the amount of the electricity bill that exceeds the own-liability threshold of € 400, but is below € 1,500. The assistance cannot be granted if one of the persons living in the household is entitled to tax credit under the Income Tax Act.⁸ Further, the electricity assistance cannot be paid to the extent that the electricity bill has been used in the calculation of social assistance under the Act on Social Assistance.⁹

To support low income families with children in 2023, temporary amendments to several social security acts were adopted on 20 December 2022. The child-related

⁴ Finland, Statistics Finland (*tilastokeskus/statistikcentralen*) (2023), '[Around EUR 255 million paid to households as compensation for electricity costs](#)', press release, 30 June 2023.

⁵ Finland, Act on the extension of the payment period of electricity bills and the temporary support to secure the liquidity of electric companies ([laki sähköenergiälaskujen maksuajan pidentämisestä ja sähköyhtiöiden maksuvalmiuden väliaikaisesta tukemisesta/lag om förlängning av betalningstiden för elenergiräkningar och om temporärt stödjande av elbolagens likviditet](#)), Act No. 276/2023, 3 March 2023, sections 3, 4 and 5.

⁶ Finland, Act on temporary amendment of the Income Tax Act ([laki tuloverolain väliaikaisesta muuttamisesta/lag om temporär ändring av inkomstskattelagen](#)), Act No. 1013/2022, 9 December 2022, section 127 g.

⁷ Finland, Act on temporary electricity assistance ([laki väliaikaisesta sähkötuesta/lag om temporärt elstöd](#)), Act No. 1152/2022, 20 December 2022, sections 2 and 5.

⁸ Finland, Act on amendment of section 2 of the Act on temporary electricity assistance ([laki väliaikaisesta sähkötuesta annetun lain 2 §:n muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av 2 § i lagen om temporärt elstöd](#)), Act No. 278/2023, 3 March 2023.

⁹ Finland, Act on Social Assistance ([laki toimeentulotuesta/lag om utkomststöd](#)), Act No. 1412/1997, 30 December 1997.

supplements were increased in connection with unemployment allowances,¹⁰ basic social assistance¹¹ and study grants.¹² In addition, the single carer increment of child benefits increased with € 5 to € 68.30 per month.¹³ Further, affecting all families, the excess of medical costs was frozen at the level of 2022.¹⁴ As of 1 March 2023, the monthly care supplement,¹⁵ paid to low income families, for private day care of a child increased with approx. € 100¹⁶ to € 265.85 per month.¹⁷

Following the recent health and social services reform, the organisation and implementation of social lending was transferred from the municipalities to 21

¹⁰ Finland, Act on the temporary amendment of Chapter 6, section 6 of the Unemployment Security Act ([laki työttömyysturvalain 6 luvun 6 §:n väliaikaisesta muuttamisesta/lag om temporär ändring av 6 kap. 6 § i lagen om utkomstskydd för arbetslösa](#)), Act No. 1227/2022, 20 December 2022.

¹¹ Finland, Act on the temporary amendment of section 9 of the Social Assistance Act ([laki toimeentulotuesta annetun lain 9 §:n väliaikaisesta muuttamisesta/lag om temporär ändring av 9 § i lagen om utkomststöd](#)), Act No. 1228/2022, 20 December 2022.

¹² Finland, Act on the temporary amendment of the Study Grant Act ([laki opintotukilain väliaikaisesta muuttamisesta/lag om temporär ändring av lagen om studiestöd](#)), Act No. 1229/2022, 20 December 2022.

¹³ Finland, Act on the temporary amendment of section 7 of the Child Benefit Act ([laki lapsilisälain 7 §:n väliaikaisesta muuttamisesta/lag om temporär ändring av 7 § i barnbidragslagen](#)), Act No. 1226/2022, 20 December 2022.

¹⁴ Finland, Act on the temporary amendment of Chapter 5, section 8 of the Health Insurance Act ([laki sairausvakuutuslain 5 luvun 8 §:n väliaikaisesta muuttamisesta/lag om temporär ändring av 5 kap. 8 § i sjukförsäkringslagen](#)), Act No. 1230/2022, 20 December 2022.

¹⁵ Finland, Act on the amendment of section 5 of the Act on home care and private care of children ([laki lasten kotihoidon ja yksityisen hoidon tuesta annetun lain 5 §:n muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av 5 § i lagen om stöd för hemvård och privat vård av barn](#)), Act No. 1231/2022, 20 December 2022.

¹⁶ Finland, Government bill HE 236/2022 on legislation strengthening the purchasing power in 2023 and amendment of the Act on support for home care and private care of children ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle ostovoiman vahvistamisesta vuonna 2023 koskevaksi lainsäädännöksi sekä laiksi lasten kotihoidon ja yksityisen hoidon tuesta annetun lain muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lagstiftning om stärkande av köpkraft 2023 och till lag om ändring av lagen om stöd för hemvård och privat vård av barn](#)), 20 October 2022, p. 21.

¹⁷ Finland, Social Insurance Institution of Finland ([Kansaneläkelaitos/Folkpensionsanstalten](#)), [Amount and payment of private day care allowance](#), web page, accessed on 12 October 2023.

wellbeing services counties on 1 January 2023.¹⁸ The City of Helsinki continues to provide social lending in the capital area. Whereas social lending in the past was a voluntary task of municipalities, it became a mandatory task of the wellbeing services counties and the City of Helsinki as of 1 August 2023.¹⁹ Social lending targets people with small income and scant financial means, who are unable to get reasonable terms of credit elsewhere, but who are nevertheless able to repay their loans.²⁰ A new handbook on the implementation of social lending was published on 20 March 2023.²¹ For more information on the practice, see section on promising practices.

The long-awaited new Act on services for persons with disabilities, approved by the previous Parliament on 1 March 2023²² and due to enter into force on 1 October 2023, was postponed by an Act approved by Parliament on 27 September 2023.²³ The purpose of the new Act was to strengthen the equality, inclusion and self-determination of persons with disabilities and to secure adequate services for them. Such services would be determined based on need and not on diagnosis, as is currently the case.²⁴ The Act is

¹⁸ Finland, Act on the amendment of the Act on social lending ([laki sosiaalisesta luototuksesta annetun lain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lagen om social kreditgivning](#)), Act No. 590/2022, 8 July 2022.

¹⁹ Finland, Act on the amendment of the Act on social lending ([laki sosiaalisesta luototuksesta annetun lain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lagen om social kreditgivning](#)), Act No. 956/2022, 30 November 2022.

²⁰ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*), [Social lending](#), web page, accessed on 8 September 2023.

²¹ Rainio, K., Liukonen, R. (2023), [Sosiaalisen luototuksen soveltamisopas](#) (Guide for the Application of Social Lending), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2023:14.

²² Finland, Act on services for persons with disabilities ([vammapalvelulaki/lag om funktionshinderservice](#)), Act No. 675/2023, 14 April 2023.

²³ Finland, Government bill HE 9/2023 on the postponement of the entry into force of the Act on services for persons with disabilities and certain related acts ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle vammaispalvelulain ja eräiden siihen liittyvien lakien voimaantulon lykkäämistä koskevaiksi lainsäädännöksi/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lagstiftning om senareläggning av ikraftträdandet för lagen om funktionshinderservice och vissa lagar som har samband med den](#)), 31 August 2023. Parliament's response No. 7/2023 ([eduskunnan vastaus/riksdagens svar](#)), 27 September 2023.

²⁴ Finland, Government bill HE 191/2022 on the Act on services for persons with disabilities and certain related acts ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle vammaispalvelulain ja siihen liittyviksi laeiksi/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om funktionshinderservice och till vissa lagar som har samband med den](#)), 22 September 2022, p. 1.

a special law which guarantees mainly subjective rights, the costs of services for which are largely covered by public funds. The postponement of the Act is estimated to have a negative impact especially on young people and children with disabilities, to whose services the new legislation would have brought significant improvements.²⁵ According to the government proposal, one of the key grounds for postponing the entry into force of the Act was the need to assess its economic impact to guarantee sufficient resources for the wellbeing services counties to implement the Act.²⁶ This need arose from the fact that several amendments were made to the bill in Parliament in its final stages, broadening its scope. Although the current government significantly increased the amount of appropriations reserved for the implementation of the Act as compared to the previous government, it wanted to set a ceiling of € 100 million for its annual costs.²⁷ Several stakeholders considered this to be contrary to subjective rights obligations. Opinions on postponing the entry into force of the new Act were strongly divided, also among disability organisations.²⁸ To mitigate the negative impact of the postponement on young people and children, the government has pledged € 20 million for people with

²⁵ Finland, Government bill HE 191/2022 on the Act on services for persons with disabilities and certain related acts ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle vammaispalvelulaiksi ja siihen liittyviksi laeiksi/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om funktionshinderservice och till vissa lagar som har samband med den](#)), 22 September 2022, pp. 47–49, 127–129.

²⁶ Finland, Government bill HE 9/2023 on the postponement of the entry into force of the Act on services for persons with disabilities and certain related acts ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle vammaispalvelulain ja eräiden siihen liittyvien lakien voimaantulon lykkäämistä koskevaksi lainsäädännöksi/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lagstiftning om senareläggning av ikraftträdandet för lagen om funktionshinderservice och vissa lagar som har samband med den](#)), 31 August 2023.

²⁷ Finland, Government bill HE 9/2023 on the postponement of the entry into force of the Act on services for persons with disabilities and certain related acts ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle vammaispalvelulain ja eräiden siihen liittyvien lakien voimaantulon lykkäämistä koskevaksi lainsäädännöksi/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lagstiftning om senareläggning av ikraftträdandet för lagen om funktionshinderservice och vissa lagar som har samband med den](#)), 31 August 2023, p. 3.

²⁸ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*) (2023), Request for opinion on the postponement of the entry into force of the Act on services for persons with disabilities ([vammaispalvelulain voimaantulon siirtäminen, lausuntopyyntö/senareläggning av ikraftträdandet för lagen om funktionshinderservice, begäran om utlåtande](#)), lausuntopalvelu.fi, VN/19726/2023, 3 July 2023.

neuropsychiatric disabilities until the entry into force of the new Act.²⁹ The new proposal is due to be submitted to Parliament in autumn 2024 and the new Act to enter into force on 1 January 2025.

In line with the new government programme adopted on 20 June 2023,³⁰ several legislative amendments have been made to social welfare legislation in connection with the state budget for 2024. These include the freezing of the rate of social security benefits at their 2023 level for the period 2024–2027.³¹ Normally social security benefits are annually adjusted based on the national pension index and consumer price index. The lack of index adjustments during the prescribed period covers the sickness benefit, rehabilitation benefit, basic unemployment allowance, child home care allowance, general housing allowance, housing allowance for pensioners, study grant, adult education allowance, and reception and spending allowance of asylum seekers and victims of trafficking. However, to avoid too drastic decreases in the benefits, a cap of 10.2 % is laid down in section 2 of the temporary act regulating index adjustments until 31 December 2027.³² In addition, the rate of child benefits will increase.³³ This concerns benefits paid to families with four or more children, single-parent supplements and benefits for children under the age of three. The reform covering benefits for large

²⁹ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, p. 38.

³⁰ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60.

³¹ Finland, Act on index adjustments of some benefits and amounts linked to the national pension index and the consumer price index 2024–2027 ([laki eräiden kansaneläkeindeksiin ja elinkustannusindeksiin sidottujen etuuksien ja rahamäärien indeksitarkastuksista vuosina 2024–2027/lag om indexjustering åren 2024–2027 av vissa förmåner och belopp som är bundna vid folkpensionsindex och levnadskostnadsindex](#)), Act No. 1296/2023, 28 December 2023.

³² Finland, Government bill HE 75/2023 ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi eräiden kansaneläkeindeksiin ja elinkustannusindeksiin sidottujen etuuksien ja rahamäärien indeksitarkastuksista vuosina 2024–2027 ja siihen liittyviksi laeiksi sekä lapsilisälain 7 §:n muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om indexjustering åren 2024–2027 av vissa förmåner och belopp som är bundna vid folkpensionsindex och levnadskostnadsindex och lagar som har samband med den samt lagen om ändring av 7 § i barnbidragslagen](#)), 12 October 2023, p. 11.

³³ Finland, Act on the amendment of section 7 of the Child Benefit Act ([laki lapsilisälain 7 §:n muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av 7 § i barnbidragslagen](#)), Act No. 1299/2023, 28 December 2023.

families and single-parent households enters into force on 1 January 2024, whereas the increase in benefits for small children enters into force on 1 April 2024.

Further, stricter requirements and reduced benefits are introduced regarding, for example, social assistance,³⁴ housing allowance,³⁵ and unemployment allowance³⁶. Thus, the amendment of the Act on Social Assistance provides that if the housing costs of a person are higher than established in a government decree, subject to annual review, for a specific municipality and household size, and no special grounds motivate that the person stays put, the person should be instructed to move to more affordable housing within three months.³⁷ After that the calculation of the rate of social assistance will be based on the established lower housing costs. These amendments will enter into force on 1 April 2024. As to housing allowance, a person can from 1 January 2025 onwards no longer obtain housing allowance for an apartment or house that he or she owns.³⁸ In addition, the general level of the housing allowance for rental apartments and right-of-occupancy housing will decrease from 1 April 2024.

As of 1 January 2024, the waiting period to qualify for unemployment benefits is extended from five to seven days,³⁹ the exempt amount which has allowed unemployed persons to earn € 300 without reductions in the unemployment allowance expires on 1

³⁴ Finland, Act on the amendment of section 7a of the Social Assistance Act ([laki toimeentulosta annetun lain 7 a §:n muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av 7 a § i lagen om utkomststöd](#)), Act No. 1242/2023, 21 December 2023.

³⁵ Finland, Act on the amendment of the General Housing Allowance Act ([laki yleisestä asumistuesta annetun lain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lagen om allmänt bostadsbidrag](#)), Act No. 1241/2023, 21 December 2023.

³⁶ Finland, Act on the amendment of the Unemployment Security Act ([laki työttömyysturvalain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lagen om utkomstskydd för arbetslösa](#)), Act No. 1300/2023, 28 December 2023.

³⁷ Finland, Act on the amendment of section 7a of the Social Assistance Act ([laki toimeentulosta annetun lain 7 a §:n muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av 7 a § i lagen om utkomststöd](#)), Act No. 1242/2023, 21 December 2023, section 7a.

³⁸ Finland, Act on the amendment of the General Housing Allowance Act ([laki yleisestä asumistuesta annetun lain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lagen om allmänt bostadsbidrag](#)), Act No. 1241/2023, 21 December 2023, section 7.

³⁹ Finland, Act on the amendment of the Unemployment Security Act ([laki työttömyysturvalain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lagen om utkomstskydd för arbetslösa](#)), Act No. 1300/2023, 28 December 2023, Chapter 5, section 13.

April 2024⁴⁰ and the child increases to unemployment allowances is first reduced and from 1 April 2024 abolished.⁴¹ Furthermore, to be eligible for unemployment allowance, the work requirement applicable to employees will be extended from around six to twelve months from 2 September 2024.⁴²

During the legislative drafting process in Parliament, the cumulative effects of the above amendments have been debated. For example, the Constitutional Law Committee (*perustuslakivaliokunta/grundlagsutskottet*) expresses concern regarding the lack of sufficient background material on the long-term, cumulative effects of the amendments on fundamental and human rights, particularly,⁴³ when it comes to the right to social security, as protected in section 19 of the Constitution of Finland.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Committee notes with respect to the amendment of the General Housing Allowance Act that the legislative proposal⁴⁵ does not pay adequate attention to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including relevant treaty practice and statements concerning Finland. In this context, the Committee is specifically mentioning the

⁴⁰ Finland, Act on the amendment of the Unemployment Security Act ([laki työttömyysturvalain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lagen om utkomstskydd för arbetslösa](#)), Act No. 1300/2023, 28 December 2023, Chapter 4, section 5.

⁴¹ Finland, Government bill HE 73/2023 ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laeiksi työttömyysturvalain ja eräiden muiden lakien muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lagar om ändring av lagen om utkomstskydd för arbetslösa och vissa andra lagar](#)), 12 October 2023, p. 25. See also Social Insurance Institution of Finland (*Kansaneläkelaitos/Folkpensionsanstalten*), [Changes to Kela benefits in 2024](#), web page, accessed on 20 December 2023.

⁴² Finland, Act on the amendment of the Unemployment Security Act ([laki työttömyysturvalain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lagen om utkomstskydd för arbetslösa](#)), Act No. 1300/2023, 28 December 2023, Chapter 5, section 3.

⁴³ Finland, Constitutional Law Committee of Parliament (*perustuslakivaliokunta/grundlagsutskottet*), statements, [PeVL 11/2023 – HE 58/2023 vp](#) (9 November 2023), [PeVL 14/2023 – HE 74/2023 vp](#) (24 November 2023), [PeVL 15/2023 – HE 75/2023 vp](#) (28 November 2023), [PeVL 16/2023 – HE 73/2023 vp](#) (28 November 2023).

⁴⁴ Finland, [Constitution of Finland \(Suomen perustuslaki/Finlands grundlag\)](#), Act No. 731/1999, 11 June 1999, section 19.

⁴⁵ Finland, Government bill HE 74/2023 ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi yleisestä asumistuesta annetun lain muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om ändring av lagen om allmänt bostadsbidrag](#)), 12 October 2023.

concluding observations of 2 June 2023,⁴⁶ where the Committee on the Rights of the Child requests that Finland avoid cutting social benefits which affect children at risk of poverty and exclusion.⁴⁷

Moreover, in connection with approving the acts, Parliament made statements requesting the government to monitor the impact of the amendments, including on various population groups, and adopt necessary measures to rectify possible problems.⁴⁸ Also civil society organisations have expressed concern regarding the effects of the amendments.⁴⁹ In a joint statement of 20 December 2023, 11 organisations express the opinion that the reform is a failure because its impact on fundamental and human rights was not sufficiently assessed during the legislative process.

⁴⁶ United Nations (UN), Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (2023), *Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth reports of Finland*, 2 June 2023, para. 35 a and b.

⁴⁷ Finland, Constitutional Law Committee of Parliament (*perustuslakivaliokunta/grundlagsutskottet*), statement, [PeVL 14/2023 – HE 74/2023 vp](#), 24 November 2023, para. 21.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Government bill HE 75/2023 ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi eräiden kansaneläkeindeksiin ja elinkustannusindeksiin sidottujen etuuksien ja rahamäärien indeksitarkastuksista vuosina 2024–2027 ja siihen liittyviksi laeiksi sekä lapsilisälain 7 §:n muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om indexjustering åren 2024–2027 av vissa förmåner och belopp som är bundna vid folkpensionsindex och levnadskostnadsindex och lagar som har samband med den samt lagen om ändring av 7 § i barnbidragslagen](#)), 12 October 2023. Parliament’s response EV 84/2023 vp – HE 75/2023 vp ([eduskunnan vastaus/riksdagens svar](#)), 15 December 2023.

⁴⁹ Finland, Finnish League for Human Rights (*Ihmisoikeusliitto/Förbundet för mänskliga rättigheter*), [‘Järjestöt: Olemme syvästi huolissamme köyhyyttä lisäävästä politiikasta’](#), press release, 20 December 2023.

1.2. Policy measures impacting on vulnerabilities of persons affected by the rising costs of living and energy.

The new government, appointed on 20 June 2023, aims to strengthen general government finances by €6 billion during the parliamentary term 2023–2027.⁵⁰ According to the government programme, this will require austerity measures, which, however, are to be implemented “in a way that acknowledges the situation of the most vulnerable groups”.⁵¹ In addition to improving public finances, the government programme aims, in the area of welfare policy, to eradicate benefit traps and increase employment.⁵² Consequently, the programme contains multiple measures that impact on the general public including vulnerable groups. Among measures that appear to have a positive impact on children and families are “raising the child benefit for children under three years of age, increasing the single parent increment for child benefits, developing the family provider increment of study grants, and increasing the child benefit for families with many children”.⁵³ The child benefit system in Finland is universal, benefitting all families irrespective of income.

Among other measures that are likely to impact negatively on the economic situation of vulnerable families, children and others are the plans to freeze index increases of benefits linked to the national pension index/consumer price index for the duration of the term 2024–2027. This covers multiple social welfare benefits such as sickness benefits, rehabilitation benefits, basic unemployment allowance, child home care allowance, housing allowance, study grant, and reception allowance among others.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo’s Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, p. 11.

⁵¹ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo’s Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, p. 12.

⁵² Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*) (2023), [‘Sosiaaliturvamuutosten yhteisvaikutusten arviointi on valmistunut’ \(The assessment of the cumulative effect of the social security revisions has been finalised\)](#), press release, 9 October 2023.

⁵³ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo’s Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, p. 82.

⁵⁴ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*) (2023), Request for opinion on the draft government bill on freezing

The policy does not cover social assistance, pensions, front veteran's supplement, disability benefits and additional reimbursement for medicine.⁵⁵ According to the government programme, the inflation will be monitored and adjustments made so that the effect of the frozen index will not be higher than 10.2 %.

Concerns regarding the cumulative effect of the reform on low income households have been raised during various stages of the legislative process (see also 1.1). For example, the Chancellor of Justice states that the impact assessment of the reform should be supplemented by a more comprehensive evaluation of this and other planned reforms' actual effect on fundamental and human rights.⁵⁶ Further, the Chancellor of Justice expresses concern regarding the statement in the draft government bill, according to which, the reform is expected to increase the need for social assistance. The Chancellor notes that it is generally considered that social security reforms should ensure sufficient levels of income in order to avoid the need to resort to social assistance.⁵⁷

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published on 9 October 2023 a memorandum on the total impact of the planned changes in the social security and taxation systems in 2024.⁵⁸ The evaluation covers changes in the income taxation, housing allowance, unemployment benefits, child benefits, study grants and the index adjustments. It is carried out with the help of the SISU microsimulation model, which is intended for the planning, monitoring and assessment of personal taxation and social security legislation.⁵⁹ The planned changes will increase income inequality and the share of low

index increases for benefits linked to the national pension index and consumer price index during 2024–2027 ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laeiksi eräiden kansaneläkeindeksiin ja elinkustannusindeksiin sidottujen etuuksien ja rahamäärien indeksitarkastuksista vuosina 2024–2027 ja siihen liittyviksi laeiksi sekä lapsilisälain 7 §:n muuttamisesta](#)), lausuntopalvelu.fi, VN/20785/2023, 24 September 2023.

⁵⁵ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, pp. 77–78 and 256.

⁵⁶ Finland, Chancellor of Justice (*Oikeuskansleri/Justitiekansler*) (2023), Indeksitarkastusten jäädyttäminen (Freezing of the index adjustments), opinion, [OKV/1769/21/2023](#), 20 September 2023.

⁵⁷ Finland, Chancellor of Justice (*Oikeuskansleri/Justitiekansler*) (2023), Indeksitarkastusten jäädyttäminen (Freezing of the index adjustments), opinion, [OKV/1769/21/2023](#), 20 September 2023, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*) (2023), [Vuoden 2024 sosiaaliturvamuutosten yhteisvaikutusten arviointi](#) (Assessment of the cumulative effect of the social security changes in 2024), Helsinki, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

⁵⁹ Finland, Statistics Finland (*tilastokeskus/statistikcentralen*), [Microsimulation](#), web page, accessed on 10 October 2023.

income households, including the share of low income families with children. The groups most negatively affected are students and unemployed persons covered by earnings-related security. As to the effect on various family types, the most affected are young adults, single families, and older working age persons living on their own. It is estimated that 14 % of the population live in households where the income loss is more than 1 % and 3 % live in households with more than 10 % income loss.⁶⁰

Revision in the social welfare system is foreseen also with respect to migrants. Keeping in mind the constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights, the government plans to reduce the reception allowance to the minimum amount possible, differentiate the social security system and social benefits of migrants from that of permanent residents of Finland. Furthermore, the government plans to explore the possibilities to tighten the provisions of the Act on residence-based social security in cross-border situations⁶¹ to extend the required period of residence and raise the required income level.⁶²

In the beginning of the new government term, a statement was made to Parliament on promoting equality, gender equality and non-discrimination in Finnish society.⁶³ The government declares that it is committed to continue the work carried out by the previous government when implementing the Action Plan for An Equal Finland 2021–2023.⁶⁴ Among measures listed for the coming years is the adoption of an action plan to increase the participation of under-represented groups in working life, such as persons with disabilities, Roma, various immigrant groups, and immigrant women. In addition, an equality and gender equality programme covering the entire education system will be launched in 2024–2025. The programme will support educational institutions in the

⁶⁰ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*) (2023), '[Sosiaaliturvamuutosten yhteisvaikutusten arviointi on valmistunut](#)' (The assessment of the cumulative effect of the social security revisions has been finalised), press release, 9 October 2023.

⁶¹ Finland, Act on residence-based social security in cross-border situations ([laki asumisperusteisesta sosiaaliturvasta rajat ylittävissä tilanteissa/lag om bosättningsbaserad social trygghet i gränsöverskridande fall](#)), Act No. 16/2019, 11 January 2019.

⁶² Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, pp. 223–224.

⁶³ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [Government statement to Parliament on promoting equality, gender equality and non-discrimination in Finnish society](#), 31 August 2023.

⁶⁴ Artemjeff, P., Attias, M., Mohammed, A. (2023), [Arviointi valtioneuvoston Yhdenvertainen Suomi –toimintaohjelmasta rasismiin torjumiseksi ja väestösuhteiden edistämiseksi](#) (Evaluation of the Government Action Plan on Equal Finland to Combat Racism and to Promote Good Relations), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Reports and guidelines 2023:31.

implementation of their current equality and gender equality plans in the day-to-day activities of early childhood education and care and educational institutions.⁶⁵

The Third National Roma Policy (ROMPO3) for the years 2023–2030 was launched on 9 February 2023.⁶⁶ The policy supports the inclusion, participation and equality of Roma in accordance with the EU Roma strategic framework.⁶⁷ The cross-cutting objective of the policy programme is to eradicate anti-Gypsyism and the discrimination of Roma and to ensure the equal realisation of the fundamental rights of Roma. ROMPO3 contains 71 action proposals within areas, such as working life, social and health care, education and housing. Action 39 concerns the inclusion of Roma in societal policy debates on poverty reduction and taking Roma into account in debates on diversity in society and working life.⁶⁸ Action 12 addresses EU mobile Roma children and young people living in Finland and their access to education, health care and leisure activities that support their growth.⁶⁹

With respect to children, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare published on 14 August 2023 a research report, which shows that while poverty among foreign born children has decreased between 2006 and 2019, the share of children with a foreign background (i.e., at least one of the parents is born abroad) among poor children has increased. In 2006, 12 % of all children at risk of poverty had a foreign background, whereas the figure in 2019 was 27 %.⁷⁰ In 2019, children born in Africa and Middle East

⁶⁵ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [Government statement to Parliament on promoting equality, gender equality and non-discrimination in Finnish society](#), 31 August 2023, pp. 8 and 11.

⁶⁶ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*) (2023), [Finland's National Roma Policy \(ROMPO\) 2023–2030](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2023:15.

⁶⁷ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*) (2023), [Finland's National Roma Policy \(ROMPO\) 2023–2030](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2023:15, p. 9.

⁶⁸ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*) (2023), [Finland's National Roma Policy \(ROMPO\) 2023–2030](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2023:15, p. 104.

⁶⁹ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*) (2023), [Finland's National Roma Policy \(ROMPO\) 2023–2030](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2023:15, p. 97.

⁷⁰ Rintala, L., Sirniö, O., Vaalavuo, M. (2023), [Ulkomaalaistaustaisten lasten osuus köyhyyriskissä olevista lapsista on kasvanut](#) (The share of children with a foreign background among children at risk of poverty has grown), Tutkimuksesta tiivistä 39/2023, Suomen sosiaalinen tila 6/2023, Helsinki, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare.

face the biggest risk of poverty, more than 60 %. This is a drop from 2006, when the figure was 80 %.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends that Finland avoids cuts in social security benefits that impact on children at risk of poverty and exclusion, and strengthens its policies to ensure that all children have an adequate standard of living, including by improving the financial situation and increasing social benefits for children with disabilities, asylum-seeking children, and children with an irregular residence status.⁷¹

The European Social Fund Plus of the 2021–2027 Innovation and Skills in Finland programme includes funding for EU food aid. In January 2023, five national organisations were awarded in total € 800,000 to coordinate and implement food aid activities.⁷² A new call covering € 1.8 million opened on 2 April 2023.⁷³

Table 1 – Promising practice

Promising practice	
Title (original language)	Sosiaalinen luototus/social kreditgivning
Title (EN)	Social lending
Organisation (original language)	Hyvinvointialueet ja Helsingin kaupunki (in Finnish) Välfärdsområden och Helsingfors stad (in Swedish)
Organisation (EN)	Wellbeing services counties and City of Helsinki
Government / Civil society	Government
Funding body	State budget
Reference (incl. URL, where available)	https://stm.fi/en/income-security/social-lending https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2002/20021133

⁷¹ United Nations (UN), Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (2023), [Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth reports of Finland](#), 15 November 2023, para. 35 a and b.

⁷² Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [‘Viisi valtakunnallista järjestöä saa valtionavustusta ruoka-avun järjestämiseen’ \(Five national organisations will receive discretionary government grants for organising food aid\)](#), press release, 20 January 2023.

⁷³ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*), [Vuoden 2023 valtionavustushaut \(The call for discretionary government grants in 2023\)](#), web page, accessed on 7 September 2023.

Promising practice	
Indicate the start date of the promising practice and the finishing date if it has ceased to exist	<p>Social lending was originally introduced on 1 January 2003 as a voluntary task of municipalities.⁷⁴ Twenty years later, with the health and social services reform of 1 January 2023, the task was transferred to the new wellbeing services counties.⁷⁵</p> <p>Social lending became a mandatory activity of all wellbeing services counties (n=21) and the City of Helsinki on 1 August 2023.⁷⁶</p>
Type of initiative	Social lending
Main target group	People who, due to small income and scant financial means, are unable to get reasonable terms of credit elsewhere, but who are nevertheless able to repay loans.
Indicate level of implementation: Local/Regional/National	Regional
Brief description (max. 1000 chars)	The purpose of social lending is to help prevent financial problems and indebtedness, and to help people deal with unexpected financial problems and manage independently. Social lending services form part of the social welfare services. They are regulated in the general Social Welfare Act ⁷⁷ and in the special Act on Social Lending. ⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Finland, Act on social lending ([laki sosiaalisesta luototuksesta/lag om social kreditgivning](#)), Act No. 1133/2002, 20 December 2002.

⁷⁵ Finland, Act on the amendment of the Act on social lending ([laki sosiaalisesta luototuksesta annetun lain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lag om social kreditgivning](#)), Act No. 590/2022, 8 July 2022.

⁷⁶ Finland, Act on the amendment of the Act on social lending ([laki sosiaalisesta luototuksesta annetun lain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lag om social kreditgivning](#)), Act No. 956/2022, 25 November 2022.

⁷⁷ Finland, Social Welfare Act ([sosiaalihuoltolaki/socialvårdslag](#)), Act No. 1301/2014, 30 December 2014, section 14.

⁷⁸ Finland, Act on social lending ([laki sosiaalisesta luototuksesta/lag om social kreditgivning](#)), Act No. 1133/2002, 20 December 2002.

Promising practice	
	<p>The wellbeing services county where the person has his or her municipality of residence decides on social lending based on an application. The social lending agreement includes information on the usage of the credit, the amount of the credit, interest and re-payment terms.⁷⁹</p> <p>The Act on Social Lending allows in special situations fixed-term interruptions in the repayment of the loan, partial or full exemption from repayment as a last resort when debt collection would be unreasonable, and the right without delay to discuss in person with a civil servant representing the authority that grants social lending. Further, the person is entitled to advice and guidance throughout the whole social lending process.⁸⁰</p> <p>A guide for the application of social lending was published on 23 March 2023.⁸¹</p>
Highlight any element of the actions that is transferable (max. 500 chars)	The practice as a whole is transferable.
Give reasons why you consider the practice as sustainable (as opposed to 'one off activities')	The practice is based on law and has been developed over many years.
Give reasons why you consider the practice as having concrete measurable impact	The fact that the practice as of 1 August 2023 covers the whole country enhances its impact.
Give reasons why you consider the practice as transferable to other	There is no particular reason why the practice could not be transferred to other contexts. Having said that the design of the practice would have to be adjusted to respective country's social welfare system.

⁷⁹ Finland, Act on social lending ([laki sosiaalisesta luototuksesta/laq om social kreditgivning](#)), Act No. 1133/2002, 20 December 2002, sections 4 and 6.

⁸⁰ Finland, Act on social lending ([laki sosiaalisesta luototuksesta/laq om social kreditgivning](#)), Act No. 1133/2002, 20 December 2002, sections 7 a, 7 b, 9.

⁸¹ Rainio, K., Liukonen, R. (2023), [Sosiaalisen luototuksen soveltamisopas](#) (Guide for the Application of Social Lending), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2023:14.

Promising practice	
settings and/or Member States?	
Explain, if applicable, how the practice involves beneficiaries and stakeholders in the design, planning, evaluation, review assessment and implementation of the practice	n.a.
Explain, if applicable, how the practice provides for review and assessment	The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health will monitor the implementation of the Act and assess possible needs for development. Furthermore, statistical information will be available through the Kanta database in the future. This will allow an annual follow-up of the social lending practices. Previously information has been collected every third year. ⁸²

⁸² Finland, Government bill HE 136/2022 on the amendment of the Act on social lending ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi sosiaalisesta luototuksesta annetun lain muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om ändring av lagen om social kreditgivning](#)), 15 September 2022, p. 26.

2. Threats to democratic values - Protecting civic space, strengthening meaningful participation and the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression

2.1. Major threats to democracy as reflected in national legal and political developments and the discourse at national level.

Table 2 – Challenges

Based on a scan of legislative and policy and other developments and the public discourse please identify **three major challenges** to democracy emerged in the course of 2023.

Challenges	Justification/explanation: description of issue at stake and its overall relevance compared to other challenges to democracy and the civic space. Please provide examples and references.
Attacks and threats to the safety of civil society organisations, human rights defenders and journalists	<p>Attacks against Pride events</p> <p>On 26 June 2023, the human rights organisation LGBTI Rights in Finland – Seta issued a joint statement, signed by several civil society organisations, on attacks and hate speech against gender and sexual minorities. Seta notes that, in 2022, Pride events in Finland faced widespread harassment and hate crimes. Seta points out that, in 2023, attacks and acts of vandalism have not only been directed at Pride events but also at a rainbow cultural event in Helsinki and restaurants in the cities of Tampere and Joensuu. According to Seta, the</p>

Challenges	Justification/explanation: description of issue at stake and its overall relevance compared to other challenges to democracy and the civic space. Please provide examples and references.
	<p>opposition against the existence, rights, and societal visibility of members of gender and sexual minorities has intensified. Seta contends that the rhetoric used fuels hatred and prejudice, and that it has been employed by leading politicians. Furthermore, Seta notes that offensive and stigmatising texts have also been disseminated in the media.⁸³</p> <p>As noted by an annual review issued by ILGA-Europe on 20 February 2023 and covering events in 2022, Pride organisers across Finland had found that vandalism and hate speech were far too common. According to the annual review, a rainbow-coloured bench was set on fire in Pirkanmaa on a beach where a Pride event for young people was to be held. In Helsinki, the police had to remove far-right protesters outside the Central Library, which hosted a drag story time event during the Pride month. In the town of Lapua four youngsters detonated a homemade bomb at the other end of a building where a Lapua Pride event was taking place. Lapua Pride also received violent threats in social media. Also in the town of Mikkeli, a homemade bomb was detonated by two young persons close to where the Pride march was taking place.⁸⁴</p> <p>Disruption of environmental activists' protests</p> <p>In its report regarding protest monitoring in 2022, issued on 17 February 2023, Amnesty Finland observed that during Extinction Rebellion (<i>Elokapina</i>) protests, there had often been other individuals present who livestream the protest and openly express that they do not agree with the demonstrators on the subject of the protest. According to Amnesty Finland, they film the protesters from close proximity and aim to provoke them. If the actions of individuals disrupting the protest are not addressed, Amnesty Finland contends that it poses a serious threat to the realisation of the freedom of assembly and may increase people's reluctance to participate</p>

⁸³ LGBTI Rights in Finland – Seta (2023), '[Yhteislausunto – hyökkäykset ja vihapuhe sateenkaari-ihmisiä kohtaan saatava loppumaan](#)', (Joint statement – attacks and hate speech against gender and sexual minorities must be stopped), 26 June 2023.

⁸⁴ ILGA-Europe (2023), [Annual review of the human rights situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people in Europe and Central Asia](#), Brussels, ILGA-Europe, p. 59.

Challenges	Justification/explanation: description of issue at stake and its overall relevance compared to other challenges to democracy and the civic space. Please provide examples and references.
	<p>in protests. Amnesty Finland notes that provocative and derogatory streaming may also fuel hate speech and targeting against the protesters, especially in online environments.⁸⁵</p> <p>Smear campaigns against journalists</p> <p>In June 2023, two journalists – a Paris correspondent for the Finnish public broadcaster Yleisradio and an editor for Euronews – were targeted on social media after they shared and wrote articles on the current Finnish government and politicians. Both had discussed the Nazi references made by a Member of Parliament (Finns Party) and former Minister of Economic Affairs, and the court sentences handed down to the former spokesman of the Finns Party and current Speaker of Parliament. Following this, both journalists were made targets of cyberbullying, receiving large quantities of hate mail and threats through a wide range of communication channels.⁸⁶ In its reply to the Council of Europe Safety of Journalists Platform, issued on 7 December 2023, the Finnish government notes that the police have not received any report of an offence from one of the targeted journalists. Another journalist had filed a criminal complaint about the illegal threat. However, the police concluded that the reported act did not meet the statutory definitions of illegal threat, extortion, or coercion.⁸⁷</p> <p>In July 2023, a journalist was subjected to threats of physical and sexual violence online after some Members of Parliament (MP) launched a smear campaign discrediting and insulting them due to their column published in the newspaper <i>Iltaalehti</i> on 2 July 2023, in which they, among other things, criticised the ruling Finns Party for trying to prevent the media from bringing out the "extreme right-wing connections" of their MPs. In a short period, the extensive online harassment campaign</p>

⁸⁵ Amnesty Finland (2023), [Mielenosoitustarkkailu: Amnestyn raportti 2022](#) (Protest monitoring: report of Amnesty Finland 2022), Helsinki, Amnesty Finland, p. 14.

⁸⁶ Council of Europe, Safety of Journalists Platform (2023), [Finland, Alert No. 210/2023](#), 7 September 2023.

⁸⁷ Finland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs (*ulkoministeriö/utrikesministeriet*) (2023), [Reply by the Government of Finland to the platform alert no. 210/2023](#), VN/29000/2023, 7 December 2023.

Challenges	Justification/explanation: description of issue at stake and its overall relevance compared to other challenges to democracy and the civic space. Please provide examples and references.
	<p>acquired thousands of responses on Twitter and other social media platforms.⁸⁸</p> <p>On 3 July 2023, the Union of Journalists in Finland (<i>Suomen Journalistiliitto/Finlands Journalistförbund</i>) pointed out that the smearing targeted at the journalist by some politicians had been aimed at their person and called on the governing parties to respect the freedom of the press.⁸⁹ The Association of Editors (<i>Päätoimittajien yhdistys/Chefredaktörernas förening</i>) denounced large-scale harassment and smearing directed at individual journalists as an attempt to restrict freedom of speech and interfere with editorial independence. The Association called to protect the work of journalists and invited all members of society to join forces in defending freedom of speech, one of the cornerstones of Finnish democracy.⁹⁰</p> <p>In its reply to the Council of Europe Safety of Journalists Platform, issued on 11 October 2023, the Finnish government notes that the matter has been reported as an offence and that the police have initiated a criminal investigation of the matter.⁹¹</p>
Legal and administrative constraints, harassment, intimidation, and reprisals against civil	<p>Criminalisation of targeting to a standstill</p> <p>In 2022, the Ministry of Justice (<i>oikeusministeriö/justitieministeriet</i>) issued an assessment exploring whether amendments to criminal law are needed to improve the effectiveness of prosecution of targeting, a form of hate</p>

⁸⁸ Council of Europe, Safety of Journalists Platform (2023), [Finland, Alert No. 167/2023](#), 11 July 2023.

⁸⁹ Finnish Broadcasting Company (*Yleisradio/Rundradion*) (2023). '[Osa perussuomalaisten ja kokoomuksen poliitikoista maalittaa Iltalehden toimittajaa, sanoo Journalistiliitto](#)', (The Union of Journalists claims that some politicians representing the Finns Party and the National Coalition Party target a journalist at Iltalehti), news report, 3 July 2023.

⁹⁰ Finnish Association of Editors (*Päätoimittajien yhdistys/Chefredaktörernas förening*) (2023), '[PTY vetoaa: journalistien työrauhaa puolustettava](#)', (Finnish Association of Editors appeals: Journalists' work peace must be defended), press release, 3 July 2023.

⁹¹ Finland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2023), [Reply by the Government of Finland to the platform alert no. 167/2023](#), VN/22082/2023, 11 October 2023.

Challenges	Justification/explanation: description of issue at stake and its overall relevance compared to other challenges to democracy and the civic space. Please provide examples and references.
society organisations, human rights defenders (including SLAPPs - strategic lawsuits against public participation)	<p>speech,⁹² which refers to systematic actions aimed at silencing people or influencing their activities, for example, by threatening or spreading their private (or false) information on the internet. Targeting is typically a group activity involving the incitement of people to participate in a hate campaign against specific individuals, often with hundreds of participants. Those involved also encourage others to share offensive information or threats against the chosen target.⁹³ The assessment suggested that there are grounds for making targeting punishable. The report contended that initiating and participating in targeting should be punishable. The report suggested that the penalty be a fine or a maximum of one year of imprisonment. Furthermore, it was suggested that targeting should be subject to official prosecution.⁹⁴</p> <p>During government formation talks in 2023, the government decided against including the criminalisation of targeting in the government programme. As the reasons for omitting the criminalisation of targeting from the government programme, the Minister of Justice cited, for instance: 1) that numerous offenses, often associated with the term “targeting”, have already been legislated as punishable (e.g., crimes against public officials, public exhortation to an offense, dissemination of information violating personal privacy, defamation, illegal threat, stalking, coercion); 2) that the principles of complicity in the Criminal Code apply to offenses committed by multiple perpetrators; 3) that, as of 1 October 2021, illegal threats became subject to official charges if the act is directed at a person due to their professional duties; 4) that when</p>

⁹² Finland, Government bill HE 226/2020 on the amendment of Chapter 25, section 9 of the Criminal Code ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi rikoslain 25 luvun 9 §:n muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om ändring av 25 kap. 9 § i strafflagen](#)), 19 November 2020, p. 4.

⁹³ Illman, M. (2020), *Järjestelmällinen häirintä ja maalittaminen: Lainsäädännön arviointia* (Systematic harassment and targeting: a legislative assessment [unofficial translation]), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 3, pp. 12–13.

⁹⁴ Kanerva, J. (2022), *Maalittamisen rikosoikeudellinen sääntely: Arviomuistio* (Legal regulation of targeting: evaluation memorandum), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of Justice 2022:29.

Challenges	Justification/explanation: description of issue at stake and its overall relevance compared to other challenges to democracy and the civic space. Please provide examples and references.
	<p>criminalising verbal expressions, it is crucial to consider freedom of speech as a fundamental right, which is a cornerstone of democracy: the purpose of criminal law cannot be to prevent sharp or even angry criticism; 5) that the potential statutory definition of targeting is vague, making it difficult for individuals to anticipate whether their actions are punishable.⁹⁵</p>
<p>Lack of media freedom a/o media pluralism; disinformation (incl. online)</p>	<p>Concentration of media ownership risking media pluralism</p> <p>The Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM), published by the European University Institute, assesses the risks to media pluralism in EU Member States and five candidate countries. The tool considers legal, political and economic variables relevant in assessing the levels of plurality of media systems in a democratic society. The risk scores, based on various indicators, are grouped as low (0–33 %), medium (34–66 %) and high (67–100 %) across four thematic areas, including fundamental protection, market plurality, political independence, and social inclusiveness.⁹⁶</p> <p>The 2022 MPM report regarding Finland was published on 6 July 2023. The report finds that the most notable change in the negative direction was in the thematic area of market plurality (from 64 to 75 % risk). This finding was due to a high degree of media ownership concentration and a lack of specific thresholds in media legislation to prevent it, and a lack of sector-specific legal provisions imposing financial reporting obligations on media companies. For instance, in 2022, the ownership concentration of the four biggest cross-media companies increased from 69 to 78 %. In addition, the combined market share of the four largest audiovisual media owners increased from 65 to 77 % from the previous year. In</p>

⁹⁵ Meri, L. (2023), '[Maalittamisilmiön kriminalisointi](#)' (Criminalisation of the targeting phenomenon), column, 9 August 2023, Ministry of Justice.

⁹⁶ Bleyer-Simon, K., Brogi, E., Carlini, R., Da Costa Leite Borges, D., Nenadić, I., Palmer, M., Parcu, P. L., Trevisan, M., Verza, S., Žuffová, M. (2023), [Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era: Media Pluralism in the Digital Era Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey in the year 2022](#), Research project report, San Domenico di Fiesole, European University Institute Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom.

Challenges	Justification/explanation: description of issue at stake and its overall relevance compared to other challenges to democracy and the civic space. Please provide examples and references.
	<p>addition, the report finds that, in the thematic area of <i>social inclusiveness</i>, the indicator for local/regional and community media has continued to score a high risk at 75 % as compared to 2021. The report contends that the issue is the lack of state support and recognition for local and community media. Local, regional and citizen media are present in some parts of the country, while many communities and regions lack their own media.⁹⁷</p> <p>To address the news media concentration, the report recommends that the government should explore media subsidy options based on non-economic criteria. In addition, the report recommends that the government introduces support mechanisms for local, community and minority media based on the criteria of inclusiveness, quality, pluralism, and information accessibility.⁹⁸ And, as suggested by the previous MPM report,⁹⁹ a government funded research project, examining the current state of concentration of media ownership, its effects on the diversity of media content and its consequences in terms of equality of information and freedom of speech was launched in March 2023.¹⁰⁰</p>

⁹⁷ Mäntyoja, M., Manninen, V. (2023), [Monitoring media pluralism in the digital era: application of the media pluralism monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey in the year 2022. Country report: Finland](#), Research project report – June 2023, San Domenico di Fiesole, European University Institute Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom.

⁹⁸ Mäntyoja, M., Manninen, V. (2023), [Monitoring media pluralism in the digital era: application of the media pluralism monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey in the year 2022. Country report: Finland](#), Research project report – June 2023, San Domenico di Fiesole, European University Institute Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom.

⁹⁹ Mäntyoja, M., Manninen, V. (2022), [Monitoring media pluralism in the digital era: application of the media pluralism monitor in the European Union, Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey in the year 2021. Country report: Finland](#), Research project report – June 2022, San Domenico di Fiesole, European University Institute Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom.

¹⁰⁰ Finland, University of Tampere (2023), [Media concentration and diversity of media content in Finland](#), project website, accessed on 18 October 2023.

Challenges	Justification/explanation: description of issue at stake and its overall relevance compared to other challenges to democracy and the civic space. Please provide examples and references.
Foreign interference	
Lack of (processes for) transparent, accountable, democratic and pluralistic participation in law and policymaking; incl. access to information	
Lack of election integrity (incl. electoral process, political campaigning and party financing)	
Disproportionate use of law enforcement measures (surveillance, police violence, unlawful arrest etc.)	
Corruption, including misuse of EU funds	
Lack of (effective judicial protection by) independent and impartial courts	
Threats to (the independence of) the fundamental rights institutional landscape (NHRIs, equality bodies, data protection authorities and	

Challenges	Justification/explanation: description of issue at stake and its overall relevance compared to other challenges to democracy and the civic space. Please provide examples and references.
similar bodies), incl. closure of fundamental rights bodies, legal changes, budget cuts and harassment	
Institutional issues linked to checks and balances (lack of parliamentary oversight, lack of implementation of final court decisions by executive, etc.)	
Other major developments threatening democratic values	Please explain

2.2. Legislative and policy measures having an impact on the freedom of assembly/association/expression of civil society actors.

Government planning to limit right to political industrial action

In its 2023 government programme, the Finnish government is planning labour market reforms, which include limitations to the right to political industrial action and solidarity action as well as increased level of compensatory fines for unlawful industrial action.¹⁰¹ First, the government is preparing proposals to limit the exercise of the right to political

¹⁰¹ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), *A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government 20 June 2023*, Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60.

industrial action to protests lasting no longer than one day.¹⁰² Second, the government is planning to amend the legislation so that solidarity action will become subject to the duty to notify in accordance with the proportionality assessment and the Act on Mediation in Labour Disputes.¹⁰³ In future, according to the government programme, only solidarity action that is “proportionate in relation to the objectives” and “the effects of which only affect the parties to the labour dispute” will be legal.¹⁰⁴ Third, the level of a compensatory fine for unlawful industrial action is planned to be increased, with the maximum amount set at € 150,000 and the minimum set at € 10,000. An employee who continues a strike which the Labour Court (*työtuomioistuin/arbetsdomstolen*) has found to be unlawful industrial action will be subject to an administrative penalty payment of € 200 to the employer.¹⁰⁵ A working group appointed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (*työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö/arbets- och näringsministeriet*) is preparing a report containing suggestions for the planned legislative changes.¹⁰⁶ The draft bill is set to be presented in the plenary session of government in January–February 2024.¹⁰⁷

Key judgments awaiting Extinction Rebellion and the police on their policies towards protesters

¹⁰² Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo’s Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, p. 67.

¹⁰³ Finland, Act on Mediation in Labour Disputes ([laki työriitojen sovittelusta/lag om medling i arbetstvister](#)), Act No. 420/1962, 1 October 1962.

¹⁰⁴ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo’s Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, p. 67.

¹⁰⁵ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), [A strong and committed Finland: Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo’s Government 20 June 2023](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2023:60, p. 68.

¹⁰⁶ Finland, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (*työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö/arbets- och näringsministeriet*) (2023), [Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laeiksi työehtosopimuslain ja työriitojen sovittelusta annetun lain muuttamisesta](#) (Government bill on amending the Collective Agreements Act and the Act on Mediation in Labour Disputes), statute drafting project TEM053:00/2023.

¹⁰⁷ Finland, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (*työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö/arbets- och näringsministeriet*) (2023), [Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laeiksi työehtosopimuslain ja työriitojen sovittelusta annetun lain muuttamisesta](#) (Government bill on amending the Collective Agreements Act and the Act on Mediation in Labour Disputes), statute drafting project TEM053:00/2023.

The first case is related to an Extinction Rebellion (*Elokapina*) protest held in Tampere in August 2021. The demonstration organiser had not notified the police of the event in advance.¹⁰⁸ According to Extinction Rebellion, the demonstration disrupted traffic in Tampere, as approximately 50 protesters demanded climate crisis action from the government.¹⁰⁹ Protesters sitting on the roadway had disobeyed the police order to leave the road. The Turku Court of Appeal (*Turun hovioikeus/Åbo hovrätt*) convicted the defendants of resisting the police but did not impose a punishment on them. According to the Court of Appeal, the punishment was considered futile, especially considering that the defendants apprehended at the scene had been deprived of their liberty for about 8–9 hours. The Pirkanmaa District Court (*Pirkanmaan käräjäoikeus*) had also refrained from imposing a sentence on the defendants, justifying its decision by deeming the act to be minor and considering the imposition of a fine, in addition to the detention, unreasonable. The prosecutor in the case was granted permission to appeal to the Supreme Court (*Korkein oikeus/Högsta domstolen*). The Supreme Court is currently tasked with assessing whether the defendants should be sentenced for their actions.¹¹⁰

The second case is also related to an Extinction Rebellion protest held in Helsinki in October 2020. A group of protesters had halted traffic by standing in the roadway, as noted by Extinction Rebellion. According to the National Police Board's report to the Ministry of the Interior, the police were notified of the demonstration but not about the plan to block traffic on the roadways.¹¹¹ According to Extinction Rebellion, the police had issued a dispersal order, but some of the protesters refused to comply. Extinction Rebellion points out that, in order to dismantle the blockade, the police had deployed pepper spray, spraying the protesters several times, causing severe symptoms for around ten people. The Extinction Rebellion contends that the police also prevented

¹⁰⁸ Information obtained from the Central Finland Police Department by email on 2 January 2024.

¹⁰⁹ Extinction Rebellion (2021), '[Elokapina on katkaissut liikenteen Tampereella vaatiakseen hallitukselta ripeämpiä ilmastotoimia](#)', (Extinction Rebellion has disrupted traffic in Tampere to demand swifter climate action from the government), press release, 14 August 2021.

¹¹⁰ Finland, Supreme Court (2023), '[KKO: Syyttäjälle valituslupa Elokapina-mielenosoittajia koskevassa asiassa](#)', (Supreme Court: Leave to appeal granted for the prosecutor in the Elokapina protester case), press release, 7 September 2023.

¹¹¹ Finland, National Police Board (*Poliisihallitus/Polisstyrelsen*), Poliisihallituksen selvitys poliisin voimankäytöstä sekä poliisin tehtävästä huolehtia mielenosoitusten järjestyksestä ja turvallisuudesta, [POL-2020-62468](#) (The National Police Board's report on the use of force by the police and the duty of the police to ensure order and safety at demonstrations), 8 October 2020, p. 12.

some of those sprayed from rinsing their faces with water.¹¹² On 21 June 2023, the Helsinki District Court (*Helsingin käräjäoikeus/Helsingfors tingsrätt*) issued a judgment in the case where fines were sought for seven Helsinki Police officers for using pepper spray on protesters. According to the District Court, the use of the pepper spray against the protesters was too heavy-handed. The court sentenced only the commander of the operation, who remotely oversaw and decided on the use of the spray, among the seven police officers charged. The court found the commander guilty of negligent breach of official duty, and they received a punishment of 30 day-fines. The prosecutor now wants the Court of Appeal to assess whether criminal responsibility for the use of pepper spray should also extend to two on-site police field commanders and the officers who used the spray, proposing fines for all defendants.¹¹³

Transparency Register Act

Parliament adopted the Transparency Register Act (430/2023)¹¹⁴ on 24 February 2023. The Act stipulates an obligation for legal entities and private companies to report their lobbying activities directed at Parliament and ministries, along with related consultancy services provided as a business. There are several restrictions on the registration obligation. For example, all small-scale lobbying activities and usual dealings with the authority are excluded from the register. The Act entered into force on 1 January 2024.¹¹⁵

The government bill regarding the enactment of the Transparency Register Act points out that, during the law drafting, concerns have been voiced about the transparency register's impact on the opportunities of civil society to participate in decision-making. According to the government bill, the most significant concern relates to the administrative burden, which is feared to hinder the ability of minor actors to carry out influencing activities and be involved in public discourse. As noted in the government

¹¹² Extinction Rebellion (2020), '[Poliisi käytti pippurisumutetta Elokapinan väkivallattomiin mielenosoittajiin](#)' (The police used pepper spray against the nonviolent demonstrators of Extinction Rebellion), press release, 3 October 2020.

¹¹³ Uusimaa (2023), '[Uutissuomalainen: Poliisin pippurisumutus Elokapina-mielenosoituksessa etenee hovioikeuden arvioitavaksi](#)', (Uutissuomalainen: Police use of pepper spray against Extinction Rebellion demonstrators will proceed to the court of appeal), news report, 29 August 2023.

¹¹⁴ Finland, Transparency Register Act ([avoimuusrekisterilaki/lag om öppenhetsregistret](#)), Act No. 430/2023, 23 March 2023.

¹¹⁵ Finland, Government bill HE 98/2022 on the Transparency Register Act ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle avoimuusrekisterilaiksi/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om öppenhetsregistret](#)), 16 June 2022, p. 1.

bill, however, grassroots civic activities and most small associations and foundations, whose influencing activities are often occasional and small-scale, remain outside the scope of the Act.¹¹⁶

The government bill refers to studies which indicate that large advocacy organisations with resources to conduct extensive advocacy activities have had the most opportunities to influence legislative drafting.¹¹⁷ As legislative drafting increasingly takes place in ministries and informal networks (instead of broader preparatory bodies involving, e.g., stakeholders), the status and resources of the advocacy actors are emphasized in influencing legislative drafting.¹¹⁸ The government bill finds that the transparency register can indirectly increase opportunities for participation and influence, especially among minor actors, as it is expected to spur the authorities to amend their consultation practices in the long term in such a way that they pay more attention to an open and equal consultation of different views and stakeholders. This is likely to encourage smaller actors to bring forth their work and activities and will help the authorities identify a broader range of stakeholders in their field.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Finland, Government bill HE 98/2022 on the Transparency Register Act ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle avoimuusrekisterilainsäädännön valmistelusta](#)), 16 June 2022, p. 24.

¹¹⁷ Finland, Government bill HE 98/2022 on the Transparency Register Act ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle avoimuusrekisterilainsäädännön valmistelusta](#)), 16 June 2022, p. 24. For example, Vesa, J., Kantola, A. (2016), [Kuka pääsee mukaan? Miten järjestöjen ääni kuuluu lakien valmistelussa](#) (Who gets to participate? How organisations get their voices heard in policy preparation), Publications of the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities 59/2016, Helsinki, Prime Minister's Office.

¹¹⁸ Hirvola, A., Mikkonen, S., Skippari, M., Tiensuu, P. (2021), [Kohti avoimempaa lobbausta: Lobbauksen nykytila Suomessa valtiollisella tasolla](#) (Towards more open lobbying: Current state of lobbying in Finland at central government level), Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Reports and guidelines 2021:6, Helsinki, Ministry of Justice.

¹¹⁹ Finland, Government bill HE 98/2022 on the Transparency Register Act ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle avoimuusrekisterilainsäädännön valmistelusta](#)), 16 June 2022, p. 24.

Table 3 – Case law

Case law	
Deciding body (in original language)	Korkein oikeus/Högsta domstolen
Deciding body (in English)	Supreme Court of Finland
Case number (also European Case Law Identifier ECLI , where applicable)	KKO:2023:51 ECLI:FI:KKO:2023:51
Parties	
Decision date	11 July 2023
Web link to the decision (if available)	https://korkeinoikeus.fi/fi/index/ennakkopaatokset/kko202351.html#
Which fundamental freedoms of (peaceful assembly, association and/or expression) were referred to in the case?	Freedom of expression
Key facts of the case (max. 250 words)	In the Helsinki District Court, a trial was held in 2020, in which a man was accused of stalking two women. The potential victims of the crimes were a journalist (A) – who had written, for instance, about Russia’s information war and so-called troll factories – and a researcher from the Finnish Defence Forces (B). In the actual criminal case, the district court sentenced the man to a suspended prison

Case law	
	<p>sentence for stalking A and aggravated defamation against B.¹²⁰ During the trial, the women were heard in the courtroom, where they described the impact of the actions of the accused on their lives. A representative and spokesperson of alternative media outlets (C) requested an audio recording of the public court hearing of B from the district court and published it in its entirety on a video streaming service. External individuals posted comments alongside the video service. According to a later decision by the Supreme Court, some of the comments violated the privacy of the victim in the stalking trial and were inappropriate in their expression. C also requested recordings of later hearings from the district court. C had indicated their intention to publish these recordings as well. The district court had stated that there were no grounds for keeping the audio recordings confidential under sections 9 or 10 of the Act on the Publicity of Court Proceedings in General Courts.¹²¹ Instead, after considering the matter as a whole, the district court concluded that the harm to the publicity of the trial would be smaller by keeping the recordings confidential than by making them public, ensuring the protection of legal rights and the fairness of the trial, and therefore ordered the audio recordings to be kept confidential.</p>
<p>The key legal question raised by the Court</p>	<p>The Supreme Court was tasked with deciding whether audio recordings made during a public trial of the statements of the parties involved and witnesses can be ordered to be kept confidential.</p>
<p>Result of the case in terms of factual outcome, and in terms of assessment of the legal question raised</p>	<p>The Supreme Court concludes that the audio recordings made by the district court during the public proceedings, referred to in the appeal, cannot be ordered to be kept confidential.</p> <p>The Supreme Court notes that, according to the Constitution Act,¹²² court documents are generally public, and restrictions on publicity must be established by law. The Supreme Court points out that legislation has drawn a distinction between visual and audio recordings, and it has been deemed necessary to limit only the disclosure of visual recordings. The Supreme Court finds that provisions of the Act on the Publicity of Court Proceedings in General</p>

¹²⁰ Finland, Supreme Court (*Korkein oikeus/Högsta domstolen*), [KKO:2022:8](#), 18 February 2022.

¹²¹ Finland, Act on the Publicity of Court Proceedings in General Courts ([laki oikeudenkäynnin julkisuudesta yleisissä tuomioistuimissa/lag om offentlighet vid rättegång i allmänna domstolar](#)), Act No. 370/2007, 1 October 2007.

¹²² Finland, Constitution of Finland ([perustuslaki/grundlag](#)), Act No. 731/1999, 11 June 1999.

Case law	
	<p>Courts¹²³ do not allow for an order of confidentiality regarding audio recordings in this matter. The Supreme Court states that the reasons supporting the confidentiality of audio recordings must be particularly weighty, considering the regulatory framework described, which emphasises the safeguarding of a fair trial and the protection of privacy.</p> <p>The Supreme Court contends that the trial in question has had problematic aspects concerning a fair trial and privacy. However, the Supreme Court believes that these aspects are not so weighty in this case that they would render the trial, when evaluated as a whole, unfair. Therefore, the Supreme Court finds that these aspects do not provide sufficient grounds for the court to deviate from the legal starting point and order the audio recordings to be kept confidential. One of the justices deciding the case disagreed with the decision, citing, for instance, Article 18 of the Victim's Rights Directive, which obliges the Member State to ensure, without limiting the rights of the defence, that measures are taken to protect the victim and their family members from secondary and repeated victimisation, intimidation, retaliatory actions, as well as from the risk of emotional or psychological harm in connection with the questioning and the issuance of statements for evidential purposes. The justice also points out that, in the government bill regarding the Act on the Publicity of Court Proceedings in General Courts,¹²⁴ it is also stated that the disclosure of information that violates an individual's personality may even lead to the situation where the party concerned would rather abandon the entire legal process than allow the public disclosure of information concerning them, thereby preventing the person from exercising their fundamental right to a fair trial.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the disagreeing justice noted that public authority has a positive</p>

¹²³ Finland, Act on the Publicity of Court Proceedings in General Courts ([laki oikeudenkäynnin julkisuudesta yleisissä tuomioistuimissa/lag om offentlighet vid rättegång i allmänna domstolar](#)), Act No. 370/2007, 1 October 2007.

¹²⁴ Finland, Act on the Publicity of Court Proceedings in General Courts ([laki oikeudenkäynnin julkisuudesta yleisissä tuomioistuimissa/lag om offentlighet vid rättegång i allmänna domstolar](#)), Act No. 370/2007, 1 October 2007.

¹²⁵ Finland, Government bill HE 13/2006 for an Act on the publicity of court proceedings in general courts and certain related acts ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi oikeudenkäynnin julkisuudesta yleisissä tuomioistuimissa ja eräiksi siihen liittyviksi laeiksi/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lag om offentlighet vid rättegång i allmänna domstolar samt vissa lagar som har samband med den](#)), 10 March 2006.

Case law	
	<p>obligation to ensure the realisation of the right to a fair trial protected by the constitution and human rights conventions, as well as to protect the privacy of the parties involved, even though such a situation is not explicitly recognised in the legislation on the publicity of court proceedings.</p> <p>The decision of the Supreme Court highlights the potential and limits of the existing legislation on publicity of court proceedings to shield civil society actors, human rights defenders, and journalists from harassment, intimidation, and reprisals.</p>
