



INFORMATION ON THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS OF 2017

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 next municipal elections will take place on **Sunday, 9 April 2017**.

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

In the region of Åland, no municipal elections will take place in 2017.

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 EU Member State, Iceland or Norway, and you meet the following criteria:

- you are 18 years of age at the latest on the election day (9 April 2017), and
- you are assigned a municipality of residence in Finland no later than on 17 February 2017.

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 (9 April 2017), and
- you have had a municipality of residence in Finland for a continuous period of at least two years before 17 February 2017.

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

In the municipal elections of 2017, your municipality of residence is the one recorded as your municipality of residence in the Population Information System on 17 February 2017 at midnight.

If necessary, you can contact the local register office to check your municipality of residence.

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

A notice of right to vote will be sent to you

The Population Register Centre and the local register offices maintain a voting register that contains information on all those who are entitled to vote. You do not need to do anything to be entered into the voting register.

By **16 March 2017**, the local register office will send a notice of right to vote (a polling card) to all those who are entitled to vote and whose addresses are found in the register. The polling card contains instructions on voting.

Eligibility – who can stand as a candidate

You are eligible – in other words, you can stand as a candidate – in the municipal elections of your municipality of residence if you meet the following criteria:

- the municipality in which you intend to stand as a candidate is your municipality of residence,
- you are entitled to vote in some municipality, and
- you are not legally incompetent, i.e. under guardianship.

Certain state officials and leading public officials 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 and
- constituency associations established by eligible voters.

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

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 maximum number of candidates nominated by a party, an electoral alliance or a joint list in a municipality is the number of councillors to be elected multiplied by 1.5. Depending on the population of the municipality, a minimum of 13–79 councillors will be elected in each municipality.

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 the order of their numbers, starting with the number 2. On this printed master list, the candidates will be grouped according to their parties and joint lists. The master list shows the name, candidate number and occupation of each candidate. In addition, the master list shows

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

The master list of candidates will be drawn up on 9 March 2017.

Voting dates

You can either vote on the election day, which is Sunday, 9 April 2017, 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, 29 March 2017**.

Advance voting will end abroad on **Saturday, 1 April 2017** and in Finland on **Tuesday, 4 April 2017**. At certain advance polling stations, the voting time is shorter than this.

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

- in Finland, advance polling stations designated by each municipality, for example municipal agencies or post offices
- a number of Finnish missions abroad
- certain institutions, such as hospitals, units of social welfare services and prisons. Only persons who are patients or inmates at these institutions may vote at these polling stations.
- Finnish ships that are abroad during the advance voting period. Only the crew members may cast their votes onboard. This right does not apply to the passengers.

Voting on election day:

On the election day, **Sunday, 9 April 2017**, you may vote **at 09.00–20.00**.

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

Voting at home:

If your ability to move or function is restricted to the extent 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, 28 March 2017** by 16.00.

The registrations are taken by the central municipal election board of your municipality of residence. Under certain conditions, a family caregiver living in the same household with the disabled person may vote at the same time with him or 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 in the master list of candidates in your municipality.

- 1) Prove your identity to the election official** by showing your passport, identity card, driving licence or another 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 inside the ballot. Do not write anything else on the ballot. Fold the ballot so that the number you wrote stays inside 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's 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 must not be a person who is standing for election. The assistant has the duty to protect the secrecy of the ballot by keeping confidential any information he or she may have received in connection with the voting.

Further information

- For more information on the elections, contact the central municipal election board of your municipality. In questions concerning your personal right to vote, contact the local register office. The addresses and telephone numbers of both of these are given on your polling card.
- For the addresses and opening hours of advance polling stations, the candidate register and other information on the elections, visit the elections website of the Ministry of Justice at **www.vaalit.fi**.
- Information on the candidates in the municipal elections will be published on the Ministry of Justice's elections website in the beginning of March, and information on the advance polling stations at the end of January.