

European Elections 2009

The European Elections will be held in Finland on 7 June 2009. The advance voting period in Finland is from 27 May to 2 June 2009 and abroad from 27 May to 30 May 2009. Advance voting is not arranged on Whit Sunday (31 May).

When and where can I vote?

Those entitled to vote may vote on the election day or in advance. On the election day voters may vote only at the polling station stated on the notice of the right to vote. During the advance voting period it is possible to vote at any of the general advance polling stations in Finland or abroad.

Information on advance polling stations is available on the Internet at www.vaalit.fi. It is also possible to get information on advance polling stations by calling the Ministry of Justice's election information service number 0800-1-57575 (for information in Finnish) or 0800-1-38383 (for information in Swedish).

Identification required

Voters are required to present valid photo identification (for example a passport). It is also good to bring along the notice of the right to vote.

Who can I vote for?

In the European Elections the candidates enter as candidates in the entire country so the voters may vote for any of the candidates in list of candidates. The list of candidates is available at the polling stations and on the Internet at www.vaalit.fi.

This is how you vote:

- 1) Present a document confirming your identity to the election official. The election official hands you a ballot.
- 2) Take the ballot with you and enter a voting booth. Write the number of the candidate you want to vote for on the ballot. Do not write anything else on the ballot! You can check the number of your candidate in the candidate list available at the polling station.
- 3) Fold the ballot so that the number cannot be seen and take the folded ballot with you and go to the election official. The election official will stamp your ballot.
- 4a) On election day: Drop the ballot into the ballot box.
- 4b) If you vote in advance: Seal the stamped ballot in the brown election envelope and sign the covering letter or the notice of the right to vote according to the instructions of the election official.

Assistance and voting at home. A person whose ability to make a mark on the ballot is essentially weakened may use the help of an assistant he or she has chosen. People whose ability to move or function is so limited that they are unable to access an advance polling station or a polling station on election day may vote in advance at home. The intention to vote at home must be notified to the central municipal electoral board of the person's home municipality at the latest on 26 May 2009 before 4 p.m. The notification form (in Finnish) is available on the Internet at www.vaalit.fi/37060.htm.

More information. Ministry of Justice Elections website www.vaalit.fi, the central municipal electoral board and the local register offices.

The European Parliament (EP) represents the people of the Member States of the European Union. The Members of the Parliament are elected every five years by direct universal suffrage.

Equally to the Commission of the European Communities and the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament is a central decision making organ within the European Union.

Since 1979 the Members of the European Parliament have been elected by direct universal suffrage. The European Elections will be held in all Member States during the same time period from 4 to 7 June 2009. In Finland election day is 7 June 2009.

Elections to the European Parliament are held in the Member States according to their national election legislation. The seats are shared out proportionately to the population of each Member State. The number of members elected from Finland is 13. The Members of the European Parliament are grouped in European political groups by political affinity.

During the last decades the role and the powers of the European Parliament have grown substantially. The powers of the European Parliament may be divided into five entities:

1. Most of the European laws are adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council (codecision procedure). In some cases the Parliament delivers an opinion on the issue to the Council. The Parliament can ask the Commission to present legislative proposals for laws.
2. The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union together adopt the budget of the European Union.
3. The European Parliament appoints the President of the Commission and approves Commissioners appointed by the Member States. The Parliament has the power to censure the Commission.
4. The European Parliament gives its assent to the accession of new EU Member States and significant international agreements.
5. The European Parliament exercises control especially over the Commission. The Members of the European Parliament may direct written and oral questions to the Council and the Commission. The Parliament also appoints the European Ombudsman.