



# Finland Report

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Sustainable Governance  
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## Executive Summary

Finland is a model democracy that has established a democratic basis for government reform, problem-solving and social improvement. International rankings continuously demonstrate the effectiveness of Finland's model. For instance, Finland has repeatedly been awarded the highest ranking worldwide for political liberties and civil rights by Freedom House and – since 2008 – in Reporters without Borders' Worldwide Press Freedom Index. However, while the level of corruption is still comparatively low in the country, Finland has lost its leading position in world indexes assessing the degree of corruption. This has resulted from scandals relating to political-party and electoral-campaign financing, which subsequently led to the introduction of legislation requiring the sources of political donations to be disclosed. Electoral-system reforms, though comparatively minimal, have increased the proportionality of the system, while a participatory mechanism introduced in 2012 now enables citizens to propose legislative changes through an Internet-based platform. The parliament has already decided on a few citizen-initiated proposals, with further initiatives awaiting parliament's decision at the time of writing.

While Finland's economy has been among the most stable in Europe in recent years, its outlook is now clearly less favorable than in previous periods. The economy has been in recession for several years, and Finland has only barely managed to retain its AAA rating. Public debt is increasing, and the labor market has continued a downhill slide. Unemployment figures are now alarming, with an increase in youth unemployment giving particular cause for concern.

In the wake of the economic crisis, attitudes toward immigrants have hardened, with the main political parties failing to challenge such attitudes. In part, this hesitation may be explained by the recent years' growing support for the populist, anti-immigration Finns Party (formerly referred to in English as the True Finns party), although levels of support for the party have in fact diminished radically under the present government. Attitudes toward Finland's Swedish-speaking minority have also hardened, despite Finland's officially

bilingual nature and constitutional protections. However, the present dramatic and largely uncontrolled inflow of refugees and asylum-seekers into Europe has brought about a shift in these trends, generating a greater understanding among the general public that Finland needs to adopt a more generous and responsible immigration policy.

In retrospect, the performance of Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen's government in the 2011 – 2014 period was rather poor. Katainen's government was a coalition of six parties that included members of right-wing and left-wing parties. Under the conditions of economic crisis, this broad coalition framework fragmented along ideological lines. Following the withdrawal of two parties from the governing coalition, as well as cabinet reshuffles in 2014, a new government under Prime Minister Alexander Stubb took over until parliamentary elections in spring 2015. Following these elections, a three-party government under Juha Sipilä was installed in late May 2015, commanding 124 seats in the Finnish 200-seat parliament. The early experiences under Sipilä are perhaps not very encouraging, reflecting inter-governmental tension, an unsteady direction, and above all severe conflict over economic policy between the government and labor-market organizations. With regard to earlier items on the Finnish political agenda, a fairly recent reform seeking to introduce business practices into the higher-education sector has largely failed. Meanwhile, the central government's attempts to restructure local government, in part through amalgamating local-government services, evoked resistance within local administrations and among the public more widely, ultimately leading to a compromise solution with no clear prospect of success. In 2013, Finland failed in its application to become a non-permanent member of the United Nation's Security Council, though responsibility for this lay beyond the government's influence. On the environmental front, continuous problems arising from the location of mining activities as well as from disputes over environmental-policy principles more generally indicate the ineffectiveness of the country's environmental management and related policy framework.

No large-scale institutional reforms or similar actions promoting governance and decision-making have been undertaken during the assessment period. The government has retained much of its system of program management, and retained or even strengthened its strategy-planning procedures. However, the lack of reform is not evidence of government deficiency, but rather an indication of the quality and comprehensiveness of the inherited system.

Finland's present economic and governance-related challenges are perhaps surmountable, although in many cases the origins of these challenges lie largely beyond the government's control. The repercussions of the global and

European economic crises present several challenges for the economy, and have directly and indirectly undermined public sympathy for the values and political agendas of the European Union. However, as a counterbalance, recent security developments –particularly Russia’s military and political intervention in Ukraine and other manifestations of Russian power – have led to an observable rise in pro-EU and pro-NATO attitudes among the public.

## Key Challenges

Although Finland’s political system represents a model polity, current democratic prospects are less encouraging. Overall, public perceptions of the legitimacy and trustworthiness of Finland’s democratic institutions have weakened, as is evident from the relatively low electoral turnouts and declining membership in political parties. Furthermore, survey data indicates that public trust in central political institutions such as the parliament and government could be improved. However, public interest in politics and trust in political institutions increased slightly over the assessment period.

Low levels of participation and institutional trust usually result in part from the instability of recent governments. In Finland, this instability has been due to the necessity of forming coalition governments made up of several political parties in order to achieve a working parliamentary majority; evidently, the broad and unstable nature of such governments undermines government accountability and transparency, and limits the public’s ability to fully understand and engage with the processes of public policy-making. In that sense, the three-party structure of the present Sipilä government no doubt represents a step toward a more efficient and transparent governance style.

Radically innovative measures and political engineering will be required to reverse the trend toward democratic decline. In particular, the revitalization of representative democracy will require the input of new participatory institutions such as the binding referendum. Indeed, some progress has been made in this regard. A new mechanism, the so-called citizens’ initiative, obliges parliament to debate any petition that receives at least 50,000 signatures, and as of the time of writing, several initiatives were awaiting parliamentary consideration. However, while a start, this mechanism is non-binding, and parliament retains the right to reject any initiative. The first successful initiative, proposing same-sex marriage, was passed by a slim parliamentary majority in November 2014. At the close of the review period, signatures were being collected for an initiative that would overturn the new law on same-sex marriage.

National security – both internal and external – and foreign-policy issues represent substantial challenges for Finland. First, given Russia’s political and military intervention in the Ukraine, as well as the deteriorating relationship between Russia and EU member states, concerns about Finland’s proximity to Russia have led to an increased pressure on the government to form alliances with international partners. Political and public attitudes toward EU and NATO membership, which were deteriorating before the recent security crises, are increasingly favorable. Second, current institutional arrangements divide responsibility for foreign affairs (excluding those related to the European Union) between the president and the government. The limited constitutional basis for this duality creates uncertainty both abroad and domestically.

Third, the long-term increase in the average age of Finland’s population has created a strong demand for migrant workers. However, this economic demand conflicts with public attitudes toward immigration, represented in particular by the True Finns party, which has increased its electoral support in recent parliaments. Consequently, the main political parties have been hesitant to pursue policy initiatives that would increase immigration. At the time of writing, however, the massive inflow of refugees and asylum-seekers to Europe, and to a lesser extent to Finland, appears to have had a moderating impact on the country’s public opinion.

The government’s executive capacity of the remains strong. The government-program framework works reasonably well, and forms the basis for strategic planning and implementation. Strategic governance is also promoted by effective interministerial coordination, by the government office’s ability to independently monitor and evaluate public policies, and by the oversight capacities of cabinet committees and working groups. Interest associations and civil-society groups are widely consulted during the preparation of legislation. However, local-government executive capacity is frequently undermined by inadequate funding, while reforms intended to amalgamate and restructure local-government administrations have had mixed success. Plans to restructure administrative boundaries have not sufficiently taken into account the effects this will have on the constitutionally protected rights of Finland’s Swedish-speaking population. Generally, there appears to be a lack of appreciation for the contextual nature of the public-policy challenges confronting Finland. A lesson to be learned would be that there is no one-size-fits-all policy solution; rather, any successful solution must be built upon combinations of policies rooted in a division of responsibilities between local and central governments.

# Policy Performance

## I. Economic Policies

### Economy

Economic Policy  
Score: 7

The Finnish economy has not recovered to its pre-recession levels of 2008. In fact, the economy has now contracted for three years in a row, with gross national product contracting in the April – June 2015 period for the fourth consecutive quarter. Furthermore, even as other Nordic countries are emerging from recession, Finland faces continued negative growth and the imminent threat of losing its AAA rating due to a decline in export competitiveness, weakened investment and subdued private consumption. The impact of the recession on public finances has been so strong that a full recovery will probably not be achieved for several years. Fiscal policy is a particular concern, as public debt is growing. Debt will pass 60% of GDP in 2015, and will probably continue to grow until 2019. Government expenditure totaled 58.7% of GDP in 2014, among the highest such ratios in the EU. With the aim of restoring fiscal sustainability, the government is placing a high priority on greater budgetary prudence and eventually budgetary balance. The government is also seeking to raise the minimum statutory retirement age, while improving incentives for people to continue working into later life. Furthermore, government has been working toward a reform of the wage-setting system, as well as significant and much-needed reforms of the retirement system. These measures are crucially important, as further fiscal consolidation will otherwise be needed to manage the increasing costs associated with Finland's aging population.

While the Finnish economy continues to be among the world leaders in several measures of economic freedom, the country's overall performance has declined. Finland's economy was ranked 19th worldwide in the Heritage Foundation's 2015 Index of Economic Freedom, slipping several places from its 2012 rank of 16th. This relative decline can be attributed to deteriorations in fiscal freedom, business freedom and the management of government

spending. Still, during the assessment period, the government successfully maintained monetary stability and encouraged entrepreneurship. In addition, Finland remains open to international trade and investment, with transparent and efficient investment regulations.

Citation:

“OECD Economic Surveys: Finland 2014”, <http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/economic-survey-finland.htm>;  
 “European Commission Assessment of the 2015 Stability Programme for Finland”, [ec.europa.eu/economy.../2015/26\\_fi\\_scp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/economy.../2015/26_fi_scp_en.pdf);  
 “The Heritage Foundation 2015 Index of Economic Freedom”, <http://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2015/book/Highlights.pdf>;  
 Kati Pohjanpalo, “Finnish Economy Falls Back Into Recession”

### Labor Markets

Labor Market  
 Policy  
 Score: 6

A deep depression in the Finnish economy in the 1990s resulted in a rapid and dramatic increase in unemployment rates. While the employment situation recovered from this 1990s recession, unemployment has again become a serious challenge in recent years, aggravated by the recent European economic crisis. The unemployment rate in July 2014 was 7.0%, an increase from 6.6% in July 2013; by June 2015, this rate had reached 10.0%, up from 9.2% in June 2014. Comparatively, present achievements in stemming long-term unemployment, youth unemployment and low-skilled unemployment are not satisfactory. The high level of youth unemployment is a particular cause for concern. In the area of active labor-market policies, recent government strategies include efforts to improve employment subsidies and labor-market training. In 2010, the government initiated measures to promote self-motivated education and training for unemployed people receiving unemployment benefits. Youth unemployment has been specially targeted by reforms that entered into effect at the beginning of 2013. While Finland maintains a system of minimum wages and collective agreements, more attention is needed in matters of worker-dismissal protections. Structural, institutional and political factors exacerbate the present difficulties. Finland is a large but sparsely populated country. Consequently, geography is an obstacle to labor mobility. Globalization has also become a threat to labor-market strategies, as companies have sought to reduce their costs by moving production abroad. In many sectors, the amount of temporary work contracts is increasing. All this works against employment and job security.

Citation:

Heikki Räisänen et al., “Labor Market Reforms and Performance in Denmark, Germany, Sweden and Finland”, Publications of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Nr 19/2012.  
<http://www.findikaattori.fi/fi/table/34>.  
 Tilastokeskus/Työvoimatutkimus.

## Taxes

Tax Policy  
Score: 9

In Finland, the state, municipalities, the Evangelic Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church have the power to levy taxes. Taxation policies are largely effective. The state taxes individual incomes at rates falling on a progressive scale between 6.5% and 31.75% (2015). Municipal taxes range from 16.25% to 21.75%, depending on the municipal authority. In 2015, the average overall personal income-tax rate was 51.50%; it averaged 53.10% over the 1995 – 2014, falling from an all-time high of 62.20% in 1995. Generally speaking, demands for vertical equity are largely satisfied. However, this is less true for horizontal equity. The corporate income-tax rate was lowered in January 2014 from 24.5% to 20%, and adjustments in recent years have made Finland's taxation system less complex and more transparent. Finland performs well in regards to structural-balance and redistributive effects, and overall taxation policies generate sufficient government revenue. Taxes are generally high in Finland because the country has expensive health care and social-security systems, and also operates an efficient but costly education system. In comparison to most other countries, Finland enjoys a unique situation in which the public understands that taxation is necessary in order to secure the overall social welfare. In recent polls, 96% of respondents agreed that taxation is an important means of maintaining the welfare state, and 75% agreed that they had received sufficient benefits from their tax payments.

Citation:

<https://www.vero.fi/fi->

[FI/Syventavat\\_veroohjeet/Henkiloasiakkaan\\_tuloverotus/Valtion\\_tuloveroasteikko\\_2015%2835390%29\\_for\\_2015\\_income\\_tax\\_schedule;](https://www.vero.fi/fi-FI/Syventavat_veroohjeet/Henkiloasiakkaan_tuloverotus/Valtion_tuloveroasteikko_2015%2835390%29_for_2015_income_tax_schedule;)

Tim Begany, "Countries with the Highest Taxes", <http://www.investopedia.com/>

<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/finland/personal-income-tax>

## Budgets

Budgetary Policy  
Score: 8

The government agenda drafted by the current Sipilä government builds on its predecessors' initiatives, structural-policy programs and public-finance adjustment policies. Consequently, the current government's economic-policy program aims at strengthening the economy's growth potential, raising the employment rate, bolstering household spending power and improving international competitiveness. The government is accordingly committed to an active fiscal policy that supports economic growth and employment, aims at a reduction of the central government's debt-to-GDP ratio, maintains Finland's current credit rating, and tries to strike a balance between long-run fiscal sustainability and the short-term need to support domestic demand. However, the unfavorable economic environment has impeded the government's goals



and ambitions. The debt crisis in Europe has slowed economic growth, and the government's ambition to halt the growth in public debt by 2015 was not fulfilled. Still, while overall government debt is now considerably higher than in 2008, according to the European Commission, debt levels are still less than the euro area average. While spending limits for the 2013 – 2016 period have already been set, the government annually reviews the need for additional fiscal-policy adjustments. At the time of writing, the present government was developing the first General Government Fiscal Plan of its term.

Citation:

"Finnish Economy: Fiscal Austerity to last Several Years", <http://danskeresearch.danskebank.com/abo/ResearchFinland260314>; \*\*THIS LINKS DOES NOT WORK AND THE ARTICLE CANNOT BE FOUND ANYMORE - REMOVE THE CITATION?\*

### Research and Innovation

R&I Policy  
Score: 8

Finland has for some time been a forerunner in research and development (R&D) spending as well as in its number of researchers and patent applications. Its lead in computer technology and Internet access has been somewhat less. Finland had the EU's highest R&D intensity in 2013, followed by Sweden and Denmark; indeed, in Finland, R&D expenditure totaled 3.3% of GDP. However, this position has declined in recent years, and the innovation system's low level of internationalization is a particular weakness. Moreover, the focus of R&D has been on applied research, with basic research at universities and other institutes benefiting little. This aspect has become more accentuated in recent years, and at the time of writing, the Sipilä government had announced dramatic new cuts in government spending for education and higher learning. In the long run, given the dependence of applied research on basic-research developments, the heavy bias in favor of applied research will have negative consequences for product development and productivity. More broadly, the system of technology transfer from universities to the private sector is also comparatively weak, and academic entrepreneurship is not well developed.

Citation:

"Research and Innovation Policy Guidelines for 2010-2015". The Research and Innovation Council of Finland, 2010. [http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Tiede/tutkimus-\\_ja\\_innovaationeuvoisto/julkaisut/liitteet/Review2011-2015.pdf](http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Tiede/tutkimus-_ja_innovaationeuvoisto/julkaisut/liitteet/Review2011-2015.pdf)  
Also: <http://www.research.fi/en/key-statistics>

### Global Financial System

Stabilizing  
Global Financial

Following the collapse of financial markets in Europe and the increased vulnerability of financial markets globally, political leaders in Finland have

Markets  
Score: 9

urged the passage of stronger regulations and more coordinated market supervision. In terms of attitudes and action, Finland has presented itself as an agenda-setter, providing support to countries seeking to advance self-regulation and combat excessive market risk-taking. Finland has also pursued measures to secure its own finances. In 2013, the Finnish government approved the Europe 2020 National Program, which contains measures and national targets for achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy. The program included proposals to create an effective national macroprudential supervision system. To this end, a working group proposed that provisions relating to additional fixed and counter-cyclical capital buffers be added to the Credit Institution Act in accordance with the minimum requirements of the directive.

Citation:

“Finanssimarkkinoiden makrotaloudellisten vaikutusten sääntely ja valvonta”, Työryhmän muistio 32/2012, Ministry of Finance, Publications 2012.

## II. Social Policies

### Education

Education Policy  
Score: 8

Built on the principle of lifelong learning, policy in Finland promotes and maintains a high educational standards. All people by law must have equal access to high-quality education and training, basic education is free, and municipalities are responsible for providing educational services to all local children. Finland has 20 universities and 30 polytechnics, and close to 70% of high-school graduates enter higher education. Nevertheless, the proportion of graduates from higher education (among 25- to 34-year-olds) has been comparatively low and the number of graduates overall has been rising more slowly than in many other OECD countries. By and large, Finland’s education system is successful, and Finland has ranked at the top of the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in recent years. The Education and Research Development Plan, revised every four years by the government, is the key document governing education and research policy in Finland, and directs the implementation of education- and research-policy goals as stated in the government program. From 2011 to 2016, the plan will focus on the alleviation of poverty, inequality and exclusion.

Although the area of knowledge and education is a key focus for the Sipilä government, the state nevertheless enacted considerable cuts in education

spending. These are likely to undermine the equality of educational opportunities, as well as the quality of basic education. Additionally, restrictions on the right to day care for children whose parents are not participating in the labor market undermine equal access to early education, especially in socially vulnerable families. This change in education policy is likely to decrease the quality and diminish the successes of the Finnish educational system.

Citation:

Education and Research 2011-2016. A development plan. Reports of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2012:3

### Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion  
Policy  
Score: 8

The Finnish constitution safeguards basic economic, social and educational rights for all people, with these rights guaranteed both by the state and by municipal authorities. However, the reality does not completely measure up to this ideal. While social policy largely prevents poverty and the income-redistribution system has proven to be one of the most efficient in the European Union, pockets of relative poverty and social exclusion still prevail. In particular, poverty rates among elderly women are comparatively high due to the low pensions accrued within this population. Furthermore, inequalities in well-being exist between regions and municipalities, depending on demographic composition and economic strength. In general, the global economic crisis has exposed an increasing number of people to long-term unemployment and poverty.

In terms of life satisfaction and gender equality, Finland has embarked on a number of programs to improve its performance. The government has passed an Act on Equality between Women and Men, and gender discrimination is prohibited under additional legislation. Despite this legislation, however, inequalities prevail between men and women, especially in the workplace. The government has placed a particular emphasis on programs for at-risk youth from 15 to 17 years old who experience social exclusion, as well as on programs to create equal opportunities for disabled individuals. Immigrants are another group that faces social exclusion, especially due to poor integration in the labor market.

Citation:

"Socially Sustainable Finland 2020. Strategy for Social and Health Policy", Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Helsinki, 2010.

## Health

Health Policy  
Score: 8

Health policies in Finland have over time led to improvements in public health such as a decrease in infant-mortality rates and the development of an effective health-insurance system. Finnish residents have access to extensive health services despite comparatively low per capita health costs. Yet criticisms are common regarding life expectancy, perceived health levels, the aging population and an inadequate provision of local health care resources. Finland's old-age dependency ratio is increasing substantially, although not as dramatically as in other EU countries. Many clinics formerly run by municipal authorities have been privatized, which has led to increasingly attractive employment conditions for physicians.

Government planning documents outline preventive measures. For example, the 2015 Public Health Program is a central document that describes a broad framework to promote health across various sectors of the government and public administration. Similarly, the Socially Sustainable Finland 2020 strategy sets out the current aims of Finland's social and health policy. In November 2015, the government agreed on a major social and health care reform (SOTE) that will move responsibilities for social welfare and health care services from municipalities to 15 larger governmental entities. These services had up to now been managed by more than 150 municipal-level authorities; thus, the reform is expected to yield substantial public savings.

### Citation:

"Government Resolution on the Health 2015 Public Health Programme". Helsinki: Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2001; Juha Teperi et al., "The Finnish Health Care System", Sitra Reports 82, 2009; "Socially Sustainable Finland 2020. Strategy for Social and Health Policy", Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2014.

## Families

Family Policy  
Score: 9

Family policy in Finland adheres to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as other international agreements. Finland's family-policy programs aim to create a secure environment for children and support parents' physical and mental resources. Family policy has been successful. For example, child poverty has practically been eradicated in Finland. Support for families has three main elements: financial support for services and family leave, child benefits, and the provision of day care services. Access to public day care is guaranteed to all children under seven years of age, and allowances are paid for every child until they turn 17. However, the Sipilä government is planning changes in the right to day care, with potentially far-reaching consequences; as of January 2016, the right to day care will be limited to part-

time coverage (20 hours a week), if one of the parents is unemployed or on parental leave taking care of a younger sibling. This would increase inequalities in early-childhood education, and further weaken the position of children in socially marginalized families.

Family policy also remains somewhat problematic with regard to gender equality. Although the employment rate among women is among the highest such in the European Union, and the fertility rate has increased, family policies have not been able to fully solve the challenge of combining parenting and employment. In practice, although the number of fathers that take paternity leave has increased, child care responsibilities still fall predominately on women, and mothers are more likely to be in part-time employment than are fathers. Also, Finnish women tend to leave the labor market after having a child for a longer period than do women in other countries. Yet evidence has shown that family-centered thinking is increasing among Finnish adults and within Finnish culture. In short, the family has become more important for the individual.

Citation:  
Katja Repo, "The Contradiction of Finnish Childcare Policies",  
[www.ungdata.no/reassessassets/20608/20608.ppt](http://www.ungdata.no/reassessassets/20608/20608.ppt)

## Pensions

Pension Policy  
Score: 9

The Finnish pension system has two pillars: a residence-based, national pension, and a mandatory employment-based, earnings-related pension. Furthermore, about one-fifth of the citizens participate in private saving schemes. Successfully managed by the social partners as well as by the government, the overall pension policy has been able to provide adequate pension provision, and Finland has by and large been able to avoid the classic problem of poverty in old age. However, among elderly women, old-age poverty rates are somewhat higher than for men due to short working careers in often low-paid jobs, and low earnings-related pensions as a consequence. The ongoing aging of Finland's population creates problems in terms of labor-force maintenance and fiscal sustainability, and the economic crisis in Europe has added considerably to these problems.

A major reform of the pension system in 2005 aimed at increasing pension-policy flexibility and creating more incentives for workers to stay in employment later in life. In 2011, a guarantee pension was introduced. The guarantee pension provides a benefit of €746 euros (2015) for persons without any other pension entitlements. While these reforms were successful, a further major reform is now scheduled for 2017. In September 2014, the social

partners agreed on a further gradual raise of the lowest retirement age to 65, with adjustments for future cohorts based on changes in life expectancies (with exceptions for those pursuing long careers of strenuous and wearing work, who will be able to retire at 63), flexible part-time retirement, and amendments to the accumulation rate. The reform ensures the financial sustainability of the pension systems and will provide incentives for longer working careers. At the time of writing, the pension reform was still going through parliament. At present, Finland ranks in the middle in the EU in terms of average exit age from the labor force, but the effective retirement age is expected to reach its target level of 62.4 years in 2025 as a result of the 2017 reforms.

Citation:

Nicholas Barr, "The Pension System in Finland: Adequacy, Sustainability and Systems Design", Finnish Centre for Pensions, 2013.

"Earnings-related Pension System in Graphs and Figures", Finnish Centre for Pensions, 2014.

"Vuoden 2017 työeläkeuudistus." [http://www.etk.fi/fi/service/el%C3%A4keuudistus\\_2017/1628/el%C3%A4keuudistus\\_2017](http://www.etk.fi/fi/service/el%C3%A4keuudistus_2017/1628/el%C3%A4keuudistus_2017). Finnish Centre for Pensions 2014.

## Integration

Integration Policy  
Score: 7

In a recent policy study on immigrant integration that compared EU countries, the United States, Canada and Switzerland, Finland was ranked fourth in terms of how well its legislation and policies help newcomers adopt to their new circumstances. However, the study did not fully measure the practical success of integration efforts in the various countries, and may therefore give a somewhat exaggerated view of the Finnish situation. Second-generation immigrants have had difficulties entering education or finding work, and the employment situation – when measured by indicators for employment rates among foreign-born workers, comparative employment rates between foreign-born and native-born workers, and generational concerns for foreign-born workers – is certainly troubling. There are also great differences in labor-market attachment relative to migrants' countries of origin, with Estonians and Russians, for example, finding their way into employment much more easily than migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

Boosting rates of labor-market participation is one of the key targets of the government's Future of Migration 2020 Strategy. While the Finnish immigrant population has increased substantially, there are still only about 300,000 foreign-born residents or naturalized Finnish citizens out of a population of 5.4 million (5.5%). In general, Finland is not considered to be among the top destinations for immigrants. This is for various reasons. Applying for a Finnish residence permit is still a complicated process, as is applying for Finnish citizenship. Finnish is a difficult language, and proficient language

skills are required. For example, the police-recruitment process requires a very high level of language proficiency. While sympathetic to work-related immigration, authorities' general attitude toward immigration is rather restrictive. Moreover, the Finns Party has used its cabinet platform to fan anti-immigrant resentments. Some demonstrations by radical anti-immigrant protesters against refugee accommodations have taken a violent turn. However, according to polls, the share of favorable attitudes toward immigration among the public is increasing, certainly in part due to the catastrophic refugee situation in Europe.

Citation:

Arno Tanner, "Finland's Balancing Act", <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/finlands-balancing-act-labor-market-humanitarian-relief-and-immigrant-integration>

### Safe Living

Safe Living  
Conditions  
Score: 9

Finland is still among the safest countries in Europe, although its rate of violent crime, and homicides in particular, is relatively high. According to polls, Finnish citizens regard the police as one of the most reliable public institutions. The government established the First Program on Internal Security in 2004, and later modified and expanded it. In June 2012, the government adopted the Third Internal Security Program, which aimed to reduce citizen's daily security concerns. The program places an emphasis on measures to prevent social exclusion and social polarization. In sum, the program includes 64 measures, each associated with an agency responsible for carrying it out and a timetable for implementation. The program's overall implementation will be monitored by the Ministry of the Interior. Additionally, the government has adopted or is considering national strategies for combating organized crime, the informal economy and terrorism.

Citation:

"Turvallisempi huominen. Sisäisen turvallisuuden ohjelma." 26/2012. Ministry of Interior, Helsinki. [http://www.intermin.fi/download/34893\\_262012\\_STO\\_III\\_fi.pdf](http://www.intermin.fi/download/34893_262012_STO_III_fi.pdf)

### Global Inequalities

Global Social  
Policy  
Score: 7

Based on international humanitarian law, international human-rights treaties and laws regarding refugees, Finnish humanitarian aid is committed to aid principles as laid down by the OECD Development Assistance Committee. In 2014, Finland provided a record amount of humanitarian aid at over €105 million; the biggest recipients were Syria, South Sudan, Somalia and the Central African Republic. However, due to the severe strains in the Finnish economy, the government plans to make dramatic reductions in the amount of

humanitarian aid it provides. Finland emphasizes the primary role of the United Nations in coordinating the provision of aid, and in general channels its funds for humanitarian aid through U.N. organizations. In terms of development coordination, such as work to improve the economic and social position of developing countries, Finland's contributions are implemented through various methods. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in conjunction with external consultants, monitor the attainment of goals and the use of funds, and in June 2014 the ministry introduced an online service enabling anybody to report suspected misuse of development-cooperation funds. Generally, Finland is committed to promoting development, and has participated in a number of international efforts to promote equal social opportunities and fair trade globally. Surveys on the issue of development cooperation also indicate that the Finnish people perceive humanitarian assistance as an important form of aid. However, the overall efficiency of Finnish efforts is not high, and the country should not be counted as among the world's top aid initiators or agenda-setters. In short, in terms of advancing global social inclusion, Finland is a committed partner rather than a leader.

Citation:

"Finland's Development Policy Programme 2012", Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 6/19/2012. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, <http://www.formin.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=251855>

### III. Environmental Policies

#### Environment

Environmental  
Policy  
Score: 8

Finland faces specific environmental challenges in terms of climate change and population growth. Yet the country's contribution to larger efforts in combating climate change have to date been fairly modest. In the Yale 2014 Environmental Protection Index, Finland was ranked 18th out of 178 countries overall, and was top-ranked in the categories of health impact along with water and sanitation. Water pollution is indeed a large issue in Finland. While pollution emissions from large industrial facilities have been to a large extent successfully curbed, and polluted lakes and rivers have been cleaned, waterborne nutrient emissions generated by farms remain a pressing problem. According to calculations, some 1,500 lakes are in need of more active restoration measures to combat eutrophication. Finland's most valuable natural resource is its forests, the management of which is of vital importance for sustainable economic development. The overall annual growth rate of trees in the forests exceeds the total timber harvest, a result of institutionalized



protections. Separately, efforts to halt an ongoing decline in biodiversity have proved insufficient, though the government has created networks of protected areas.

Citation:

Jari Lyytimäki, "Environmental Protection in Finland", <http://finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=160041>; 2014 "Environmental Performance Index", <http://epi.yale.edu/epi/country-profile/finland>

### Global Environmental Protection

Global  
Environmental  
Policy  
Score: 8

International regimes are often sector-specific. The core of each international regime is formed by international regulatory and administrative systems, which are created and implemented through formal agreements. While Finland is certainly committed to observing many multilateral and bilateral environmental agreements concerning climate change and air pollution, for example, Finland is still not among the agenda-setters with regard to the advancement of international regimes. However, the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, a multilateral agreement among Arctic states adopted in 1991, was a Finnish initiative. Furthermore, Finland has received ratings ranging from "good" to "satisfying" in several international comparisons of environmental-protection standards, such as the Global Economic Forum's Environmental Sustainability Index.

Citation:

Katrina Running, "Examining Environmental Concern in Developed, Transitioning and Developing Countries", *World Values Research* 5 (1): 1-25, 2012.

# Quality of Democracy

## Electoral Processes

Candidacy  
Procedures  
Score: 10

The electoral process in Finland is free and fair, and the country's constitution grants Finnish citizens the right to participate in national elections and referendums. Registered political parties have the right to nominate candidates, though all voters have the right to influence the nomination process. Electoral associations of at least 100 enfranchised citizens also have the right of nomination. However, the role of these associations has been fairly marginal. Candidates for presidential elections can be nominated by any political party that is represented in parliament at the time of nomination. Again, however, candidates may also be nominated by associations of at least 20,000 enfranchised citizens. Presidential candidates must be Finnish citizens by birth, while young people under guardianship and those in active military service cannot stand as candidates in parliamentary elections. The procedure for registering political parties is regulated by the Party Law of 1969. Parties which fail to elect representatives to parliament in two successive elections are removed from the list of registered parties. However, by gathering signatures of 5,000 supporters, a party may be re-registered.

Citation:

Dag Anckar and Carsten Anckar, "Finland", in Dieter Nohlen and Philip Stöver, eds. *Elections in Europe. A Data Handbook*, Nomos, 2010.

Media Access  
Score: 10

The access of candidates and parties to media and means of communication is fair in principle, but practical constraints, such as the duration and breadth of a program's coverage, restrict access for smaller parties and candidates to televised debates and other media appearances. Given the increased impact of such appearances on the electoral outcome, this bias is somewhat problematic from the point of view of fairness and justice. However, the restrictions reflect practical considerations rather than ideological agendas. Access to newspapers and commercial forms of communication is unrestricted, but is in practice dependent on the economic resources of parties and individual candidates for campaign management. However, candidates are required to report on the sources of their campaign funds. Social media play an increasing role in candidates' electoral campaigns, as these outlets now attract a growing share of voters.

Voting and  
Registrations  
Rights  
Score: 10

Citation:

Strandberg, Kim (2012): Sosiaalisen median vallankumous? Ehdokkaat, valitsijat ja sosiaalinen media vuoden 2011 eduskuntavaaleissa. In: S. Borg (ed.), *Muutosvaalit 2011*, Helsinki: Ministry of Justice, 79-93.

Sundberg, Jan (2012): Finland. In: *European Journal of Political Research Political Data Yearbook 51*: 96–102, 2012.

Electoral provisions stipulate universal suffrage for all adult Finnish citizens, a secret-ballot voting method, a minimum voting age of 18, non-compulsory voting, an entitlement to vote for expatriated Finnish citizens, and the exclusion of non-Finnish nationals resident in Finland from national elections. However, non-Finnish permanent residents may vote in municipal elections. The population registration center maintains a register of persons eligible to vote, and sends a notification to those included in the register. Citizens do not need to register separately to be able to vote. A system of advance voting has been in place since the 1978 parliamentary elections, and the proportion of ballots cast in advance has risen significantly. Electronic voting was tested during the municipal elections of 2008, but has not been adopted in subsequent elections. However, the government is continuing to explore Internet-based voting methods for use in the future.

Citation:

Dag Anckar and Carsten Anckar, "Finland", in Dieter Nohlen and Philip Stöver, eds. *Elections in Europe. A Data Handbook*, Nomos, 2010.

Party Financing  
Score: 9

New campaign-finance legislation was implemented between 2008 and 2009, in the wake of political financing scandals. This legislation requires politicians to disclose funding sources, and has provided for independent and efficient monitoring. There are now bans on donations from foreign interests, corporations holding government contracts and anonymous donors. There are limits on the amount a donor can contribute over a time period or during an election. Candidates have to report on the sources of their campaign funds, and these reports are made public and filed with ministries and auditing agencies. Financing scandals involving parties and candidates continue to attract media coverage, and studies indicate that parties are likely to lose electoral support if they are involved in finance scandals. As a result of the new rules, the quality of party financing has improved, and polls indicate that public opinion of politicians' credibility has improved.

Citation:

<http://www.idea.int/parties/finance>

Demokratiapuntari 2012: Yhteenveto. Ministry of Justice/MTV3/tnsGallup, 02/2012.

Mattila, Mikko & Sundberg, Jan 2012: Vaalirahoitus ja vaalirahakohu. In: Borg, Sami (ed.): *Muutosvaalit 2011*. Oikeusministeriön selvityksiä ja ohjeita 16/2012. Oikeusministeriö (Ministry of Justice), 227–238.

Popular Decision-  
Making  
Score: 6

In 1987 government incorporated referendums into the Finnish constitution. The provision, laid down in the Law of Procedures in Advisory Referendums, enable advisory referendums to be called by parliament by means of special laws that specify the date of voting and establish the alternatives to be presented to the voters. There are no minimum participation rates or required vote majorities specified. Since that time, only a single national referendum has taken place, in 1994. This addressed Finland's entry into the EU. While this mechanism does not enable direct citizen participation in public policy-making, a constitutional amendment in 2012 introduced a popular-initiative system. This system requires parliament to consider any petition that receives 50,000 signatures or more. However, citizens do not themselves have the opportunity to vote on the initiative issues, as the right of decision and agenda-setting remains with parliament.

The first initiative to receive enough signatories to be submitted to parliament was on a prohibition of fur farming, and was subsequently rejected. A later initiative concerning same-sex marriage also received a sufficient amount of signatories, and was accepted by parliament after a heated debate. As of the time of writing, initiatives still to be considered included an amendment to copyright laws and sentences for crimes relating to child sexual abuse. The Finnish system also allows for citizen-initiated municipal referendums. However, the arrangement for such referendums is decided by the municipal authorities, and the results are nonbinding.

Citation:

Dag Anckar, "Finland", in Bruno Kaufmann and M. D. Waters, eds. *Direct Democracy in Europe*. Durham, N. C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2004.

### Access to Information

Media Freedom  
Score: 10

Media independence is a matter of course in Finland. Media independence is guaranteed by the Act on the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in Mass Media from 2003, and supported by public and political discourse. A free and pluralist media is considered an important contributor to debate among citizens and the formation of public opinion. Finland has been ranked at or near the top of the Reporters without Borders' Worldwide Press Freedom Index since 2009; in 2015, Finland again took first place, for the fifth year in a row. Several factors contribute to this rather unique success. Media consumption rates are high in Finland, which ranks first in the European Union on the basis of relative rates of newspaper circulation. This high rate of media consumption guarantees a strong market and healthy competition, promoting high quality journalism. In addition, the Council for Mass Media in Finland has

successfully managed a system of self-regulation among media outlets. Furthermore, as Finland is one of the least corrupt societies in the world, the government has not sought to interfere with press freedom.

Citation:

<http://en.rsfs.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html>

Media Pluralism  
Score: 10

Finland's media landscape is pluralistic and includes a large number and variety of newspapers and magazines. In addition, Finland still boasts an impressive newspaper readership, despite a definite decline in circulation numbers for the 10 largest printed newspapers in recent years. However, newspapers do face the prospect of long-term decline due to the rise of the electronic media and increasing economic pressures due to a loss of advertising share and increasing costs. Indeed, during the last decade, user-generated content and online social-media platforms have revolutionized the media landscape. As a rule, newspapers are privately owned but publicly subsidized. The ownership structure is therefore diverse. The position of regional newspapers remains fairly strong, and they provide a variety of print media at the national and regional level. Internet use is open and unrestricted, the share of Internet users in the population aged 16 to 74 exceeds 90%, and broadband internet access is defined by law as a universal service that must be available to everyone. According to Official Statistics of Finland, the Internet has become an established source of information concerning elections. The national broadcasting company, Yleisradio, operates several national and regional television and radio channels, and supplies a broad range of information online. Although state-owned and controlled by a parliamentary council, Yleisradio is viewed as unbiased. Yleisradio is complemented by several private broadcasting companies.

Citation:

Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Use of information and communications technology by individuals [e-publication]. ISSN=2323-2854. 2011. Helsinki: Statistics Finland.

Access: [http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2011/sutivi\\_2011\\_2011-11-02\\_tie\\_001\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2011/sutivi_2011_2011-11-02_tie_001_en.html) ;  
[http://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suolu\\_k\\_kulttuuri\\_en.html#newspaper](http://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suolu_k_kulttuuri_en.html#newspaper);

Inka Salovaara-Moring, "Mind the Gap? Press Freedom and Pluralism in Finland", in Andrea Czepek, Melanie Hellwig & Eva Nowak, eds., *Press Freedom and Pluralism in Europe*, 2009, Intellect Books, European Communication Research and Education Association.

Access to  
Government  
Information  
Score: 10

The public's access to government information is in principle unrestricted. In accordance with the Finnish constitution, every Finnish citizen has the right of access to public documents and recordings. This right includes access to documents and recordings in the possession of government authorities, unless their publication has for some compelling reason been restricted by a government act. However, special categories are secret and exempt from release, including documents that relate to foreign affairs, criminal investigations, the police, security services and military intelligence. Such

documents are usually kept secret for a period of 25 years, unless otherwise stated by law. Finland was also among the first countries to sign the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents in 2009. The 1999 act on the openness of government activities stipulates that persons asking for information are not required to provide reasons for their request, and that responses to requests must be made within 14 days. Appeals of any denial can be taken to a higher authority and thereafter to the Administrative Court. The chancellor of justice and the parliamentary ombudsman can also review the appeal.

### Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights  
Score: 10

Civil rights are widely respected and protected in Finland. The country has received the highest possible rankings for civil rights in Freedom House's annual rankings since the early 1980s. The law provides for freedom of speech, which is also respected in practice. Furthermore, Finns enjoy full property rights and freedom of religion, with the government officially recognizing a large number of religious groups. Freedoms of association and assembly are respected in law and practice, while workers have the right to organize, bargain collectively and strike. Debates on adoption-rights legislation for same-sex couples are ongoing, while the parliament voted to provide marriage rights for same-sex couples in November 2014 after long and contentious discussions.

Political Liberties  
Score: 10

Political liberties are effectively protected in Finland. The country has for decades received the highest scores concerning political liberties in Freedom House surveys. Finnish law provides for freedom of speech, and this freedom is upheld in practice. Finns also enjoy freedom of religion, freedom of association and assembly, and the right to organize, bargain collectively and strike. A large majority of workers belong to trade unions, although the share of membership in trade unions has been decreasing. Women enjoy rights and liberties in Finland equal to those of men. The criminal code covers ethnic agitation and human trafficking. The constitution guarantees members of the indigenous Saami population, who comprise less than 1% of the population, cultural autonomy and the right to pursue their traditional livelihoods.

Citation:  
<http://findikaattori.fi/en/36>

Non-discrimination  
Score: 8

Rights of ethnic and religious minorities are as a rule well protected in Finland, and the criminal code provides penalties for anyone who incites violence on racial, national, ethnic or religious grounds. The rights of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland are widely respected, with Swedish recognized as an official national language. However, reforms to public

administration at the local level, which are still pending, may violate some of the rights of the Swedish-speaking population. In addition, some segments of the population, primarily represented by the so-called Finns Party, have turned hostile toward Finland's Swedish-speaking population. The Aland Islands, whose inhabitants speak Swedish, have historically maintained an extensive autonomy and a home-rule parliament as well as one permanent seat in the national legislature. Finland has often been seen as a forerunner concerning its efforts to maintain an effective minority-protection policy. Still, although cases of discrimination are rather few, ethnic minorities and asylum seekers report occasional police discrimination. According to the Youth Barometer 2014 survey, 55% of young people have experienced discrimination at some point in their life, and an immigrant background additionally increases the risk of encountering discrimination. Roma individuals, who make up a small proportion of the population, are marginalized, and the Finns Party, now a government party, encourages discrimination against ethnic minorities and asylum seekers.

Citation:

[https://tietoanuorista.fi/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Nuorisobarometri\\_2014\\_web.pdf](https://tietoanuorista.fi/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Nuorisobarometri_2014_web.pdf)

### Rule of Law

Legal Certainty  
Score: 10

The rule of law is a basic pillar of Finnish society. When Sweden ceded Finland to Russia in 1809, the strict observation of prevailing Swedish laws and legal regulations became one of the most important tools for avoiding and circumventing Russian interference in Finnish affairs. From this emerged a political culture that prioritizes legal certainty, condemns any conflation of public and private interest, and prevents public officeholders from abusing their position for private interests.

Judicial Review  
Score: 9

The predominance of the rule of law has been somewhat weakened by the lack of a constitutional court in Finland. The need for such a court has been discussed at times, but left-wing parties in particular have historically blocked proposals for the creation of such a court. Instead, the parliament's Constitutional Law Committee has assumed the position taken in other countries by a constitutional court. The implication of this is that parliament itself is controlled by a kind of inner-parliament, making the Constitutional Law Committee arrangement a less than convincing compensation for a regular constitutional court. In addition, although courts are independent in Finland, they do not decide on the constitutionality or the conformity with law of acts of government or the public administration. Instead, the supreme supervisor of legality in Finland is the Office of the Chancellor of Justice. Together with the parliamentary ombudsman, this office monitors authorities' compliance with the law and the legality of the official acts of the government,

its members, and the president of the republic. The chancellor is also charged with supervising the legal behavior of courts, authorities and civil servants.

Appointment of  
Justices  
Score: 5

There are three levels of courts: local, appellate and supreme. The final court of appeal is the Supreme Court, while there is also a supreme administrative court and an ombuds office. The judiciary is independent from the executive and legislative branches. Supreme Court judges are appointed to permanent positions by the president of the republic. They are not subject to political influence. Supreme Court justices appoint lower-court judges. The ombudsman is an independent official elected by parliament. The ombudsman and deputy ombudsman investigate complaints by citizens and conduct investigations. While formally transparent, the appointment processes do not receive much media coverage.

Corruption  
Prevention  
Score: 9

The overall level of corruption in Finland is low, with the country offering a solid example of how the consolidation of advanced democratic institutions may lead to the reduction of corruption. Several individual mechanisms contribute, including a strict auditing of state spending; new and more efficient regulations over party financing; legal provisions that criminalize the acceptance of bribes; full access by the media and the public to relevant information; public asset declarations; and consistent legal prosecution of corrupt acts. However, the various integrity mechanisms still leave some room for potential abuse, and a 2014 European Commission report emphasized the need to make public-procurement decisions and election funding more transparent. It is also evident that positions in Finland are filled through political appointment. Whereas only about 5% of citizens are party members, two-thirds of the state and municipal public servants are party members. Recently, several political-corruption charges dealing with bribery and campaign financing – particularly a case in which a former head of Helsinki police’s narcotics unit was judged guilty of bribery – have been brought to light and have attracted media attention.

Citation:

Hung-En Sung, “Democracy and Political Corruption: A Cross-National Comparison”, *Crime, Law & Social Change*, Vol. 41, 2004, 179-194.



# Governance

## I. Executive Capacity

### Strategic Capacity

Strategic  
Planning  
Score: 9

Strategic planning has considerable influence on government decision-making. The strategic goals contained in the government program are recorded in specific government-strategy documents. These strategy documents cover a one-year period and include a plan for pursuing priority goals, a notice of intent for upcoming key decisions and indicators for evaluating government performance. The implementation of the government program is assessed by a report halfway through the cabinet's tenure, which defines how strategic goals should be attained through the rest of the cabinet's time in office. The Prime Minister's Office assists the prime minister and the government in their work, and is also responsible for the planning of social policy legislation that does not fall within the competence of any other ministry. The government often launches policy programs to ensure its key objectives are met. Meanwhile, the preparation and monitoring of programs is delegated to ministerial groups. In addition, the Committee for the Future deals with future-related matters. As a former entrepreneur, Prime Minister Sipilä has given the government program an even more strategic turn. For some of its policy objectives, the government utilizes trial projects to assess reform impacts. The basic income trial project, which is currently in the planning stages in an advisory committee, and will possibly be run in 2017 – 2018, is an example of this kind of new strategic evidence-based planning.

Scholarly Advice  
Score: 7

The government predominately organizes the collection of scholarly advice informally, for example, by consulting scientific experts on committee report drafts. Some formal bodies, such as temporary working groups, ad hoc committees and permanent councils, also exist. In general, different permanent and non-permanent committees play an important role in structuring scholarly advice in government decision-making. An example of a permanent group that advises the government and ministries in research and technology matters is the Research and Innovation Council. A government resolution on a

comprehensive reform of state research institutes and research funding was adopted in 2013, and aims to make more efficient and focused use of sectoral research to support governmental decision-making. Implementation of this resolution is underway from 2014 – 2017. The Prime Minister’s Office makes a yearly plan for realizing strategic research objectives, and calls for the systemic use of research projects and data for decision-making, steering and operating procedures. Attempts at steering research to support political goals are as a rule regarded unfavorably by the scientific community. However, academics in the field of international politics participate in policy preparation and in foreign- and security-policy networks, and legal scholars are often used as experts in parliamentary-committee hearings.

### Interministerial Coordination

GO Expertise  
Score: 9

As a ministry in itself, the Prime Minister’s Office has the capacity to evaluate proposed policy. The primary function of the Prime Minister’s Office is to support the duties of the prime minister, who directs the work of government and coordinates the preparation and consideration of government business. The Prime Minister’s Office monitors the implementation of the government program and coordinates Finland’s EU policy. In addition, the Prime Minister’s Office is tasked with coordinating communications between the government and various ministries, planning future-oriented social policies, and promoting cooperation between the government and the various branches of public administration. The Prime Minister’s Office has four departments: European Union Affairs, Government Administration, Government Ownership Steering, and Government Communications. Additionally, it has three units: the Government Session Unit, the Government Policy Analysis Unit and the Government External Economic Relations Unit. The Prime Minister’s Office has a secretary of state, a permanent undersecretary of state and some 550 employees arranged within several task-specific departments. In addition, the steering of the Team Finland network takes place within the Prime Minister’s Office. Team Finland is a network tasked with promoting international trade and relations, improving the efficiency of business cooperation abroad, and increasing the ease with which Finnish customers can access international business services.

Citation:  
<http://vnk.fi/en/frontpage>  
<http://team.finland.fi/en/frontpage>

GO Gatekeeping  
Score: 7

The Prime Minister’s Office can return items envisaged for cabinet meetings on policy grounds. As the Prime Minister’s Office coordinates the drafting of proposals, and also arranges the agenda for cabinet meetings, there is rarely reason for it to return items. The rule is that ministers can place items on the

cabinet's agenda even against the wishes of the prime minister. The handling of conflicts can be delicate, especially in cases when the prime minister and minister represent different parties, and perhaps differing political interests which need to be reconciled. Yet controversial items are often discussed in informal meetings beforehand. In previous times, an institutionalized unofficial meeting of the cabinet led by the prime minister, called the *Iltakoulu*, played an important function in consensual decision-making; unfortunately, for reasons that are not entirely clear, this arrangement is no longer used.

Line Ministries  
Score: 9

The guiding rule in Finland is that each ministry is, within its mandate, responsible for the preparation of issues that fall within the scope of government and also for the proper functioning of the administration. Given this framework, rather than line ministries involving the Prime Minister's Office in policy preparation, the expectation is that the Prime Minister's Office involves ministries in its own policy preparations. In practice, of course, the patterns of interaction are not fixed. For one thing, policy programs and other intersectoral subject matters in the cabinet program are a concern for the Prime Minister's Office as well as for the ministries, and efforts must be coordinated. The government's analysis, assessment and research activities supporting policymaking across the ministries are coordinated by the PMO. In addition, because decision-making is collective and consensual in nature, ministry attempts to place items on the cabinet's agenda without involving the Prime Minister's Office will fail. Finland has a recent tradition of fairly broad-based coalition governments; this tradition amalgamates ideological antagonisms and thereby mitigates against fragmentation along ministerial and sectoral lines.

Citation:

Jaakko Nousiainen, "Politiikan huipulla. Ministerit ja ministeriöt Suomen parlamentaarissa järjestelmässä", Porvoo: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, 1992, p. 163.

Cabinet  
Committees  
Score: 10

Cabinet committees effectively prepare cabinet meetings. The government has four statutory cabinet committees: the Committee on Foreign and Security Policy (which meets with the president when pressing business issues arise), the Committee on European Union Affairs, the Cabinet Finance Committee and the Cabinet Committee on Economic Policy. Additionally, ad hoc cabinet committees can be appointed by the government plenary session. All these committees are chaired by the prime minister, who also chairs sessions of the Economic Council, the Research and Innovation Council, and the Title Board. In addition, there are several ministerial working groups. The primary task of these committees and groups is to prepare cabinet meetings by helping to create consensus between relevant ministries and interests. In all, a large majority of issues are reviewed first by cabinet committees and working groups.

Ministerial  
Bureaucracy  
Score: 10

Cabinet meetings are prepared by ministry officials and civil servants. Findings from a large-scale analysis some years ago into the internal politics and practices of the cabinet and ministries emphasized the existence of a cyclical culture of dependence between ministers and senior officials. One expression of this mutual dependence, according to the same analysis, was that ministers put greater trust in the advice of their subordinate civil servants than in the advice of ministerial colleagues. This pattern extends to all aspects of the cabinet's agenda. With regard to policy programs and similar intersectoral issues, coordination between civil servants of separate ministries happens as a matter of course. In specific matters, coordination may even be dictated. For instance, statements from the Ministry of Finance must be obtained by other ministries on economic and financial issues. On the whole, given the decision-making culture, civil servants in different ministries are expected to engage in coordination. An unwritten code of behavior prescribes harmonious and smooth activity, and ministers or ministries are expected to subject projects that are burdensome or sensitive to a collective examination and analysis.

Citation:

Jaakko Nousiainen, "Politiikan huipulla. Ministerit ja ministeriöt Suomen parlamentaarissa järjestelmässä". Porvoo: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, 1992, p. 128.

Informal  
Coordination  
Score: 10

Intersectoral coordination has generally been perceived as an important issue in Finnish politics, but rather few institutional mechanisms have in fact been introduced. One of these, the Iltakoulu (which translates as evening session), was previously an important unofficial negotiation session for the cabinet, but this system is no longer systematically used. To a considerable extent, though, coordination proceeds effectively through informal mechanisms. Recent large-scale policy programs have enhanced intersectoral policymaking; additionally, Finland's membership in the European Union has of course necessitated increased interministerial coordination. Recent research in Finland has only focused tangentially on informal mechanisms, but various case studies suggest that the system of coordination by advisory councils has performed well.

### Evidence-based Instruments

RIA Application  
Score: 9

Systematic impact assessment is today a routine part of the Finnish legislative drafting process. Regulatory impact assessment activities abound and comprise, for instance, a series of evaluation reports by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that deal with principles of development policy, partner countries and geographic regions. An empirical study showed that in 2009, the government most often assessed impacts relating to public finances and the economy, with 59% of all government proposals including this form of evaluation. Potential impacts on the public administration were assessed in 55% of all cases. Assessments have also investigated the activities of the

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and an international evaluation of the Finnish national innovation system, commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, was also performed. The Ministry of Education and Culture has been preparing a plan for third-party evaluations and a process for monitoring the lessons learned from such assessments. Since 2014, the Education Evaluation Center has been responsible for evaluating educational services. The general framework for regulatory impact assessments is grounded in a program-management system governing intersectoral policy programs. This framework was initiated in 2007 and is still valid as a guide to impact assessment.

Citation:

“Impact Assessment in Legislative Drafting. Guidelines”, Ministry of Justice, Finland. Publication 2008:4.  
 Auri Pakarinen, Jyrki Tala & Laura Hämynen, “Regulatory Impact Assessment in the Finnish Government’s Proposals in 2009”, National Research Institute of Legal Policy, Research Communications no. 104.  
 “Better Regulation”, Helsinki, Ministry of Justice, 2014.  
<http://oikeusministerio.fi/en/index/basicprovisions/legislation/parempisaantely.html>  
 Finnish Education Evaluation Centre: <http://karvi.fi/en/>

Quality of RIA  
 Process  
 Score: 8

Impact assessment guidelines adopted in 2007 provide a framework for the process of regulatory impact assessment. The revision bureau of the Ministry of Justice’s Law Drafting Department monitors compliance with these impact assessment guidelines. Impact assessments cover the economic, administrative, environmental and social impacts of proposed legislation. The guidelines describe what impact may be involved, how the impact may be assessed, and what methods and information sources are available. The guidelines also specify that this information must be provided in the assessments. For instance, assessments deal with proposals’ potential economic impact on households, businesses and public finances, as well as overall economic impact. Concerning method, the guidelines recommend the use of statistical data, questionnaire data, expert analyses, and when necessary, qualitative methods. Generally speaking, the regulatory impact assessment process is well-structured and of a high quality.

Citation:

Ministry of Justice (2008): “Impact Assessment in Legislative Drafting - Guidelines”. Helsinki, Publication 2008:4. [[https://www.tem.fi/files/32176/Vaikutusarviointiohjeet\\_2007\\_en.pdf](https://www.tem.fi/files/32176/Vaikutusarviointiohjeet_2007_en.pdf)].

Sustainability  
 Check  
 Score: 9

Finland’s government understands that regular and complete assessments of regulations are fundamental to the governing of complex, open societies and economies. In consequence, the country has a comprehensive regulatory impact assessment program in place, and has formally adopted a regulatory impact assessment strategy that contains instructions to be carried out when drafting legislative proposals, and is complemented by separate instructions issued by ministries. Assessments involve the use of multiple indicator sets, various interests are consulted and different techniques used. As a rule, aspects

of sustainability form an integral part of the assessment process, and variations between forecasts and actual outcomes are monitored over time.

### Societal Consultation

Negotiating  
Public Support  
Score: 9

In Finland's consensus-oriented political system, interest organizations and associations are regularly consulted. Although the corporatist system adopted in the 1960s has evolved, the exchange of views and information with a variety of social interests is still part and parcel of the everyday activities of the Finnish government. Through various mechanisms such as committee hearings, joint-council memberships and expert testimony, bills and drafts are circulated to interested parties who are then invited to critique the draft legislation. Various laws and guidelines, such as the Act on the Openness of Government Activities, contain provisions on consultation and participation. By and large, the system functions reasonably well and largely prevents social confrontations over policymaking. Admittedly, consultation tends to favor organized groups and neglects outside participation. It is also the case that consultation is carried out mainly to build consensus rather than to gather support or assess impact. However, in the long run, this helps to generate public support for government policies. Recent developments indicate a weakening in the role played by the tripartite negotiation of labor-market agreements between the government, employers groups and employee organizations.

### Policy Communication

Coherent  
Communication  
Score: 9

Since the prime minister's position is one of *primus inter pares* (first among equals), rather than one of absolute leadership, it is natural that the government's policy positions are advanced through discussion and consultation rather than through directives and commands. Furthermore, as directives and commands would challenge the principle of freedom of speech, such communication would probably be regarded as illegitimate and foster opposition. In practice, therefore, contradictory statements are rare. However, the fact that Finland has a tradition of broad-based umbrella coalitions that accommodate diverse interests and ideological shadings serves to diversify communication to some extent. This has been true of communications from the Sipilä government, which have been notably vague and often undecided, reflecting tensions or even conflicts between the Finns Party and the other two government parties. The existence of an agreed-upon and fairly detailed government plan in principle serves to streamline communications; however, the present government has demonstrated that different interpretations of the plan can certainly arise.

## Implementation

Government  
Efficiency  
Score: 9

Given that Finland has lately been governed by broad or fairly broad coalition governments, the political conditions for a satisfactory implementation of government plans have been good. A February 2013 session reviewing the implementation record under former Prime Minister Katainen (2011 – 2014) concluded that approximately 80% of the measures outlined in the government program had at that point been undertaken successfully or were about to be accomplished. However, the review also indicated shortcomings in several interrelated areas, including economic growth, employment and foreign trade, and municipal finances. In fact, according to the review, the largest and most difficult program issues remained unsolved. The global economic crisis of course hampered the cabinet's efforts regarding the economy, but the difficulties were also partly because of internal tensions in government. Following a cabinet reshuffle, the government program under Prime Minister Stubb (2014 – 2015) was submitted to parliament in June 2014 and was fairly well received. Given the circumstances, this program in the main carried forward the policies introduced by the previous government. The present Sipilä government announced its program at the end of May 2015; in comparison with earlier programs, which resembled a telephone directory in size, the Sipilä program is much shorter and more strategic and focused. At the time of writing, this government's likelihood of success in implementing its objectives remained an open question. However, the government had already backed away from several of its proposals, such as the abolishment of home assistance for pensioners.

Citation:

Hufvudstadsbladet March 1, 2013;

Ville Pitkänen, "Kenen ääni kuuluu hallitusohjelmassa?", Kanava, 2015, Nr 6, 40-42.

Ministerial  
Compliance  
Score: 8

A number of mechanisms are in place that serve to bind ministers to the government's program. Government programs result from negotiations between the political parties forming the government; in consequence, the coalition partners and ministries closely monitor implementation. Cabinet agenda issues are generally prepared, discussed and coordinated in cabinet committees as well as in informal groups and meetings. On the whole, ministers are closely watched, and are expected to be integral parts of cooperative units. They would no doubt find it difficult as well as unrewarding to pursue narrow self-interests. Nevertheless, individual figures' profile-raising attempts have been more discernible in the Sipilä cabinet, largely within the so-called Finns Party.

Monitoring  
Ministries  
Score: 8

The government monitoring of ministries is indirect in nature and the same mechanisms that foster ministerial compliance tend to have monitoring functions as well. These include the preparation and coordination of matters in cabinet committee meetings as well as other formal and informal meetings. In general, the various forms of interministerial coordination also fulfill monitoring functions. However, these forms are characterized by cooperative and consultative interactions rather than critical interactions. While the Prime Minister's Office does monitor ministries, the monitoring is implicit rather than explicit.

Monitoring  
Agencies,  
Bureaucracies  
Score: 8

All ministries use results-management practices to monitor agencies in their various task areas. In many cases, a balanced score system is used. However, not all agencies are monitored to the same extent. Some agencies, such as the National Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes), which operates under the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, have a high degree of autonomy, with monitoring taking place only on a general level. Other agencies are accorded a somewhat lesser degree of autonomy. However, as a rule, they do have autonomy with respect to day-to-day operations. Monitoring takes many forms and a system of political undersecretaries of state has been designed to support the individual ministers in their monitoring activities.

Task Funding  
Score: 8

Municipal governments have a right to assess taxes, collecting more than twice as much as the central government in income taxes. A government grant system additionally enables local governments to continue to provide public services when they experience a funding gap. In essence, a portion of locally collected taxes is put into a common pool, from which transfers are made to financially weak local governments. The central government establishes strict standards and service-provision requirements intended to cover all citizens. However, local governments are tasked with providing these services, which means that some municipalities are unable to meet the standards without increasing taxes. Given that local government units differ greatly in size and resources, they are in unequal positions in terms of capacity and performance efficiency. A large-scale reform of municipalities and services, started in 2006 and yet unfinished, has led to a reduction in the number of municipalities from 415 to 348 in 2009. Among other goals, the reform aims to secure sufficient financing and an efficient provision of services across the country. The government has introduced a further reform project – this one highly contested – to create larger entities tasked with providing social and health services in a more efficient way (SOTE). According to expert assessments, the final November 2015 compromise solution of 15 social services and health care entities within 18 autonomous regions is less satisfactory in terms of efficient funding and democratic organization than was an original proposal for a maximum of nine to 12 SOTE regions.



## Citation:

Government press release on “Government decision on next steps in reform package on healthcare, social welfare and autonomous regions”, [http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset\\_publisher/hallitus-paatti-sote-uudistuksen-jatkosta-ja-itsehallintoalueista?\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_3qmUeJgIxZEK\\_groupId=10616](http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/hallitus-paatti-sote-uudistuksen-jatkosta-ja-itsehallintoalueista?_101_INSTANCE_3qmUeJgIxZEK_groupId=10616)

Constitutional  
Discretion  
Score: 9

Municipalities in Finland have a long tradition of independence in specific policy areas, while also implementing policies of the central government. In particular, municipalities are responsible for the implementation of educational, health care, social and infrastructural services. Municipalities may not be burdened with new functions or with financial or other obligations, nor may they be deprived of their functions and rights, except by an act of parliament. The control that the state exercises over municipalities does not imply any general state right to intervene. Control may be exercised only in accordance with specific legal provisions. Thus, subnational autonomy is guaranteed and protected by law. Still, the autonomy of local government may be curtailed in practice by financial pressures. The SOTE reform of November 2015, with its resulting 18 autonomous regions and 15 regions for the organization of social-welfare and health care tasks will lead to greater complexity in terms of financing structures, accountability and responsibilities.

National  
Standards  
Score: 7

Since local authorities have the constitutional right to use their own discretion, the central government has limited capacity to ensure that national standards are consistently met. Local governments are separate from the central government, with municipal authorities recognized as existing independently of the state. Still, appeals to administrative courts regarding decisions taken by local authorities are possible on grounds that the decisions were not made in proper order or were otherwise illegal. In certain and very few specific matters, such as environmental or social-care issues, local government decisions must be confirmed by state authorities. The reform of municipalities and services now ongoing for years aims to increase the effectiveness of public-services provision in peripheral regions and improve local governments’ fiscal sustainability. The extent to which these reforms can meet the stated goals remains an open and much-debated question

### Adaptability

Domestic  
Adaptability  
Score: 9

Most recent adaptations have resulted from Finland’s membership in the European Union. Finland was among the first EU member states to adopt the euro, and government structures have in several instances adopted EU norms. The Parliamentary Grand Committee is tasked with preparing and adopting EU legislation. Furthermore, oversight of the EU secretariat, responsible for the coordination of EU affairs, has been transferred from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister’s Office. A coordination system exists to ensure that Finland maintains positions in line with its overall EU policy with regard to issues under consideration at the EU level. This system involves

International  
Coordination  
Score: 8

relevant ministries, a cabinet committee on EU affairs and various EU subcommittees. These subcommittees are sector-specific governmental organs, and constitute the foundation for the promotion of EU affairs within the state's structures.

Typically, global public goods are best addressed collectively, on a multilateral basis, with cooperation in the form of international laws, agreements and protocols. Finland is a partner to several such modes of cooperation and contributes actively to the implementation of global frameworks. Finland is committed to and has ratified the Kyoto Protocol of the UNFCCC, which came into effect in 2005. The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for coordinating further climate negotiations, and specifically, within the framework of the EU, Finland is committed to bringing down its national annual average carbon emissions. The Finnish government has also adopted a report on long-term climate and energy policy. In 2012, the government signed a Memorandum of Understanding in which Finland and the United States agreed to continue their cooperation in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Yet Finland cannot be regarded as a dominant actor concerning the protection of global public goals. Given its relatively high level of knowledge, research capacities, and the existence of frameworks for policy coordination and monitoring, Finland does have the institutional capacities to participate in global governance. However, they are not utilized to their fullest extent.

### Organizational Reform

Self-monitoring  
Score: 10

The monitoring and evaluation of existing institutional models forms an important element of the Finnish political and administrative system. Attempts to improve the proportionality of the electoral system and alter constituency sizes are examples of how evaluation and monitoring processes in Finland mainly focus on administrative and steering issues. A system of program management has been implemented that includes monitoring of the government program. In an implementation plan adopted in 2011, the Katainen cabinet introduced new measures for monitoring the government's plan, with elements including a statement of the program's main objectives; a definition of responsibilities for policy preparation and other key measures and projects; and a process for turning these into a strategic intersectoral policy framework. This monitoring system has been adopted by subsequent governments, and the Stubb cabinet (2014 – 2015) even made monitoring data publicly available. The Secretariat for Government Strategy Work assists the government and ministries in implementing and monitoring the Sipilä cabinet's five strategic key projects.

Citation:

<http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/implementation-of-the-government-programme/information>

“Government Programme Monitoring Data”, <https://www.avoindata.fi/data/fi/dataset/hallitusohjelman-seurantadata>

Valtioneuvoston kanslia, “Jyrki Kataisen ja Alexander Stubbin hallitusohjelmien loppuseuranta 2015”, <http://valtioneuvosto.fi/documents/10184/321857/Hallitusohjelmien+loppuseuranta+032015.pdf/44d7de02-958c-4b1c-8633-201038a0f2f5>

Institutional  
Reform  
Score: 7

While institutional arrangements have not changed much, the Sipilä government is considering plans to further promote and implement strategic aims within government. These plans may include merging ministries and expanding monitoring and planning capacities. Several factors, including the fairly high degree of independence accorded to Finnish ministries and the quite broad nature of recent cabinets, tend to undermine policy coordination across government bodies, and thereby highlight the need for reforms that improve coordination efforts. The Sipilä government’s strategic goals are furthermore discussed regularly in an evening strategy session that has partly replaced the traditional “evening school” as an informal meeting between ministry staffers and the heads of the parliamentary groups, and serves as a venue for in-depth consultation and consensus-building.

## II. Executive Accountability

### Citizens’ Participatory Competence

Policy  
Knowledge  
Score: 9

Democracy requires that the public and its representatives have the means to hold government accountable. In this respect Finnish democracy is effective, though not perfect. Information on government policies and decisions is widely available online and many policy fields are debated at great length on television or in other media. Newspaper readership is also very high in Finland. A weak spot, however, is the public’s evaluative and participatory competencies. Surveys on the extent to which citizens are informed of government policymaking indicate that the public’s interest in politics has increased, and that young people in particular are more interested in politics today as compared to the early 2000s. Trust in political institutions has also increased. Social media and the 2012 presidential campaign in particular have had a marked impact on younger citizens’ rates of participation in politics. Yet the degree of interest and participation probably varies significantly across policy issues. Whereas some issues are widely debated in the media and attract general attention, other less media-friendly or stimulating issues pass largely unnoticed.

Citation:

YLE News, 29.09.2012, [http://yle.fi/uutiset/politiikka\\_kiinnostaa\\_nuoria\\_yha\\_enemman/6310622](http://yle.fi/uutiset/politiikka_kiinnostaa_nuoria_yha_enemman/6310622) .

Demokratiapuntari 2012: Yhteenveto. Ministry of Justice/MTV3/tnsGallup, 02/2012.

### Legislative Actors' Resources

Parliamentary  
Resources  
Score: 9

Parliamentarians' resources for obtaining information were greatly improved in the 1990s through the creation of a parliamentary assistant system. Currently, some 165 assistants work in a parliament of 200 sitting legislators. However, critics have recently argued that this system has become too comprehensive and expensive. The assistants perform a variety of tasks, some of which relate closely to the procurement of information and general expertise. MPs are also assisted by the Information and Communication Department, which includes the Library of Parliament, the Research Service, and the Parliament Information Office. The Library of Parliament has about 40 employees and maintains three service entities: collection services, reference and archival services, and information services.

Additionally, the Research Service supplies information, documents, publications and other materials that are required by MPs and other actors involved in parliamentary work. As legislators each serve on an average of two parliamentary committees, they also benefit from the information and knowledge provided by the various experts regularly consulted in committee hearings.

Citation:

<http://lib.eduskunta.fi/Resource.phx/library/organization/people.htm>

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tietoeduskunnasta/Organisaatio/eduskunta-tyonantajana/Sivut/default.aspx>

Obtaining  
Documents  
Score: 10

Reports drafted by committees provide the basis for legislative decisions. Committees prepare government bills, legislative initiatives, government reports and other matters for handling in plenary sessions. Given these tasks and functions, it follows that the government is expected to report in full its motives for proposing legislation and that committees are able to obtain the desired documents from the government upon request.

Summoning  
Ministers  
Score: 10

Committees are able to summon ministers to hearings and do so regularly. Committee meetings usually begin with a presentation by a ministry representative. Ministers can take part in committee meetings and debates, but cannot be regular members of the committee. Furthermore, when deemed necessary, committees invite the ombudsman, the deputy ombudsman or their representatives to a formal hearing as experts on questions of legislative drafting.

Citation:

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/lakiensaaminen/valiokunnat/Pages/default.aspx>

Summoning  
Experts  
Score: 10

Parliamentary committees are able to summon experts for committee meetings, and do so regularly and even to an increasing extent. A committee starts its work with a recommendation by the committee's own experts on which additional experts to call. This may include ministerial representatives or other individuals who have either assisted in preparatory work or represent specific agencies, organizations or other interested parties. The scope of hearings varies greatly. In some cases only one expert may be called, but in major legislative projects a committee may hear dozens of experts. Data from earlier research shows that committees in 1938 consulted advisers in 59% of all cases on which they prepared reports. The corresponding figure for 1960 was 94% and 100% in 1983. The number of experts consulted has likewise been increasing.

Citation:

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/lakiensaaminen/valiokunnat/Pages/default.aspx>

Dag Anckar, "Finland: Dualism and Consensual Rule", in Erik Damgaard, ed.: *Parliamentary Change in the Nordic Countries*, Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1992, pp. 182-186.

Task Area  
Congruence  
Score: 10

A total of 15 permanent special parliamentary committees along with the Grand Committee prepare government bills, legislative initiatives, government reports and other matters for plenary sessions. Reforms of the committee system in the early 1990s aimed to improve parliamentary committees' alignment with ministry responsibilities. These reforms have been highly successful, and committees are thematically bound within the scope of a corresponding ministry. The Grand Committee is in practice a committee for the handling of EU-related matters.

Audit Office  
Score: 10

Legislative accountability is advanced by the audit office, which is accountable to parliament. Formerly, parliamentary oversight of government finances was performed by parliamentary state auditors. However, this institution has been abolished. In its place is the parliamentary Audit Committee, which was created by combining the tasks performed by the parliamentary state auditors with the related functions of the administrative and audit section of the Finance Committee. The office of the parliamentary state auditors has also been replaced by the National Audit Office of Finland, which is an independent expert body affiliated to parliament. Its task is to audit the legality and propriety of the state's financial arrangements and review compliance with the state budget. Specifically, the office is expected to promote the exercise of parliament's budgetary power and the effectiveness of the body's administration. It also oversees election and party funding. The office is directed by the auditor general, who is elected by parliament. With

about 140 employees, the office is made up of a financial-audit unit, a performance-audit unit, an executive management support unit, and the administration and information units.

Citation:

“National Audit Office”; <http://www.vtv.fi/en>

“The Audit Committee

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/lakiensaaminen/valiokunnat/tarkastusvaliokunta/Pages/default.aspx>

Ombuds Office  
Score: 10

Parliament has an ombudsman office consisting of one ombudsman and two deputy ombudsmen. Established in 1920, it is the second-oldest ombuds office in the world and employs 59 people. The officeholders are appointed by parliament, but the office is expected to be impartial and independent of parliament. The office reports to parliament once a year. Citizens may bring complaints to the office regarding decisions by public authorities, public officials and others who perform public duties. The number of complaints decided on by the ombudsman increased from 4,543 cases in 2011 to 4,975 in 2013, but decreased again to 4,558 in 2014. A considerable number of matters have been investigated and resolved on the initiative of the ombudsman himself.

Citation:

<http://www.ombudsman.fi/english>

<http://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/dman/Document.phx?documentId=z31415095734653&cmd=download>

## Media

Media Reporting  
Score: 9

By providing a continuous flow of information and background analysis, the main print media, TV and radio stations in Finland offer substantive in-depth information on government decisions. This provision takes different forms, such as inserts in regular news programs, special features, debates between proponents of conflicting views, debates between representatives of the government and opposition parties, regular broadcasts of government hearings in parliament, and so on. Empirical information about program volume is not available, but subtracting for “infotainment programs,” between five and seven hours a week of television and radio programming is dedicated to governmental issues. Daily newspaper circulation numbers remain reasonably high, with newspapers often providing high-quality political reporting.

## Parties and Interest Associations

Intra-party  
Democracy  
Score: 8

At the time of writing, four major parties held seats in the Finnish parliament (Eduskunta). Although empirical research on intra-party democracy has so far

mainly dealt with the Center Party (Kesk), there is little doubt that the findings of this research can be assumed to apply to the other three major parties as well. Generally, the structure of internal decision-making systems within political parties has developed in two directions. While active party members operate in voluntary, sub-national organizational units, national policy functions are decided by career politicians who constitute the party elite. This dualism places power in the hands of party elites, and most particularly the party chairs. This has led to a marginalization of party members from the executive functions within each party. As intra-party meetings are the highest decision-making institutions within political parties, the average party member participates in party meetings only indirectly by helping to elect delegates.

Citation:

Karina Jutila, "Yksillä säännöillä, kaksilla korteilla", Dissertation, University of Tampere, 2003; Rauli Mickelsson, "Suomen puolueet. Historia, muutos ja nykypäivä", Tampere: Vastapaino, 2007.

Association  
Competence  
(Business)  
Score: 8

Employers' and employees' organizations became involved in a series of comprehensive income-policy agreements in 1968 concerning wages, working conditions, and social-welfare programs and legislation. While this institutional arrangement for cooperation between government and associations has since eroded, it created a framework for advancing responsible, considered and expert-based policy proposals on the part of the large economic-interest associations. Other mechanisms, including associations' participation as members and experts in the committee system, have worked in the same direction. As a consequence, this corporatist setting and the consensus style of policymaking has led to reasonable policies with broad support.

Association  
Competence  
(Others)  
Score: 8

Most associations' policy-relevant positions are based on expert knowledge and feasibility analyses. In this sense, associations clearly contribute to the general quality of decision-making. True, exaggeration and one-sided arguments are in the very nature of interest organizations and the ensuing negotiation process, but the prevailing style of policymaking grants access to various and often competing interests. The contribution of interest associations' expert knowledge is therefore on the whole a valuable asset that enhances the quality of policymaking. Interest associations also have a high profile in public discourse, and often help shape public opinion. The fact remains, however, that the function of interest associations is to promote certain interests at the potential expense of others.

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