

## **INFORMATION ON THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS OF 2012**

Under the Constitution, Finland is divided into municipalities whose administration is based on self-government. Municipalities make decisions on many issues that concern their residents.

The highest decision-making body in a municipality is a council elected by the residents. The council members, or councillors, are elected for four years at a time in municipal elections. The following municipal elections will take place on **Sunday 28 October 2012**.

In municipal elections, Finnish citizens and, under certain conditions, citizens of other countries living in the municipality may vote and stand for election. Voting in Finland is voluntary.

In the Region of Åland, no municipal elections will take place in 2012.

### **Right to vote – who is entitled to vote**

You have the right to vote in municipal elections if you are a citizen of Finland, another European Union Member State, Iceland or Norway, and you meet the following conditions:

- you are 18 years of age at the latest on the election day (28 October 2012)
- you are assigned a municipality of residence in Finland no later than on 7 September 2012.

If you are a citizen of some other country, you may vote in the municipal elections if

- you are 18 years of age at the latest on the election day (28 October 2012)
- you have had a municipality of residence in Finland for a continuous period of at least two years before 7 September 2012.

Your municipality of residence is determined under the provisions of the Municipality of Residence Act. Usually, your municipality of residence is the municipality in which you live.

In the municipal elections of 2012, your municipality of residence will be the one recorded as your municipality in the Population Information System on 7 September at 12 midnight.

If necessary, you can contact the Local Register Office to check your municipality of residence.

You may only vote for a candidate standing for election in your own municipality of residence in a municipal election.

### **A notice of your right to vote will be posted to you**

The Population Register Centre and the Local Register Offices maintain a voting register that contains the information on all those who are entitled to vote. You are not required to do anything to become entered in the voting register.

By **4 October 2012**, the Local Register Office will send a notice of your right to vote (an information card) to all those who are entitled to vote and whose addresses are found in the register. The information card will contain instructions for voting.

## **Eligibility – who can be a candidate**

You are eligible - in other words, you can stand for election - in the municipal elections of your municipality of residence if you meet the following criteria:

- The municipality in which you intend to stand for election is your municipality of residence
- You are entitled to vote in some municipality
- You are not legally incompetent, or under guardianship.

Certain state officials and leading public servants and employees of the municipality are not eligible, however.

## **Nomination of candidates in municipal elections**

In municipal elections, candidates may be nominated by

- registered parties
- constituency associations established by voters.

In order to establish a constituency association, a minimum of ten voters resident in the municipality are needed, while in certain small municipalities, three or five is enough.

Two or more parties have a right to establish an electoral alliance. Two or more electoral alliances have a right to set up a joint list.

The maximum number of candidates nominated by a party, an electoral alliance or a joint list in a municipality equals the number of councillors to be elected multiplied by one and a half. Depending on the population of the municipality, 17–85 councillors will be elected.

Each candidate will be assigned a number. A combined list of the candidates will be produced, on which all the candidates will be shown in the order of their numbers, starting with the number 2. On this combined list, the candidates will be grouped by their parties and joint lists. The combined list will show the name, candidate number and occupation of each candidate. In addition, the combined list will show

- which parties have set up an electoral alliance
- which electoral alliances have formed a joint list
- which parties do not belong to an electoral alliance

- which candidates are running from outside of a joint list.

The combined list of candidates will be drawn up on 27 September 2012.

## **Voting dates**

You can either vote on the election day, which is Sunday 28 October 2012, or before this date in advance voting. You may only cast your vote once. Voting twice is a punishable offence under the Criminal Code.

### **Advance voting:**

Advance voting will start on **Wednesday 17 October 2012**.

Advance voting will end abroad on **Saturday 20 October 2012** and in Finland on **Tuesday 23 October 2012**. At certain polling stations for advance voting, the voting time is shorter than this.

You may vote in advance at any polling station in Finland or abroad. Polling stations for advance voting include

- in Finland, advance polling stations selected by each municipality, for example municipal offices or post offices
- a number of Finnish missions abroad
- institutions including hospitals, operating units of social care services and prisons. Only persons who are patients or inmates of the institutions may vote at these polling stations.
- Finnish ships that are abroad during the advance voting period. Only the crews may cast their votes onboard. This right does not extend to the passengers.

### **Voting on the election day:**

On the election day, voting takes place on **Sunday 28 October from 9 a.m. till 8 p.m.**

On the election day, you may only vote in the municipality and at the polling station that is shown on the information card sent to you.

### **Voting at home:**

If your ability to move or function is restricted so much that you cannot reach the polling station without unreasonable difficulty, you may vote at home during the advance voting period. If you wish to vote at home, you need to register for this at the latest on **Tuesday 16 October 2012** by 4 p.m.

The registrations are taken by the central election committee of your municipality of

residence. Under certain conditions, a family caregiver living in the same household with a disabled person may vote at the same time with him/her.

## How to vote

You have to go to the polling station to cast your vote. You may only vote for one candidate whose name is included on the combined list of candidates in your home municipality.

**1) Prove your identity to the election official** by showing your passport, identity card, driving licence or other similar document. The election official will give you a ballot.

**2) Go into the voting booth.** Only one person at a time may enter the voting booth.

**3) Write the number of the candidate you wish to vote for on the ballot.** You may only vote for one candidate. Write the candidate's number in the circle shown on the inside of the ballot. Do not write anything else on the ballot. Fold the ballot so that the number you wrote stays on the inside of the fold and cannot be seen from the outside.

**4) Take the folded ballot to the election official.** He or she will stamp the ballot.

**5a) If you are voting on the election day, drop the stamped ballot into the ballot box.**

**5b) If you are casting your vote in advance voting, the election official will give you an election envelope in which you will seal the stamped ballot.**

If your ability to write the candidate number on the ballot is substantially impaired, you may use a polling assistant selected by you or an election official to help you. The assistant may not be a person who is standing for election. The assistant has the duty to safeguard the secrecy of the ballot by keeping confidential any information he or she may have received in connection with the voting.

## Additional information

- For more information on the elections, contact the central election committee of your municipality. In questions concerning your personal right to vote, you can contact the Local Register Office. You will find the addresses and telephone numbers of both on your information card.
- For the addresses and opening hours of polling stations for advance voting, the candidate register and other information on the elections, visit the election website of the Ministry of Justice at [www.vaalit.fi](http://www.vaalit.fi).
- The information on candidates in the municipal elections will be posted on the Ministry of Justice's election website by the beginning of October, and the information on polling stations for advance voting, by mid-August.

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