

Submission to the Universal Periodic
Review of the United Nations Human
Rights Council

4th Cycle – 41st Session

Country Review: Finland

March 2022
by Maya Shaw

Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 and focused on raising awareness and minimizing human rights violations in the educational field.

Together with our international sponsors and partners, we encourage and support the following activities/projects: removing obstacles in education; contributing to the achievement of peace and tranquility in the society through adaptation studies in an environment of intercultural tolerance; preventing radicalism and polarization; and eliminating the opportunity gap in education for all. Our goal is to work together with global partners to remove barriers to access to education and to take concrete steps to ensure universal access to education.



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0. Introduction

1. Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 and is focused on raising awareness and minimising human rights violations in the educational field.
2. Together with our international sponsors and partners, we encourage and support the following activities/projects: removing obstacles in education; contributing to the achievement of peace and tranquillity in the society through adaptation studies in an environment of intercultural tolerance; preventing radicalism and polarisation; and eliminating the opportunity gap in education for all. Our goal is to work together with global partners to remove barriers to access to education and to take concrete steps to ensure universal access to education.
3. In this 4th Cycle Universal Periodic Review, Broken Chalk will be occupied with reviewing Finland's challenges and improvements in the educational field. In the 3rd cycle, (September 2017) Finland received 153 recommendations and supported 120 (78% of acceptance).

I. Third cycle recommendations

4. 44% of recommendations of reduced inequalities, 13% on peace, justice and strong institutions, 12% on gender equality, 10% on decent work and economic growth, 10% on poverty.

II. Racial, ethnic discrimination: its impact on the educational field

5. Finland is said to be blind to immigrants' special needs¹ within education. For example, Finnish as a secondary language in school is highly stigmatised; compared to learning it as a main language. Indeed, many Finnish students from immigrant backgrounds recall the lack of understanding from teachers of their circumstances. Particularly, they declare being constantly put down; regardless of their academic achievement. If they struggle, no additional support is provided. If they succeed, they are told successful spheres won't accept them; in light of their non-Finnish names. This behaviour fosters low self-esteem and creates a vicious circle of lower academic achievement. In other terms, pupils start believing that they will never succeed, regardless of their academic achievements and stop trying. The teaching bodies, student counselling and secondary education all participate in discrimination towards students from migrant-backgrounds.
6. Another example of the underlying issue is the way Africa is depicted in school books: poor and under-developed². This perpetuates Euro-centrism and white superiority, which will be internalised by children both from European descent or from migrant backgrounds and will shape their values and behaviours.

¹ <https://yle.fi/news/3-11434180>

² <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/78562627.pdf>

7. This phenomenon points to a larger problem: a lack of understanding of the realities of children's lives with migrant backgrounds, on the receiving end of biased treatment.
8. This observation echoes the Third Cycle's recommendations on minimising racism and xenophobia in Finland. In the Mid-Term Report (2019) we can see a significant number of recommendations centred around minimising xenophobia, racism and discrimination of individuals from migrant backgrounds. The majority of those are marked as partially implemented.
9. Lastly, this issue involves particular consequences on the Saami people, as they have been displaced and forced to assimilate into Finnish culture. The same expectation is put on Roma and immigrants as multiculturalism is geared towards assimilation rather than integration.³ Countless multiculturalist studies explain the dehumanising nature of such an expectation. Instead, cultural rights represent human rights⁴. At this stage, Finland's acknowledgment of the harm caused as well as the provision of supplemented help is required.
10. Indeed, the children's testimonies of teachers' blindness to immigrants' special needs within education as well as the Mid-Term report point to the need for more comprehensive educational policies on the protection of kids from discriminated-against groups. If most recommendations provide an appropriate start, most are about strengthening or amendments of the legal framework. Considering the implicit aspect of xenophobia as well as the known gap between laws and observed behaviour; new recommendations on understanding and tackling bias should be proposed in the 4th cycle.
11. Additionally, people with disabilities are underrepresented in universities⁵. This points to the urgency of the implementation of current recommendations on better rights for individuals with disabilities. This should be accompanied by a specific recommendation on inclusivity in schools as it holds the most urgency. Indeed, children with disabilities can take longer to complete their education and fall behind other children on grounds of inaccessibility of their district schools. In turn, they can become increasingly disenfranchised and pursue less educational and professional opportunities compared to people their age.

³ <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/78562627.pdf>

⁴ Will Kymlicka 1995 Multicultural citizenship : a liberal theory of minority right Oxford University Press ISBN 0-19-829091-8

⁵ <https://yle.fi/news/3-11421093>

III. Gendered discrimination: the innadequate weight put on girls

- 12.** The second majority of recommendations on the Mid-Term report are axed on minimising gender inequality. For example, it is required that rape cases should put focus on consent rather than violence of the act to be qualified as such. The need for such an amendment points towards the social climate in Finland, in which girls and women are bearing a disproportionate cost of life. In education, this means girls need to be adequately protected so as to not experience educational disparities compared to boys. For example, the emotional, psychological and physical trauma a girl can experience from rape - especially as it is categorized as such depending on the violence rather than her consent - is likely to significantly harm her life and violently inhibit her education.
- 13.** On another scope, Finland exhibits a heavily gendered education: jobs for women and jobs for men⁶. More specifically, Immonen and Sutela created five indices to illustrate Finnish working conditions: Opportunities to develop and influence working conditions; Social environment pressures and beneficial relations; Working time flexibility, Physical environment and Work Intensity⁷. These allowed them to construct the most beneficial job profile, so called “good jobs”. Interestingly, this research shed light on the fact that, while 42% of men work in good jobs, only 28% of women do. Accordingly, education should protect girls from being overrepresented in low-quality professions. A first step would be bringing awareness in the gendered aspect of labour as well as which qualities are considered most employable. According to research, these often correspond with masculine rather than feminine traits⁸ as men have historically dominated the workforce; relegating them as the norm for behaviour.
- 14.** Accordingly, an adequate recommendation would mirror this gendered logic of appropriateness in the workforce by educating children on its existence as well as on the disproportionate obstacles (physical danger, exclusive values) girls and women face. In turn, such educational support will encourage girls and women to speak out on their needs and the pressure they face with the expectation of change.
- 15.** In the Mid-Term report, most recommendations on gender are marked as partially implemented. In other terms, the proper legal implementation of these recommendations constitutes the first adequate step in the construction of consecutive programs on gender bias and systemic gendered oppression.

⁶ <https://yle.fi/news/3-11421093>

⁷ <https://www.finnwards.com/working-in-finland/gender-segregation-in-the-finnish-labor-market/?fbclid=IwAR3ZJ0mJtedhZSMgD-mNRt9pPS6e5luRe4li3YEgbDc0tVbB54PwDQa1PSE>

⁸ Annesley, Claire, and Francesca Gains. “The Core Executive: Gender, Power and Change.” *Political Studies*, vol. 58, no. 5, 4 Nov. 2010, pp. 909–929, 10.1111/j.1467-9248.2010.00824.x. Chappell, Louise, and

Georgina Waylen. “Gender and the Hidden Life of Institutions.” *Public Administration*, vol. 91, no. 3, Feb. 2013, p. n/a-n/a, 10.1111/j.1467-9299.2012.02104.x.

Niven, David. “Party Elites and Women Candidates.” *Women & Politics*, vol. 19, no.2, 21 Apr. 1998, pp. 57–80, 10.1300/j014v19n02_03.

IV. Socio-economic relevance

16. The 2018 Pisa survey results identify the widening socio-economic gap, with lower classes scores deteriorating whereas higher classes remain the same⁹. Accordingly, a recommendation on the protection of children coming from underprivileged classes should be drafted. Indeed, a system relying on parental support is not equal for all children and the educational sector should fill these gaps with added support for children from underprivileged backgrounds.

V. Urgencies - No Measures Taken

17. Prohibit the detention of minors

18. Separate children from adults in juvenile centres

19. Evidently, the fact that this recommendation has not evolved since the Third Cycle is highly worrying for the educational sector. Minors should be able to keep working towards their education regardless of the circumstances. This permits the child's proper insertion in society. Correspondingly, structures allowing the adequate continuation of children's education are urgently needed. Additionally, children should be separated from adults in detention centres; as the Third Cycle already required. Indeed, children should feel protected as being vulnerable and unable to protect themselves. Accordingly, the complete lack of progress on these recommendations should trigger a proportionate mention during the Fourth Cycle.

20. This is of particular importance from immigrant children who should under no circumstances be detained. This claim is shared by Amnesty that accuses the lack of actions taken in this regard¹⁰.

VI. Recommendations for the Fourth Cycle

21. Whereas there were already many existing recommendations on tackling racism, xenophobia and gendered discrimination, an understanding of the implicit and pervasive system of values that sustain them are necessary for stronger and more efficient results.

22. Add a recommendation merging the need for human rights training to teachers (prevention of exclusion of pupils) and the need for diminished discrimination against people (students) from migrant backgrounds, diminished racism and xenophobia such that teachers pay particular attention to students from secluded groups and are provided with adequate training to do so.

⁹ <https://yle.fi/news/3-11100956>

¹⁰ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EUR2023352020ENGLISH.pdf>

23. Raise awareness on the pervasiveness of gender expectations in the Finnish labour division so as to present boys and girls with real professional choices.
24. Increasingly protect girls in schools from gender discrimination on all levels: from gender bias to rape
25. Change the curricula so as to no longer provide a Euro-centric education.
26. Add an implicit understanding of systemic exclusion in the Equality Act. Whereas obvious exclusion has been made illegal, people can still be faced with implicit bias regarding their race, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation.
27. Provide adequate support for children from low socioeconomic classes.
28. Urgently secure accessibility for children with disabilities in all schools.
29. Exert pressure on the Measures not Taken that could significantly harm a child's life.



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