

VAALIPOOLI - VALPOOLEN - ELECTION POOL

FINAL REPORT

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ABSTRACT

From 1 December 2020 to 30 November 2021, the Ministry of Justice has been implementing the Election Pool project, which supports election preparedness and cooperation between authorities. The project has been funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme. The objective of the project has been to strengthen cooperation among authorities and with social media in addressing election interference and improving election preparedness.

The Election Pool project has extensively mapped different authorities and actors related to the organisation of elections and election preparedness. A questionnaire was sent to these actors, and its results have been utilised in planning the content of the Election Pool platform, which aims at supporting the work of election authorities. The project has also supported the work of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice. The Election Pool project has organised training for members of the Cooperation Group and political parties on election interference and election preparedness. In addition, online meetings aimed at the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness have been organised with the other EU Member States' election networks and authorities as part of the Election Pool project. The project has also organised a roundtable discussion with EU Member states from smaller language regimes and social media companies.

Key observations and lessons learned from the Election Pool project

- Discuss, coordinate, prepare: effective cooperation and smooth exchange of information between the authorities is the foundation for all preparedness.
- Look around: international cooperation plays a key role in identifying and preparing for different phenomena.
- Raise awareness and ensure commitment: free and fair elections lie at the heart of democracy and safeguarding them is a shared task for all of us.



BACKGROUND

From 1 December 2020 to 30 November 2021, the Ministry of Justice has been implementing the Election Pool project, which supports election preparedness and cooperation between authorities. The project has been funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme. The objective of the project has been to strengthen cooperation among authorities and cooperation with social media in addressing election interference and improving election preparedness.

The Election Pool project is linked with the National Democracy Programme 2025, which covers the numerous measures related to civil society and participation outlined in the Government Programme of Prime Minister Marin. The National Democracy Programme functions as an umbrella for democracy-related projects carried out by different ministries. The Election Pool project is based on the Ministry of Justice's 2018–2019 training project to raise awareness of election interference. Training and reviewing the coordination by authorities were defined as the goals of the training project.

In recent years, election interference in all forms has become a phenomenon affecting Western societies and their preparedness. Election interference is a multi-faceted phenomenon that takes many forms and happens in many ways, so a coordinated, multi-authority approach is needed.

Election interference aims to undermine citizens' trust in society and the underlying democratic system and decision-making. Election interference may also be related to broader planned activities or hybrid influence. Influence can be used, among other things, to steer social debate. If a discussion is about invented topics or is based on lies, the topics discussed are wrong. If this affects the election result, the impact could be detrimental to society.

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of any functioning democracy. The Finnish electoral system is secure, but as the world changes and potential risks become more diverse, election preparedness requires new measures and the further development of old ones. The continuous development of cooperation between authorities plays a key role in improving election preparedness.

Being prepared is part of the authorities' statutory tasks. As the world around us changes, the authorities must constantly assess the effects of the changes on Finnish society. These changes must be taken into account in all activities. The authorities have been preparing for information operations for years. The key themes in preparing for election interference are trust and maintaining trust.



OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of the Election Pool project has been to support the integrity of free and fair elections in Europe and to safeguard citizens' rights to participate in democratic processes by supporting the existing national cooperation network (the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness) and coordinating with authorities. Furthermore, the project's goal has been to enhance European-level cooperation between election authorities and networks, thus bringing added EU value by discussing and sharing information about different Member States' practices and lessons learned on election preparedness.

The objectives of this project can be summarised as follows:

1. Improved monitoring and understanding of electoral processes, including risks and challenges, and of the regulatory framework, for preserving the integrity of democratic elections in Finland.
2. Stronger commitment by the participating organisations in the work of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness.
3. Improved value for time and money by facilitating and experimenting with different working methods in the Cooperation Group.
4. Increased capability and awareness of authorities and relevant bodies involved in elections regarding their respective roles and responsibilities in this domain, and better collaboration.
5. Stronger commitment by the local- and regional-level authorities to safeguarding free and fair elections.
6. To build a foundation for streamlined and effective European-level coordination in electoral matters by sharing experiences from enhanced cooperation at local and regional level.
7. To combat hate speech, disinformation and other forms of electoral interference online.



The following actions have sought to meet these objectives:

- The project has consolidated and developed the work of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness, which was set up in March 2020 and is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice. The project has provided an opportunity to develop the Cooperation Group's activities, information sharing and working methods intensively during the year, as well as to increase the commitment of the member groups of the Cooperation Group, and their expertise and awareness in the electoral processes.
- The project has also especially sought to support the work of local and regional electoral authorities. In Finland, the practical arrangements and preparations for elections belong to these actors (e.g. the central election committees of the municipalities). For this reason, the project has focused on mapping the information needs of these actors and addressing these needs and gaps through the Election Pool platform.
- The innovative aspect of the project is linked to the creation of the Election Pool platform. Elections take place quite seldom and there may be staff changes between elections in authorities responsible for practical arrangements. For this reason, it is important to compile election-related information, guidance and procedural proposals so that elections can be smoothly organised and prepared for.
- The project has also sought to increase interaction with social media companies. Social media platforms provide a means of communicating election-related information to the general public and reaching out to voters, but unfortunately they also offer the opportunity for various forms of election interference and hate speech. Especially in the framework of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness, there have been discussions about the activities and roles of social media companies in election preparedness. The project has also sought to promote interaction between different EU Member States and social media companies.
- Cooperation among authorities and political parties can support election preparedness work and increase the awareness of different forms of election interference. In addition, increased cooperation with other EU Member States can support EU-level preparedness to combat election interference and increase election preparedness and awareness of the phenomenon itself.



KEY STAKEHOLDER

The stakeholders and target groups of the project, i.e. those who benefit from the project's actions, consist of various state-, regional- and local-level authorities and other actors, political parties and EU Member States' election authorities and election networks.

The main target groups of the project are:

- public authorities at local, regional and national level related to elections (e.g. electoral district committees, central election committees of municipalities, law enforcement, the Digital and Population Data Services Agency);
- Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness;
- political parties;
- social media actors.

Other networks, stakeholders and events that have been utilised in disseminating information about the project are, for example:

- National Democracy Programme 2025 and its coordination group
- DINO II (Democracy and Human Rights Education and Participation of Young People) coordination group
- Elections administration organisation
- Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness meetings and training
- Seminar for political parties
- Roundtable discussion with other Member States and social media companies
- Online cooperation visits to meet with other EU Member States' electoral networks and authorities
- European cooperation network on elections

The key messages that represent the main objectives of the project:

Free and fair elections are a cornerstone of every functioning democracy.

A multifaceted approach and well-functioning coordination among authorities is essential in tackling different forms of election interference.

Existing legislation and structures should be better utilised in safeguarding the integrity of elections in all situations.

Mutual learning and exchange between Member States supports the utilisation of multifaceted methods, tools and approaches in the work to ensure free and fair elections.



PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The tasks of the Election Pool project are defined in the project's grant agreement and the activities of the project have followed its work packages listed in the grant agreement. The project has utilised existing structures, resources and networks as much as possible, while also supporting them where applicable. The progress of the project has been regularly monitored throughout the project period in the weekly meetings of the project core team and in the Steering Group meetings. Regular progress reports on the project have also been provided to the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness, which has been closely involved in the project work.

Project management and coordination

The project has been implemented in the Ministry of Justice by a project manager who has been responsible for the day-to-day administration, coordination, communication and reporting of the project. The permanent staff in charge of matters related to elections and political parties at the Ministry of Justice have supported the project and its implementation with their expertise. In addition, other experts from the Ministry of Justice have supported the project in communication, procurement and financial management issues. At the start of the project, it was agreed that there would be a regular weekly meeting between the election staff of the Ministry of Justice, in which the progress of the project, future tasks and other current issues have been addressed. The progress of the project has been monitored through the action plan, financial monitoring, publicity plan, Steering Group meetings and deliverable reporting.

At the beginning of project, the Ministry of Justice set up a Steering Group for the project period. The work of the Steering Group has been carried out as statutory work and it has met five times in total. The chair of the Steering Group has been the unit manager of the Democracy and Elections Unit and other members have been election, non-discrimination and communications specialists from the Ministry of Justice. The project manager has acted as the secretary of the Steering Group, and members and the secretariat of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness, as well as other invited specialists, have been able to participate in the Steering Group meetings.

A separate publicity plan was prepared for the Election Pool project right at the beginning of the project period, describing the project's communication activities, channels and target groups. In accordance with the publicity plan, the project, its objectives and tasks have been presented to various stakeholders and actors, for example the Legal Register Centre, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and the National Police Board. On 15 April 2021, the project was also presented to about 20 different societal actors (e.g. interest groups, political parties, ministries, media actors) in a thematic seminar organised by YLE and the Timeout Foundation. The project has also been presented to various government networks, such as the National Democracy Programme 2025 Coordination Group on 22 March 2021 and the DINO II (Democracy and Human Rights Education and Participation of Young People) coordination group on 19 April 2021. The Ministry of Justice's press release on the project was prepared at the beginning of the project period as well as a blog post for the Ministry's website. The European Commission has also been regularly informed about the project and its progress through the project portal.



At the end of the project period, an evaluation questionnaire was sent to the closest stakeholders of the project and others involved in the project. In addition, after the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness training session, feedback from participants was collected.

Supporting the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness

One of the key objectives of the Electoral Pool project has been to support the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice. The Cooperation Group follows the international debate and developments related to election interference and election security as well as providing expertise and coordinating cooperation with other key stakeholders in elections in Finland. The Election Pool project has aimed at improving the Cooperation Group members' understanding and monitoring of electoral processes as well as increasing the commitment of the participating organisations to the work of the Cooperation Group. The project has also facilitated and experimented with different working methods for the Cooperation Group (e.g. training, thematic meetings) and strived to raise awareness of hate speech, disinformation and other forms of election interference. In addition, the project has aimed at building a foundation for streamlined and effective European-level coordination in electoral matters by sharing experiences of election preparedness and election interference with other EU Member States.

Coordination between the authorities that functions well plays a key role in combatting different types of election interference. The Election Pool project has planned, organised and facilitated the meetings of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness. In total, 11 Cooperation Group meetings were organised during the project period (listed below). On 11 May 2021, the project also organised a training session for members of the Cooperation Group and their organisations on election interference and election preparedness. Seventeen people attended the training, which consisted of presentations, group discussions and a scenario-based exercise.

List of Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness meetings during the project period:

- 7 December 2020
- 11 February 2021
- 9 March 2021
- 30 March 2021
- 20 April 2021
- 21 May 2021
- 2 September 2021
- 23 September 2021
- 13 October 2021
- 3 November 2021
- 23 November 2021



Mutual learning and dialogue between the Member States support the use of different working methods and approaches to promote free and fair elections. Five online meetings aimed at the Cooperation Group were planned and facilitated with the Swedish, Lithuanian, Dutch, Irish and Croatian election networks and authorities as part of the Election Pool project. The purpose of the meetings was to learn about election preparedness and cooperation between the authorities in other Member States and to share best practices related to election preparedness. These online visits addressed, for example, current election issues in Member States, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on election preparations, cybersecurity aspects of elections, tackling disinformation and election interference, as well as election-related data protection and security issues. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent travel restrictions, all visits were arranged as online meetings.

Election Pool platform

One goal of the Election Pool project has been to increase the awareness of authorities and relevant actors involved in elections of their respective roles and responsibilities. The project has also sought to support the work and competencies of local- and regional-level election authorities in safeguarding free and fair elections.



At the beginning of the project, the different local-, regional- and state-level authorities and actors that have links to organising elections and election preparedness have been mapped in a broad way. After mapping, a contact list of these actors has been created. To this end, several meetings and discussions have been organised (online) with election-related stakeholders, and efforts have been made to create an overall picture of all the relevant actors related to elections. In addition to the central election committees of the municipalities, attention has also been paid to the security authorities, for example.

Following the mapping, a questionnaire was sent to these actors, in which, for example, their resources were examined, as well as possible information needs that have been encountered in election preparations and where additional support would be needed. A total of 228 responses to the questionnaire were received. The questionnaire in itself raised awareness on election preparedness and the Ministry of Justice's actions in this area. The questionnaire can also support the development work of the Ministry of Justice after the project period, for example when planning training materials based on the information needs identified in the questionnaire.

The results of the questionnaire have been utilised in planning the content of the Election Pool platform, which has been created to support the work of local and regional election authorities. The Election Pool platform provides information and supports the work of election authorities on issues related to election arrangements and election preparedness. The Election Pool functions as a data bank where election authorities can find information about competent authorities responsible for different areas of managing and organising elections, and election-related instructions and



guidelines, as well as procedural proposals for different election-related situations. In addition, the Election Pool contains information on social media platforms and elections.

The Election Pool platform has been created on the Ministry of Justice's elections website (www.elections-finland.fi), which has a well established position as a source of reliable information related to elections in Finland. At the beginning of the project, different options for the platform's technical solution were identified. Creating the Election Pool platform as part of the existing elections website was assessed to be a cost-effective and the best solution, as the website is updated by Ministry of Justice election staff (continuity) and it has a similar target group to the Election Pool platform (familiar interface). Following the publication of the platform, information about it was shared to the contact list and other stakeholders.

Joining forces and raising awareness

Another goal of the Election Pool project has been to combat hate speech, disinformation and other forms of election interference by sharing best practices between different EU Member States and especially with Member States from smaller language regimes. In addition, the project has strived to strengthen cooperation and interaction among authorities and political parties in protecting the integrity of elections.



In the context of the 2021 municipal elections, an online seminar was organised for political parties on 6 May 2021 in which the member organisations of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness talked about election interference, its different forms and ways to tackle it. The seminar addressed issues related to, for example, hate speech, information influencing, cybersecurity and data protection. The seminar was a follow-up to the training organised by the Ministry of Justice's Facts Against Hate project.

The Election Pool project also addressed election preparedness on social media, especially from the perspective of smaller language regimes. On 29 September 2021, the project organised a half-day roundtable discussion with the Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Danish election authorities and major social media companies (Facebook, Twitter, Google/YouTube). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the roundtable was held as an online event. Twenty people attended the discussion. The roundtable contributed to establishing interaction between social media platforms and different Member States' election authorities, and it enabled them to discuss their actions and practices in relation to elections and election interference. The Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness has also discussed and shared information on social media platforms, their practices and contacts in its meetings.

In order to disseminate and evaluate the outputs of the project, this final report and a leaflet presenting the main project activities and lessons learned have been prepared at the end of the project.

RESULTS AND IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

One objective of the project has been *“improved monitoring and understanding of electoral processes, including risks and challenges, and of the regulatory framework, for preserving the integrity of democratic elections in Finland.”* Cooperation between the authorities, especially within the framework of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness, has intensified and the exchange of information between the authorities has become smoother during the project period. A total of 11 Cooperation Group meetings have been organised during the project period, whereas before the project, the group had met three times in less than a year. Different experts have also been invited to the Cooperation Group meetings to give presentations on various topics, such as the fight against hate speech, the European Democracy Action Plan and tackling disinformation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Group has also discussed the legal framework related to disinformation and how to tackle it. During the Election Pool project, municipal elections were held in Finland (June 2021) and preparations for the first county elections (January 2022) have begun. Therefore, the Cooperation Group has been kept updated with topical election arrangements and preparations.

The project has also strived for *“stronger commitment by the participating organisations in the work of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness.”* The Cooperation Group has been very active during the project period (meetings, training, online cooperation visits). However, organising and coordinating meetings and events between a number of different actors can be a challenge to timetable. Therefore not all member organisations of the Cooperation Group have been able to participate in the Cooperation Group meetings and activities at the same time. In the future, it will be important to think about how different organisations could be even more involved in and committed to the Cooperation Group’s work in order to avoid bottlenecks (central contact points will not always be able to participate). The training session provided a good example of expanding the knowledge base in the member organisations of the Cooperation Group, and it would be useful to continue this work in the future.

In addition, the Election Pool project has aimed at offering *“improved value for time and money by facilitating and experimenting different working methods in the Cooperation Group.”* As part of the project, the Cooperation Group’s regular meetings have been organised and sometimes a guest speaker (e.g. from another authority or ministry) has been invited to present various topics. In addition, the Cooperation Group’s scenario-based training session enabled the participation of other staff from the member organisations in cooperation work related to election preparedness. A new element in the work of the Cooperation Group has been online cooperation visits with other EU Member States’ election networks and authorities. Through these visits, it has been possible to get acquainted with other Member States’ election-related procedures and practices, which contributes to the evaluation and further development of Finnish practices.



Another objective of the project has been *“increased capability and awareness of authorities and relevant bodies involved in elections of their respective roles and responsibilities in this domain and better collaboration between them.”* The Election Pool platform created in the project can provide information more broadly about election preparedness and it presents examples of typical situations and operating models related to elections. In addition, the Election Pool platform has compiled information in Q&A form on competent authorities with regard to different questions. Training that was organised for political parties in spring 2021 can also increase parties’ awareness of the various forms of election interference and strengthen their ability to tackle election interference together with the competent authorities.

“Stronger commitment by the local- and regional-level authorities in safeguarding free and fair elections” has also been one of the objectives of the Election Pool project. The Election Pool platform provides information for different election authorities and supports the induction of new election staff into election processes. Election interference is one of the topics in the training organised by the Ministry of Justice as elections approach. In addition, feedback about possible election interference cases is collected from election authorities during elections. In this way, the different authorities are more aware of the possible forms and means of election interference, which contributes to safeguarding free and fair elections. The Election Pool platform will support the work of election authorities in the 2023 Finnish parliamentary elections, the 2024 European elections and beyond.

In addition, the project has sought *“to build a foundation for streamlined and effective European-level coordination in electoral matters by sharing experiences from enhanced cooperation at a local and regional level.”* Online cooperation visits of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness with other EU Member States’ election networks and authorities, as well as the roundtable discussion with EU Member States from smaller language regimes and social media companies, have supported this goal and created interaction between these actors. In these discussions, different Member states’ experiences, lessons learned and practices on election preparedness have been shared, which has enabled mutual learning and the exchange of best practices. In addition, the roundtable discussion with social media companies has provided an opportunity to establish contacts between different actors. In addition, the Election Pool project and its activities and objectives were presented to other EU Member States at a meeting of the European cooperation network on elections (22 October 2021), which raised awareness of election interference and the development of cooperation between authorities in this area.

Finally, *“to combat hate speech, disinformation and other forms of electoral interference online”* has been an objective of the project. The Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness has provided the framework for discussing and exchanging information on these issues between the authorities. Different organisations bring added value to the discussion from their perspectives, which has enhanced mutual learning within the Cooperation Group and enabled the authorities to create a ‘big picture’ of society’s preparedness.



CONTINUITY AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROJECT

In the planning and implementation of the project and its activities, attention has been paid to their continuation after the project period. The activities, objectives and deliverables of the project are planned so that they support the existing Ministry of Justice processes, networks and activities in order to achieve best synergies and to strengthen the impact of the project.

The Ministry of Justice promotes and monitors democratic participation rights and is responsible for drafting election legislation. Moreover, the Ministry of Justice is the highest electoral authority in Finland and it directs the holding of national and municipal elections and referendums. Therefore the Ministry has been in an excellent position to coordinate the Election Pool project and support the continuity and the long-term sustainability of its outputs.

The Election Pool project provides several inputs into the existing election-related work of the Ministry of Justice, and the outputs and findings of the project can be utilised in the Ministry's future training sessions and materials, for example. The Election Pool questionnaire can support the development work of the Ministry of Justice after the project period, e.g. in planning training materials based on the information needs identified in the questionnaire.

The central stakeholders of the Election Pool project, especially the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness, continue their efforts to strengthen election preparedness and tackle election interference after the project, within their respective mandates. The tools and working methods developed during the project support them in their work in the long-term. The Cooperation Group is encouraged to share information about the project, its outputs and the Election Pool platform. It is possible to re-organise a training session for the Cooperation Group with a different theme or composition. In addition, cooperation visits may be organised in the future with different EU Member States in order to compare and share different practices and to learn about their election preparedness work.



To some extent, the Election Pool project has functioned as a follow-up for the Facts Against Hate project's training for political parties. The Facts Against Hate project is also funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice. It is important to continue the training of political parties in the future on election preparedness and the means to tackle election interference. In this way, parties can be better equipped, for example against possible cyber attacks, and be more aware of the different aspects of election preparedness. The Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness provides an excellent framework for planning similar kinds of training and for addressing topical electoral themes. Authorities and other actors related to election preparedness have been involved in the implementation of the project and many of these actors are also members of the Cooperation Group on Election Security Preparedness, which will contribute to the continuity of the project outputs and cooperation between the authorities after the project period.

The role of the Election Pool platform is to support election authorities at different levels even after the end of the project period. When planning and executing the platform, consideration has been given to its life cycle after the project period (e.g. maintenance, possible costs) and its usability in other EU Member states (e.g. information content, publicity of the platform). The Ministry of Justice can easily supplement and update the content of the Election Pool platform if necessary, for example if new information needs arise. The platform's operating model is easy to copy to other EU Member States to support the work of their election authorities.

The Election Pool project was presented at a meeting of the European cooperation network on elections on 22 October 2021. In addition, five cooperation visits have spread awareness of the project's benefits to other EU Member States. Information about online cooperation visits as well as the Election Pool platform and its construction can be shared in various cooperation networks even after the end of the project.



PROJECT BUDGET

The project manager has monitored the use of the project funding together with the Ministry of Justice's financial administration. The work of the Election Pool project has been based on existing structures, which has helped to lower costs and give the project long-lasting impact. The project has utilised the expertise of the Ministry of Justice in matters such as elections, procurement and communications. As a public entity, the Ministry of Justice has a long tradition and deep knowledge of operating under budgetary constraints and cost-effectively.

All project activities have been supporting the ongoing processes, and the results of the activities can be utilised after the project. All goods and services have been purchased so that they represent the best possible value for money. Procurement has followed the procurement procedures and rules of the Ministry of Justice and state administration, and the Ministry's procurement specialist has been consulted during the project period. For example, offers have been requested from several providers or only tendered service providers have been used.

The innovative part of the project – the Election Pool platform – could be created at fairly low cost by utilising existing tools and platforms. As it was decided to build the platform in connection with the existing elections website of the Ministry of Justice, no project funds were spent on the technical acquisition of the platform.

During the project period, several restrictions have been in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, it has not been possible to organise meetings of the Election Pool project as physical meetings until the very end of the project, when meeting restrictions in Finland have been eased. There have also been travel restrictions between different EU Member States, which is why it was not possible to organise cooperation visits or a roundtable seminar with Member States from small language regimes and social media companies in the form of physical meetings. For these reasons, the project has saved money designated for meeting arrangements and travelling.



ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility means accessibility in the digital world: that as many different people as possible are able to use online services as easily as possible. Accessibility is the consideration of the diversity of people in the design and implementation of online services. Accessibility improves equality in a digital society.

Accessibility can also be thought of as an aspect that draws attention to different kinds of users and their diverse situations, needs and potential limitations or challenges. Accessibility plays a key role in a customer-centric approach. Since people are very different, there are also different needs in terms of accessibility. It is essential that the situations and needs of different users are well understood and taken into account when designing and implementing online services and their contents. Accessibility is linked with the Design for All / Universal Design principle. The purpose of the Design for All principle is to take different kinds of users into account right from the start of the design and to create one service that can be used by different people.

The accessibility and reachability of facilities refer in particular to the accessibility and functionality of buildings and other built environments. The environment or an individual building is accessible when it is functional, safe and pleasant for different users and when all the premises in the building are easily accessible.

The project has been committed to complying with the accessibility and reachability elements described above in all its activities. For example, all events, meetings and seminars of the project have been free of charge. Different language versions (Finnish, Swedish, English) have been used in the project communication and dissemination activities. Accessibility in its various forms has also been taken into account in the procurements of the project, in particular in planning and executing the Election Pool platform (images and their alt texts, text structure, layout and titles).



GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In the framework of the project, gender mainstreaming has been implemented as follows:

- the Steering Group has consisted of both women and men as members;
- the project staff has consisted of women, men and others;
- the project target groups have consisted of women, men and others;
- the meetings and events organised by the project have been planned to be interesting regardless of gender.

Infographs and illustrations have been procured for the Election Pool platform to support the textual content of the platform. Both male and female characters are visible in these visual elements.



This project was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014–2020).

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