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Finnish Election System

Overview

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Finnish Election System

Overview

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Abstract

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1. General

Elections and legislation

In Finland

- the parliament (200 Members of Parliament) and
- the President of the Republic,
- the councils of the municipalities (342¹), and
- 13 Members of the European Parliament

are elected through general elections.

The foundation of the Finnish election legislation was laid at the beginning of the 20th century. The Parliament Act and the Election Act of the Grand Duchy of Finland were enacted in 1906, and the first parliamentary elections in accordance with these were held in 1907. The first act on municipal elections was enacted in 1917. The first President of the Republic of Finland was elected by Parliament in 1919, and in 1922 an act on the election of presidential electors was enacted. In 1994 the President was for the first time elected directly by the people in a two-stage election. When Finland joined the European Union on 1 January 1995, the Act on the Election of Finnish Representatives to the European Parliament was enacted.

Through an amendment in 1998 all election legislation was merged into one single act - the Election Act (714/1998) - which entered into force on 8 October 1998.

Central principles of holding elections

All Finnish elections follow the principles below:

The elections are direct. Eligible voters vote directly for the person they want to see elected.

The elections are proportional. In proportional elections each party or other group gains seats in relation to the votes cast for it compared with the votes cast for other groups. For example if a party gets 20 per cent of the votes, it should also get 20 per cent of the seats. (This does not apply to presidential elections in which votes are only cast for a candidate, not for a party.)

The elections are secret. Secrecy of the ballot means that neither the election authorities nor anyone else get to know who the voters cast their vote for or whether they returned an empty ballot.

The right to vote is universal and equal. Universal franchise signifies that the right to vote only depends on requirements which citizens usually fulfil. For example the only requirements in the parliamentary elections are: Finnish citizenship and 18 years age. Equal franchise means that every person entitled to vote has an equal right to influence

¹ The number of municipalities on 1 January 2010.

the election results, i.e. everyone has the same number of votes. In general elections everybody has one vote.

Voting is personal. The right to vote may not be used through an agent.

Voting takes place in front of election authorities. This aims to guarantee that the elections are trustworthy, the voters may freely express their will, and that secrecy is maintained. The election authorities usually are elected officials.

The system is a combination of voting for individuals and parties. A vote goes both to a party and a person. (This does not apply to presidential elections in which votes are only cast for a candidate, not for a party.)

Authorities

The supreme election authority is the Ministry of Justice which has the overall responsibility for carrying out elections. Local authorities are

- constituency electoral committees (15) and
- central election committees of the municipalities (342) and the election boards at the polling stations (approx. 2500) and electoral commissions (approx. 500) and
- election officials at the advance polling stations (approx. 1000).

Other election authorities are the Population Register Centre and the local register offices which see to the compilation of the voting register and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which takes care of the advance voting abroad.

2. Parliamentary elections

2.1 General

According to the Finnish Constitution sovereign power in Finland belongs to the people, represented by Parliament convened in session. The Finnish Parliament is unicameral and comprises 200 representatives who are elected every fourth year. Election day is the third Sunday of April.

On the basis of a reasoned initiative by the Prime Minister and after having consulted the various parliamentary factions, the President of the Republic may dissolve Parliament at a time when it is in session by ordering that new elections be held. Election day then is the first Sunday within 50 - 75 days of the publication of the order. The latest dissolving of the parliament has happened in 1975.

2.2 Right to vote and eligibility

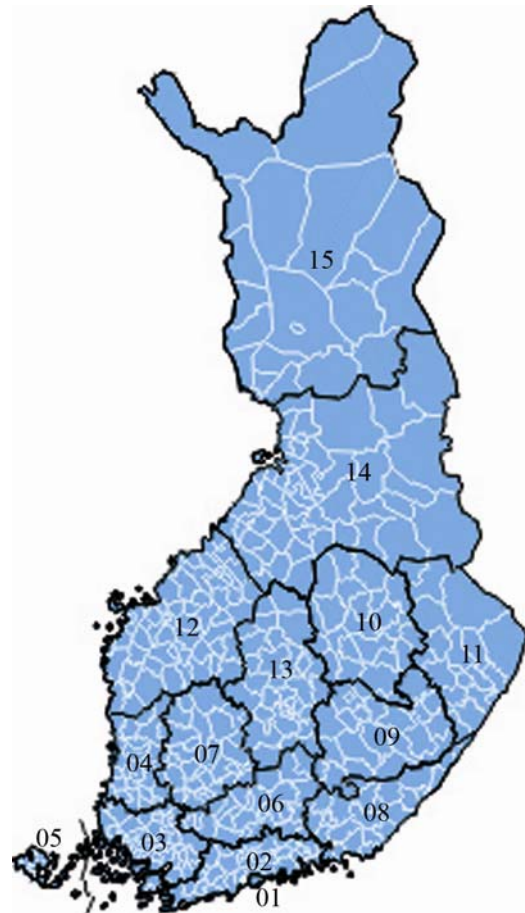
Regardless of domicile, every Finnish citizen who has reached the age of 18 at the latest on the day of the election is entitled to vote.

Every person entitled to vote who is not legally incompetent is eligible for Parliament, i.e. may enter as a candidate. A professional soldier may not, however, be elected Member of Parliament. In addition, some high-ranking officials such as the Chancellor of Justice and the Justices of the Supreme Court may not be Members of Parliament, and may thus not enter as candidates without resigning from their office.

2.3 Electoral districts

For the purpose of parliamentary elections the country has been divided into 15 electoral districts in accordance with the division into provinces. A number of representatives proportional to the number of Finnish citizens residing in the electoral district six months prior to the elections are elected from each electoral district. However, from the electoral district of Åland is always elected one representative. Well before the elections, the Government decides on the division of parliamentary seats on the electoral districts on the basis of information in the Population Information System. In the parliamentary elections of 2007 the seats were divided as follows:

- 01 electoral district of Helsinki (21 seats)
- 02 electoral district of Uusimaa (34)
- 03 electoral district of Varsinais-Suomi (17)
- 04 electoral district of Satakunta (9)
- 05 electoral district of Åland (1)
- 06 electoral district of Häme (14)
- 07 electoral district of Pirkanmaa (18)
- 08 electoral district of Kymi (12)
- 09 electoral district of Etelä-Savo (6)
- 10 electoral district of Pohjois-Savo (10)
- 11 electoral district of North Karelia (6)
- 12 electoral district of Vaasa (17)
- 13 electoral district of Central Finland (10)
- 14 electoral district of Oulu (18)
- 15 electoral district of Lapland (7)



2.4 Nomination of candidates

In parliamentary elections candidates may be nominated

- 1) by parties which have been entered into the party register kept by the Ministry of Justice and
- 2) by constituency associations established by people entitled to vote.

At most 14 candidates may be nominated by each party in every electoral district or, if more than 14 representatives are elected from the electoral district, at most the number of candidates elected. Parties may form electoral alliances. However, the number of candidates nominated by an alliance may not exceed the maximum number of candidates for a single party.

A constituency association for the nomination of a candidate may be established by at least 100 people entitled to vote in the electoral district. Such associations may form joint lists containing at most 14 candidates or, if more than 14 representatives are elected from the district, at most the number of candidates elected.

A party or constituency association has to submit its list of candidates (candidate application) to the constituency electoral committee of the electoral district in which it intends to nominate candidates not later than 40 days before election day at 4 p.m. The same deadline applies to notices of electoral alliances and joint lists.

The constituency electoral committees examine the candidate lists, especially whether the candidates are eligible, and confirm the nomination of candidates 31 days before election day. The committee compiles a master list of candidates in which the candidates of all parties, constituency associations and joint lists are enumerated in an order drawn by lot. The master list includes the number (beginning with number 2), name, municipality of residence and title, profession or position of each candidate. The master list of candidates is displayed e.g. in the polling booths.

2.5 Compilation of the voting register

The Population Register Centre compiles a computer register of everyone entitled to vote (voting register) 46 days before election day. This register contains some of the information on the voters (e.g. name, personal number, electoral district, municipality of residence, and polling station) which was in the Population Information System 51 days before election day.

The voting register is publicly available at the local register offices (maistraatti) from day 41 before election day. In addition, everyone in the register is sent a notice of his or her right to vote (card of information) not later than 24 days before election day. The card states i.a. the election day, the days for advance voting, the advance polling stations within the electoral district of the recipient, the address of the polling station of the recipient, and the addresses and telephone numbers of the election authorities. The voting register is later used to print out electoral rolls for the polling stations on election day.

Claims for correction of the register must to be submitted to the local register office not later than 16 days before election day. A correction may be demanded e.g. if somebody considers that he or she has without cause been left out of the register or that the information in the register is incorrect. The local register office shall decide the claims not later than 13 days before election day. The decision of the local register office may be appealed at the regional administrative court within seven days of service. The decision of the regional administrative court is not subject to appeal. An appeal to the Supreme

Administrative Court is, however, possible through so called extraordinary appeal, i.e. a complaint or application for the annulment of the administrative decision or for the restoration of lapsed. These are nevertheless extremely rare.

The voting register becomes legally valid at noon 12 days before election day. After this it may not be amended, i.e. a person may neither be erased from nor added to the register and the information may not be changed. The only exceptions to this are the cases in which a regional administrative court or the Supreme Administrative Court reaches its decision after the register has already become legally valid. In this case persons who e.g. pursuant to the court decision have been added to the voting register may vote in the elections, but they have to take the decision with them to the polling station and present it to the election authorities.

2.6 Voting

A person entitled to vote may vote either 1) in advance or 2) on election day.

Voting in advance

The advance voting begins on Wednesday eleven days before election day, and ends abroad on Saturday eight days and in Finland on Tuesday five days before election day.

General advance polling stations where any person entitled to vote may do so are in Finland post-offices and municipal offices and abroad Finnish embassies prescribed in a Government decree. There is at least one such polling station in every municipality, unless otherwise prescribed. Those entitled to vote may do so at any of the general advance polling stations in Finland or abroad.

In Finland special advance polling stations are hospitals, prisons and some other institutions where only the people who receive treatment or are incarcerated there may vote.

In addition, people whose ability to move or function is so restricted that they are unable to come to an advance polling station or a polling station on election day may vote in advance at home. This means that an election official comes to their home to receive their vote. The family carer of a person entitled to vote at home, living in the same household, has the right to vote in this context.

The crew of a Finnish ship abroad may vote in advance on board the ship. The advance voting in ships can begin already 18 days before the election day.

At the advance polling station the voter first has to show an identity card to the election official who then gives him or her *a ballot*. The voter writes the number of the candidate he or she wants to vote for on the ballot in a polling booth. The master lists of candidates in all electoral districts with all the candidates and their numbers are available at

the advance polling station. In the polling booth is the master list of candidates in the electoral district in question.

The ballot then has to be folded so that the number can not be seen, after which it is presented to the election official who stamps it. After this the voter seals the ballot in the brown *ballot envelope* and signs a *covering letter*. Finally, the election official seals the ballot envelope (with the ballot inside) and the covering letter in a *covering envelope*, which is posted to the central election committee of the municipality of the voter.

The central election committee opens the covering envelopes and to guarantee election secrecy then separates the covering letters from the ballot envelopes. All ballot envelopes (which are not opened) are gathered together and sent to be counted to the constituency electoral committee.

Voting on election day

On election day the polling stations are open between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. There is at least one polling station in every municipality, and the total number is approximately 2500. Voters may cast their votes only at the polling station stated in the voting register and on the card sent to them before the elections.

An election board consisting of five members arranges the voting at a polling station.

At the polling station a voter first has to show an identity card to the election board which checks the voting register to see that the he or she is entitled to vote and that he or she has not voted in advance. Then the board hands over *a ballot* to the voter who in a polling booth writes the number of the candidate he or she wants to vote for on the ballot. In the polling booth and also otherwise available at the polling station is a master list of candidates in the electoral district in question with all the candidates and their numbers. The ballot then has to be folded so that the number can not be seen, after which it is presented to the election official taking care of the ballot box who stamps it. Finally, the voter drops the stamped ballot into a ballot box.

2.7 Election Results

Counting the advance votes

The constituency electoral committees begin counting the advance votes on election day at 3 p.m. at the earliest (or on special grounds at noon at the earliest). The brown ballot envelopes sent from the municipalities are opened and the ballots within them counted. The results of the advance voting should be ready by 8 p.m. Before this the constituency electoral committees may not reveal anything on how the counting is progressing.

Counting the votes cast on election day

As soon as the doors of the polling station have been closed at 8 p.m. the election board begins a preliminary count of the votes given on election day. The board opens the ballot box, counts the ballots within it, and notes down the votes of the candidates in the election protocol. Immediately thereafter the board informs the central election committee of the municipality of the votes of the candidates, i.e. of the election results in the voting district. The central committee enters the results in the central calculation system in the Election Information System of the Ministry of Justice. Finally, the election board seals the ballots in a parcel and delivers it to the constituency electoral committee before Monday morning 9 a.m.

Determination of the election results

The so-called d'Hondt method is used to determine the election results. Thus, in the first stage of the calculation the total number of votes of each group, i.e.

- party which does not belong to an electoral alliance,
- electoral alliance,
- joint list, and
- constituency association which does not belong to a joint list,

is counted. Parties which have formed an electoral alliance are thus treated as a single group, as are constituency associations on a joint list.

In the *second stage of the calculation* the candidates in each group are ranked in order of their personal number of votes.

In the *third stage* each candidate is accorded a comparative index, i.e. the candidate who has received most personal votes is accorded an index which equals the total number of votes of the group, the second best candidate half of that, the third best a third, the fourth best a fourth, and so on.

In the *final stage* all candidates within the electoral district are listed in order from best to worst according to their comparative index, and the representatives elected from the district are chosen from this list (see chapter 2.3).

Publication of the preliminary election results

The preliminary election results are ready to be published already on the evening of election day. After the polling stations have closed at 8 p.m. the results of the advance voting are published. Thereafter, the preliminary counts by the election boards are entered into the Election Information System as soon as they are ready. Usually preliminary results for the entire election are ready at midnight.

Check count and confirmation of the election results

The constituency electoral committees begin controlling the preliminary count on Monday at 9 a.m. The results of the check count has to be ready by Wednesday 6 p.m., when the constituency electoral committees confirm the final results within the electoral districts and issue letters of appointment to the new members.

3. Presidential elections

3.1. General

According to the Finnish Constitution the President of the Republic is elected by a direct vote for a term of six years. The President shall be a native-born Finnish citizen. The same person may be elected President for no more than two consecutive terms of office.

The President is elected by a direct vote, if necessary in two stages. Election day is the fourth Sunday of January. If one of the candidates receives more than half of the (approved) votes cast in the election, he or she is elected President. If none of the candidates has received a majority of the votes cast, a new election shall be held on the second Sunday after the election between the two candidates who received most votes in the first election. The candidate receiving most votes in the new election is elected President. If only one candidate is nominated, he or she is appointed President without an election. The President assumes office on the first day of the month following the elections.

The two last Presidents, i.e. Martti Ahtisaari in 1994 and Tarja Halonen in 2000 and 2006, have been elected by direct elections in two stages.

Before that the President was elected

- by Parliament in 1919 (President Ståhlberg) and 1946 (Paasikivi);
- by electors in 1925 (Relander), 1931 (Svinhufvud), 1937 (Kallio), 1950 (Paasikivi), 1956, 1962, 1968 and 1978 (Kekkonen), and in 1982 (Koivisto);
- by the electors of 1937 in 1940 and 1943 (Ryti);
- with a special enactment in 1944 (Mannerheim) and 1974 (Kekkonen); and
- through a combination of direct and electoral elections in 1988 (Koivisto).

The next presidential elections will be held in 2012.

3.2. Nomination of presidential candidates

A presidential candidate may be nominated

- 1) by registered parties from whose lists at least one representative was elected in the parliamentary elections preceding the presidential elections and
- 2) by constituency associations established by at least 20,000 people entitled to vote.

Each party chooses its candidate according to its own rules and regulations.

The candidates enter as candidates in the entire country. A party or constituency association has to submit its list of candidates (candidate application) to the constituency electoral committee of the municipality in which it intends to nominate candidates not later than 47 days before election day at 4 p.m. The Committee checks the applications and confirms the nomination of candidates 38 days before election day by compiling a list of candidates in which the candidates are enumerated in an order drawn by lot. The list includes the number (beginning with number 2), name, municipality of residence and title, profession or position of each candidate. The list is displayed i.e. in the polling booths.

3.3. Right to vote, compilation of the voting register and voting

Regardless of domicile, every Finnish citizen who has reached the age of 18 not later than on the day of the first election is eligible to vote. The voting register, which does not change between the first and the possible second election, is compiled as in parliamentary elections (see chapter 2.5).

The voting proceeds as in parliamentary elections (see chapter 2.6). Advance voting for seven days is arranged for both the first and the second election. The election results are also counted as in parliamentary elections (see chapter 2.7.), except that the d'Hondt method is not used.

3.4. Election results

The votes of the candidates are counted, and the candidates are ranked in order of number of votes received. If the numbers are the same, the order is drawn by lot. The voting proceeds as in parliamentary elections (see chapter 2.7).

After both elections the constituency electoral committee of Helsinki confirms the final number of votes received by the candidates in the entire country, and informs the Government of them.

In the first election the Government declares either a) that one of the candidates has received a majority of the votes cast and been elected President, or b) that this has not happened and that a second election between the two candidates who have received most votes will be held in three weeks. In the second election the Government establishes which candidate has received most votes and thus been elected President.

4. Municipal elections

4.1 General

Municipal elections are held to elect the councillors of the municipalities. In Finland there are altogether 342 municipalities, of which 16 are in the Province of Åland. Municipal elections are held every fourth year on the fourth Sunday of October.

In Åland municipalities elections are also held every fourth year but not at the same time as in the rest of Finland.

The number of councillors elected depends on the population of a municipality. According to Section 10 of the Local Government Act (365/1995) the number of councillors varies as follows:

Population	Councillors
at most 2000	17 ²
2001 - 4000	21
4001 - 8000	27
8001 - 15000	35
15001 - 30000	43
30001 - 60000	51
60001 - 120000	59
120001 - 250000	67
250001 - 400000	75
over 400000	85

4.2 Right to vote and eligibility

Entitled to vote in municipal elections are

- 1) citizens of Finland or another Member State of the European Union as well as of Iceland and Norway who have reached the age of 18 not later than on the day of the election, and whose municipality of residence, as defined by law, is the municipality in question on the 51st day before election day, and
- 2) other foreigners who have reached the age of 18 not later than on the day of the election, and whose municipality of residence, as defined by law, is the municipality in question on the 51st day before election day, and who at that time have had a municipality of residence in Finland for an uninterrupted period of two years.

² The municipality may decide that the number shall be 15 or 13.

Eligible as candidates are persons

- 1) whose municipality of residence is the municipality in question,
- 2) who are entitled to vote in municipal elections in some municipality, and
- 3) who are not legally incompetent.

Provisions on the restrictions on eligibility are laid down in section 34 of the Local Government Act.

4.3 Nomination of candidates

Candidates may be nominated

- 1) by parties entered into the party register and
- 2) by constituency associations established by people entitled to vote.

Each *party* may nominate a number of candidates equalling the number of councillors to be elected (see chapter 4.1.) multiplied by one and a half. For example if the number of councillors to be elected in the municipality is 27, the party may nominate 40 candidates. Parties may form electoral alliances. However, the number of candidates nominated by an alliance may not exceed the maximum number of candidates for a single party.

A constituency association for the nomination of one candidate may be established by at least ten people who are entitled to vote in the municipality. In some small municipalities determined by the Ministry of Justice a constituency association may, however, be established by at least three persons entitled to vote. Constituency associations may form joint lists with a maximum number of candidates equalling the number of councillors to be elected (see chapter 4.1.) multiplied by one and a half.

A party or constituency association has to submit its list of candidates (candidate application) to the central election committee of the municipality in which it intends to nominate candidates not later than 47 days before election day at 4 p.m. The same deadline applies to notices of electoral alliances and joint lists.

The central election committee controls the lists of candidates, especially whether the candidates are eligible, and confirms the nomination of candidates 31 days before election day. The committee compiles a master list of candidates in which the candidates of all parties, constituency associations and joint lists are enumerated in an order drawn by lot. The master list includes the number (beginning with number 2), name, title, profession or position of each candidate. The master list of candidates is displayed e.g. in the polling booths.

4.4 Compilation of the voting register, voting and election results

The voting register is compiled and the voting proceeds as in parliamentary elections (see chapters 2.5 and 2.6). The election results are also counted as in parliamentary elections (see chapter 2.7), with the exception that in the case of municipal elections the

central election committees of the municipalities are responsible for the counting of the advance votes, the check count, the notification of the preliminary results, and the confirmation of the election results.

4.5. Election of the Kainuu Regional Council in connection with municipal elections

In accordance with the Act on a self-government experiment in the Kainuu region (343/2003) an election of the Kainuu Regional Council has been arranged in the municipalities in Kainuu in connection with the municipal elections in 2004 and 2008. Through the elections the inhabitants of the region have elected 59 councillors to the Kainuu Regional Council.

The voters in the Kainuu region voted with two ballots, i.e. with a white ballot in the municipal elections and with a brown ballot in the election of the regional council. A candidate in the regional elections could also be nominated as a candidate in the municipal elections. The election results were confirmed by the central election committee of Kajaani. For other parts the election was held as the municipal elections.

The Act on a self-government experiment in the Kainuu region is in force until the end of 2012. However, the Ministry of Finance is preparing legislation to continue the experiment.

5. European elections

5.1. General

According to the Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force in 2009, the European Parliament is composed of at the most 751 members elected from the Member States in proportion to their population. The number of Finnish members is 13.

Elections for the European Parliament are held in the Member States according to their national election legislation. In addition to this the provisions of the Election Act of the EU (stipulated in 1976, latest amendment in 2002) are followed.

Elections are held every fifth year in every Member State at the same time. The Council of the EU decided that the first elections (in 1979) were to be held in every Member State the second weekend in June beginning on Thursday and ending on Sunday. According to the election statute of the EU the following elections were to be held during the same period, and thus elections have always been held in early June. The Council may, however, unanimously decide to amend this so that the elections are held a month earlier or later, but so far this has not happened. In Finland election day is a Sunday falling on the above mentioned period.

5.2. Right to vote and eligibility

Entitled to vote in European elections held in Finland are

- 1) regardless of domicile every Finnish citizen who has reached the age of 18 not later than on the day of the election, and
- 2) every citizen of another Member State of the European Union who has reached the age of 18 not later than on the day of the election and whose municipality of residence, as defined by law, is in Finland on the 51st day before election day, unless he or she has lost the right to vote in the Member State whose citizen he or she is. The right to vote requires, however, that the voter enrolls with the voting register in Finland.

A person entitled to vote may only vote in one Member State in the same European elections, either in his or her home state or in his or her country of residence.

Correspondingly, a Finnish citizen, who has registered as a voter in another Member State, is not entitled to vote in the European elections in Finland.

The provisions on eligibility of Finnish citizens are the same as in parliamentary elections. Thus eligible is every Finnish citizen entitled to vote and not legally incompetent. Every citizen of a Member State of the EU who is entitled to vote in Finland is eligible in the European elections in Finland unless he or she has lost the right to enter as a candidate in European elections in his or her home state.

5.3. Nomination of candidates

Candidates in European elections may be nominated

- 1) by parties entered into the party register and
- 2) by constituency associations established by people entitled to vote.

The candidates enter as candidates in the entire country. Each party may nominate at most 20 candidates. Parties may form electoral alliances. However, the number of candidates nominated by an alliance may not exceed the maximum number of candidates for a single party (20). A constituency association for the nomination of one candidate may be established by at least 2000 people entitled to vote. Such associations may form joint lists with a maximum of 20 candidates.

A party or constituency association has to submit its list of candidates (candidate application) to the constituency electoral committee of Helsinki not later than 40 days before election day at 4 p.m. The same deadline applies to notices of electoral alliances and joint lists.

The constituency electoral committee of Helsinki examines the lists of candidates, especially whether the candidates are eligible, and confirms the nomination of candidates 31 days before election day. The committee compiles a master list of candidates in which the candidates of all parties, constituency associations and joint lists are enumerated in an order drawn by lot. The master list includes the number (beginning with number 2),

name, municipality of residence and title, profession or position of each candidate. The master list of candidates is displayed e.g. in the polling booths.

5.4. Compilation of the voting register, voting and election results

The voting register is compiled mainly as in parliamentary elections (see chapter 2.5).

Well before elections the Population Registration Centre sends to all EU-citizens residing in Finland a letter about their voting rights and the procedures that they must follow in order to vote or/and be as a candidate in Finland. EU-citizens living in Finland must enrol with the Finnish voting register not later than on the 80th day before the election day. After that PRC informs the home states of the enrolled EU-citizens that they are going to vote in Finland.

The voting proceeds and the election results are counted as in parliamentary elections (see chapters 2.6 - 2.7), except that in the case of European elections the constituency electoral committee of Helsinki confirms the results in the entire country.

6. Appeal against election results

Decisions on the confirmation of the results of the first and second presidential elections are not subject to appeal. In other elections these decisions may, however, be appealed against to a regional administrative court within 14 days of the publication of the election results.

An appeal may be submitted

- 1) on the ground that a decision is illegal by
 - a person whose interests or rights are violated by the decision,
 - the candidates, and
 - the parties or joint lists which have taken part in the elections, and
- 2) on the ground that the elections have not been held in proper order by
 - everyone entitled to vote and
 - a municipality member in municipal elections.

If a decision or measure of an election authority has been illegal and this clearly may have influenced the election results, the results shall be amended or, if that is not possible, new elections shall be ordered to be held in the electoral district (parliamentary elections), municipality (municipal elections), or in the entire country (European elections).

Appeals against the decision of the regional administrative court may be lodged with the Supreme Administrative Court.

7. Political parties

7.1. General

A political party is a registered association entered into the party register kept by the Ministry of Justice. Parties are non-profit associations whose main purpose is to influence public issues. One usually becomes a member through a local branch.

In Finland political parties have existed for a hundred years. Until 1969 their position was unofficial. The Party Act (10/1969) enacted in that year changed this.

7.2. Establishment of a party

The establishment of a new party and the entering of it into the party register require that rules and regulations as well as a party programme containing the goals of the party are drawn up. Only a registered association may be entered into the party register. Only the central organisation of the political party is entered into the party register. District, local and municipal branches as well as local associations are usually registered associations, but they are not entered into the party register.

The main goal of an association to be entered into the party register must be to influence state matters. The rules and regulations of the association shall guarantee that democratic principles are abided by in decision-making and in the activities. Another prerequisite for the registration of a party is that the association has drafted a party programme which takes up the goals and principles followed in the national activities, whose final objective is mentioned in the rules and regulations. In addition, signed support cards of at least 5,000 citizens entitled to vote in parliamentary elections are required. If the rules and regulations of a party entered into the party register are amended, the Ministry of Justice has to be notified of the amendment, which enters into force only after it has been recorded in the party register.

Only a party entered into the party register may use the abbreviation r.p. (rekisteröity puolue, registered party) with its name, and it may no longer use the abbreviation r.y. which signifies a registered association (rekisteröity yhdistys). The registration is free of charge.

If a party fails to gain a parliamentary seat in two consecutive parliamentary elections, or if it ceases to be a registered association, it is deleted from the party register. A party may also apply for deletion.

For the present there are 15 parties in the party register (see the Annex 1)

7.3. Funding of political parties

The state supports the activities of political parties by granting a discretionary government transfer, i.e. a party subsidy. Party subsidy is granted annually by the Government in accordance with the number of seats in Parliament.

Parties may accept even other contributions as provided in the Act on Political Parties.

Political parties are accountable in accordance with the Accounting Act. For the purpose of overseeing the activities, accountancy and use of funds of the parties, every party has to submit documents on the closing of the accounts to the National Audit Office of Finland and the Ministry of Justice within three months of the confirmation of the final accounts. The Ministry of Justice monitors the use of the party subsidy and the National Audit Office of Finland the contributions the parties receive and other use of funds.

8. Candidate's election funding

The Act on a Candidate's Election Funding (273/2009) lays down provisions on candidate's election funding and its disclosure in parliamentary elections, presidential elections, municipal elections and European Parliamentary elections.

According to the Act, election funding means the funding raised to cover the costs of the candidate's election campaign incurred over a period starting no earlier than six months before the election day and ending no later than two weeks after the election day irrespective of when such costs are paid.

An election funding disclosure is to be filed by

- 1) a member of Parliament elected in parliamentary elections and an alternate member appointed upon confirmation of the election results;
- 2) the political party nominating a candidate for a presidential election and the polling representative of the constituency association nominating a candidate or their alternate;
- 3) a council member and an alternate member elected in municipal elections; and
- 4) a member of the European Parliament elected in the European Parliamentary elections and an alternate member appointed upon confirmation of the election results.

The election funding disclosure must identify election campaign costs in total an itemized, the election funding in total itemized and any other information on election funding and campaign costs that the discloser deems appropriate.

The value of each contribution and the name of the donor shall be stated separately, if the value is at least 800 euros in municipal elections and 1,500 euros in other elections. The name of a private individual may not be disclosed without his or her express consent if the amount donated is lower than the amount specified above.

The election funding disclosure must be filed with the National Audit Office of Finland within two months of the confirmation of the election results. Filing of the disclosure can be done by using the form approved by the National Audit Office. Compliance with the disclosure obligation is to be overseen by the National Audit Office.

A candidate and a political party nominating a Presidential candidate and the polling representative of a constituency association nominating a candidate may file an advance disclosure with the National Audit Office containing an estimate of campaign funding and costs before the election day but no earlier than after the completion of the master list of candidates, or the list of candidates in the case of a Presidential election.

9. Election Information System

Data processing in connection with elections has been systematically developed in Finland since 1990. The objective has been to improve the election readiness and security, to diversify and expedite the election information service and to economize on resources. As a result of the development work an Election Information System (EIS, in Finnish VAT) consisting of six subsystems has been in use since 1996. The systems contain:

1. Basic data and polling stations, including data on i.e. electoral districts, municipalities, voting districts, election authorities and polling stations.

2. Data on candidates (candidate register) in which the following data on each candidate in the elections is entered: name, candidate number, profession, municipality of residence, party/constituency association that has nominated the candidate, and social security number. The candidate register also includes the party register.

3. Franchise data (Voting register) for which data on every person entitled to vote are collected from the Population Information System. A separate voting register is compiled for each election. The voting register is used at the advance polling stations and the voting of every advance voter is recorded therein. After the advance voting is completed voters' lists for each polling station are printed out from the voting register for the elections on Election Day. The voting register can, however, be used at the Election Day polling station instead of a voters' lists. After the election the voting register is destroyed.

4. A centralized calculation system to which the constituency electoral committees and the central election committees submit their results of the elections as they are ready using result computation programmes and by means of which the results of the elections and other statistical data are transmitted to the media and to Statistics Finland.

The Election Information System also includes a management system, an access control and administration system, a code system and an archive.

The Ministry of Justice owns the Election Information System. The system is managed by the ICT Service Centre for the Judicial Administration and an agreement on its tech-

nical use has been made with a private IT-company. The Ministry of Justice and the ICT Service Centre for the Judicial Administration continually develop the election information system with regard to the general developments in the area of IT technology.

10. More information

General information about elections and political parties: www.vaalit.fi

About election and party funding: www.vaalirahoitusvalvonta.fi

About civic participation: www.kansanvalta.fi

About the Ministry of Justice: www.om.fi

Registered parties

Political parties with parliamentary seats beginning with the biggest party and other parties in the order they have been registered:

<i>Party and its website</i>	<i>Seats in the parliamentary election 2007</i>	<i>Party leader</i>
Centre Party of Finland www.keskusta.fi	51	Mari Kiviniemi
National Coalition Party www.kokoomus.fi	50	Jyrki Katainen
The Finnish Social Democratic Party www.sdp.fi	45	Jutta Urpilainen
Left-Wing Alliance www.vasemmistoliitto.fi	17	Paavo Arhinmäki
Green League www.vihreat.fi	15	Anni Sinnemäki
Swedish People's Party in Finland www.sfp.fi	9	Stefan Wallin
Christian Democrats in Finland www.kd.fi	7	Päivi Räsänen
True Finns www.perussuomalaiset.fi	5	Timo Soini
Communist Party of Finland www.skp.fi	-	Yrjö Hakanen
Suomen Senioripuolue r.p. www.senioripuolue.fi	-	Heikki Silván
Communist Workers' Party www.ktpkom.fi	-	Hannu Harju

Suomen Työväenpuolue r.p. www.tyovaenpuolue.org	-	Juha Tanski
Itsenäisyyspuolue r.p. www.itsenaisyyspuolue.fi	-	Antti Pesonen
Köyhien Asialla r.p. www.koyhienasialla.fi	-	Terttu Savola
Piraattipuolue r.p. www.piraattipuolue.fi	-	Pasi Palmulehto

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<i>Year</i>	<i>Elections</i>
2010	-
2011	April: Parliamentary elections
2012	January: Presidential elections October: Municipal elections
2013	-
2014	June: European elections
2015	April: Parliamentary elections
2016	October: Municipal elections
2017	-
2018	January: Presidential elections
2019	April: Parliamentary elections June: European elections
2020	October: Municipal elections
2021	-
2022	-
2023	April: Parliamentary elections
2024	January: Presidential elections June: European elections October: Municipal elections
2025	-



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