



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
22 February 2023

Original: English
English, French and Spanish only

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Ninety-third session

8–26 May 2023

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of reports of States parties

Replies of Finland to the list of issues in relation to its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports*, **

[Date received: 16 February 2023]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annex to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



Part I

Reply to paragraph 2 (a) of the list of issues in relation to the combined fifth and sixth reports of Finland (CRC/C/FIN/Q/5-6)

1. On November 2022, the Government of Finland gave to Parliament a comprehensive report on the administration of justice, including the resources in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Justice (<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164448>). The aim is to provide the decision-makers all the necessary information that is needed for a long-term budget planning.
2. In September 2022, the Government submitted a proposal to Parliament (HE 144/2022 vp) proposing that certain crimes against persons under the age of eighteen, should be dealt with urgently. Parliament passed the proposal in February 2023. The provisions will enter into force in October 2023. Additional resources for police, National Prosecutor Authority and courts have been allocated in the state budget in order to implement the new legislation. (<https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/project?tunnus=OM058:00/2022>).
3. In October 2022, the Government submitted another proposal to Parliament (HE 217/2022 vp) proposing some minor changes to the provisions concerning the appointment of a trustee for a child. The purpose is, inter alia, to promote the appointment of a trustee also for child witnesses in situations where the trustee or other legal representative of the child (usually the parents) cannot objectively ensure the interests of the child. Moreover, in the same proposal, legislation is proposed to be amended so that the child's identity in a petitionary matter related to a criminal case that concerns a particularly sensitive aspect of his or her private life (in most cases, a sexual offence case) would be possible to order to be kept secret.
4. The police authority in the Åland Islands is responsible for the duties of the State of Finland in respect of criminal investigation and coercive measures. The directives and developments of activities applicable in mainland Finland apply automatically in the Åland Islands, too.

Reply to paragraph 2 (b) of the list of issues

5. New guidelines for impact assessments in the legislative process have been published in the beginning of November 2022. The guidelines include guidance on human rights impact assessments and child impact assessments as well as impact assessments related to gender, non-discrimination, the Sámi, rights of persons with disabilities etc. (<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410853/new-guidelines-for-impact-assessment-to-support-high-quality-law-drafting>).

Reply to paragraph 2 (c) of the list of issues

6. The Government has agreed to establish a permanent National Child Strategy function in September 2022. Its key tasks are to coordinate the work of the child rights network of the Child Strategy and to ensure parliamentary contacts, to implement, monitor and report on the Child Strategy, and to coordinate and monitor the European child guarantee scheme (<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-740-9>).

Reply to paragraph 2 (d) of the list of issues

7. In Finland, sensitive personal data is covered by special protection under data protection provisions, and collecting data on protected characteristics must involve careful consideration.
8. As part of the third National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights (2020-2023), adopted in June 2021, an indicator framework has been developed as a new tool to assess trends in the realization of fundamental and human rights in Finland. The indicators aim to provide systematic data in the long term on the realization of rights of different population groups. For this purpose the indicators produce, when necessary and enabled by the sources, disaggregated data. This project is under preparation at the Ministry of Justice and will be finished in 2023.

9. Statistics Finland's extensive work on disaggregated data has been explained in the Government's periodic report of (see paragraphs 50 and 51).

Reply to paragraph 2 (e) of the list of issues

10. The resources of the Ombudsman have been strengthened. In addition to the Ombudsman for Children, an administrative assistant, a senior researcher, a lawyer, senior adviser and communications specialist work in the in the Office of the Ombudsman for Children. Moreover, a lawyer and a designer work in a fixed-term contract until the end of 2023.

11. The new Act on the Wellbeing Service Counties (611/2021) entered into force in July 2021. According to the Act, residents of wellbeing service counties and clients of services have similar participation rights to residents of municipalities and clients of municipal services. County councils need to ensure diverse and effective possibilities and means for participation and exerting influence for residents and clients. In addition, the Counties must set up a youth council or similar group representing young people's views for the well-being service county and ensure the operational preconditions for it. The youth council must be given the opportunity to influence the planning, preparation, execution and monitoring of the activities of the well-being service county in matters of importance to children and youth and their services.

12. In addition, the residents regardless of their age have the right to submit initiatives on matters concerning the well-being service county's activities.

Reply to paragraph 2 (f) of the list of issues

13. The Government Programme includes the Barnahus model, which seeks to mainstream practices compliant with the Barnahus standards and the earlier development efforts carried out in Finland by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare in the investigation processes of suspected cases of violence against children as well as in support and treatment provided for children who have encountered violence.

14. See reply 5 (a).

Reply to paragraph 3 (a) of the list of issues

15. See reply 3 c.

Reply to paragraph 3 (b) of the list of issues

16. A Government proposal for a new Act on services to persons with disabilities (HE 191/2022) is under consideration in Parliament. Under the proposal, particular attention shall be paid to supporting the inclusion of children with disabilities when planning, providing and evaluating services to persons with disabilities. When providing services to children and young people with disabilities, account shall be taken of their age and stage of development, their method of communication and their opinions as well inclusion and their capabilities in their own environments. Services shall be provided in a way that safeguards the wellbeing and development of children and young people and supports their resources and strengths.

17. The second National Action Plan on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities determines the measures that will be taken to promote the implementation of the Convention in different administrative branches during the Action Plan period 2020-2023.

18. As part of the preparation of the Government proposal for the reform of the Transgender Act (HE 189/2022 vp), the concrete effects of the age limit laid down in the current act on the status of minors and on the realisation of their fundamental and human rights were examined. It was also examined what kinds of models would be available for regulating the recognition of gender with regard to minors. Parliament passed the proposal in February 2023. The provisions will enter into force in March 2023.

19. In the implementation of the National Child Strategy, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare has prepared a training package on sexual orientation and gender diversity and LGBT families for professionals.

20. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, in collaboration with other Ministries, has developed a comprehensive Action Plan to prevent bullying, teasing, violence, and harassment in early childhood education, schools, and other educational institutions (<https://okm.fi/en/-/action-plan-to-prevent-bullying-resources-education-and-legislative-amendments-at-the-centre>).

21. In 2020-2022, several initiatives to strengthen the wellbeing, sense of community, and inclusion of students in vocational education and training have been launched within the national development programme for quality and equality in vocational education and training.

Reply to paragraph 3 (c) of the list of issues

22. In accordance with the Government Programme, a Government proposal on the partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act was given to Parliament in September 2022. Parliament has approved the partial reform of the Equality Act (1325/2014). The revised Act will enter into force in June 2023. In the Government proposal (HE 148/2022), it is proposed to regulate the promotion of gender equality in early childhood education. The obligation of equality planning would be extended from educational institutions to early childhood education.

23. The Ministry of Justice has prepared an Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups (<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163737>). The goals of the Action Plan are, among other things, to identify and dismantle structures that discriminate in society, to promote the diversity of working life, to strengthen the equality skills of the authorities and to raise awareness of the different forms of racism. The Action Plan covers all ages and the educational part of the program is especially concentrated to youths and children's rights. In the framework of the Action Plan, teaching material is produced for teachers and for the social and health care sector.

24. Finland is drafting its third National Roma Policy for years 2023-2030. The overarching goals of the policy are equality, inclusion and participation, and the elimination of discrimination against Roma. The policy includes also number of sections related to Roma children and young people.

25. Finland's first National Child Strategy was prepared through parliamentary cooperation and published on February 2021. According to the strategy, each new Government is tasked with preparing and implementing a detailed implementation plan for promoting the policy guidelines of the Strategy during its term of office.

26. The plan takes into account the ongoing measures and projects that promote the policy guidelines of the Strategy and sets out 30 measures. The plan includes measures on combating discrimination and inequality and measures on securing the rights of the children in vulnerable position.

27. In the implementation of the National Child Strategy, the Ombudsman for Children is preparing a report on the realisation of the welfare and rights of Sámi and Roma children in Finland.

Reply to paragraph 3 (d) of the list of issues

28. In the Constitution of Finland *origin* is an explicitly prohibited discrimination ground and is considered to be wide in its scope covering also ethnic origin. The list of grounds is also open-ended and therefore covers any reasons related to the person parallel to those explicitly mentioned in the paragraph. This means that also those reasons included in international human rights treaties ratified by Finland, such as *race*, *colour* and *ethnicity*, fall within the scope of the prohibition of discrimination. Due to its non-scientific nature and risk of perpetuating stereotypes, *race* as an explicit ground is not mentioned in the Constitution. However, all discrimination based on supposed race is undisputedly prohibited by the Constitution.

Reply to paragraph 3 (e) of the list of issues

29. Changes have been made to the Basic Education Act (628/1998), the Act on General Upper Secondary Education (714/2018), the Act on Vocational Education and Training (531/2017). In the future, the legislation will require that the best interests of children and young people are given primary consideration when teaching or education is planned, organized, or decided upon. The amendments entered into force in August 2022.

30. In the implementation of the National Child Strategy, the National Agency for Education is creating a website for the work to prevent bullying, sexual harassment, violence, hate speech and discrimination against children and young people.

Reply to paragraph 3 (f) of the list of issues

31. Parliament passed the Government proposal for the reform of the Transgender Act in February 2023. The provisions will enter into force in March 2023. However, the reform does not cover persons under the age of 18.

Reply to paragraph 4 (a) of the list of issues

32. According to section 22 of the Constitution of Finland, the public authorities shall guarantee the observance of basic rights and liberties and human rights. Consequently, authorities are obliged to guarantee the rights of children, and therefore also assess and take into account the best interest of the child as a primary consideration in all matters concerning a child.

33. During the legislative process, the Constitutional Law Committee evaluates compatibility of legislative proposals sent to it for consideration with international human rights obligations, including the best interest of the child. It should also be noted that international human rights treaties ratified by Finland, including the CRC, are brought into force by an Act and are directly applicable in courts of law.

34. The principle of the primacy of the best interests of the child and the obligation to determine the best interests of the child has been incorporated into numerous Acts including the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018), the Basic Education Act, the Act on General Upper Secondary Education, the Act on Vocational Education and Training, the Adoption Act (22/2012), the Act on Child Custody and Right of Access (361/1983), the Aliens Act (301/2004), the Parenthood Act (775/2022), the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014) and the Child Welfare Act (417/2007).

35. The police authority observes the State's competence and follows national models in criminal investigation and criminal proceedings. Criminal procedural legislation includes provisions that aim to protect children in the proceedings. In a criminal investigation, a person under the age of 18 years shall be treated in the manner required by his or her age and level of development (see Criminal Investigation Act, chapter 4, section 8 and chapter 11, section 9 a).

36. The implementation of the National Child Strategy includes a number of measures aiming to raise awareness of and take into account the rights of the child in all decision-making and activities.

37. On custody matters, please see the Government's periodic report for the reform of the Act on Child Custody and Right of Access (paragraphs 8, 70, 107, 112, 132, 163-164).

Reply to paragraph 4 (b) of the list of issues

38. In 2019, the Ministry of Justice launched a project to measure Finland's progress in implementing Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18. In spring 2020, an assessment report was published.

39. The Barnahus project in Finland has involved the training of legal interpreters in appropriate conduct in child interview situations. The National Police Board has instructed that such legal interpreters shall primarily be used whenever children are interviewed. Children are only interviewed by police officers with special training. Interviews of children

are videotaped and the recording is then introduced at trial. Hence the child need not appear before the court. At the request of the police, the more demanding interviews of children are carried out by child and adolescent forensic psychologists from university hospitals.

40. In April 2022, the Ministry of Justice launched a new online platform www.digiraati.fi (“digital council”) aimed especially at young people. The purpose of the new platform is to provide a reliable and secure channel for consulting children and young people and for dialogue between children, young people and decision-makers.

41. In the implementation of the National Child Strategy, several measures have been taken to promote children’s right to express their views in all matters affecting them.

42. On custody matters, please see the Government’s periodic report for the reform of the Act on Child Custody and Right of Access (paragraphs 8, 70, 107, 112, 132, 163-164).

43. Åland’s Provincial Act on social welfare contains numerous provisions concerning children and young people.

44. See reply 11 (c).

Reply to paragraph 4 (c) of the list of issues

45. The Government’s policy since 2019 has been to repatriate all the Finnish children from the refugee camp in al-Hol as soon as possible, when necessary together with their mothers. In December 2019, the Government issued guidelines for the repatriation of Finnish nationals from the refugee camp in al-Hol in Syria and later adopted a resolution in accordance with the Constitution of Finland, international treaties binding on Finland, and other applicable national legislation.

46. The authorities will, in all situation, actively seek to ensure compliance with the rule of law, the Constitution of Finland, other Finnish legislation and international law, including human rights treaties, agreements on the rights of the child and other applicable international law. In all actions, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. Following this legal basis and the Government resolution, the authorities have repatriated most Finnish citizens detained in Al Hol: 35 individuals, including 26 children and 9 adult women.

47. Since December 2019, the authorities have sought to put in place interim measures in order to protect the fundamental and human rights of children, while their repatriation has not yet been possible. In December 2019, the authorities organized a remote paediatrician and in April 2020, another remote service, a Finnish school of distant learning was introduced.

Reply to paragraph 4 (d) of the list of issues

48. The Constitution of Finland guarantees freedom of religion and conscience.

49. The Freedom of Religion Act (2003/453) provides more detailed provisions on the right to exercise freedom of religion. The Act also affects the provisions on the teaching of religion and ethics in comprehensive schools and general upper secondary schools.

50. In comprehensive and upper secondary schools, students belonging to a religious community are given religious education, while non-affiliated students are taught ethics. Denominational teaching other than Evangelical Lutheran and Orthodox is provided if there are at least three students belonging to the same religious community and their parents request it. The concept of instruction in one’s own religion aims to guarantee the rights of minorities and to ensure that students receive an education in accordance with their family’s beliefs.

Reply to paragraph 5 (a) of the list of issues

51. Non-Violent Childhood Action Plan aims to safeguard the right of children to live free from violence. A steering group nominated by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare is responsible for monitoring and directing the objectives and actions. In 2022, a mid-term review will be carried out concerning the implementation of the Action Plan’s objectives and actions. (<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162554>).

52. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health appointed a working group to formulate Finland's first Action Plan for the Lanzarote Convention to prevent sexual violence against children aged 0–17. (<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164524>).

53. The Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NAPE) was tasked with preparing a plan for implementing the Istanbul Convention. (<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164242>).

54. The preparation of an Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings was agreed by the Government of Prime Minister Marin. The plan will be implemented in 2021–2023. (<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163326>).

55. One of the key actions in anti-violence work in the term of the current Government has been to expand Barnahus activities to cover all of Finland. The National Child Strategy also contributes to anti-violence work.

56. See reply 3 (b).

Reply to paragraph 5 (b) of the list of issues

57. The National Institute of Health and Welfare is coordinating the Barnahus project in Finland. The objective of the Barnahus is to mainstream practices compliant with Barnahus standards in investigation processes of suspected cases of violence against children as well as in support and treatment provided for children who have encountered violence. The idea is to enhance the cooperation of different authorities (police, prosecutor, health sector and social sector). In this way it can be better guaranteed that the child will get the help that they need during and after the proceedings.

58. Under the leadership of police experts in the Barnahus project, the police have drawn up their own operational handbook on children the investigation of violent and sexual crimes. All police departments have a facility in which the child can be heard and the hearing recorded on a video. In all of the five University Hospitals districts, there are dedicated centres of expertise that specialize in hearing minor victims of a crime. The facilities of these centres have been designed to be child friendly, and interviews are conducted by experts with special training. The police work in a close-knit cooperation with these centres.

59. Barnahus has existed in the Åland Islands since 2007 as an organised network based on cooperation between different public authorities.

60. See reply 4 (a).

Reply to paragraph 5 (c) of the list of issues

61. Since 2007, Save the Children Åland is running activities titled “the Internet of Children” (“*Barnens Internet*”) to promote a sound and safe development of children and young people in using the Internet and the media.

Reply to paragraph 5 (d) of the list of issues

62. During the reform of the legislation of transgender persons, the status of intersex children was discussed and evaluated. A broad-based working group made proposals i.e. to reinforce intersex children's self-determination. Among other things, they proposed an official report on practices related to measures targeting intersex children as well as official guidance. These proposals are under consideration in relevant Ministries. At that stage no legal provision were suggested while two working groups were also evaluating the legal status and rights of intersex children.

63. Finland is continuing to prepare legislation on the self-determination of clients and patients. The reform that will be implemented in stages, will pay special attention to several vulnerable groups including intersex children. The work is at an early stage, and will extend to the next governmental periods.

64. A working group established to propose clarification of the Criminal Code, as regards to female genital mutilation, has finished its work at the end of November 2022. A related legislative proposal is aimed to be submitted to Parliament at a later stage.

Reply to paragraph 6 (a) of the list of issues

65. The social and health care reform aims to create better integration of primary and specialized healthcare and stronger primary-level services. Restructuring is necessary in order to curb the increase in costs and to ensure equal health and social services for future generations, as well as improve accessibility (<https://soteuudistus.fi/en/frontpage>).

66. Provincial Act on Social Welfare of Åland also provides the right to counselling in matters concerning families and the bringing up of children.

Reply to paragraph 6 (b) of the list of issues

67. On custody matters, please see the Government's periodic report paragraphs 8, 70, 107, 112, 132, 163-164.

Reply to paragraph 6 (c) of the list of issues

68. Legal protection guarantees for the child and children's rights for good treatment, care and supervision in substitute care have been strengthened by reforming the Child Welfare Act.

69. As a measure of the Implementation plan for the National Child Strategy, an online Handbook for Child Welfare for children and young people who are child welfare clients has created, an up-to-date report on the abuse and violence occurring in substitute care is prepared and a national operational programme for the prevention of unauthorised departure from a substitute care facility, for activities during unauthorised absence and for aftercare measures is prepared.

70. In spring 2022, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published a set of guidelines prepared in cooperation with the National Police Board and the Emergency Response Centre Agency on returning children who are absent from their substitute care without permission. As of the beginning of 2023, no charge will be made for executive assistance requested from the police on urgent child welfare and social welfare calls.

The child welfare units have the responsibility to ensure the rights of the child in situations where the child has been taken into e.g. foster care or custody.

71. The staff of residential homes are duty-bound to assist and support children in clarifying their legal rights and provide guidance and advice regarding legal remedies. The quality recommendation for child welfare and electronic handbook of child welfare include guidance to the personnel and foster carers regarding complaint mechanisms.

72. A placed child has the right to have their care, protection and other circumstances relating to the placement subjected to external supervision on a regular basis in addition to self-monitoring. The supervision shall include consultation of the children.

73. Workers of reception centers are obligated to notify authorities in case there are concerns about the safety of the child. The reception unit guides the reception centres on how to operate in various situations and with special attention given to the rights of the child.

74. All workers of the immigration service can lodge a child protection notice in necessary cases after consultation with their supervisor and notices are lodged on a lower threshold. A representative of child protection services can also be present at the oral hearing and appointing a legal guardian may be recommended in cases where it is suspected that the guardian is violent towards the child.

75. In a study published in 2021, the realisation of children's rights and related legal oversight in child welfare was analysed (https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162842/STM_2021_6_rap.pdf?sequence=6&isAllowed=y).

Reply to paragraph 6 (d) of the list of issues

76. Reviewing the family reunification criteria is included in the Government Programme. Right to family life and best interests of the child formed the basis for a legislative project on family reunification concerning children that are beneficiaries of international protection.

77. The Ministry of the Interior recently submitted a Government proposal (HE 100/2022 vp) to Parliament, which proposes abolishing the use of the requirement of sufficient resources for family members of children that are beneficiaries of international protection. In future, the status of being a minor would be determined according to the date on which the family member's residence permit application is submitted and no longer according to the date on which the application is decided. The legislative amendments will enter into force in the first quarter of 2023.

78. Finland has recently opened a mission in Teheran, Iran in order to promote the family reunification process of Afghan nationals.

Reply to paragraph 6 (e) of the list of issues

79. In May 2022, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health launched the preparation of the reform of child welfare and legislation concerning child welfare.

80. From the beginning of 2022, a social worker responsible for child's affairs can have a maximum of 35 children as clients at a time. This includes minor children in after-care. Starting from 2024, the maximum number of children as clients will be 30. Financial resources have allocated to municipalities for recruiting new social workers (4,8 million euros in 2022 and 2023; 21,7 million euros from 2024 onwards) as well as to the universities for increasing the intake of students into social work programmes (8 million euros between 2022–2028, responsibility of Ministry of Education and Culture).

81. The social welfare service of the Ålandic municipalities and the child welfare authorities in Åland have complied with the requirements of the Act for the minimum staffing level.

Reply to paragraph 7 (a) of the list of issues

82. Needs-based funding for early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and primary and lower secondary education has been established as part of the legislation as of January 2023.

83. As a part of the Government's right to Learn programme, special discretionary government grants totalling approximately EUR 241 million have been awarded in 2020–2022 for measures and quality development that promote equality in early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and primary and lower secondary education.

84. The working group appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture to promote educational equality and positive special treatment in early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and primary and lower secondary education submitted its proposal in 2022.

Reply to paragraph 7 (b) of the list of issues

85. A Government proposal for a new Act on services for persons with disabilities (HE 191/2022 vp) is currently under consideration in Parliament. The Act would apply to special social welfare services for children with disabilities regardless of their diagnosis. A provision on a child housing benefit is proposed in the new Act.

86. Under the proposal, the purpose of the child housing benefit is primarily to safeguard the child's opportunity to reside in the family home. Children with disabilities and their families should be provided with the kind of housing support that would enable the child to have the care, treatment, participation and secure environment to grow up in as appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child. A child could be housed outside the home as a service for people with disabilities only if it is not possible for the child to reside in the family home despite individualised assistance and support provided for the child and the family.

87. The new Act would also strengthen the right to short-term care. Persons with disabilities would be entitled to short-term care when their family caregivers are unable to care for the person with disabilities who, in the absence of family caregivers, requires assistance or support in daily activities or supervision for reasons of safety.

88. At the end of 2021, there were nine children with developmental disabilities who are in long-term institutional care aged 0–6 years and 128 such children aged 7–17 years.

89. The Disability Policy Action Plan adopted by the Government of Åland (“Ett tillgängligt Åland”) (2022-2025) highlights the need to improve the access of persons with disabilities, including children, to equal services and the need to equalize the client fees for them in social welfare services.

Reply to paragraph 8 (a) of the list of issues

90. The social and health care reform aims to create better integration of primary and specialized healthcare and stronger primary-level services (<https://soteuudistus.fi/en/frontpage>).

Reply to paragraph 8 (b) of the list of issues

91. The Government submitted a legislative proposal (HE 112/2022 vp) to Parliament in August 2022. The proposal enhances undocumented migrants’ right to health care and social services. The amendments extend the right of undocumented migrants in Finland to receive also necessary health care services. Currently, the right is limited only to emergency care. Parliament approved the proposal in December 2022 and the legislation comes into force in the beginning of 2023.

Reply to paragraph 8 (c) of the list of issues

92. Information on social and health care reform is available at: <https://soteuudistus.fi/en/frontpage>.

Reply to paragraph 8 (d) of the list of issues

93. The social and health care reform aims to create better integration of primary and specialized healthcare and stronger primary-level services (incl. mental health services).

94. The reception centre workers who are responsible for providing the applicants with health care and social services have been trained on how to provide children with necessary services, including mental health services. Some health care services are provided outside reception centres by private health care providers, as well as child health clinics and school health care.

95. The project on the health and well-being of children (“Barn och ungdomars hälsa och välmående”) (2022-2026), initiated and financed by the Government of Åland, aims to identify structural obstacles to the health and wellbeing of children and young people and to propose and implement long-term solutions.

Reply to paragraph 8 (e) of the list of issues

96. The reform of mental health and substance abuse legislation (HE 197/2022 vp) improves the availability of mental health and substance abuse services and strengthen the clients’ right to receive the services they need in all age groups. The amendments will enter into force at the beginning of 2023.

97. As part of the National Mental Health Strategy, Finland has started implementing various psychosocial methods for mental health disorders among youth. By the end of 2022, about 1600 professionals will be trained to provide a counselling method for depression called interpersonal counselling. Other methods will be implemented in the future, including methods to prevent and treat substance abuse.

98. The LAPE-reform is developing substance abuse services for children and youth. Early stage mental health services have also been developed as well as better co-ordination between psychiatric and child welfare services.

99. The National Mental Health Strategy and Suicide Prevention Agenda was completed in 2020 and implementation is taking place. The starting point is the comprehensive approach of mental health in society and its different sectors and levels. Children and young people are included in the strategy.

Reply to paragraph 8 (f) of the list of issues

100. In 2019, the Government of Åland adopted an action plan to prevent suicide and is continuing its work to implement and follow up the anti-bullying measures in schools under the action plan.

101. During 2023, the Government of Åland will launch a pilot project based on the Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) programme for schools. Under the programme, school pupils are taught about mental health in everyday life.

102. See the reply 8(e).

Reply to paragraph 8 (g) of the list of issues

103. Social and health care professionals are required to consider the best interest of client or patient and to respect client's/patient's wishes. Child's opinion should be taken into account according to her/his developmental level.

104. Several Provincial Acts regulate the status of minors in social welfare services and health and medical care services in the Åland.

Reply to paragraph 8 (h) of the list of issues

105. All law-drafting must involve an assessment of the impacts of the legislation on various groups, children and young people included. The drafting of the new Climate Act (432/2022) took account of the impacts of the proposed Act on parties including children, young people and future generations. The new Climate Act includes a provision under which one of the objectives of the Act and the climate policy planning system based on it is to contribute to ensuring sustainable development and justice of the climate measures.

106. The new Climate Act contains several provisions that concern the Sámi people. Under section 14, subsection 1 of the Act, in the preparation of climate policy plans, consideration shall be given to the right of the Sámi people to maintain and develop their own language and culture. To safeguard this right, the authorities shall negotiate with the Sámi Parliament when preparing the plans. Under section 2, subsection 3 of the Act, another objective of the Act and the climate policy planning system based on it is to contribute to ensuring the prerequisites for the Sámi people to maintain and develop their own language and culture. In addition to these, section 21 of the Act requires the appointment of a Sámi Climate Council, the task of which is to submit opinions on climate policy plans with regard to the promotion of the Sámi culture. Account shall also be taken of the rights of Sámi children as part of the procedures described above.

107. Extensive consultations of children and young people were held during the drafting of the Climate Act. The consultations also boosted the knowledge base as to the impacts the drafted Act might have on children and young people.

108. Additionally, Finland is strongly committed to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development. Sustainable development in general upper secondary curriculum is one of the basic values in education.

109. Children and young people are widely consulted also with regard to other climate instruments. In the context of the release in autumn 2022 of the Annual Climate Report prepared pursuant to the Climate Act, the Ministry of the Environment held remote studio sessions with Youth Council representatives.

110. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish national Agency for Education have launched an extensive education project on climate and sustainability education. The Guidelines for sustainable development in the sectors covering the Ministry of Education and Culture were drawn up in 2020.

Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues

111. Poverty reduction is a key priority for Finland and it is reflected in national policies.

112. The single-parent supplement to child benefit was increased permanently in 2019 and 2022, which improved the economic position of single parents, whose households have a weaker financial position than those with two parents.

113. Based on the EU-level target of reducing poverty and social exclusion significantly by 2030, Finland has set itself the target of reducing the number of people living at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 100,000 by the year 2030. One third of these people should be children. In order to reach the national target the Government has published an action plan to reduce poverty and social exclusion, especially the poverty of families with children.

114. See reply 7 (b).

Reply to paragraph 10 (a) of the list of issues

115. There are many references to the promotion of education for democracy and human rights in the current Government Programme. The overarching National Democracy Programme 2025, as well as the National youth work and youth policy programme 2020–2023 and the Right to Learn Programme, refer to the importance of education for democracy and human rights.

116. A Steering Group for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights Education (2020–2023) was set up in 2020. The aim of the Steering Group is to increase the participation of the pupils and the students in the decision making process in the schools and to develop education for democracy and human rights further, including developing the issue in teacher education and continuous professional development.

117. In March 2022, a research project was launched with the aim of assessing the practical implementation of the objectives for democracy and human rights education defined in the national curricula in early childhood education, primary and secondary education, and in teacher education. The study will be completed in spring 2023.

118. A joint project by the University of Helsinki, the Ministry of Justice and the Human Rights Centre strengthened the training on democracy and human rights education in the basic training and in-service training of school teachers. The project produced education materials on democracy and human rights training, improved cooperation and cooperation between teacher training providers and promoted research on the topic (<https://www.helsinki.fi/en/projects/human-rights-democracy-values-and-dialogue-education>).

119. Additionally, a national database on existing democracy and human rights education projects and good practices was created in 2021.

Reply to paragraph 10 (b) of the list of issues

120. One of the fundamental principles of Finnish education is that all people have equal access to high-quality education, regardless of age, residence, gender, economic situation, or mother tongue. Education from pre-primary to higher education is free.

121. In 2021, compulsory education was extended so that it continues until a young person completes an upper secondary qualification or turns 18. As a result, studies in upper secondary education are now free of charge for students subject to compulsory education.

122. Guidance for studies and student welfare services have also been enhanced. A new educational package for transitional phases, preparatory education for programs leading to an upper secondary qualification, will be introduced in autumn 2022. The Act on Compulsory Education (1214/2020) will be implemented one age group at a time. The Act and the obligation to apply for upper secondary education were applied to young people completing basic education for the first time in spring 2021. The implementation of the extended compulsory education is being monitored according to a separate plan from 2021 to 2024.

123. Two ongoing development programs, the “Right to Learn” development program and the “Programme for the sustainable development of VET and the green transition,” also

implement objectives of the government program. The development of VET is also guided by the National Roadmap for Research, Development and Innovation, which was adopted by the government in 2020.

124. The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre will conduct assessments of preparatory education and mother tongue instruction in basic education. The goal of preparatory education is to give pupils the necessary skills in Finnish or Swedish and other skills to transition to preschool or basic education.

Reply to paragraph 10 (c) of the list of issues

125. See reply 10 (b).

Reply to paragraph 10 (d) of the list of issues

126. One of the fundamental principles of Finnish education is that all people have equal access to high-quality education, regardless of age, residence, gender, economic situation, or mother tongue. Education from pre-primary to higher education is free.

Reply to paragraph 10 (e) of the list of issues

127. The Government launched the “Finnish model” in 2020. The goal of the Finnish model is to provide every child and young person with a free leisure activity during the school day. The Finnish model involves consulting children and young people on leisure activities, coordinating existing good practices, and fostering cooperation between schools and leisure activity providers. 267 Finnish municipalities are participating in the model.

Reply to paragraph 11 (a) of the list of issues

128. See reply 6 (d).

Reply to paragraph 11 (b) of the list of issues

129. Measures at the Finnish Immigration Service taken to ensure the best interests of the child:

- Introducing and implementation of the Finnish Immigration Services own family tracing practice.
- Regular quality checks and training on decision making concerning children.
- New hearing transcript structure for unaccompanied minors.
- More focus addressed also to the matters concerning accompanied children.
- General guidance on minors, new guidance on human trafficking and application of 52 § of the Alien’s Act as well as specific guidance on gender-based violence.
- Best interests of the child taken into account at the reception services, for example when accommodating unaccompanied children who have relatives or close family members in Finland.

Reply to paragraph 11 (c) of the list of issues

130. The extension of compulsory education became effective in 2021. Education is not, however, compulsory for children seeking asylum or who have received temporary protection but they have the right to go to school (age 7-17) and to pre-school at the age of 6. The municipality where these children are accommodated is responsible for organizing day care services for children whose parents are working or studying. Day care can be organized also if it has been estimated to support the wellbeing and development of the child or as a part of child protection support measures.

131. A Government proposal on the comprehensive reform of the Integration Act (HE 84/2022 vp) was submitted to Parliament in October 2022. The act is scheduled to enter into force at the beginning of 2025, simultaneously with the reform of employment services. The Integration Act will be renewed so that the responsibility for arranging accommodation for

unaccompanied minors with a residence permit e.g. in family group homes, will be transferred from municipalities to wellbeing services counties.

132. From 2023 onwards, the Government will compensate municipalities for the costs of services for refugees (within the scope of temporary protection or seeking asylum) through a discretionary government grant. An amendment to the Act on the Financing of Education and Culture (1705/2009) was accepted in November 2022, and the compensation of costs will be based on this grant.

Reply to paragraph 11 (d) of the list of issues

133. A proposal to amend the Citizenship Act (HE 64/2022 vp) was submitted to Parliament in April 2022 and is still pending there. The proposal contains the following amendments concerning children: the provisions relating to the definition of a child would be amended to remove the reference to the possibility of reaching the age of majority by marrying under the age of 18; and a child would always acquire Finnish citizenship at birth directly by law if his or her mother or father had Finnish citizenship. A child adopted by a Finnish citizen would also always be granted Finnish citizenship directly by law. Under the current law, the acquisition of citizenship by a child requires in some cases the submission of a declaration of citizenship to the Finnish Immigration Service.

134. With regard to statelessness, in the future instead of the current two definitions (voluntary statelessness and involuntary statelessness) there would be only one definition of statelessness in the Citizenship Act.

Reply to paragraph 11 (e) of the list of issues

135. In September 2022, the Government submitted a proposal to Parliament (HE 144/2022) proposing that certain crimes against persons under the age of eighteen, should be dealt with urgently. Parliament passed the proposal in February 2023. The provisions will enter into force in October 2023.

136. The provisions apply to the following offences: offences against personal liberty (Chapter 25 of the Criminal code, 39/1889), offences against privacy, public peace and personal reputation (Chapter 24), homicide and bodily injury (Chapter 21), sex offences (Chapter 20) and robbery and extortion (Chapter 31). Under the provisions, the criminal investigation shall be conducted urgently and the prosecutor shall decide urgently whether to bring charges. If charges are brought, they shall be done so also without delay. In court, the main hearing shall be held within 30 days of the time when the criminal case became pending. If the main hearing is cancelled, the new main hearing shall be held within 30 days of when the main hearing had been intended to be held.

137. The legislation already includes equivalent provisions in cases where the suspected or accused person is under 18 years old.

138. See reply 5 (b).

Reply to paragraph 11 (f) of the list of issues

139. The detention of children is precisely regulated and occurs very rarely. Unaccompanied children under the age of 15 cannot be detained. Minors can be held in detention together with their families. However, this is only possible in situations where family unity is seen within the best interest of the child.

Reply to paragraph 11 (g) of the list of issues

140. Courts adhere to rules and regulations concerning underage defendants in criminal cases.

141. The performance management agreement between the Ministry of Justice and the National Courts Administration includes a provision on promoting the standing of children in the administration of justice. As a concrete measure, material aimed at children and youth on how cases concerning them are processed by the court system will be produced.

142. See replies 2 (a), 4 (b) and 11 (e).

Reply to paragraph 11 (h) of the list of issues

143. According to Act on Checking the Criminal Background of Persons Working with Children (504/2002), a transcript of criminal record is required to be presented to an employer, authority, educational institution or volunteer activity organizer when a person starts working with children. However, the transcript is only needed for employment lasting more than three months.

144. The Provincial Act on Checking the Criminal Background of Persons Working with Children (ÅFS 2004:3) entered into force on 1 March 2004. The Provincial Act on Applying in the Province of Åland the Act on Checking the Criminal Background of Volunteers Working with Children (ÅFS 2019:101) entered into force on 1 January 2020.

Reply to paragraph 11 (i) of the list of issues

145. From the beginning of 2022, children in prison have been placed in their own units, separately from the adults. Since 2019, there has been also two alternatives to detention of children: a travel ban and house arrest imposed instead of remand imprisonment. The travel ban was used for 8 children in 2020, 13 children in 2021 and 15 children so far in 2022. Whenever it is possible, a child can be placed to a child welfare institution instead of prison. This requires co-operation with child protection outside Prison and Probation Services.

Reply to paragraph 12 (a) and (b) of the list of issues

146. The recruitment and involvement of children in hostilities may be punishable under Chapter 11, Section 5 or 6 of the Criminal Code as war crime or aggravated war crime. Also, for example, provisions on unlawful military operations and coercion (Chapter 13, Section 4 and Chapter 25, Section 8 of the Criminal Code) may apply. However, for such offences Chapter 1, Chapter 11 of the Criminal Code does not provide for an exception to the requirement of double criminality.

Reply to paragraph 12 (c) of the list of issues

147. Based on Chapter 1, Section 6 of the Criminal Code, offences committed outside Finland by a Finnish citizen and a person permanently resident in Finland fall within the criminal jurisdiction of Finland. This does apply to crimes for which the most severe punishment provided for is imprisonment for more than six months. For example, war crime, aggravated war crime, unlawful military operations and coercion meet this requirement.

Reply to paragraph 12 (d) of the list of issues

148. The Non-Violent Childhoods Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children contains 93 national actions dealing with the prevention of violence against children, the minimising of harmful impacts, and the provision of multisectoral assistance to victims.

Part II**Reply to paragraph 13 (a) of the list of issues***The Social and Health care reform*

149. Information about the Social and Health care reform at:
<https://soteuudistus.fi/en/frontpage>.

Family leave reform

150. The Government has launched a comprehensive reform of the social security system that aims on a clearer and more efficient system for individuals. One of the main objectives is to improve integration of employment and social security in changing life situations.

151. The Government has also introduced a family leave reform that entered into force on August 2022. The number of parental leave days increased and there will be more flexibility for parents to take leave.

Partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act.

152. The Government proposal on the partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act was given to Parliament in September 2022. Parliament has approved the partial reform of the Equality Act. The revised Act will enter into force in June 2023. The Government proposal includes several amendments to the Act and other relevant legislation. The amendments strengthen legal protection of victims of discrimination and help tackle discrimination and harassment more effectively.

Rights of the Sámi people

153. The Government will respect and promote the realization of the linguistic and cultural rights of all Sámi people and Sámi groups in a way that takes the relevant international conventions into account. For example:

- The current Government examines the possibility of ratifying the ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.
- A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established by the Government in October 2021.
- The Nordic Sámi Convention was negotiated jointly with representatives of the three Sámi Parliaments.
- The Government is working towards the renewal of the Act on the Sámi Parliament. A committee, consisting of representatives of both the Sámi Parliament and the Government parties, has drafted a proposal and it has been given to Parliament for further inspection.
- In the preparation of the new Nature Conservation Act, stronger efforts have been made to safeguard the rights of the Sámi.
- A Government proposal for changes to the Mining Act (HE 126/2022) includes some proposals that aim at improving the existing provisions and the implementation of the Act what comes to Indigenous Peoples' rights.
- According to the new national Climate Act, the rights of the Sámi people must be taken into account when preparing national climate policy plans.

Parenthood Act

154. Parliament approved the new Parenthood Act in June 2022. The Act combines the existing separate acts on maternity and paternity. The new Act enters into force in January 2023. The basic premises of the legislation will remain unchanged. Parenthood is still registered as either 'a father' or 'a mother', and the child may still only have two legal parents.

Forced marriages

155. In October 2021, the Government introduced proposal to Parliament (HE 172/2021) that relates to annulment of forced marriages and recognition of foreign child marriages. The aim is to enable the dissolution of a marriage that has been concluded by coercion also in a manner other than the divorce proceedings. In addition, the proposal restricts recognition of a marriages concluded abroad as a minor. The aim of the proposal is to combat forced marriages and child marriage and to improve the status of vulnerable persons who have concluded such marriages. The proposal is under consideration in Parliament.

Reform of legislation related to sexual offences

156. Reformed provisions on sexual offences in the Criminal Code were passed in July 2022 and entered into force in January 2023. The reform aims to strengthen everyone's right to sexual self-determination and the protection of personal integrity. The definition of rape will be explicitly based on consent. Rape is defined as sexual intercourse with a person who does not participate in it voluntarily. Sentences for offences against children will be lengthened.

Use of recorded investigations as evidence in certain criminal cases

157. In addition to the legislative amendments described above (see reply 2(a)), in the Government's proposal to Parliament (HE 217/2022), there is a proposal concerning the use of recorded investigations as evidence in certain cases. In the legislation in force, the questioning of a victim may in some cases be video-recorded and the recording then be used as evidence in a trial, for example if the victim is under 18 years of age or if the case concerns, for example, a sex offence (the Code of Judicial Procedure, chapter 17 sections 24, 51 and 52). In connection with the abovementioned Government's proposal, it was proposed that this possibility would be extended to cases also concerning human trafficking and some related crimes (pandering, abuse of a victim of sexual trade, offering compensation for a sexual act against young person, see the Criminal Code, chapter 20).

The Integration Act

158. The Integration Act lays down provisions on the services offered to those who arrived in Finland as unaccompanied minors and who have been granted a residence permit. The upper age limit for support for young persons that have arrived as unaccompanied minors was raised from 21 to 25 years on 9 July 2020 to correspond to the raise in the equivalent age limit in child welfare after-care.

Act on Voluntary National Defence

159. Voluntary national defence training is governed by the Act on Voluntary National Defence (556/2007). The Act was revised in early 2020 and the National Defence Training Association of Finland was assigned a new public administration task of organising familiarisation activities geared to young people and women in particular. This refers to training that gives young people the opportunity to learn more about what national military service entails. This familiarisation training would be organised for Finnish citizens aged 16 or older and as a rule, it would be available to all comers.

The Early Childhood Education Act

160. The Early Childhood Education Act (540/2018) was reformed in 2019 to provide equal opportunity for early education for all children to participate in ECEC, and in 2022, private ECEC provision became subject to authorization to ensure adequacy, quality, and reliability of services. From 2021 ECEC staff are required to report malpractice or shortcomings (453/2021). The Act was also amended to improve support for children with special needs from August 2022.

161. The Finnish Upper Secondary School Act (714/2018) guarantees special education and support for students with learning difficulties, and the Vocational Education Act (513/2017) provides special support for students needing help to achieve the competency requirements or learning objectives of their training program.

162. The Act on Measures to Prevent the Distribution of Child Sexual Abuse Material was updated in 2022 where the definition of child pornography site was amended to reflect terminology used in the Criminal Code, and the Regulation (EU) 2021/1232 on the use of technologies to combat online child sexual abuse came into effect in 2021.

163. In Åland the following Acts entered into force: the Provincial Act on Social Welfare (ÅFS 2020:12), the Provincial Act on Child Welfare and Comprehensive School (ÅFS 2020:32) and the Provincial Act on Professionals in Social Welfare (ÅFS 2020:24).

Reply to paragraph 13 (b) of the list of issues

164. On September 2022, the Government agreed to establish of the permanent National Child Strategy function. The Finnish Centre of Expertise in Education and Development and the Service Centre for Continuous Learning and Employment were established.

165. The social welfare service of the Ålandic municipalities (Kommunernas socialtjänst, KST) was established and started operating in January 2021.

Reply to paragraph 13 (c) of the list of issues

166. The first implementation plan for the National Child Strategy takes into account the ongoing measures and projects that promote the policy guidelines of the Strategy.

167. The third National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights (2020–2023) was adopted in June 2021 with a focus on developing the monitoring of fundamental and human rights.

168. The new Language Policy Programme was adopted as a Government Resolution in June 2022. It takes into account languages spoken in Finland other than the national languages, especially the Sámi languages, the Romani language, the Karelian language and sign languages.

169. In May 2021, the Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings was accepted. The plan will be implemented in 2021–2023. Its implementation will be monitored and reported by a working group (<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163326>).

170. New guidelines for impact assessments in the legislative process have been published in the beginning of November 2022. The guidelines include guidance on human rights impact assessments and child impact assessments as well as impact assessments related to gender, non-discrimination, the Sámi, rights of persons with disabilities etc., (<https://okm.fi/en/qualityprogramme>).

171. The Government of Åland has adopted a programme to combat the abuse of alcohol, drugs, doping and tobacco as well as gambling for 2022-2024, a Disability Policy Action Plan for 2022-2025, and a Social Welfare Policy Action Plan for 2023-2027.

Reply to paragraph 13 (d) of the list of issues

172. Parliament has approved, in January 2023, a Government proposal (HE 87/2022) for the approval of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. National implementation and ratification preparations will begin.

Part III**Data, statistics and other information****Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues**

173. Child-oriented budgeting has been implemented in the state budget proposal starting from the budget proposal for 2022. The implementation started with a pilot in the budget proposal for 2022. In the 2022 central government budget appropriations directly allocated to children or families with children amount to around EUR 7 billion, taking into account the statutory and discretionary measures under the different main titles of expenditure. Of these appropriations, slightly less than EUR 2.7 billion is estimated to be central government transfers for basic public services targeting the age group of children. In the 2022 budget in addition to the appropriations for the age group of children and related changes, separate funding has been allocated to priority areas that affect the age group of children.

174. In the 2023 state budget proposal appropriations directly allocated to children or families with children amount to around EUR 10.4 billion. Of this amount the funding targeted at strengthening equal opportunities and support for vulnerable people is approximately EUR 360 million. As wellbeing services counties are responsible for organizing health and social services from 2023 on a new governmental level was added to the analysis. Appropriations targeting the age group of children, approximately EUR 2.2 billion is estimated to be central government transfers to municipalities for basic public services (e.g. education) and EUR 3.7 billion is estimated to be central government financing to wellbeing services counties for health and social services.

Reply to paragraph 15 (a) and (b) of the list of issues

175. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 15 (c) of the list of issues

176. Extracted from yearly national statistics of health care during the last three years there have been one partial removal of female genital organs, and one surgical modification of outer genital organs. According to consultation of a university clinic the latter is most probably a reversible surgical modification.

177. Since 2011, no circumcision on non-medical reasons have been performed in public health care. Interventions done in private health care cannot be monitored by national health care registers.

Reply to paragraph 15 (d) of the list of issues

178. In Finland, compulsory education is in place for 7-18 year olds, which means that all children in this age range are required to attend school. There is no official data on the out-of-school rates for these groups.

Reply to paragraph 15 (e) and (f) of the list of issues

179. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 15 (g) of the list of issues

180. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 15 (h) of the list of issues

181. N/A.

Reply to paragraph 16 (a) of the list of issues

182. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 16 (b) of the list of issues

183. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 16 (c) of the list of issues

184. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 16 (d) of the list of issues

185. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 17 (a) of the list of issues

186. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 17 (b) of the list of issues

187. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 17 (c) of the list of issues

188. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 17 (d) of the list of issues

189. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 17 (e) of the list of issues

190. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 17 (f) of the list of issues

191. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 17 (g) of the list of issues

192. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 18 (a) of the list of issues

193. See appendix.

Reply to paragraph 18 (b) of the list of issues

194. N/A.

Reply to paragraph 18 (c) of the list of issues

195. N/A.

Reply to paragraph 18 (d) of the list of issues

196. See appendix and reply 15.

Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues

197. In order to promote the goals of the 2030 Agenda, Finland has also participated in the annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF 2022) in New York in 2022, which presents Finland's national state of implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda.

198. According to the SDG indicator 8.6, Finland has succeeded in reducing youth unemployment among those in working life and in reducing the number of NEETs.

199. In spring 2022, the national Commission on Sustainable Development published a sustainable Development Strategy, which is widely implemented by its members in all parts of Finland. The work of the national Commission has highlighted the need for special measures to promote the rights of children and young people. In particular, needs to prevent social exclusion, to normalize the effects of the coronavirus epidemic, to increase inclusion and to promote literacy have emerged. The Agenda 2030 Youth Group operates in connection with the national Commission.

200. In accordance with the Programme of Prime Minister Marin's Government, the Government aims to reduce the number of young people who are not working or studying. The aim is to guarantee all young people under 25 years of age or graduates under 30 years of age a job, traineeship, job try-out or similar within three months of the start of unemployment. Finland has also taken active steps to improve the position of families with children and to promote a more age-friendly society.

201. In 2014, the Parliament of Åland and the Government of Åland decided to strive together towards full sustainable development in the Åland Islands by 2051. The development and sustainability agenda was prepared in close cooperation with businesses and civil society. The agenda defines and concretises seven strategic development goals to be achieved by 2030.

202. See paragraph 74 of the report.

Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues

Data in the report that may have been outdated by more recent data collected or other new developments.

203. Paragraph 30: In 2021, the Parliamentary Ombudsman handled 7 892 complaints, of which 835 concerned the rights of the child. Approximately 85 % of these cases concerned social services, basic education or early childhood education and care.

204. Paragraph 31-34: The Office of the Ombudsman for Children receives annually 400-700 contacts from individuals. In 2021, the Office of the Ombudsman for children received 588 contacts. The number increased by 27 % to the previous year. Most of the contacts are made by concerned parents, grandparents and other people close to the children. Approximately 30 % of the contacts were related to the coronavirus pandemic.

205. Paragraph 47: Child-oriented budgeting has been implemented in the state budget proposal starting from the budget proposal for 2022. The implementation started with a pilot in the budget proposal for 2022. From the budget proposal for 2023 child-oriented budgeting will be part of the rationale annually.

206. Paragraph 98: In the term of Prime Minister Marin's, the Government Integration Programme was replaced by the Government Report on the need for a reform in integration promotion. The Report was submitted to Parliament in June 2021. The Report outlined a reform of the manner in which services to unaccompanied minor immigrants are organised so as to safeguard equal services to these children and young people relative to other groups who, under the Social Welfare Act, are in need of special support, taking better into account the social welfare frame of reference. The organisation of housing for this group and the responsibilities for it will be examined, as will the role of the future wellbeing services counties and legislation on family care and after-care. This policy outlined in the Report will be implemented by means of an overall reform of the Integration Act.

207. Paragraph 169: Family care for unaccompanied minor immigrants who have been issued a residence permit has been provided in the various regions through cooperation between the City of Helsinki and the Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment.

208. Paragraph 180: Recent changes in the definition of a minor were made in the judgement of the Court of Justice of the European Union in case C 279/20 Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Regroupement familial d'un enfant devenu majeur). According to the judgment, Article 4(1) of Directive 2003/86 must be interpreted as meaning that the date to which reference must be made in order to determine whether the child of a sponsor who has been granted refugee status is a minor child, within the meaning of that provision, where that child has attained his or her majority before the parent sponsor was granted refugee status and before the application for family reunification was submitted, is the date on which the parent sponsor submitted his or her asylum application with a view to obtaining refugee status, provided that an application for family reunification was submitted within three months of the recognition of the parent sponsor's refugee status. This clarification of the definition of a minor has been taken into account in the decision-making practice.

209. Paragraph 185-187: The prison family unit operating in Vanaja and Hämeenlinna prison is a special child protection unit that operates under the Finnish Institute of Health and welfare. As of November 2022, there were 6 children in prison together with their prisoner parents. The daily average number of children has been 3 in prison family unit in 2020-22. No data are available on the accurate number of prisoners' children outside prison as data on prisoners' children are not collected directly by virtue of law. According to the prisoner register, at the beginning of 2021, 2809 registered prisoners had 1778 children under 18 years of age, and the number of dependants was 1103. The guidelines for child and family work issued by the Prison and Probation Services were revised in 2019 and will be updated in 2023.

210. Paragraph 238: The new national curriculum for general upper secondary education was introduced in autumn 2021. It takes strong account of international instruments and the focal areas of sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda included. The quality strategy for general upper secondary education completed in 2022 also strongly emphasises support for the wellbeing of young people as well as sustainable development.

211. Paragraph 245: The Programme to Develop Quality and Equality in Vocational Education and Training was implemented in 2020-2022 in cooperation with the Finnish National Agency for Education.

212. Paragraph 290: During 1.1.2019 - 31.10.2022 a total of 15 443 asylum applications were lodged, including of total of 2663 applications of accompanied minors. Between the time period the highest number (5139) of asylum applications were lodged during the year

2022. A total of 19 411 decision were made in the Asylum Unit during the time period, including 3126 decisions for accompanied minors.

213. During 1.1.2019 - 31.10.2022 a total of 589 applications of unaccompanied minors were lodged and the number of applications spread between the years as follows 2019: 98, 2020: 146, 2021: 136 and 10/2022: 209. A total of 396 decisions were made during 1.1.2019 - 31.10.2022 for unaccompanied minors.

214. After 2019, a total of 126 unaccompanied minors and 29 of accompanied minors came to Finland through EU's internal relocation program.

215. Until October 2022 a total of 43 342 applications of temporary protection have been made. Approximately 389 Ukrainian unaccompanied children are at the moment (November 2022) registered in the reception system.

216. During 1.1.2019 - 31.10.2022, 174 applications were made for residence permit based on family ties where a minor had received international protection and the guardian was the applicant.

217. A residence permit on the basis of family ties is not free of charge but the fee is regulated to be lower than the actual cost price based on social grounds.

218. Paragraph 293: The current time limit for lodging a complaint to the administrative court on matters relating to international protection is 30 days.

219. Paragraph 299: The housing of unaccompanied minor immigrants after the issue of a residence permit is organised in a family group home or in supported family housing as provided in the Integration Act. The upper age limit for support measures was raised to 25 in July 2020.

220. Paragraph 356: In November 2022, the District Court dismissed a charge against employees of the National Defence Training Association in a case where two courses of training contributing to military capability (intended only for persons aged 18 and over) were attended by minors. Since the District Court held the offence to be minor in nature, the defendants could not be found guilty of breach of official duty.

Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues

221. N/A.
