

INFORMATION OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN FINLAND IN 2008

Finland is divided into municipalities and the self-government of their residents is guaranteed by the Constitution. The decision-making power of the municipality is exercised by a Municipal Council elected by the residents. The Municipal Council is the highest decision-making body in the municipality, and its members, i.e. the councillors, are elected in general municipal elections for four calendar years at a time. The next municipal elections shall be held on 26 October 2008.

In addition to Finnish citizens, also the citizens of other countries may participate in the Finnish municipal elections subject to the following conditions. No municipal elections shall be held in the area of the province of Åland in the year 2008.

1 Right to vote and eligibility

The right to vote in the municipal elections to be held in the municipality on 26 October 2008 can be exercised by a Finnish citizen as well as by a citizen of another Member State of the European Union, Iceland and Norway,

- 1) who will reach the age of 18 years no later than on the election day and
- 2) whose municipality of residence as referred to in the Municipality of Residence Act is the municipality in question on 5 September 2008 at 12.00 mid night according to the information in the population information system, as well as by another foreigner,
 - 1) who will reach the age of 18 years no later than on the election day,
 - 2) whose municipality of residence as referred to in the Municipality of Residence Act is the municipality in question on 5 September 2008 at 12.00 mid night according to the information in the population information system, and
 - 3) if, on 5 September 2008 at 12.00 midnight, he has continuously had a municipality of residence in Finland for a minimum of two years.

With certain exceptions, the municipality of residence of a person is the municipality in which he resides.

Eligible as a candidate for the Council is a person

- 1) whose municipality of residence is the municipality in question,
- 2) who has the right to vote in these municipal elections in a municipality, and
- 3) who is not legally incompetent (under guardianship).

Certain State civil servants and leading civil servants and employees of the municipality as well as comparable persons are, however, not eligible as candidates.

2 Right to vote register

The persons with the right to vote will ex officio be recorded in the right to vote register. A person need not separately register in the right to vote register. The Local Register Office (maistraatti) shall, no later than 2 October 2008, send each person with the right to vote whose address is known a notification card, i.e. a notification of the right to vote. The notification card includes instructions on voting.

3 Nomination of candidates for municipal elections

In municipal elections, candidates may be nominated by

- 1) registered parties
- 2) persons with the right to vote who have formed a constituency association.

The formation of a constituency association for the nomination of a candidate requires at least ten residents of the municipality with the right to vote. In some small municipalities however only three or five residents are required.

When nominating candidates, two or more parties have the right to form an electoral coalition. Two or more constituency associations have the right to form a joint list. The maximum number of candidates that a political party, electoral coalition or joint list may have in each municipality is one and a half times the number of councillors to be elected. The number of councillors to be elected is 17 – 85. The number of councillors depends on the population of the municipality.

A combined list of candidates, printed on paper, is drawn up of the candidates in each municipality and the candidates are placed in the list in the order of their candidate numbers beginning with the number 2. The combined list of candidates indicates which parties have formed an electoral coalition and which constituency associations have formed a joint list as well as which parties do not belong to an electoral coalition and which candidates are outside the joint list.

The combined list of candidates shall be drawn up on 25 September 2008. After this, also a national candidate register shall be drawn up of the candidates.

4 Voting

The elections shall be held by arranging advance voting and voting on the election day. A person may vote in advance voting or voting on the election day, not both. Voting twice is punishable as provided for in the Penal Code.

Voting on the election day shall take place on Sunday 26 October 2008 between 9.00 a.m. and 8.00 p.m. During the voting on the election day, a voter has the right to vote in his own municipality at the polling station that has been entered for him in the right to vote register. The notification card to be sent to a person with the right to vote shall indicate this municipality (the municipality of the right to vote) as well as the polling station there and the address of the polling station.

Advance voting shall begin on Wednesday 15 October 2008 and end abroad on Saturday 18 October 2008 and in Finland on Tuesday 21 October 2008. At

some advance polling stations the period of advance voting shall be shorter.

Advance polling stations are:

- 1) domestic public advance polling stations such as most post offices and municipal advance polling stations,
- 2) many Finnish Embassies abroad;
- 3) hospitals and certain operating units of the social services as well as penal institutions (institutions); Those being cared for in institutions or admitted to institutions may vote in the institutions.
- 4) Finnish ships which are abroad at the time advance voting is arranged in Finland; The crew of a ship may vote onboard the ship when the ship is abroad during the period of advance voting. Passengers may not vote onboard a ship.

Everyone who has the right to vote may vote in advance at the public advance polling stations in Finland or abroad.

A person with the right to vote whose ability to move or act is limited to the extent that he cannot without undue difficulties get to the polling station or advance polling station may, subject to certain conditions, vote during the period of advance voting in his own municipality at home. Home voting shall be applied for no later than 4 p.m. Tuesday 14 October 2008 to the central election committee of the municipality of residence of the voter.

The voter has the right to vote only for a candidate included in the combined list of candidates of this municipality.

Voting takes place at the polling station. Voters must show proof of their identity to the electoral official. The electoral official gives a ballot to the voter. The number of the candidate the voter wants to vote for is entered on the ballot. Voters may vote for only one candidate. The candidate number is entered in the circle inside the ballot. No other entries may be made in the ballot. The voter fills in the ballot in a polling booth, in which there can only be one voter at a time. The ballot is folded so that the number can not be seen by others. The folded ballot is handed to the electoral official to be stamped so that the secrecy of the vote is preserved. On election day the voter drops the stamped ballot into the ballot box. When voting in advance, the voter seals the stamped vote in the election envelope. Taking the notification card with you to the advance polling station or the polling station will make the voting easier.

5 Additional information

Additional information on the elections is available at the central election committee of the municipality (kunnan keskusvaalilautakunta) and the Local Register Office (maistraatti). The address and telephone numbers are indicated in the notification card.

The domestic public advance polling stations, the advance polling stations abroad and their addresses and opening hours as well as the candidate register shall also be available in the Internet at the election web site of the Ministry of Justice www.vaalit.fi. The candidate register shall be available as soon as the combined list of candidates has been drawn up on Thursday 25 September 2008 and the information on the advance polling stations shall be available in September.

In August 2008 this information will be available on the Ministry of Justice Election website www.vaalit.fi also in the following languages: Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, French, Thai and Turkish.