



## INFORMATION ON THE 2021 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

In accordance with its Constitution, Finland is divided into self-governing municipalities. Each municipality is responsible for many of the decisions that concern its residents.

The highest decision-making municipal body is the municipal council, which is elected by its residents. The members of the council, or councillors, are elected in municipal elections for four-year terms. The next municipal elections will be held on **Sunday, 18 April 2021**.

In municipal elections, Finnish citizens and, under specific conditions, citizens of other countries may vote and stand as candidates.

Voting in Finland is voluntary.

In the region of Åland, no municipal elections will be held in 2021.

### Voting rights – who is entitled to vote

You may 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 have turned 18 by election day (18 April 2021)
- you have a municipality of residence in Finland by 26 February 2021

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

- you have turned 18 by election day (18 April 2021)
- you have had a municipality of residence in Finland continuously for at least two years before 26 February 2021

Your municipality of residence is determined on the basis of the Municipality of Residence Act. In principle, your municipality of residence is the municipality you live in.

In the municipal elections of 2021, your municipality of residence will be determined on the basis of the municipality that has been recorded as your municipality of residence in the Population Information System on 26 February 2021 at 12.00 midnight.

If necessary, you can check your municipality of residence from the Digital and Population Data Services Agency.

In the municipal elections, you may only vote for a candidate standing for election in your municipality of residence.

## **A notification of the right to vote is sent to all persons entitled to vote**

The Digital and Population Data Services Agency maintains a voting register containing the information of all those entitled to vote. There is no need to register for the voting register separately.

The Digital and Population Data Services Agency will send a notification card informing you of your right to vote by **25 March 2021** at the latest. The card is sent to each person who is entitled to vote and whose address is known. Your notification card will be sent to you in just digital form if you have signed up for the Suomi.fi Messages service, which is provided by the Digital and Population Data Services Agency (for more information, visit [www.suomi.fi/messages](http://www.suomi.fi/messages)).

The voting right notification contains instructions on the voting process, a list of advance polling stations near your place of residence, and information concerning your right to vote. You do not need to bring your voting right notification to the polling station, but you will need to prove your identity before casting your vote.

## **Eligibility – who may stand as a candidate?**

You can stand as a candidate in your municipality of residence if you meet the following conditions:

- the municipality in which you intend to stand as a candidate is your municipality of residence
- you have the right to vote in some Finnish municipality
- you have not been declared legally incompetent.

Please note that certain state officials, leading municipal officials and employees listed in the Local Government Act may not stand as candidates in municipal elections.

## **Nominating candidates in municipal elections**

In municipal elections, candidates may be nominated by

- registered parties
- constituency associations established by eligible voters.

Each party may decide on its own candidates in accordance with its rules and regulations. If you wish to stand as a party candidate, you must discuss the matter with your preferred party.

The establishment of a constituency association requires at least ten eligible voters who reside in the municipality in question. However, in municipalities with smaller populations, only three or five residents are required.

Two or more parties have the right to form an electoral alliance. Two or more constituency associations have the right to set up a joint list.

The number of candidates nominated by a party, electoral alliance or joint list in a municipality may exceed the total number of councillors to be elected by a factor of 1.5 at most. Depending on the municipality's population, a minimum of 13–79 councillors are to be elected to its council, but a municipality may also decide to elect a larger number of councillors.

Each candidate will be assigned a number. A master list of candidates will be drawn up, on which all the candidates will be shown in numerical order, starting from number 2. On the master list, the candidates are grouped by party and joint list. The master list will contain the following information for each candidate: their name, candidate number and occupation. In addition, the master list will indicate

- which parties have formed an electoral alliance
- which constituency associations have set up a joint list
- which parties do not belong to an electoral alliance
- which candidates are running outside the joint list.

The master list of candidates will be drawn up in all municipalities on 18 March 2021. Your municipality's master list is available in, for example, the polling booths and on the election pages of the Ministry of Justice ([www.vaalit.fi](http://www.vaalit.fi)). If you intend to vote in advance in a municipality other than your municipality of residence, you can ask the election officials for your municipality's master of lists of candidates.

## Voting dates

You can vote either on election day on Sunday, 18 April 2021, or before election day during the advance voting period. You may cast your vote only once. Voting twice is a punishable offence under the Criminal Code.

### Advance voting:

Advance voting begins on **Wednesday, 7 April 2021**.

Advance voting abroad ends on **Saturday, 10 April 2021**, and in Finland on **Tuesday, 13 April 2021**. At some advance polling stations, the voting period is shorter.

You can vote in advance at any polling station in Finland or abroad. The following may function as advance polling stations:

- advance polling stations in Finland that have been designated by municipalities, e.g. municipal offices
- several Finnish missions abroad

- institutions, such as hospitals, social welfare units, and correctional institutions. Only those who are patients or serving a sentence at these institutions may vote there.
- Finnish ships that are abroad during the advance voting period. Only the ship's personnel may vote while at sea, passengers may not vote on ships.

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

On election day, voting will take place on **Sunday, 18 April 2021, between 9 am and 8 pm.**

On election day, you may vote only at the polling station marked on the voting right notification that has been sent to you.

### **Voting from home:**

If your ability to move or function is limited to the extent that you cannot reach the polling station without unreasonable difficulty, you can vote from home during the advance voting period.

You must register to vote from home by **Tuesday 6 April 2021** before 4 pm. To register, contact the central municipal election board of your municipality of residence. The board's contact details can be found on your voting right notification. Under certain conditions, a family caregiver who lives in the same household may vote at the same time.

### **Voting by mail:**

If you will be abroad during the entire advance voting period and on election day, you can also vote by mail from abroad.

To vote by mail, order the necessary voting material from the Ministry of Justice's online service to your address abroad. Orders can be placed no earlier than three months before election day. As a person entitled to vote, you are responsible for ordering the necessary voting documents in due time so that you can return your ballot in its covering envelope to your municipality's central municipal election board within the time specified in the Election Act.

## **How to vote**

To cast your vote during the advance voting period or on election day, go to your local polling station. You may only vote for one of the candidates listed in the master list of candidates in your municipality.

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

**2) Go to the polling booth.** Only one person may enter a polling booth at a time.

**3) Mark the number of the candidate you are voting for on your ballot.** You can only vote for one candidate. Write the number of your candidate in the circle on the ballot. Do

not write or draw anything else on your ballot. Fold the ballot so that the number you wrote remains inside and is not visible to anyone else.

**4) Take your folded ballot to the election official.** They will stamp the ballot.

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

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

If your ability to write a candidate's number on the ballot is significantly impaired, you may request a polling assistant of your choice or an election official to help you cast your vote. Your assistant may not be a candidate or a close relative of a candidate. Your assistant will be obliged to maintain the secrecy of your ballot, i.e. to keep any information related to your vote a secret.

## **Additional information**

- For more information on the elections, please contact the central municipal election board of your municipality.  
Any questions concerning personal voting rights can be submitted to the Digital and Population Data Services Agency.  
The contact details of both are available on your voting right notification.
- The addresses and opening hours of advance polling stations, instructions for ordering a mail-in vote, information on candidates and other election information can be found on the election website of the Ministry of Justice at [www.vaalit.fi](http://www.vaalit.fi).
- Information on the candidates standing in the municipal elections can be found on the election pages of the Ministry of Justice after 18 March 2021. Information on advance polling stations will be made available after 1 February 2021.

Digital and Population Data Services Agency, 2 December 2020