

FINLAND 2017 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

Note: This report was updated 6/07/18; see Appendix G: Errata for more information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Republic of Finland is a constitutional republic with a directly elected president and a unicameral parliament (Eduskunta). The prime minister heads a three-party coalition government approved by parliament and appointed by the president in 2015. Parliamentary elections in 2015 were considered free and fair.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over security forces.

The most significant human rights issues included societal violence against minority persons based on their nationality or ethnicity or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) animus; authorities generally investigated, and where appropriate prosecuted, such cases.

The government took steps to prosecute officials who committed abuses.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

On August 18, police shot, wounded, and arrested a 22-year-old Moroccan asylum seeker, Abderrahman Bouanane, after he killed two women and wounded eight other persons in a terrorist attack in Turku.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution and law prohibit such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

There were no significant reports regarding prison or detention center conditions that raised human rights concerns.

Physical Conditions: There were some instances of overcrowding, violations of prisoners' rights, and substandard sanitation.

The parliamentary ombudsman's annual report (last published in 2016) criticized the law allowing police to detain prisoners in temporary holding facilities and stated police employed this option too frequently.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring visits by independent human rights observers, including regularly scheduled visits by the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), most recently in June 2016.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention and provide for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court, and the government generally observed these requirements.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The national police maintain internal security. Both Finnish Customs and the Border Guard have law enforcement responsibilities related to their fields of responsibility. The Border Guard has additional law enforcement powers to maintain public order when it operates in joint patrols and under police command. The defense forces are responsible for safeguarding the country's territorial integrity and providing military training. The defense forces also have some domestic security responsibilities, such as assisting the national police in maintaining law and order in crises, participating in search and rescue operations, and providing aid in the event of a natural disaster or catastrophe. The national police and Border Guard report to the Ministry of the Interior; the Ministry of Defense oversees the defense forces.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the police, the defense forces, the Border Guard, and Finnish Customs. The government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires police to have a warrant issued by a prosecutor to make an arrest. Police must obtain a warrant within three days if an individual is arrested while committing a crime. Arrested persons must receive a court hearing within three days of arrest, and police must promptly inform detainees of the charges against them. There is no system of bail, but most defendants awaiting trial are eligible for conditional release on personal recognizance. The law provides for a detainee's prompt access to a lawyer. Persons detained for "minor" criminal offenses, however, do not have a right to an attorney from the outset of detention or prior to interrogation. The government must provide lawyers for the indigent. Authorities respected most of these rights.

The most recent CPT report, released in 2015, stated that delays in notification of custody remained widespread, especially for apprehended foreign nationals who were not residents of the country. Persons who did not speak Finnish appeared to be at a particular disadvantage.

Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court: The constitution and law allow anyone who is deprived of liberty by arrest or detention to challenge in court the lawfulness of his/her detention.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality.

Trial Procedures

The constitution and law provide for the right to a fair public trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right.

Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Authorities generally informed detainees promptly and in detail of the charges against them. Trials are fair and public, and take place without undue delay. Defendants have a right to be

present at their trial and to consult an attorney of their choice in a timely manner before trial. The government provides attorneys at public expense if defendants face serious criminal charges that can result in imprisonment or significant fines. Authorities give defendants adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense. Defendants are provided free interpretation as necessary from the moment an individual is charged through all appeals. They can confront and question witnesses for the prosecution and present witnesses and evidence on their own behalf. Defendants may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt and have the right of appeal.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals or organizations may seek civil remedies through domestic courts for human rights violations. Persons may appeal court decisions involving alleged violations of the European Convention on Human Rights to the European Court of Human Rights after they exhaust all avenues of appeal in national courts.

Property Restitution

The government reports Finland did not confiscate property belonging to Jews during the Holocaust-era, that Holocaust-era restitution has not been an issue, and that no litigation or restitution claims were pending before authorities regarding real or immovable property covered by the Terezin Declaration, to which the government is signatory.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and there were no reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of expression, including for the press, and the government generally respected these rights. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of expression, including for the press.

Freedom of Expression: Public speech intended to incite discrimination against any national, racial, religious, or ethnic group is a crime. Hate speech is not a separate criminal offense, but may constitute grounds for an aggravated sentence for other offenses.

Press and Media Freedom: The distribution of hate material intended to incite discrimination against any national, racial, religious, or ethnic group in print or broadcast media, books, or online newspapers or journals is a crime.

Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views with little restriction, with an isolated accusation that government pressured the media.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: On March 23, the Council for Mass Media accused Prime Minister Juha Sipilä of pressuring national broadcaster Yle after it reported in November 2016 on Sipilä's potential conflict of interest when a state-owned nickel mine awarded a 500-million-euro (\$600 million) order to an engineering company owned by his relatives. Sipilä sent the author of the Yle article approximately 20 emails complaining about the journalist's reporting of the story. Following Sipilä's emails, Yle also reportedly modified its content to avoid stories about the prime minister's potential conflict of interest. According to media reports, two Yle journalists resigned in December 2016, citing the broadcaster's alleged suppression of stories about Sipilä as one of the reasons for their departure. In May, Yle's executive editor in chief, Atte Jaaskelainen, also resigned after numerous complaints against him and the broadcaster, including censure by the Council for the Mass Media in Finland. The parliamentary ombudsman cleared Sipilä of any conflict of interest on February 1.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports that the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. The law provides for everyone to have a "subjective right to a telephone subscription and an internet connection." According to International Telecommunication Union statistics, an estimated 88 percent of the population used the internet in 2016.

Courts can fine persons found guilty of inciting racial hatred on the internet. There were a few reports that individuals incurred fines for publishing and distributing such material via the internet.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution and law provide for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

d. Freedom of Movement

The constitution and law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Abuse of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons: There were several reports of violence against asylum seekers, vandalism of reception centers for asylum seekers. Additionally there were reports of inadequate legal support for asylum seekers and translation services for them during asylum application processes. Right-wing extremist groups hostile to asylum seekers and immigrants, including the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) and the vigilante group Soldiers of Odin, maintained an active presence, mostly online.

On June 8, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination criticized the government for holding some asylum seekers in police detention and

for difficulties faced by undocumented individuals in accessing affordable and adequate health care other than emergency care.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. Parliament sets an annual quota for refugee admissions, and the government decides its allocation. The law requiring private lawyers to be paid a fixed (rather than an hourly) fee reduced the frequency with which lawyers participated in asylum interviews. There were numerous reports by media and civil society organizations, including the Finnish Bar Association, that asylum seekers lacked adequate access to legal assistance and translation services during the initial stages of the asylum application process.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: The country does not abide by a list of safe countries of origin. All individuals are assessed on an individual basis. The government adheres to the EU's Dublin III Regulation that establishes which EU member state is responsible for examining the asylum application. The government does not, however, return asylum seekers to Greece or Hungary under the Dublin Regulation.

Employment: Asylum seekers who have valid travel documents, but do not yet have a valid residence permit, are allowed to begin working three months after they have submitted their asylum application. Asylum seekers who do not have valid travel documents must wait six months after they have submitted their asylum application before they can begin working.

Durable Solutions: The government assisted in the safe, voluntary return of migrants to their home countries. Between January and June, the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) and the International Organization for Migration helped more than 896 persons to return voluntarily to their home countries.

Temporary Protection: Between January and July, Migri issued 507 positive decisions for subsidiary protection and 386 for "other grounds," which include compassionate grounds, cases when a person cannot return to his or her home country or country of permanent residence, family ties, work, or education.

Stateless Persons

According to UNHCR, 2,671 stateless persons resided in the country at the end of 2016. Involuntarily stateless persons and certain other special groups, such as refugees, have a shorter residency requirement--four years instead of six--than other persons before they are eligible to apply for citizenship. A child may obtain citizenship from either the mother or father regardless of the place of birth and may also acquire citizenship if the child is born in the country and would otherwise be stateless.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution and law provide citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: The country's national parliamentary elections in 2015 and the presidential election in 2012 were considered free and fair.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit participation of women and members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year.

Corruption: In June the Helsinki district court sentenced the former mayor of Vantaa, Jukka Peltomaki, to two years and six months of unconditional imprisonment for accepting bribes totaling 187,958 euros (\$225,500). He was also ordered to pay the bribe money to the state.

Financial Disclosure: By law, income and asset information from the tax forms of all citizens, including appointed and elected officials, must be made public each year. The law does not provide for specific criminal penalties for nondisclosure.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were often cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The parliamentary ombudsman enjoyed the government's cooperation, operated without government or party interference, and had adequate resources. The parliamentary ombudsman investigates complaints that a public authority or official failed to observe the law, fulfill a duty, or appropriately implement fundamental human rights protections. The main targets of the complaints were social welfare agencies, police, and health care.

The Human Rights Center operated as part of the parliamentary ombudsman's office. The center's functions include promoting human rights, reporting on the implementation of human rights obligations, and cooperating with European and international bodies on human rights matters. The center does not have authority to investigate individual human rights abuses. A delegation of representatives from civil society who participated in promoting and safeguarding human rights frequently cooperated with the center.

The parliamentary Constitutional Law Committee analyzes proposed legislation for consistency with international human rights conventions. The committee deals with legislation relating to criminal and procedural law, the courts, and the prison system.

The law requires the ombudsman for children, the nondiscrimination ombudsman, and the ombudsman for equality impartially to advance the status and legal protection of their respective reference groups. These ombudsmen operate under the Ministry of Justice.

Responsibility for developing antidiscrimination policies and legislation as well as for the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations resides with the Ministry of Justice's Unit for Democracy, Language Affairs, and Fundamental Rights.

The nondiscrimination ombudsman also operated as an independent government-oversight body that investigates discrimination complaints and promotes equal treatment within the government. The nondiscrimination ombudsman also acted as the national rapporteur on trafficking in human beings and supervised the government's removal of foreign nationals from the country.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, , and the government enforced the law effectively. Rape is punishable by up to four years' imprisonment. If the offender used violence, the offense is considered aggravated, and the penalty may be more severe. The maximum penalties are six years' imprisonment for rape and 10 years for aggravated rape. All sexual offenses against adults, except sexual harassment, are subject to public prosecution. Sexual offenses against a defenseless person (intoxicated or with a disability) are considered as severe as rape.

Authorities may prosecute domestic abuse under various criminal laws, including laws prohibiting rape, assault and battery, harassment, and disturbing the peace. The penalty for physical domestic violence ranges from a minimum of six months to a maximum of 10 years in prison.

Violence against women, including spousal abuse, continued to be a problem. According to Statistics Finland, approximately 69 percent of the victims of domestic and intimate-partner violence were women.

The government encouraged women to report rape and domestic violence and provided counseling, shelters, and other support services to survivors.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: On July 14, the Supreme Administrative Court ordered a 22-year-old Iraqi man who was convicted of planning to kill his sister to "restore his family's honor" to be deported to Iraq.

Sexual Harassment: The law defines sexual harassment as a specific, punishable offense with penalties ranging from fines up to six months' imprisonment. Employers who fail to protect employees from workplace harassment are subject to the same penalties. The prosecutor general is responsible for investigating sexual harassment complaints. The government generally enforced the law.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion, involuntary sterilization, or other coercive population control methods. Estimates on maternal mortality and contraceptive prevalence are available at:

www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/monitoring/maternal-mortality-2015/en/.

Discrimination: The law provides for the same legal status and rights for women as for men. The government enforced the law. In February the district court of North Karelia sentenced Kesla Oyj (a machinery company) to pay more than 60,000 euros (\$72,000) in compensation to the only female employee in its factory for unjustified termination of employment and gender discrimination in 2014. According to a 2016 report (the most recent available) by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment on working conditions, 9 percent of women reported facing discrimination in the workplace.

Children

Birth Registration: A child generally acquires citizenship at birth through one or both parents. A child can also acquire citizenship at birth if the child is born in the country and meets certain other criteria, such as if the parents have refugee status in the country or if the child is not eligible for any other country's citizenship. A local registration office records all births immediately.

Child Abuse: The law considers all sexual offenses against minors subject to public prosecution.

Minors accounted for 19.6 percent of all victims of assault offenses reported to police, according to Statistics Finland.

The ombudsman for children's affairs under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health continued to raise public awareness of child abuse and promote the government's child, youth, and family policy program.

Early and Forced Marriage: The minimum age of marriage is 18, but the law allows exceptions. Minors who want to marry must submit an application to the Ministry of Justice providing a justification based on religious beliefs, cultural practices, or pregnancy. The minister of justice makes the final ruling on whether to approve a request to marry.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The country prohibits the commercial sexual exploitation of children, including the sale, offering or procuring of children for prostitution, and child pornography. Authorities enforced the law effectively. The law prohibits purchase of sexual services from minors and covers "grooming" (enticement of a child), including in a virtual environment or through mobile telephone contacts.

The minimum age for consensual sex is 16. The law regards a person whose age cannot be determined, but who can reasonably be assumed to be under the age of 18, as a child. The law defines rape of a minor (under 18 years of age) as aggravated rape.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/legal/compliance.html.

Anti-Semitism

According to Statistics Finland, in 2016 the Jewish community numbered 1,110 persons, most living in the Helsinki area.

The website Magneettimedia, known for its anti-Semitic content, continued to post discriminatory statements online during the year. The site's publisher denied that the website was anti-Semitic, instead describing itself as "critical of the Zionist elite" that included "both Christians and Jews." In May and July, respectively, it posted articles entitled "Zionist Bank Cartel Damages Finnish Mining Industry" and "International Drug Trafficking in the Hands of the Jewish Elite." The neo-Nazi NRM continued to post anti-Semitic content on its social media pages and published other online materials glorifying Adolf Hitler. The former owner of Magneettimedia continued to spread anti-Semitic editorials through the newspaper *KauppaSuomi*, a periodical distributed through his large chain of department stores. An editorial published April 19 stated "a majority of people working in education in Finland are directly influenced by literature written abroad. In the Finnish school system the most important 'anti-racist' authority has for decades been the Jew Karmela Liebkind."

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

Persons with Disabilities

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in all fields and the provision of other state services. The government effectively enforced these provisions.

Authorities generally enforced laws mandating access to buildings for persons with disabilities, although many older buildings remained inaccessible. Most forms of public transportation were accessible, but problems continued in some geographically isolated areas.

Official 2016 law enforcement figures recorded 24 cases of crimes based on bias toward persons with disabilities, including 17 physical assaults, six verbal threats, and one case of “mutual combat.”

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

In 2016, the most recent year for which data were available, official police figures recorded 831 racist and xenophobic hate crimes. Of these, 236 were physical assaults, 70 cases of damage to property or theft, 302 verbal assaults, and 223 other crimes. Among foreign citizens resident in the country, Iraqis experienced the highest frequency of racially motivated crimes.

According to historical data from the minority ombudsman, discrimination against the country’s approximately 10,000-12,000 Roma extended to all areas of life. Police investigated Member of Parliament Juho Eerola (Finns Party) for suspected ethnic agitation over a Facebook post in which he claimed to have spat at Romani beggars. Ethnic Finns were also occasionally victims of racially motivated crimes for associating with members of minority communities.

In addition to the Romani minority, Russian-speakers, Somalis, and Sami experienced discrimination. According to a study by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, members of ethnic minorities faced discrimination in the labor market (see section 7.d.).

The government strongly encouraged tolerance and respect for minority groups, and sought to address racial discrimination, and assisted victims.

Indigenous People

The constitution provides for the protection of the Sami language and culture, and the government financially supported these efforts. The Sami, who constituted less

than 0.1 percent of the population, have full political and civil rights as citizens as well as a measure of autonomy in their civil and administrative affairs. A 21-member Sami parliament (Samediggi), popularly elected by the Sami, is responsible for the group's language, culture, and matters concerning their status as an indigenous people. The Sami parliament is an independent body but operates under the purview of the Ministry of Justice. It can adopt legally binding resolutions, propose initiatives, and provide policy guidance.

Despite constitutional protections, members of the Sami community continued to protest a lack of explicit laws safeguarding Sami land, resources, language, and economic livelihood and to call for greater inclusion in political decision-making processes.

In January the Sami parliament complained to the chancellor of justice concerning the role of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in the Tenjoki Fisheries Agreement. According to media reports, the agreement, which entered into force on March 22, restricts fishing in the Teno River to revive the salmon stock and particularly restricts traditional Sami fishing techniques. A group of Sami rights activists occupied an island in the river in July to protest the agreement. In March the chancellor of justice stated that the Sami were consulted too late in the agreement's drafting process.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression. Nonetheless, the law requires a person to be sterilized or infertile before the government will recognize their gender change.

In 2016, the last year for which data were available, official law-enforcement figures recorded 57 hate crimes based on bias against LGBTI persons, including 17 verbal insults, threats, and harassment and 19 physical assaults.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

In 2016 the nondiscrimination ombudsman received 891 discrimination complaints, 37 (or 4 percent) of which involved religious discrimination.

There were isolated incidents in which politicians made discriminatory remarks on social media aimed at members of the Muslim community. In January, Member of

Parliament Teuvo Hakkarainen (Finns Party) was found guilty of incitement of racial hatred and ordered to pay a 1,160-euro (\$1,390) fine. The court also ordered him to remove the Facebook post for which he was prosecuted.

In June the online investigative journalism magazine *Long Play* published a story accusing police officers of posting racist comments on a secret Facebook group page. Yle estimated that about one-third of the country's police officers, including police leadership, belonged to the group. On July 6, Yle reported that, after reviewing complaints, the prosecutor general's office found no evidence of criminal activity and would not pursue an investigation. The head of communications at the Police Administration, however, told media that police units would still assess separately whether to take administrative actions.

The arrival of large numbers of migrants has been followed by an increase in activity by extreme right-wing and antiforeigner groups. In 2015, the latest data available, authorities recorded 33 suspected cases of violent right-wing extremism and another 16 cases instigated by antifascist and anarchist elements. The neo-Nazi NRM was suspected in most of the cases.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and any restriction or obstruction of these rights.

The government effectively enforced all applicable laws regarding the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. Employers who violate the rights of employees to organize and retain employee representatives may face administrative measures, legal proceedings, and fines. The penalties were generally sufficient to deter violations. Authorities and employers generally respected freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, and there were no reports of violations.

The law does not permit public-sector employees who provide “essential services,” including police officers, firefighters, medical professionals, and border guards, to strike. An official dispute board can make nonbinding recommendations to the cabinet on ending or limiting the duration of strikes when they threaten national

security. Employees prohibited from striking can use arbitration to provide for due process in the resolution of their concerns.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor. The government effectively enforced the law. Penalties for forced or compulsory labor depend on the severity of the crime and range from four months to 10 years in prison. Despite strong penalties for violations, some cases of persons subjected to conditions of forced labor in the country were reported during the year.

Men and women were subjected to conditions of forced labor in the construction, restaurant, agriculture, metal, and transport sectors and as cleaners, gardeners, and domestic servants.

The debate on seasonal berry pickers' situation continued during the year, as the trial of a man charged with trafficking 26 Thai berry pickers began in March. According to media reports, the number of seasonal wild berry pickers from Thailand decreased in part because the Thai government warned potential workers about reports of low pay in Finland. Yle reported that the Finnish embassy in Bangkok received slightly more than 2,000 visa applications for berry pickers compared with 3,000 most other years.

News media reported that numerous asylum seekers worked without pay in the restaurant industry, a barbershop, and at least one retail shop. In May, Yle reported that a labor inspector discovered that asylum seekers worked several months without pay in a restaurant in Lahti. The asylum seekers first began working for the restaurant through a three-week internship arranged by an asylum reception center. According to Yle, the center's director stated that it advised asylum seekers not to work for free, but many did so voluntarily.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law allows persons between the ages of 15 and 18 to enter into a valid employment contract as long as the work does not interrupt compulsory education. It provides that workers who are 15 to 18 years of age may not work after 10 p.m. or under conditions that risk their health and safety, which the Ministry of Social

Affairs and Health defines as working with mechanical, chemical, physical, or biological hazards or bodily strain that may result from lifting heavy loads.

Penalties for violations of child labor regulations range from a fine to up to 12 months in prison. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment effectively enforced child labor regulations. There were no reports of children engaged in work outside the parameters established by law.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The Center for Occupational Safety (OSHA) received 500 reports of work place discrimination in 2016. Of the reports that resulted in further inspection, 14 percent concerned ethnicity, nationality, language, or religion while 24 percent involved alleged discrimination based on age, disability, sexual orientation, or gender. The law requires equal pay for equal work, but there appeared to be a gap in pay between male and female employees.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

While there is no national minimum wage law, the law requires all employers, including nonunionized employers, to pay the minimum wages stipulated in collective bargaining agreements. Authorities adequately enforced wage laws.

The standard workweek established by law is no more than 40 hours of work per week with eight hours work per day. The law does not include a provision regarding a five-day workweek, so regular work hours may, at least in principle, span six days. The regular weekly work hours can also be arranged so that the average is 40 hours over a period of no more than 52 weeks. Certain occupations, such as seamen, household workers, road transport workers, and workers in bakeries, are subject to separate workweek regulations. The law entitles employees working shifts or during the weekend to one 24-hour rest period per week. The law limits a worker to 250 hours of overtime per year and 138 overtime hours in any four-month period. Employees are entitled to paid annual holidays and leave.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for labor policy and implementation, drafting labor legislation, improving the viability of working life and its quality, and promoting employment. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for enforcement of labor laws and regulations. In addition, OSHA enforces appropriate safety and health standards and conducts

inspections at workplaces. Individuals who commit work safety offenses are subject to a fine or imprisonment for a maximum of one year; individuals who commit working hours offenses are subject to a fine or imprisonment for a maximum of six months. The center informs employers of inspections in advance unless a surprise inspection is necessary for enforcement purposes. A subsequent inspection report gives employers written advice on how to remedy minor defects. In the case of serious violations, the inspector issues an improvement notice and monitors the employer's compliance. When necessary, OSHA may issue a binding decision and impose a fine. If a hazardous situation involved a risk to life, an inspector can halt work on the site or issue a prohibition notice concerning the source of risk.

Authorities adequately enforced wage and overtime laws. Government resources, inspections, and penalties were adequate to deter most violations.

The law requires employees to report any hazards or risks they discover in working conditions, including in machinery, equipment, or work methods. The law also requires employees, where possible, to correct dangerous conditions that come to their attention. Such corrective measures must be reported to the employer. The law provides employees the right to refuse work that may present a serious danger to their lives or health or the lives or health of others and not to be held liable for any damages that arise from their refusal to work.

According to a 2014 (latest available data) Ministry of Social Affairs and Health report on occupational safety and health, workplace safety concerns were most common in the construction, logistics, health-care, household, and maintenance sectors. According to media reports, men and women faced labor law abuses at approximately equal rates in the construction, restaurant, and health-care services industries.