

# Guide to the Rights of Immigrant Women



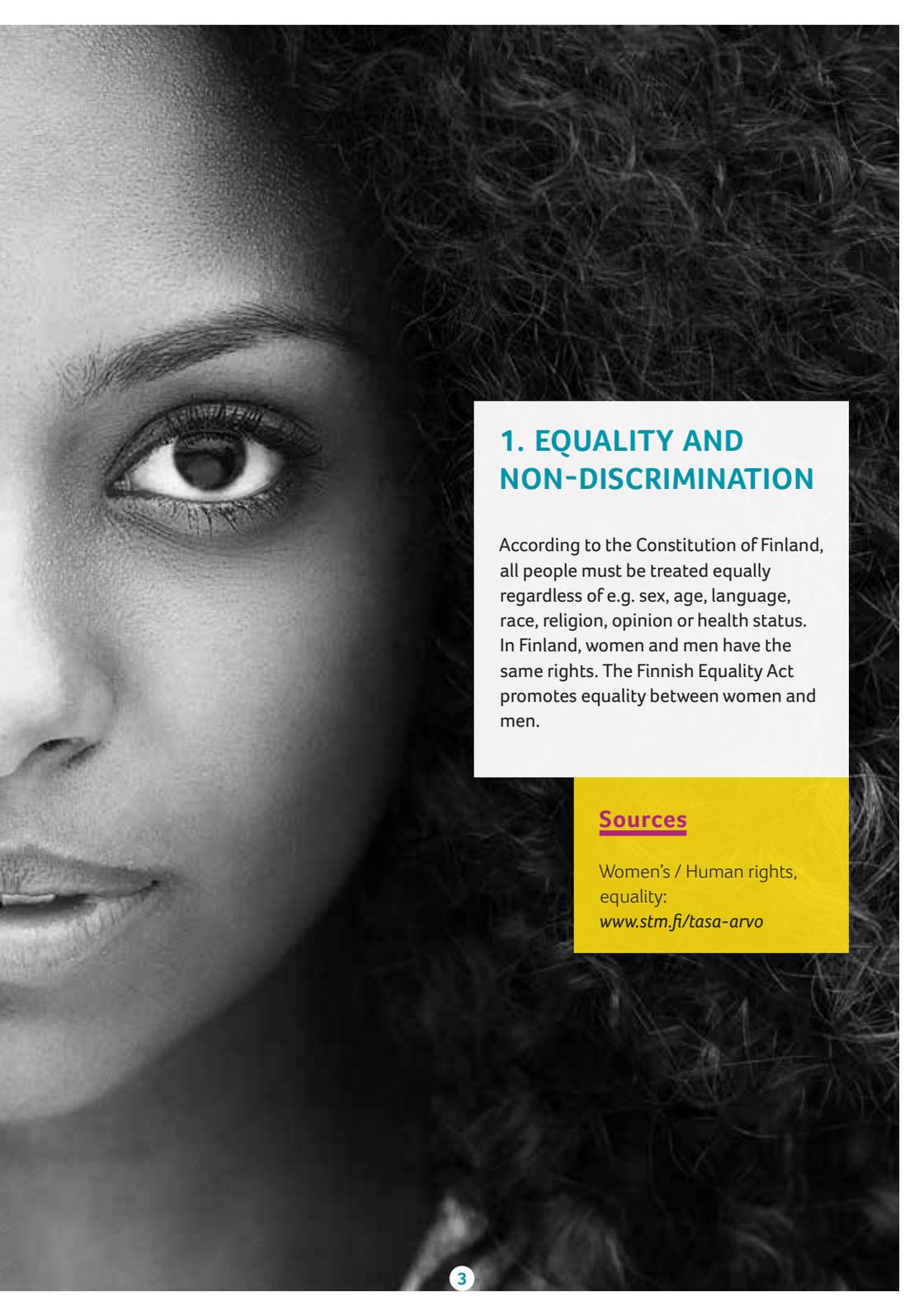
TURUN  
ENSI-JA  
TURVAKOTI RY

# CONTENTS

<b>1. EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. SOCIAL SECURITY IN FINLAND .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Health services.....	4
2.2 Financial support.....	4
<b>3. FAMILY LAW .....</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1 Filing for divorce .....	5
3.2 Child custody and maintenance.....	6
3.3 Joint custody.....	6
3.4 Sole custody.....	6
3.5 Right of access .....	6
<b>4. LEGAL PROTECTION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 Report of an offence .....	7
4.2 Restraining order.....	7
4.3 Non-disclosure for personal safety reasons.....	7

This guide has been written for you who live as an immigrant in Finland. The guide briefly explains your rights. The guide has been drawn up by a shelter home of the *Turun ensi- ja turvakoti ry* (Turku parental support and shelter home). The drawing up of the guide was made possible by a donation from the V-day charity event to the Turku parental support and shelter home. The event was organized by the professional theatres of the city: Linna Theatre, Turku City Theatre and Åbo Svenska Teater.





## 1. EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

According to the Constitution of Finland, all people must be treated equally regardless of e.g. sex, age, language, race, religion, opinion or health status. In Finland, women and men have the same rights. The Finnish Equality Act promotes equality between women and men.

### Sources

Women's / Human rights,  
equality:  
[www.stm.fi/tasa-arvo](http://www.stm.fi/tasa-arvo)

## Sources

Subsistence /KELA:  
[www.kela.fi](http://www.kela.fi) and  
[www.infopankki.fi](http://www.infopankki.fi)

## 2. SOCIAL SECURITY IN FINLAND

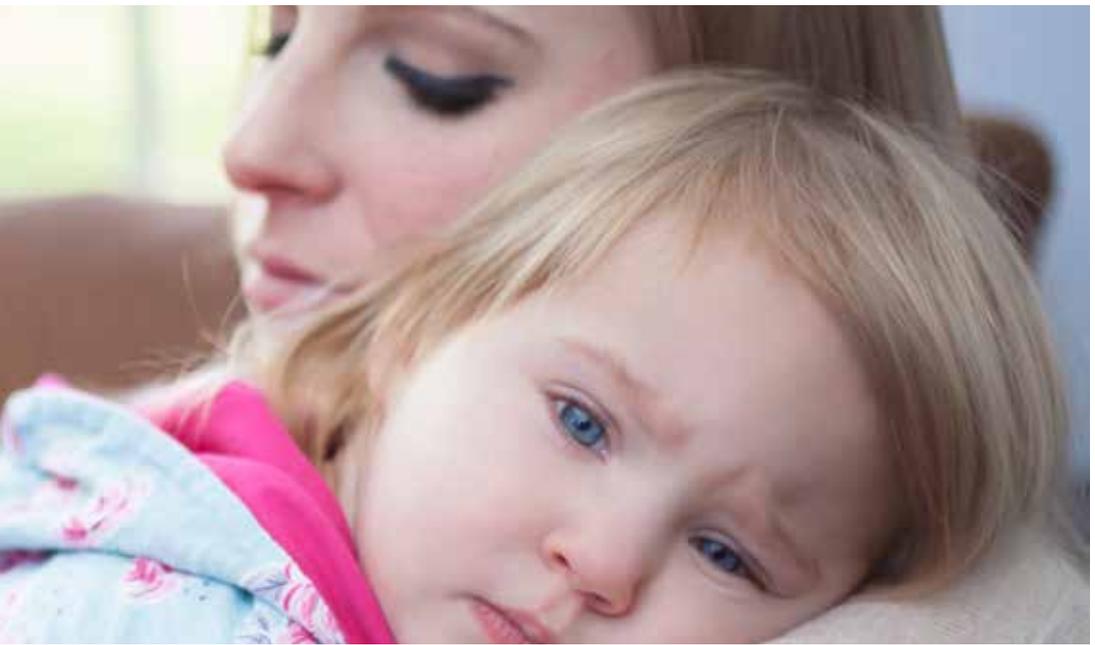
### 2.1 Health services

You are entitled to use the Finnish public health services if you have a municipality of residence in Finland. If you are unsure whether you have a municipality of residence in Finland, find out your situation in more detail at the Local Register Office. In an emergency situation, you will be treated even if you do not have a municipality of residence in Finland. In this kind of situation the medical costs can be collected from you afterwards. If you are not entitled to public health services, you can make an appointment at a private clinic. Private health services are more expensive for the customer than public ones.

### 2.2 Financial support

If you live in Finland, you are entitled to Finnish social security. Benefits included in the Finnish social security are applied for from the Social Insurance Institution, i.e. Kela, each benefit is applied for separately. You will find out what your own situation is by visiting Kela. Benefits are granted depending on the applicant's life situation. The social security includes e.g. child benefit, study grant, housing allowance, basic unemployment allowance and sickness allowances.

If your income or assets are insufficient to cover the necessary everyday costs e.g. food, clothes or health care, you can apply for social assistance. Social assistance is intended to be a temporary help and you can apply for it from the social welfare services of your own municipality of residence.



## 3. FAMILY LAW

### 3.1 Filing for divorce

The spouses can file for divorce together or one of the spouses can file alone. You can file for divorce even if your spouse does not wish to divorce. The reasons for the divorce are not investigated. In Finland, divorce is applied for in two phases. First a written application for divorce (that can be printed from the Internet) is submitted to the District Court of the municipality of residence. Submitting an application for divorce must be paid for. When the application has been submitted, a six month reconsideration period begins, after which divorce is applied for again. After this the court grants the spouses a divorce.

If the persons filing for divorce have children under 18 years of age, in connection with the divorce it must be agreed on where the child will live, who will be the child's custodian, how the other parent will meet the child and how much child support one of the parents will pay to the other parent.

#### Sources

Filing for divorce, child custody and maintenance: [www.thl.fi/lastensuojelukäsikirja](http://www.thl.fi/lastensuojelukäsikirja), [www.finlex.fi](http://www.finlex.fi) (Act on Child Maintenance Allowance, Act on Child Maintenance, Act on Child Custody and Right of Access, Marriage Act and Guardianship Services Act)

## 3.2 Child custody and maintenance

The child has the right to receive care and attention suitable for his / her level of development. The parents are responsible for the maintenance of their child until the child turns 18 and for bearing the costs of the child's care and attention. The parent with whom the child does not live will pay child support to the other parent.

The agreement concerning child custody and maintenance is confirmed with the Child Welfare Supervisor of the social welfare services of the municipality of residence. In this case the parents have been able to mutually agree on the matters concerning the custody and maintenance of the child in the divorce situation. If the parents are not able to mutually agree on the matter, the matter will be decided in court. The court will take into consideration the child's best interests and the child's own wishes when making its decision. The court may also ask the social welfare authorities for further explanation.

## 3.3 Joint custody

The child's best interests are best realized when the parents take care of their child together. In joint custody both parents participate in taking care of the child's affairs and together make the decisions concerning the child (e.g. the child's care and upbringing, place of residence, health care, day care and schooling). Joint custody can be limited by a court decision for one parent's part. In a divorce situation, the decision on the child's place of residence must be made taking into consideration the child's best interests and the arrangement of the child's everyday life. Officially a child can only live at one address.

## 3.4 Sole custody

A sole custodian makes the choices and decisions concerning the child independently. The authorities (e.g. a doctor, a teacher and a social worker) provide information concerning the child only to the custodian. A sole custodian may separately give the authority a permission according to which the other parent will also have the right to obtain information. The right to obtain information can also be given by a court decision.

## 3.5 Right of access

The right of access safeguards the child's right to maintain contact with and meet the parent with whom the child does not live. Making the meetings possible is the responsibility of both parents.

## 4. LEGAL PROTECTION

You have the right to receive legal support in Finland. You can seek help in legal matters at Legal Aid Offices. If you have become victim of serious violence or a sexual offence, you have the right to have a legal counsel at the expense of the state.

### 4.1 Report of an offence

You must make a report of an offence if you have become victim of a crime. A report of an offence is made at a police station. A report of an offence can also be made through the police website or by a phone call if the crime is minor.

For the report of an offence the police needs the information below:

- What happened
- Where and when it happened
- Who was the offender (a possible description, e.g. age, appearance)
- Possible further information on the offender

When you have reported the offence the police will investigate the incident and carry out a pre-trial investigation of the matter. If you have evidence (e.g. a medical statement on the injuries incurred, pictures, messages) these must also be submitted to the police. Criminal offences and their punishments are defined in the Criminal Code of Finland. In Finland, all people over 15 years of age are responsible for the crimes they commit, which means they can be sentenced for them. People under 15 years of age cannot be sentenced, but they are obliged to compensate for the damage they have caused.

### 4.2 Restraining order

Restraining order is applied for in a situation in which your life, health or freedom is threatened or disturbed repeatedly. Restraining order means that the person in question is not allowed to take contact with you or to approach you. Restraining order is applied for from a court of law, the police can impose the restraining order as a temporary order. Obtaining a restraining order becomes easier if you have evidence (e.g. text messages, a medical statement) or witnesses (e.g. a neighbor) to the incident.

### 4.3 Non-disclosure for personal safety reasons

If you suspect that your own or your family's safety is being threatened, you can apply for the non-disclosure for personal safety reasons from the Local Register Office. The non-disclosure for personal safety reasons means that the Local Register Office will not give e.g. your home address to anybody except to the authorities.

#### Sources

Legal support: [www.oikeus.fi](http://www.oikeus.fi) and [www.infopankki.fi](http://www.infopankki.fi)

Report of an offence, medical certificate and pictures: [www.poliisi.fi](http://www.poliisi.fi) and [www.infopankki.fi](http://www.infopankki.fi)

Restraining order: [www.infopankki.fi](http://www.infopankki.fi) and [www.poliisi.fi](http://www.poliisi.fi)

Non-disclosure for personal safety reasons: [www.maistraatti.fi](http://www.maistraatti.fi)



TURUN  
ENSI- JA  
TURVAKOTI RY

[www.tuentu.fi](http://www.tuentu.fi)

.....  
**TURUN ENSI- JA TURVAKOTI RY**

Luolavuorentie 7b, 20810 Turku

Tel. +358 2 5134 100

[turvakoti@tuentu.fi](mailto:turvakoti@tuentu.fi)

**Find us on Facebook:**

[www.facebook.com/turunturvakoti](http://www.facebook.com/turunturvakoti)

