

FINLAND

Population: 5,2 Mio

Area: 338.145 km²

Part 1: Laws concerning Homosexuality

Forbidden by law: No

Registered partnership/marriage: Yes, since March 1st, 2002

Differences to heterosexual marriages: *Heterosexual* married couples can adopt children, have the automatic right to a common family name, and when a child is born, the spouse is considered legal parent automatically on the basis of marital ties. The partners in registered partnership don't have these rights. A common family name can be obtained, however, but only through the normal (long and costly) process of a name change, whereas it is free and quick for married couples. Married couples also have a 'marriage formula', whereas the registration of a partnership is completed simply by signing the paper. This is not considered to be a disadvantage, though, as it allows more freedom for the ceremonies to be tailored to fit the couple's wishes.

Anti-discrimination law, protecting lesbians/gays (L/G) against discrimination: Yes, since 1995.

At work: Yes

In other areas: Yes

Comments: *The anti-discrimination section in the Penal Code (578/1995) says:*

"A person who in his/her trade or profession, service of the general public, exercise of official authority or other public functions, or in the arrangement of a public amusement or meeting, without a justified reason

(1)refuses someone service in accordance with the generally applicable conditions;

(2)refuses someone entry to the amusement or meeting or ejects him/her; or

(3) places someone in an unequal or an essentially inferior position owing to his/her race, national or ethnic origin, colour, language, sex, age, family ties, sexual preference, state of health, religion, political orientation, political or industrial activity or another comparable circumstance shall be sentenced, unless the act is punishable as industrial discrimination, for *discrimination* to a fine or to imprisonment for at most six months."

Part 2: Situation in the Church(es)

Open L/G welcome to

Eucharist: Yes

Do volunteer work: In theory, yes, but in practise, congregations can be quite exclusive

Work as ordained ministers: Yes, as long as they live in the closet.

Other employment in church(es): Again, as long as they remain closeted.

Partnership blessing possible: Yes, if one manages to find a minister who does it. If the minister is Lutheran, it is a very unofficial ceremony. The Orthodox (Greek-Catholic) priests do it more openly.

Incidents/outspoken attitudes that briefly describe the situation for lesbians/gays in the churches:

It's possible for gays/lesbians to work in a congregation and be privately out even to the bishop – as long as you pretend to live in celibacy. People are known to have been fired when they came out as living in a same-sex relationship. In this respect, however, differences between bishops are big.

Part 3: Christian Lesbian/Gay Networks

Network name: Arcus (for GLBT ministers and other employees of the church)

Number of members: Secret

Year of foundation: 1997

Web page/contact address: www.seta.fi/arcus (in Finnish)

Network name: Yhteys-liike

Number of members: Approx. 400

Web page/contact address: www.yhteys.org

Network name: Malkus

Number of members: Loose group under the biggest member organisation of SETA, the national LGBTQ human rights/social work organisation in Finland.

Web page/contact address: www.heseta.fi/malkus/

Country Questionnaire filled in by Tellu [REDACTED] and friends