



Finland Report

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Executive Summary

Finland is among the richest and happiest countries in the world. In spite of cuts in public spending over the past few decades, welfare state arrangements are an important cause of citizens' satisfaction. Given this, Finland may also have been in a better position than many other countries to meet the challenges of the pandemic, and may have had fewer vulnerabilities than other countries.

Finland has been a stable democracy since independence. Much as in the other Nordic countries, surveys indicate that Finns have relatively high levels of trust in politicians and political institutions. At the same time, however, voter turnout rates for parliamentary elections are significantly lower than in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. To a certain extent, this is explained by the fact that governments in Finland have often been oversized (i.e., governments have typically commanded very large parliamentary majorities). In addition, government coalition parties represent a wide range of ideologies spanning the left-right spectrum.

There were relatively few COVID-19-related deaths in Finland in 2020 and 2021. However, the economic consequences of restrictions were considerable and unemployment rates are high, but still less severe than in many other countries. The government successfully mitigated the worst consequences of the COVID-19 through measures to support businesses, buffer workers against income losses, and compensate for falling revenues (mainly for municipalities), thus enabling continued benefit administration and service provision. There have been limited increases in benefit levels, although access has been extended for some groups (most specifically self-employed persons and entrepreneurs). The support measures substantially increased the public budgetary deficit in 2020 and in 2021. By early 2022, no significant austerity measures had been discussed.

The greatest strengths of the Finnish COVID-19 strategy include Finland's relatively well-functioning healthcare system, which is based on the public provision of care, and the comprehensive safety network provided by the Finnish welfare state, which was extended further in order to cushion the economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis.

Finland enjoys high levels of public trust. People generally trust public institutions and authorities. The pandemic has demonstrated a kind of virtuous circle in terms of trust. Before the COVID-19 crisis, people generally trusted public institutions. During 2020, the parties in opposition did not challenge the government's response to COVID-19, which helped the government to sustain public trust and even enhance it.

The weak point of the Finnish crisis response relates to international solidarity. As a small country, Finland has not had enough resources to engage in COVID-19 solidarity in any extensive way. There has also been a tendency to put national self-interest before international solidarity. During 2020 and 2021, the government, health policy experts and the media focused on risks associated with COVID-19, excluding alternative points of view and limiting the scope of rational debate.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the government focused on maintaining and increasing economic demand, and introduced passive measures to protect workers from income losses. Very few new active measures were introduced to encourage workers to find new employment, as the focus was on mitigating the hysteresis effects of the crisis.

Measures have been introduced to revitalize and enhance the level of participation in Finland, the most important being the so-called citizens' initiative, which obliges parliament to debate any petition that receives at least 50,000 signatures. This initiative has been very popular.

Within the field of national security, Finland faces a number of challenges. As a consequence of Russia's annexation of Crimea and its intensified activities in the Baltic Sea region, Finland has increased and deepened its defense cooperation with international partners, notably Sweden and the United States. Finland is also a member of the European Intervention Initiative. The question of whether Finland should apply for membership in NATO has been debated ever since the fall of the Soviet Union, but leading politicians, notably President Sauli Niinistö, as well as a strong current of public opinion, remain rather indifferent toward NATO membership. However, more interest in NATO membership was shown when Russia increased its military presence at Ukraine's border in the fall of 2021.

Fertility rates have been dropping for almost a decade, and reached an all-time low in 2019. However, the declining trend was finally reversed in 2020. In the context of Finland's aging demographics, the country's low fertility rate is of major concern, as it challenges the financial sustainability of the welfare state and the availability of public services. Although public attitudes toward

asylum seekers and refugees remain negative, the attitude toward work-related immigration is generally positive. At the same time, support for the populist Finns Party increased steadily over the course of 2021, which could reflect a more negative popular attitude toward immigration.

The government's executive capacity is strong. The programmatic framework works reasonably well, and forms the basis for strategic planning and implementation. Interministerial coordination works well and is highly efficient. Interest organizations, various civil society groups and increasingly the general public are consulted when legislation is drafted.

Key Challenges

The total social, mental and economic costs of the COVID-19 crisis on Finland are still unknown. Finland was hit hard by a fourth wave of the pandemic in late 2021 and early 2022.

Unemployment rates have increased as a consequence of the crisis response and remain high. Decision-making powers have been centralized, and the government adopted a virological and epidemiological perspective on health matters that has been associated with social and mental health costs.

The response to the perceived risks associated with COVID-19 have entailed a concentration of power at the national level. It has also entailed the strengthening of the authority of health policy experts. A major challenge in the future will therefore be to restore the pre-crisis democratic order in which the government was responsible for proposing new legislation and executing existing legislation.

Another challenge relates to public finances. Unlike other Nordic countries, Finland had a deficit even before the COVID-19 crisis. Sanna Marin's government program was based on the expectation that the labor market participation rate would increase. However, the participation rate dropped and public expenditure has increased considerably. The participation rate increased in 2021, but the public deficit goals predating the pandemic were at this point out of reach.

COVID-19 has constituted an opportunity for economic policy learning, and the Finnish government has taken the opportunity to review past commitments to austerity as the international consensus has shifted away from mechanical cuts in public spending. Even before COVID-19, there was widespread debate

regarding the political, economic and environmental sustainability of the neoliberal model of economic policy. This debate should continue, because new ideas about how to produce, maintain and redistribute welfare in our societies are needed.

The management of the epidemic showed that lockdowns and compulsory, strong restrictions on civil rights produce polarization within the population between compliers and non-compliers. In the future, governments should do their utmost to seek broad support for measures to manage health risks in order to facilitate trust and cooperation among the population.

Party Polarization

In comparative terms, the level of party polarization is low in Finland. In general, Finnish governments are coalition governments, often made up of parties from both the left and right. The Sanna Marin government fit well into this tradition, as it encompassed five parties representing a broad ideological spectrum, at least in a nominal sense. The most extreme example of a broad coalition in recent decades was seen when Jyrki Katainen formed a cabinet in 2011, consisting of six parties including the far-left Left Alliance, the Green Party and Katainen's conservative National Coalition Party. The Sipilä government (2015 – 2019), however, constituted an exception to this rule, as it was made up only of three center-right parties.

As with many other European countries, Finland has experienced polarization between political elites and nationalistic populist elements. This development became even more pronounced after the establishment of a coalition government dominated by center-left parties, each led by a woman, in 2019.

As of the time of writing, the ruling cabinet in Finland consisted of a coalition of five major parties, which together commanded a clear majority in the parliament. There were basically only three parties in the opposition. Party polarization did not undermine the ability to engage in cross-party cooperation for the purposes of crisis management during first wave of the pandemic in Finland. The ruling cabinet was able to build consensus and cross-party cooperation.

In April 2020, the prime minister made an announcement in which she thanked the opposition for its cooperation: "It has been very valuable for Finland that all of our parliamentary parties have been able to cooperate extensively to enable the rapid introduction of restrictive measures. I would

particularly like to thank the opposition parties for their constructive cooperation in dealing with this national crisis. The government has sought to keep the parliamentary groups informed and has discussed the situation and measures regularly with all groups. We want to continue to do so” (Prime Minister Marin’s Announcement 2020). The political climate became more polarized during autumn 2020. The development continued well into 2021. However, there were no major conflicts between the ruling parties and the opposition even then. (Score: 9)

Citation:

Finnish Business and Policy Forum, 2020. Coronan and Political Views. Finnish Business and Policy Forum (EVA). Accessed, 28.12. 2020. [https://www.eva.fi/en/blog/2020/06/11/covid-19-crisis-had-anexceptional-](https://www.eva.fi/en/blog/2020/06/11/covid-19-crisis-had-anexceptional-impact-on-finnish-political-views/)

[impact-on-finnish-political-views/](https://www.eva.fi/en/blog/2020/06/11/covid-19-crisis-had-anexceptional-impact-on-finnish-political-views/)

Heikkilä, Heikki, 2020. Finland: Coronavirus and the media. Blog. Accessed, 28.12. 2020.

<https://en.ejo.ch/ethics-quality/finland-coronavirus-and-the-media>

Prime Minister’s Announcement, 2020. Corona Crisis Management. Accessed, 28.12. 2020.

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/10616/paaministerin-ilmoitus-koronakriisin-hoidosta>

Sustainable Policies

I. Economic Policies

Economy

Economic Policy
Score: 8

Sanna Marin's government published its program in December 2019, closely following her predecessor's program. Before the COVID-19 crisis hit, the goal of the Marin government was "ecologically and socially sustainable economic growth, high employment and sustainable public finances." This goal was not abandoned in 2020. However, the focus of the government shifted toward handling the COVID-19 crisis.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, the employment rate had grown for three years, with unemployment rates falling among all groups. According to the government program, the principal drivers of productivity in economies like Finland are skills and technological progress.

According a September 2021 Ministry of Finance (2021) forecast, Finland's gross domestic product was expected to grow by 3.3% in 2021. Before the arrival of the omicron variant, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic had progressed rapidly since spring 2021. The economic recovery was expected to continue in the autumn, especially in the sectors that were still subject to restrictions. Finland's GDP was expected to grow by 2.9% in 2022 and by 1.4% in 2023. In the forecast, the deterioration in pandemic conditions were not expected to slow down the economic recovery.

Growth in employment accelerated significantly in the first half of the year 2021. The demand for labor was sustained by economic growth, at least in the short term. It was expected that the economic recovery would boost the number of employed persons in 2022 and 2023, especially in the service sectors.

The general government deficit was expected to shrink substantially in 2021 and 2022, as the economic recovery and rapid rise in employment was expected to boost tax revenue and reduce unemployment expenditure. However, this expected temporary economic recovery was not enough to eliminate the structural imbalance affecting Finland's public finances.

Citation:

Ministry of Finance, Economic Survey, Autumn 2021. Publications of the Ministry of Finance 2021:51. https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/163513/VM_2021_51.pdf?sequence=6&isAllowed=y

Labor Markets

Labor Market
Policy
Score: 6

A deep depression in the Finnish economy in the 1990s resulted in a rapid and dramatic increase in unemployment rates. While the employment situation gradually recovered from this 1990s recession, unemployment again became a serious challenge after the global economic and financial crisis.

Like most other EU member states, Finland has not been prepared to use macroeconomic policy to reduce unemployment since around 1990. This has been the case in spite of unemployment levels that have remained relatively high over the past few decades.

Finland is known for its tradition of using active labor market policies as a tool to tackle economic crises' adverse impacts on employment. The Finnish service repertoire for long-term unemployed persons is geared toward individualized support and tailored to the needs of individual claimants (Kangas and Kalliomaa-Puha 2015). Employment office authorities define integrated action plans jointly with the claimants. The intensity and content of the measures included in the plans vary according to individual needs. In principle, the measures include a number of components including labor market training, self-motivated studies, part-time work, preparatory work training, on the-job training, integration measures for immigrants and various kinds of rehabilitative work activities. Immigrant claimants participating in activation measures or registered as jobseekers can be required to take a Swedish or Finnish language course. Young people below the age of 25 are obliged to apply for a slot to study in secondary education if they have not already completed this level of education.

The service repertoire for the long-term unemployed with reduced work capacity includes medical rehabilitation to restore their physical capacity, rehabilitative work experience, vocational rehabilitation to increase their chances of returning to employment and rehabilitative psychotherapy for those

whose employment problems are related to mental health. Social rehabilitation aims to strengthen the social skills of the long-term unemployed. The recipient's obligations can be enforced by sanctions. In Finland, the basic amount of subsistence support can be lowered by up to 20% for two months at a time in the case of non-compliance (up to 40% for repeated non-compliance). The severity of the sanction is partly left to the discretion of the case workers. Moreover, their discretionary powers are further limited by legal provisions based on the constitution. According to these provisions, the reduction in the benefit should not leave the recipient with less than the indispensable subsistence level of income necessary for a life of dignity, and it should not otherwise be regarded as inequitable. In the case of refusal to accept work, the offer should have been specific and explicit, and the job or labor market measure should enable him or her to secure their living for a reasonably long period of time.

Over recent decades, unemployment benefits' replacement rates have deteriorated, and coverage has become weaker (Kantola & Kananen 2013). The aim of policy reform has been to increase the supply of labor (i.e., the number of workers and job-seekers). These policy reforms have not had the desired effect of increasing employment. Several studies have also indicated that active labor market policies are ineffective. Instead, policy reforms have created new hierarchies in the labor market, undermining solidarity both within organizations and on the labor market as a whole. The Marin government is implementing a large pilot in which the responsibility for employment services is transferred from employment offices to municipalities.

After the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, the parliament approved the government's proposals on temporary amendments concerning layoffs, cooperation procedures, and the right of laid-off employees and entrepreneurs to unemployment security until the end of 2020. As per the temporary amendments, the period of notice required before laying someone off and the duration of cooperation negotiations regarding layoffs were shortened to five days. In addition, it became possible for employers to lay off a fixed-term employee and to terminate an employee's contract during the trial period on financial or production-related grounds. On the other hand, the period in which an employer is obligated to re-employ an employee dismissed for financial or production-related reasons was temporarily extended to nine months. The temporary amendments apply to the private sector.

Meanwhile, since 8 April 2020, entrepreneurs have been temporarily entitled to labor market support to deal with the sudden and unforeseen decline in demand due to the coronavirus epidemic. The aim has been to ensure the livelihood of entrepreneurs (Prime Minister's Office, 2020).

Citation:

Kangas, Olli & Kalliomaa-Puha, Laura (2015) ESPN Thematic Report on integrated support for the longterm unemployed Finland.

Kantola, Anu & Kananen, Johannes (2013): Seize the Moment: Financial Crises and the Making of the Finnish Competition State. *New Political Economy* 18(6): 811-826.

Ministry of Finance. Economic forecast, winter 2019. (Taloudellinen kasvu. Katsaus talvi 2019.

Valtiovarainministeriö) 2019:69. Accessed 18.12.2020.

https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161966/VM_2019_69.pdf

Prime Minister's Office. 2020 "Measures that have brought security and flexibility to labor markets during coronavirus epidemic will be extended." Accessed 18.12.2020. <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410877/jatkoa-toimille-joilla-on-tuotu-turvaa-ja-joustoa-tyomarkkinoille-korona-aikana>

Taxes

Tax Policy
Score: 9

In Finland, the state and municipalities have the power to levy taxes. The Evangelic Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church are allowed to collect their membership fees through regular taxation. Taxation policies are largely effective. The state taxes individual incomes at rates falling on a progressive scale between 6% (with an annual taxable income of €19,200) and 31.5% (2022). Municipal taxes range from 17% to 23.5%, depending on the municipal authority. In 2022, the average overall personal income tax rate is around 31%. Generally speaking, demands for vertical equity are largely satisfied. However, this is less true for horizontal equity. The corporate income tax rate was lowered in January 2014 from 24.5% to 20%, which is less, on average, than in other Nordic countries and EU member states. Adjustments in recent years have made Finland's taxation system less complex and more transparent. Finland performs quite well in regards to structural balance and redistributive effects, while overall taxation policies generate steady government revenue, but not enough to prevent state budget and municipal budget deficits. There has thus far been no major shift away from the taxation of labor toward environmental taxation; the environmental taxes' share of tax revenues remains moderate. Taxes are generally high in Finland because the country has expensive healthcare and social security systems, and also operates a costly education system that does not charge tuition. In Finland, the public in general has a favorable attitude toward high levels of taxation. In a recent poll, 96% of respondents agreed that taxation is an important means of maintaining the welfare state, and 79% agreed that they willingly paid their taxes.

Citation:

<https://www.veronmaksajat.fi/luvut/Tilastot/Tuloverot/Yhteisoverotus/#c7499fa8>

<https://www.taloustaito.fi/Vero/kenen-verotus-kevenee-kenen-kiristyy-vuonna-2021/#44efd210>

<https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/talous/verotus/kuntien-veroprosentit/kuntien-tulo-ja-kiinteistoveroprosentit-2022>

Budgets

Budgetary Policy
Score: 8

In December 2019, the Ministry of Finance's economic outlook estimated that general government finances would be in deficit for the next few years in the absence of measures to improve employment and productivity in the local and central governments (Ministry of Finance 2019). The Rinne government's plan to balance the budget was connected with the aim to increase the labor market participation rate substantially. During its first year in office, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rinne/Marin government increased spending.

Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government program, published in December 2019, aimed to increase the employment rate to 75% and the number of people in employment by a minimum of 60,000 by the end of 2023. According to the program, "given normal global economic circumstances, Finland's general government finances will be in balance in 2023." As for fiscal policy, the government program emphasized scaling fiscal policy in accordance with economic conditions, meaning that general government revenue and expenditure can be adjusted automatically according to economic conditions (Prime Minister's Office 2019). However, the COVID-19 pandemic completely changed the outlook for government finances.

In Finland, there is widespread awareness among politicians that the population age structure, with a very large cohort born immediately after the Second World War, will necessitate an increase in public spending in order to maintain the social security system and access to welfare services. However, so far, the government has taken no determined actions to cut the budget deficit, and there are currently no debt limits or other fiscal rules to prevent excessive public debt. However, the budget process is transparent. In September 2021, the Ministry of Finance (2021) estimated that the general government deficit would shrink substantially in 2021 and in 2022, as the economic recovery and rapid rise in employment were expected to boost tax revenues and reduce unemployment expenditure. The ministry also forecast that the general government finances would improve as the need for engage in COVID-19 spending dropped away. However, the ministry also emphasized that a temporary economic recovery would not eliminate the structural imbalance affecting Finland's public finances.

Research, Innovation and Infrastructure

R&I Policy
Score: 7

In general, research and innovation policy in Finland focuses on basic and applied research in research institutions, supporting startups that convert scientific output into products, and seeking to fostering productivity as well as social innovations.

The Finnish higher education system is centralized. It consists of 13 universities and 22 universities of applied sciences (UAS) that operate under aegis of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. As for institutions promoting and coordinating the development of (social) innovations, 12 public research institutes work under related ministries. The key agency for developing technological research is the Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT), which operates under the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. It is a cooperation partner for companies, research institutes, higher education institutions and policymakers both nationally and internationally. In terms of R&D activities, other public research institutes are more mission-oriented, with a broad range of research objectives. Their mandate can vary from research (both basic and applied) to additional responsibilities, such as monitoring, data collection and management, and certification and inspection (Schienstock and Hämäläinen 2001).

The recognition of companies as key partners for research institutions is reflected in increased private sector cooperation in the research sector in Finland. However, successful startup companies tend to be acquired by technology giants (GAFAM), thereby eliminating the benefits of innovations at the local and national level.

Finland was previously among the forerunners in research and development (R&D) spending, as well as in the number of researchers and patent applications. Indeed, in 2014, Finland had the European Union's highest R&D intensity, followed by Sweden and Denmark. However, this lead position subsequently declined in the wake of weakening economic prospects.

The innovation system's low level of internationalization is a particular weakness. Moreover, the focus of R&D has been on applied research, with basic research at universities and other institutes benefiting little. In the long run, given the obvious dependence of applied research on basic-research developments, the heavy bias in favor of applied research and the continuing neglect of the financial needs of schools and higher learning institutions will carry negative consequences for product development and productivity.

Furthermore, the system of technology transfer from universities to the private sector is comparatively weak, and academic entrepreneurship is not well developed.

Citation:

“Research and Innovation Policy Guidelines for 2010-2015.” The Research and Innovation Council of Finland, 2010. http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Tiede/tutkimus-_ja_innovaationeuvosto/julkaisut/liitteet/Review2011-2015.pdf

Schienstock, Gerd and Hämäläinen, Timo. 2001. Transformation of the Finnish Innovation System: A Network Approach. Sitra Series 7. Accessed 7.1. 2021.

<https://media.sitra.fi/2017/02/28142146/raportti7.pdf> “Statistics Finland – Science, Technology and Information Society – Research and Development,” www.stat.fi

Data on R&D expenditure; <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/>

http://www.stat.fi/til/tkker/2019/tkker_2019_2019-02-21_tie_001_en.html

https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/education_wage_subsidies_key_in_next_years_budget/10978952

Global Financial System

Stabilizing
Global Financial
System
Score: 9

Following the collapse of financial markets in Europe in 2008 and the increased vulnerability of financial markets globally, political leaders in Finland have urged the passage of stronger regulations and more coordinated market supervision. In terms of attitudes and action, Finland has presented itself as an agenda-setter, providing support to countries seeking to advance self-regulation and combat excessive market risk-taking. Finland has also pursued measures to secure its own finances. According to a report by the International Monetary Fund in December 2017, Finland’s banking system is well-capitalized. Though the report also noted that the relocation of the headquarter of the Nordea Group from Stockholm to Helsinki will more than triple the size of bank assets under supervision. Also, while low interest rates have squeezed net interest income, banks have increased income from trading and insurance. Importantly, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden all have sound financial systems that have withstood the impact of the European financial crisis. In 2013, the Finnish government approved the Europe 2020 National Program, which contains measures and national targets for achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy. The program includes proposals to create an effective national macroprudential supervision system. With some 200 employees, the Financial Supervisory Authority is tasked with overseeing Finland’s financial and insurance sector. The Financial Markets Department of the Ministry of Finance creates the rules for financial markets and the framework in which markets may operate; the department is also responsible for ensuring that the Ministry of Finance’s international activities remain effective. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government reduced efforts focusing on the effective regulation and supervision of the international financial market.

Citation:

“Finanssimarkkinoiden makrotaloudellisten vaikutusten sääntely ja valvonta,” Työryhmän muistio 32/2012, Ministry of Finance, Publications 2012;

[imf.org/en/Publications/CR/issues/2016/12/31/Finland-Financial-System-Assessment-44437](https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/issues/2016/12/31/Finland-Financial-System-Assessment-44437);

www.Springer.com/cda/content.../978146/14955352-c1.pdf?

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2017/12/13/Finland-Selected-Issues-45467>

II. Social Policies

Education

Education Policy
Score: 8

Governance of the education system in Finland is shared between central and local authorities. The Finnish government defines and sets educational priorities. Meanwhile, municipalities (local authorities) maintain and support schools and daycare centers, and have significant responsibility for organizing education, defining educational curricula, funding and hiring personnel. A national Education and Research Development Plan outlines education policy priorities every four years, and guides the government when it is preparing and implementing education policies. Social and political agreement on the value of education has provided stability on the structure and key features of the education system. Decisions in schools are made by either the local government or the school, depending on how decision-making is organized in the municipality.

Centered on the principle of lifelong learning, education policy in Finland promotes and maintains high educational standards. Teachers are well-trained and teaching is still considered an attractive profession. In comparison with most other countries, teachers in Finland enjoy a high level of autonomy and are not formally evaluated, and there are very few national tests for students. All people by law must have equal access to high-quality education and training, basic education is free, and municipalities are responsible for providing educational services to all local children.

By and large, Finland’s education system has proved successful, and in recent years even ranked at the top of the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment. However, while Finland remains among the top performers, the ranking of the country appears to be slipping as gender and regional disparities in student performance grow significantly. The Education and Research Development Plan, revised every four years by the government, directs the implementation of education- and research-policy goals as stated in the government program.

Finland's expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP (for all education levels combined) is above the OECD average, with one of the highest shares of public funding among OECD countries (OECD 2015). The government's education policy facilitates learning for everyone and allocates resources effectively across the different levels of education (e.g., preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary). In Finland, students complete nine years of basic education (comprehensive school), with the system focusing on equity and preventing low achievement. At upper-secondary level, students can choose between general education and vocational education and training options, both of which can lead on to tertiary education.

Recently, compulsory education has been extended to ages six to 18, from ages seven to 16 previously. Attainment rates in upper-secondary and tertiary education are higher than the OECD average, with one of the OECD's highest enrollment rates in upper-secondary vocational education and training (VET) programs. School dropout rates are lower in Finland than in other EU member states, but are higher than the country's average among people with an immigrant background. In Finland, the lack of tuition fees combined with universal access to study grants (covering both living costs and housing) and student loans guarantee equitable access to education. However, the children of parents who themselves attended higher education institutions, and who have above-average incomes, still have a higher likelihood of studying at university.

Adults (16- to 65-year-olds) in Finland were among the most skilled of any participating country in the Survey of Adult Skills, with younger adults (16- to 24-year-olds) scoring higher than all adults in Finland and young adults in other countries.

Citation:

Education and Research 2011-2016. A development plan. Reports of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2012:3;

"Education Policy Outlook Finland," oecd.org/edu/highlightsFinland.htm;

"The new curricula in a nutshell," http://www.oph.fi/english/curricula_and_qualifications/basic_education/curricula_2014; oecd.org/edu/highlightsfinland.htm.

"Finnish Teachers and Principals in Figures," https://www.oph.fi/download/189802_finnish_teachers_and_principals_in_figures.pdf
<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/rinne/government-programme/finland-that-promotes-competence-education-culture-and-innovation>

OECD, 2015. "Education Policy Outlook Finland: Finland." Accessed 18.12.2020.
<http://www.oecd.org/education/highlightsfinland.htm>

Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion
Policy
Score: 7

Finland is among the group of countries that have adopted the Nordic welfare state model, which is known for its low levels of poverty and high levels of well-being. The Finnish welfare state is known for its universalistic and all-encompassing approach to welfare. Finland has a long tradition of strongly egalitarian approaches. Residents of Finland are consistently among the happiest people in the world, on average.

Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government programs are largely consonant with the principles and values of the Nordic welfare model. The cornerstones of the Nordic model include non-discrimination and equality; healthcare, well-being and education services financed by means of tax revenue; high levels of social mobility; and an active civil society (Prime Minister's Office 2019).

However, income and wealth inequality have increased in recent years, thereby increasing social inequality. Social inequality affects people in many ways. It is manifested in poverty and prolonged need for social assistance. Inequality is also reflected in the differences in health outcomes and social inclusion between population groups, and in the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training. While the aim of the Finnish service system is to promote the health, well-being, functional capacity, work ability and social protection of the population, and to reduce inequalities in health outcomes and well-being, not all citizens can access all the services they need. Moreover, in some cases the services at their disposal do not meet their needs, as there are still significant inequalities in health outcomes and well-being. People not only experience deprivation during their lifetimes, but this is also passed down from generation to generation.

While social policy largely prevents poverty, and the income-redistribution system has proven to be one of the most efficient in the European Union, pockets of relative poverty and social exclusion still prevail. Furthermore, inequalities in well-being exist between regions and municipalities, depending on demographic composition and economic strength. In very general terms, the northeastern part of Finland is characterized by higher levels of unemployment and ill health than the southwestern part of the country.

Basic social assistance can be provided to individuals or families living or residing in Finland whose income and assets do not cover their essential daily needs, such as for food and medicine. Basic social assistance is a last-resort form of financial aid, with eligibility affected by all forms of income and assets available to applicants and their families, including any savings in a bank account. Other social security benefits are counted as income. Prior to

applying for basic social assistance, claimants must determine whether they might be entitled to other social benefits, including unemployment benefits, housing benefits, benefits for parents or a sickness allowance (Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA) 2020).

In terms of life satisfaction and gender equality, the government has embarked on a number of programs to improve its performance. The Act on Equality between Women and Men was passed in 1986 and gender discrimination is prohibited under additional legislation. Despite this legislation, inequalities between men and women prevail, especially in the workplace. The government has placed a particular emphasis on programs for at-risk youth from 15 to 17 years old who experience social exclusion, as well as on programs to create equal opportunities for disabled individuals. Immigrants are another group that faces social exclusion, especially due to poor integration in the labor market. The strong increase in the number of incoming immigrants in 2016 and 2017 added to these difficulties. Furthermore, the growing number of people (especially older people) living alone, and widespread perceptions of loneliness among children and young people have gained attention. Improving the inclusion in society of vulnerable groups and the design of services to prevent loneliness have become core issues within the social inclusion agenda.

Citation:

“Socially Sustainable Finland 2020. Strategy for Social and Health Policy,” Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Helsinki, 2010.

Health

Health Policy
Score: 7

Health policies in Finland have over time led to palpable improvements in public health such as a decrease in infant-mortality rates and the development of an effective health-insurance system. Finnish residents have access to extensive health services despite comparatively low per capita health costs. The Finnish healthcare system is based on public healthcare services to which everyone residing in the country is entitled. According to the constitution of Finland, the public authorities are to guarantee adequate social, health and medical services and health promotion to everyone. In other words, it is the constitutional duty of the public authorities to provide equal access to high-quality healthcare and disease protection (EU-Healthcare 2020).

In Finland, municipalities are responsible for organizing and financing healthcare, although this responsibility will be transferred to the regional level beginning in 2023. A municipality can organize services by providing them directly or in collaboration with other municipalities, or by purchasing services from private companies or non-profit organizations.

Healthcare services are divided into primary healthcare and specialized medical care. Primary healthcare services are provided at municipal healthcare centers. Specialized medical care is usually provided at hospitals. Municipalities form hospital districts that are responsible for providing specialized medical care in their area. In addition, joint municipal authorities belong to one of five catchment areas for highly specialized medical care.

The national hospital system delivers high-quality care for acute conditions, but there is a recognition that key challenges include improving primary care for the growing number of people with chronic conditions, and improving coordination between primary care and hospitals.

The Finnish healthcare system divides people into two main categories. Occupational primary healthcare is available for employed people. Those outside the labor force – such as the unemployed, temporary workers and self-employed people – rely on the public healthcare service, which has fewer resources and offers fewer services. As a result, socioeconomic inequalities in health outcomes persist.

Citation:

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“Socially Sustainable Finland 2020. Strategy for Social and Health Policy,” Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2014;

<http://alueuudistus.fi/en/social-welfare-and-health-care-reform>.

Tiirinki H, Tynkkynen LK, Sovala M, et al. 2020. COVID-19 pandemic in Finland – Preliminary analysis on health system response and economic consequences. *Health Policy Technol.* 2020;9(4):649-662. doi: 10.1016/j.hlpt.2020.08.005, Accessed 28.12.2020.

Families

Family Policy
Score: 8

Family policy in Finland adheres to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as other international agreements. Finland’s family-policy programs aim to create a secure environment for children and support parents’ physical and mental resources. By and large, family policy has been successful. For example, child poverty has practically been eradicated. Support for families has three main elements: financial support for services and family leave, child benefits, and the provision of day care services. Access to public day care is guaranteed to all children under seven years of age, and allowances are paid for every child until they turn 17.

According to Prime Minister Sanna Marin’s government program, Finnish family policy faces new challenges. These relate to new kinds of needs and the

growing complexity of family models (Prime Minister's Office 2019). The traditional nuclear family pattern, with two parents of opposite sexes, is changing. Non-traditional families already account for around one-third of all families in Finland, and the number of blended families and rainbow families is increasing. Existing benefits schemes and service models do not always meet the real needs of families (Eydal et al. 2018). For example, the government program mentioned that access to services – such as couples or divorce counseling, which foster the well-being of families and support parents when they experience parenting or relationship problems – is not systematic or equal across the country.

The core aims of policies aimed at families with children in Finland are twofold: to improve equality between children by ensuring that all children can enjoy a good and safe childhood, regardless of family form and/or the social situation of their families; and to enhance gender equality by enabling both parents to work and provide care. Family policies in Finland ensure that parents are provided with support to care for their young children both by guaranteeing paid parental leave and offering subsidized childcare and family benefits. Family policy remains somewhat problematic with regard to gender equality. Although the employment rate among women, and in particular the full-time employment rate, is among the highest in the European Union, family policies have still not fully solved the challenge of combining parenting and employment. Although the number of fathers that take paternity leave has somewhat increased, childcare responsibilities still fall predominately on women. Also, the home-care allowance of up to three years encourages Finnish women to leave the labor market after having a child for a longer period than women in many other countries. Comparative examinations of Nordic family policies suggest that family policies in Finland have not developed to fully match the more flexible family-policy arrangements in, for example, Norway and Sweden. In general, evidence has shown that family-centered thinking is increasing among Finnish adults and within Finnish culture more generally.

Additionally, there are social, healthcare and school services, which aim to ensure children get the best possible service and outcomes, which are either fully financed by the public sector or require parents to pay small user fees. Parents are entitled to a paid leave of absence from their work after the birth of a child, and the law guarantees that parents can return to the same job after the period of leave. Under the Employment Contracts Act, an employee is entitled to a period of leave during which he or she can receive a maternity, special maternity, paternity or parental allowance (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare 2020).

Finland has given children legal rights to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. ECEC services are intended to facilitate female labor market participation, ensure the well-being of children, and – in more recent years – support the development of children’s social and cognitive skills. In other words, ECEC is an investment in children’s beings and becomings. ECEC services are subsidized by the public sector, with parents paying relatively modest user fees compared to other countries.

The most important family cash benefit is the child benefit, which is paid to parents without consideration of the parents’ income or means, and is the same for all children. Finland pays additional benefits to single parents and a supplement for additional children. In addition to child benefits, if a partnership is dissolved resulting in single parenthood, the parent that legally resides with the child often receives a child maintenance payment from the nonresident parent. The amount and the arrangement of the payment is decided during divorce proceedings or in connection with the birth of a child out of marriage, through mutual agreement or a decision from the court or local authorities. Public authorities guarantee maintenance payments for children. Poverty among families with children is most common in single-parent families and in families where children are under the age of three.

Citation:

Katja Repo, “The Contradiction of Finnish Childcare Policies,” www.ungdata.no/reassessassets/20608/20608.ppt;

Mia Hakovirta and Minna Rantalahti, “Family Policy and Shared Parenting in Nordic Countries,” *European Journal of Social Security*, Vol. 13 No 2, pp. 247-266, 2011.

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<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/marin/government-programme/finland-as-a-sustainable-economy>

Pensions

Pension Policy
Score: 9

The Finnish public pension system has two individual programs: a basic residence-based pension consisting of the national pension and the guarantee pension, and a mandatory employment-based, earnings-related pension. Voluntary occupational schemes and private pension savings play a very minor role.

Fairly successfully managed by the social partners as well as the government, the overall pension policy has thus far been able to provide adequate pension

provision, and Finland has by and large avoided the classic problem of poverty in old age. However, the oldest cohorts, women and retirees living alone tend to suffer from poverty more often than other retirees. The aging of Finland's population and a rapid decrease in birth rates over recent years have together created problems in terms of labor-force maintenance and the fiscal sustainability of the pension system. Present strategies aim at encouraging later retirement in order to ensure that the state pension provides sufficient funding.

A major reform of the pension system in 2005 aimed at increasing pension-policy flexibility and sought to create more incentives for workers to stay in employment. In 2011, a national guarantee pension was introduced. While these reforms were successful, a further major reform came into effect in 2017, the main goal again being to lengthen careers and help close the sustainability gap in public finances. Major changes imply a gradual rise in the lowest retirement age, a harmonization of pension accrual, an increase in deferred retirement (to provide an incentive to stay in work life longer), flexible part-time retirement and amendments to the accumulation rate.

A recent evaluation by Torben Andersen (2021) found the Finnish model to be robust and well-functioning. The key challenges included the financial viability of the system, the regulatory framework for pension providers' investment policies, and the widening gap between pensioners and those active in the labor market. The report also found a long-run tendency toward increasing inequality within the group of pensioners.

Citation:

Andersen, Torben (2021). Pension adequacy and sustainability – An evaluation of the Finnish pension system. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-691-336-3>

Nicholas Barr (2013) The Pension System in Finland: Adequacy, Sustainability and Systems Design. Finnish Center for Pensions. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-691-175-8>

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Susan Kuivalainen, Juha Rantala, Kati Ahonen, Kati Kuitto and Liisa-Maria Palomäki (eds.) (2017). Eläkkeet ja eläkeläisten toimeentulo 1995–2015 [Pensions and livelihood of retirees 1995–2015]. Helsinki: Finnish Center for Pensions. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-691-261-8>

<https://www.etk.fi/en/statistics-2/statistics/effective-retirement-age/>

Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index 2019, <https://www.mercer.com.au/our-thinking/mmgpi.htm>

Integration

Integration Policy
Score: 7

Since the beginning of the 1980s, Finland has witnessed more immigration than emigration. From 1990 to 2018, the share of the population with a foreign background grew from 0.8% to 7.3%. Several factors have challenged the management of this inflow of immigrants. Second-generation immigrants have

had difficulties entering education or finding work. There are also differences in labor-market attachment relative to migrants' countries of origin; Estonians, for example, finding their way into employment much more easily than migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

Boosting the labor-market participation rate was a key target of the government's Future of Migration 2020 Strategy and 2016 Action Plan. While Finland has received a fair share of asylum-seekers on a per capita basis, the country is not considered to be among the top destinations for immigrants. This is the result of various factors. Applying for a Finnish residence permit is still a complicated process, as is applying for Finnish citizenship. Finnish is a difficult language, and proficient language skills are required. While sympathetic to work-related immigration, authorities' general attitude toward immigration is rather restrictive. Moreover, until the summer of 2017, the Finns Party (then called the True Finns) used its cabinet position as a platform to fan anti-immigrant sentiments. Several demonstrations by anti-immigrant protesters against refugee accommodations turned violent. According to a recent poll, 47% of the population is in favor of immigration, whereas 41% is negatively disposed toward it. At the same time, however, attitudes are highly dependent on the country of origin of the immigrants in question. In general, respondents were much more positive toward immigration from the EU, North America and Asia than immigration from Africa and the Middle East.

Citation:

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"Finland must develop its Immigration and Integration Policies," <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/>;

Eve Kyntäjä, "Integration Policy in Finland," h24-files.s3.amazonaws.com/62061/837056/-audb.pdf;

Henna Busk, Signe Jauhiainen, Antti Kekäläinen, Satu Nivalainen and Tuuli Tähtinen 2016. "Maahanmuuttajat työmarkkinoilla: tutkimus eri vuosina Suomeen muuttaneiden työurista" [Immigrants on the labour market – A study of the working lives of immigrants arriving in Finland in different years]. Finnish Center for Pensions, Studies 06/2016. Helsinki: Finnish Center for Pensions;

Elli Heikkilä and Selena Peltonen, "Immigrants and Integration in Finland," Institute of Migration, Turku.

Kunnallisan kehittämissäätiö: <https://kaks.fi/uutiset/kaksi-viidesta-suomalaisesta-on-kielteinen-maahanmuutolle-tyontekijat-ja-opiskelijat-toivotetaan-tervetulleiksi/>

Safe Living

Internal Security
Policy
Score: 9

According to the 2019 Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) report, Finland continues to be a safe and secure environment for business, tourism and living, having one of the world's most effective police forces. Finland remains among the safest countries in the world, with a very low crime rate. Still, as evident from the 2019 OSAC report, there has been an increase in the incidence of sexual offenses, drunk driving, robberies and narcotics-related

offenses. According to polls, Finnish citizens regard the police as one of the most reliable public institutions. Following the establishment of a First Program on Internal Security in 2004, the government in 2012 adopted the Third Internal Security Program, with the aim of reducing citizen's daily security concerns. The program's overall implementation has been monitored by the Ministry of the Interior. Additionally, the government has adopted or is considering national strategies addressing organized crime, the informal economy and terrorism. Involving a collaboration between municipalities, regions, organizations, businesses and the public administration, preparations for a new national strategy outline were initiated in August 2016 and completed in April 2017. An implementation program for Finland's Cyber Security Strategy for 2017 – 2020 has been adopted and measures have been taken to increase national and international cooperation between intelligence and police authorities. In 2020, Finland experienced a far-reaching incident of data security crime when the complete patient list maintained by psychotherapy firm Vastaamo, comprising 33,000 clients, was stolen. The clients were subsequently subject to blackmail. They were required to pay any amount of money to have their private data removed from the data published over the Tor network. The criminal investigation is still ongoing.

Citation:

"Turvallisempi huominen. Sisäisen turvallisuuden ohjelma." 26/2012. Ministry of Interior, Helsinki; http://www.intermin.fi/download/34893_262012_STO_III_fi.pdf; http://www.intermin.fi/fi/kehittamishankkeet/sisaisen_turvallisuuden_strategia; turvallisuuskomitea.fi/index.php/en/materials.
 "Finland 2019 Crime & Safety Report," <https://www.osac.gov/Content/Report/a07de0db-58c6-4954-a485-15f4aeaf1baa>

Global Inequalities

Global Social
Policy
Score: 7

Development policy constitutes an integral part of Finland's security and foreign policy. It focuses on four priorities: protecting the rights of women and girls; reinforcing developing countries' economies as a means of generating more jobs while also improving livelihoods and well-being; supporting democratic and well-functioning societies, which includes ensuring taxation capacity; and supporting food security, access to water and energy, and sustainability in the use of natural resources. Due to severe strains on the Finnish economy, the Sipilä government was compelled to reduce the amount of humanitarian aid provided by the country. Whereas Finland spent €961.4 million on development cooperation in 2017, it spent only €886 million on this area in 2018. Nonetheless, €989 million was appropriated in 2019 for development cooperation, an increase of €103 million compared to the 2018 budget. Appropriations budgeted for development cooperation in 2021 were estimated to total €1.257 billion, which corresponds to 0.5% of Finland's gross national income (GNI).

Finland emphasizes the primary role of the United Nations in coordinating the provision of aid, and in general channels its funds for humanitarian aid through U.N. organizations. Finland is committed to the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals.

In terms of development coordination, such as work to improve the economic and social position of developing countries, Finland's contributions are implemented through various methods. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in conjunction with external consultants, monitor the attainment of goals and the use of funds, and in June 2014 the ministry introduced an online service enabling anybody to report suspected misuse of development-cooperation funds. On the whole, the country is not counted among the world's top aid initiators or agenda-setters, and in terms of advancing global social inclusion, Finland is a committed partner rather than a leader.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, development policy has declined in importance in the government's overall policy activities.

Citation:
 "Finland's Development Policy,"
<https://um.fi/documents/35732/0/Finlands+development+policy+2016.pdf>
 Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, <http://www.formin.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=251855>.
<https://findikaattori.fi/en/69>
<https://um.fi/finland-s-development-cooperation-appropriations>

III. Environmental Policies

Environment

Environmental
 Policy
 Score: 8

Finland faces quite specific environmental challenges in terms of climate change and population growth; yet the country's contribution to larger efforts in combating climate change have to date been fairly modest. Still, after being ranked 18 out of 178 countries in Yale University's 2014 Environmental Performance Index, Finland ranked first ahead of Iceland, Sweden and Denmark in 2016. However, in 2018 it fell to 10th place. According to a report released in May 2019, Finland's greenhouse-gas emissions grew by 2% from the previous year, to a total of 56.5 million tons of carbon dioxide. According to another recent report, Finland emits around one metric ton of jet fuel CO₂ per capita, which is the second-highest such figure in the world. During the first year of the pandemic, overall emissions declined.

Water pollution is a major challenge in Finland. While pollution emissions from large industrial facilities have to a large extent been successfully curbed and polluted lakes and rivers have been cleaned, waterborne nutrient emissions generated by farms remain a pressing problem. According to calculations, some 1,500 lakes are in need of more active restoration measures to combat eutrophication. Finland's most valuable natural resource is its forests. The overall annual growth rate of trees in the forests exceeds the total timber harvest, a result of institutionalized protections. Separately, efforts to halt an ongoing decline in biodiversity have proved insufficient, though the government has created networks of protected areas. The environment and natural resources are among the responsibilities of 13 centers for economic development, transport and the environment. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy supervises the general administrative work of these centers. Recent research suggests that in environmental matters in which economic factors play a key role there is a trend toward restricting the rights of citizens to be informed about and influence decisions.

Citation:

Jari Lyytimäki, "Environmental Protection in Finland," <http://finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=160041>;
 "Finland's Environmental Administration," http://www.ymparisto.fi/en-US/Finlands_environmental_administration;
<http://archive.epi.yale.edu/epi/country-rankings>;
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 Siina Raskulla, "Ympäristöperusoikeus politiikkainstrumenttina ja kansalaisoikeutena," pp. 280-297, *Politiikka*, 2016, Nr 4.
http://www.stat.fi/til/khki/index_en.html
 Zen, Sola. 2019. "Not every ton of aviation CO2 is created equal," <https://theicct.org/blog/staff/not-every-tonne-of-aviation-CO2>.

Global Environmental Protection

Global
Environmental
Policy
Score: 8

International regimes are often sector-specific. The core of each international regime is formed by international regulatory and administrative systems, which are created and implemented through formal agreements. While Finland is certainly committed to observing many multilateral and bilateral environmental agreements concerning climate change and air pollution, Finland is not among the primary agenda-setters with regard to the advancement of international regimes. However, Finland is ranked high (10th out of 180 countries) in the latest Environmental Performance index. Finland chaired the Arctic Council during the 2017 – 2019 period, an obligation that inevitably strengthened the country's international position, especially with regard to questions pertaining to the Arctic region. In operational terms, Finland continues to promote the implementation of the Paris Agreement on

climate change and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. The government has issued two reports on Finland's progress in implementing the Agenda 2030 goals. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has developed guidelines on how to arrange environmentally sustainable meetings, conferences and seminars. All meetings of the Finnish EU presidency in 2019 were held according to sustainability guidelines. Climate change took a considerably more prominent role in the Rinne/Marin government's program than in that of its predecessor.

Citation:

Katrina Running, "Examining Environmental Concern in Developed, Transitioning and Developing Countries," *World Values Research* 5 (1): 1-25, 2012;

"Exploring Common Solutions – Finland's Chairmanship Program for the Arctic Council 2017-2019," Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2017.

<https://epi.envirocenter.yale.edu/>

Robust Democracy

Electoral Processes

Candidacy
Procedures
Score: 10

The electoral process in Finland is free and fair, and the country's constitution grants Finnish citizens the right to participate in national elections and referendums. Registered political parties have the right to nominate candidates, though all voters have the right to influence the nomination process. Electoral associations of at least 100 enfranchised citizens also have the right of nomination. However, the role of these associations has been marginal. Candidates for presidential elections can be nominated by any political party that is represented in parliament at the time of nomination. Candidates may also be nominated by associations of at least 20,000 enfranchised citizens. President Sauli Niinistö, who was re-elected by an overwhelming majority in the 2018 elections, preferred to be nominated by a voters' association rather than a specific political party and collected more than 150,000 supportive signatures for this purpose.

Presidential candidates must be Finnish citizens by birth, while young people under guardianship and those in active military service cannot stand as candidates in parliamentary elections. The procedure for registering political parties is regulated by the Party Law of 1969. Parties which fail to elect representatives to parliament in two successive elections are removed from the list of registered parties. However, by gathering signatures of 5,000 supporters, a party may be re-registered.

In the spring of 2021, municipal elections were postponed by six weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Citation:

Dag Anckar and Carsten Anckar, "Finland," in Dieter Nohlen and Philip Stöver, eds. *Elections in Europe. A Data Handbook*, Nomos, 2010.

Media Access
Score: 10

The access of candidates and parties to media and means of communication is fair in principle, but practical constraints, such as the duration and breadth of a program's coverage, restrict access for smaller parties and candidates to televised debates and other media appearances. Given the increased impact of such appearances on the electoral outcome, this bias is somewhat problematic

from the point of view of fairness and justice. However, the restrictions reflect practical considerations rather than ideological agendas. Access to newspapers and commercial forms of communication is unrestricted, though in practice it is dependent on the economic resources of parties and individual candidates. Candidates are required to report on the sources of their campaign funds. Social media play an increasing role in candidates' electoral campaigns, as these outlets now attract a growing share of voters. This also means that candidates are less dependent on party organizations and external funding for campaigning. As a consequence of the enhanced role of social media, campaigns are likely to be longer at the same time as candidates are expected to continuously share their opinion on a multitude of issues. Such trends are especially important in Finland, since the country uses an open list proportional system in which the order candidates are elected from the party lists is dependent on the number of personal votes received.

Citation:

Strandberg, Kim (2012): Sosiaalisen median vallankumous? Ehdokkaat, valitsijat ja sosiaalinen media vuoden 2011 eduskuntavaaleissa. In: S. Borg (ed.), *Muutosvaalit 2011*, Helsinki: Ministry of Justice, 79-93.
Laakso, Mikko (2017). Sosiaalinen media vaalikampanjoinnissa.

Voting and
Registration
Rights
Score: 10

Electoral provisions stipulate universal suffrage for all adult Finnish citizens (including prisoners and mentally disabled people), a secret-ballot voting method, a minimum voting age of 18, non-compulsory voting, an entitlement to vote for expatriated Finnish citizens, and the exclusion of non-Finnish nationals resident in Finland from national elections. However, non-Finnish permanent residents may vote in municipal elections. The population registration center maintains a register of people eligible to vote, and sends a notification to those included in the register. Citizens do not need to register separately to be able to vote. A system of advance voting has been in place for several decades now, and the proportion of ballots cast in advance has risen significantly. Electronic voting was tested in three municipalities during the 2008 municipal elections, but has not been adopted in subsequent elections. In its final report from 2017, a working group on the issue appointed by the Ministry of Justice stated that while technically feasible, an online voting system is still not ready to be implemented, since the technology is not yet at a sufficiently high level to meet all relevant requirements. However, the government has declared internet-based voting methods as a policy objective.

Citation:

Dag Anckar and Carsten Anckar, "Finland," in Dieter Nohlen and Philip Stöver, eds. *Elections in Europe. A Data Handbook*, Nomos, 2010.
<https://vaalit.fi/en/electronic-voting1>

Party Financing
Score: 9

New campaign-finance legislation was implemented between 2008 and 2009, in the wake of several political financing scandals. This legislation requires

politicians to disclose funding sources, and has provided for independent and efficient monitoring. There are now bans on donations from foreign interests, corporations holding government contracts and anonymous donors. In addition, there are limits on the amount a donor can contribute over a time period or during an election. Currently, a single private donor can donate up to €6,000 to a candidate standing in a parliamentary election. Candidates are required to report the sources of their campaign funds. These reports are filed with ministries and auditing agencies, and made publicly available. Financing scandals involving parties and candidates continue to attract media coverage, and studies indicate that parties are likely to lose electoral support if they are involved in finance scandals. As a result of the new rules, the quality of party financing has improved and public opinion polls indicate that the credibility of politicians has increased.

<http://www.idea.int/parties/finance>;

<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/105/55>

Demokratiapuntari 2012: Yhteenveto. Ministry of Justice/MTV3/tnsGallup, 02/2012;

Mattila, Mikko and Sundberg, Jan 2012: Vaalirahoitus ja vaalirahakohu. In: Borg, Sami (ed.): Muutosvaalit 2011. Oikeusministeriön selvityksiä ja ohjeita 16/2012. Oikeusministeriö (Ministry of Justice), pp.227–238.

Popular Decision-
Making
Score: 6

The government incorporated referendums into the Finnish constitution in 1987. The provision, laid down in the Law of Procedures in Advisory Referendums, enable advisory referendums to be called by parliament by means of special laws that specify the date of voting and establish the alternatives to be presented to the voters. There are no minimum participation rates or required vote majorities specified. Since that time, only a single national referendum has taken place, in 1994. This addressed Finland's entry into the European Union.

While this mechanism does not enable direct citizen participation in public policymaking, a constitutional amendment in 2012 introduced a popular-initiative system. This system requires parliament to consider any petition that receives 50,000 signatures or more within six months. However, citizens do not themselves have the opportunity to vote on the initiative issues, as the right of decision and agenda-setting remains with the parliament. The first initiative to receive enough signatories to be submitted to parliament was on the prohibition of fur farming; it was subsequently rejected. A later initiative concerning same-sex marriage also received a sufficient number of signatories and was approved by the parliament after a heated debate. In 2017, an initiative to repeal this decision received more than 100,000 signatures, but was rejected by parliament. Since the system's establishment, more than 1,300 initiatives have been brought up, 56 of which have been submitted to the parliament for debate. At the time of writing, over 60 initiatives were being lined up for consideration by the parliament. The Ministry of Justice maintains an online platform for citizens' initiatives.

The Finnish system also allows for citizen-initiated municipal referendums. However, municipal authorities determine how such referendums are conducted and results are non-binding.

Citation:

Dag Anckar, "Finland," in Bruno Kaufmann and M. D. Waters, eds. *Direct Democracy in Europe*. Durham, N. C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2004.

Online platform for citizen initiatives; <https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi>

Henrik Serup Christensen, Maija Karjalainen and Maija Setälä, *Kansalaisaloite poliittisen yhdenvertaisuuden näkökulmasta*, pp. 435-456 in Kimmo Grönlund and Hanna Wass, eds. *Poliittisen osallistumisen eriytyminen*, Helsinki: Oikeusministeriö, Selvityksiä ja ohjeita 28, 2016.

Access to Information

Media Freedom
Score: 10

Media independence is a matter of course in Finland. Media independence is guaranteed by the Act on the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in Mass Media from 2003, and supported by public and political discourse. A free and pluralist media is considered an important contributor to debate among citizens and the formation of public opinion. Finland has been ranked at or near the top of the Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index since 2009. In 2016, Finland ranked first for the sixth consecutive year. Though the country was ranked third in 2017 and fourth in 2018, it climbed to second place in 2019, trailing behind Norway. Several factors have contributed to this success. Media consumption rates are fairly high in Finland. The rate of media consumption guarantees a strong market and healthy competition, promoting high-quality journalism. In addition, the Council for Mass Media in Finland has successfully managed a system of self-regulation among media outlets. Furthermore, as Finland is one of the least corrupt societies in the world, the government has in general avoided interfering with press freedoms, although a few exceptions to this rule have occurred in recent years.

News coverage of the coronavirus crisis has been credible and trustworthy. No news organization has published any reports whose accuracy could be questioned. On the contrary, news media organizations have proactively debunked coronavirus-related misinformation that has circulated on social media platforms (Heikkilä 2020).

"Reporters without Borders, Finland," <https://rsf.org/en/finland>

https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/supreme_court_upholds_legality_of_hs_journalists_home_search/10920367

Media Pluralism
Score: 10

Finland's media landscape is pluralistic and includes a variety of newspapers and magazines as well as social media sites. Moreover, the conditions in which Finland's journalists operate are said to be among the most favorable in the

World. In addition, Finland still boasts an impressive newspaper readership, despite a definite decline in circulation numbers in recent years. According to a recent report by Reporters without Borders, Finland ranks fourth in terms of newspaper readers per capita. However, newspapers do face the prospect of long-term decline due to the rise of the electronic media and increasing economic pressures due to a loss of advertising share and increasing costs. Indeed, during the last decade, user-generated content and online social-media platforms have revolutionized the media landscape. As a rule, newspapers are privately owned but publicly subsidized. The most recent Media Monitor Report pointed out that the high level of concentration in the Finnish media market constituted a high risk for media plurality. Although regional newspapers remain comparatively strong, most local newspapers have been assimilated into larger newspaper chains. Internet use is open and unrestricted, with 89% of the population using the internet, and broadband internet access is defined by law as a universal service that must be available to everyone. According to Official Statistics of Finland, the internet has become an established source of information concerning elections. The national broadcasting company, Yleisradio, operates several national and regional television and radio channels, and supplies a broad range of information online. Although state-owned and controlled by a parliamentary council, Yleisradio has generally been viewed as unbiased. Yleisradio is complemented by several private broadcasting companies.

Citation:

http://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suolu_k_kulttuuri_en.html#newspaper;
 Manninen, Wille. "Monitoring Media Pluralism in Europe 2017. Country Report: Finland,"
https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/61138/2018_Finland_EN.pdf
https://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2018/sutivi_2018_2018-12-04_kat_001_fi.html
 Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Use of information and communications technology by individuals [e-publication]. ISSN=2341-8710. Helsinki: Statistics Finland

Access to
Government
Information
Score: 10

The public's access to government information is in principle unrestricted. In accordance with the Finnish constitution, every Finnish citizen has the right of access to public documents and recordings. This right includes access to documents and recordings in the possession of government authorities, unless their publication has for some compelling reason been restricted by a government act. However, special categories are secret and exempt from release, including documents that relate to foreign affairs, criminal investigations, the police, security services and military intelligence. Such documents are usually kept secret for a period of 25 years, unless otherwise stated by law. One such document, the so-called Tiitinen's List, continues to be highly controversial. The list was handed over to Finland by West Germany in 1990, and is assumed to contain the names of 18 people who allegedly collaborated with the East German Intelligence and Security Service. However, to date, Finnish authorities have refused to release the document.

Finland was among the first countries to sign the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents in 2009. The 1999 act on the openness of government activities stipulates that people asking for information are not required to provide reasons for their request, and that responses to requests must be made within 14 days. Appeals of any denial can be taken to a higher authority and thereafter to the Administrative Court. The Chancellor of Justice and the Parliamentary Ombudsman can also review the appeal.

In principle, the government of Finland has tried to actively publish information on the COVID-19 pandemic. Up-to-date information on infection rates and their temporal development, the local distribution of infections, information on specific outbreaks, and the indicators upon which the government bases its risk assessments are publicly available, and the data has been communicated in plain language. The government has published information on its crisis management policies. In all of its communication, the government has stressed the scientific basis for its coronavirus actions. Furthermore, the government has encouraged citizens to follow its website, and the website of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), which provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on the coronavirus. The government website contains government decisions, information produced by the ministries on the effects of the coronavirus on different administrative sectors, and topical material on the coronavirus produced by all government ministries (OECD 2020).

Other public authorities and research agencies have also actively produced information on the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. For example, Helsinki Graduate School of Economics established an economic Situation Room with the aim of supporting rapid decision-making during the coronavirus crisis. The Situation Room consists of leading economists from Helsinki GSE and the VATT Institute for Economic Research, as well as members from several public authorities. It utilizes data from relevant public and private sources, and produces regular reports for policymakers. The data is collected and organized in close cooperation with Statistics Finland, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Bank of Finland, the Finnish Tax Administration, Kela, and other institutions (Helsinki Graduate School of Economics 2020).

Citation:

OECD, 2020. OECD Survey on the STI Policy Response to Covid-19. Accessed 28.12. 2020.
<https://stiplab.github.io/Covid19/Finland.html>

Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights
Score: 10

Civil rights are widely respected and protected in Finland. Finland is one of three countries that received the maximum aggregate score (100) in the category of political rights and civil liberties in Freedom House's 2019 Freedom in the World survey. The country's legal system provides for freedom of speech, which is also respected in practice. Furthermore, Finns enjoy full property rights and freedom of religion, with the government officially recognizing a large number of religious groups. Freedoms of association and assembly are respected in law and practice, while workers have the right to organize, bargain collectively and strike. In November 2014, after long and contentious discussions, parliament voted to provide marriage rights for same-sex couples, and adoption-rights legislation for same-sex couples became effective in March 2017.

On 16 March 2020, in the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government declared a national state of emergency that gave the government the authority to restrict people's fundamental rights. On 15 June 2020, the government stated that the COVID-19 epidemic could be managed using the regular powers available to authorities (Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2020).

Within the first month of the COVID-19 emergency, Martin Scheinin, a professor of law, identified six distinct problems in the application of emergency powers. These were the lack of parliamentary scrutiny over the declaration of the state of emergency, cabinet confusion over the complicated structure of the Emergency Powers Act and failure to synchronize it with the revised Article 23 of the constitution, the lack of expertise involved, the failure of parliamentary oversight efforts to utilize all available expertise, the risk that international human rights obligations would be neglected, and a number of exceptions and derogations (Scheinin 2020).

Later, in spring 2020, the government controversially declared that people over 70 years old should remain indoors, and it was reported that those breaking the order could face sanctions. However, it was later found that the government had no mandate to issue such an order. During the fall of 2020, the government focused on delegating measures to contain the spread of the virus to regions and municipalities, thereby avoiding the need to declare another state of emergency.

Notwithstanding these issues, popular trust in institutions has remained fairly strong. A think tank, the Finnish Business and Policy Forum (EVA), conducted a survey in June 2020, which investigated the impact of the

COVID-19 crisis on the level of trust felt by Finns toward 30 different institutions or actors influential in society. A majority of Finns stated that they trusted the government (60%) and the parliament (52%). Trust in the government had increased 33 percentage points compared to a survey made in 2018. Trust in the parliament had increased by 17 percentage points. These were the biggest shifts in trust in the survey's history, and were possibly generated by a general sense of fear (Finnish Business and Policy Forum 2020).

Citation:

"Freedom House" (<https://freedomhouse.org/>).

Finnish Business and Policy Forum, 2020. Coronan and Political Views. Finnish Business and Policy Forum (EVA). Accessed, 28.12. 2020. <https://www.eva.fi/en/blog/2020/06/11/covid-19-crisis-had-anexceptional-impact-on-finnish-political-views/>

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2020. Corona Virus Informations. Accessed, 28.12. 2020.

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/information-on-coronavirus/ministry-of-social-affairs-and-health>

Scheinin, Martin, 2020: The COVID-19 Emergency in Finland: Best Practice and Problems, VerfBlog, 2020/4/16. Accessed 18.12. 2020. <https://verfassungsblog.de/the-covid-19-emergency-in-finland-bestpractice-and-problems/>, DOI: 10.17176/20200416-092101-0.

Political Liberties

Score: 10

Political liberties are effectively protected in Finland. Finland is one of three countries that received the maximum aggregate score (100) in the category of political rights and civil liberties in Freedom House's 2021 Freedom in the World survey. Finnish law provides for freedom of speech, and this freedom is upheld in practice. Finns also enjoy freedom of religion, freedom of association and assembly, and the right to organize, bargain collectively and strike. A large majority of workers belong to trade unions, although the share of membership in trade unions has been decreasing. Women enjoy rights and liberties in Finland equal to those of men. Since the criminal code covers ethnic agitation, courts are regularly faced with the delicate task of weighing the principle of freedom of speech against the principle of forbidding hate speech. In September 2018, the Court of Appeal in Turku upheld a ban on the Nordic Resistance Movement, a National Socialist organization, which is also active in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The ban has subsequently been appealed to the Supreme Court of Finland. The constitution guarantees members of the indigenous Sami population, who comprise less than 1% of the population, cultural autonomy and the right to pursue their traditional livelihoods.

Non-discrimination

Score: 8

Rights of ethnic and religious minorities are as a rule well protected in Finland, and the criminal code provides penalties for anyone who incites violence on racial, national, ethnic or religious grounds. The rights of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland are widely respected, with Swedish recognized as an official national language, although some segments of the population, primarily represented by the Finns Party, have turned hostile

toward Finland's Swedish-speaking population. The Åland Islands, whose inhabitants speak Swedish, have historically maintained an extensive autonomy and a home-rule parliament as well as one permanent seat in the national legislature. The Sami population, comprising approximately 10,000 individuals, was granted self-government in the Sami Homeland with regard to language and culture in 1995. Finland has often been seen as a forerunner concerning its efforts to maintain an effective minority-protection policy. Cases of discrimination are rather few, although people with an immigrant background are more likely to encounter discrimination. Roma individuals, who make up a small proportion of the population, are marginalized. The Finns Party has been accused of encouraging discrimination against ethnic minorities and asylum-seekers.

Rule of Law

Legal Certainty
Score: 10

The rule of law is a basic pillar of Finnish society. When Sweden ceded Finland to Russia in 1809, the strict observation of prevailing Swedish laws and legal regulations became one of the most important tools for avoiding and circumventing Russian interference in Finnish affairs. From this emerged a political culture that prioritizes legal certainty, condemns any conflation of public and private interest, and prevents public officeholders from abusing their position for private interests.

During the state of emergency in 2020, the primary modes of contacting the judicial authorities were telephone, email and electronic services. Agencies in the Ministry of Justice's administrative branch continued to inform the public about current issues in their areas of responsibility and the level of preparedness in their respective sectors. Courts postponed hearings and canceled some already scheduled hearings. These changes in the operating environment lengthened the average duration of proceedings (Ministry of Justice, 2020).

As outlined in Martin Scheinin's article (see "Civil Rights"), the problem with declaring the state of emergency in Finland was that there was no parliamentary scrutiny of the decision. The cabinet, acting jointly with the president of the republic, declared that Finland was in a double emergency: a health emergency and an economic emergency. The emergency declaration itself was not reviewed by parliament, but when the cabinet issued a decree to use specific powers under the Emergency Powers Act (EPA), this decree was subject to parliamentary scrutiny (Scheinin 2020).

Finland does not have a Constitutional Court, but does have a parliamentary constitutional committee that consists of politicians and in which the

government has a majority. As outlined in Finnish legislation, the Constitutional Law Committee (CLC) of the parliament has reviewed the constitutional compatibility of special legislation and government decrees. The CLC highlighted shortcomings in the government's compliance with the EPA.

The chancellor of justice is tasked with scrutinizing the legality of law reforms proposed by the government before they are debated in parliament. During the COVID-19 crisis, the issue of the independence of the chancellor of justice was raised. However, among legal scholars there is a "consensus that the principles of democratic decision-making have been respected in the handling of the pandemic, as parliamentary oversight functions well, and the parliament still wields the highest legislative power in Finland" (Kimmel and Ballardini, 2020). Most of the measures implemented to contain the spread of the virus in Finland took the form of recommendations (e.g., regulations concerning the right to assembly, contact restrictions) (Tiirinki et al. 2020).

Citation:

Finnish Business and Policy Forum, 2020. Coronan and Political Views. Finnish Business and Policy Forum (EVA). Accessed, 28.12. 2020. <https://www.eva.fi/en/blog/2020/06/11/covid-19-crisis-had-anexceptional-impact-on-finnish-political-views/>

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2020. Corona Virus Informations. Accessed, 28.12. 2020. <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/information-on-coronavirus/ministry-of-social-affairs-and-health>

Kimmel, Kaisa-Maria and Ballardini, Rosa Maria, 2020. Restrictions in the Name of Health During COVID-19 in Finland. Harvard Law Blog. Accessed 11.1. 2021. <https://blog.petrieflom.law.harvard.edu/2020/05/14/finland-global-responses-covid19/>

Scheinin, Martin, 2020: The COVID-19 Emergency in Finland: Best Practice and Problems, *VerfBlog*, 2020/4/16. Accessed 18.12. 2020. <https://verfassungsblog.de/the-covid-19-emergency-in-finland-bestpractice-and-problems/>, DOI: 10.17176/20200416-092101-0.

Tiirinki H, Tynkkynen LK, Sovala M, et al. COVID-19 pandemic in Finland – Preliminary analysis on health system response and economic consequences. *Health Policy Technol.* 2020;9(4):649-662. doi: 10.1016/j.hlpt.2020.08.005

Judicial Review
Score: 9

The predominance of the rule of law has been somewhat weakened by the lack of a Constitutional Court in Finland. The need for such a court has been discussed at times, but left-wing parties in particular have historically blocked proposals for the creation of such a court. Instead, the parliament's Constitutional Law Committee has assumed the position taken in other countries by a Constitutional Court. The implication of this is that parliament is controlled by a kind of inner-parliament, an arrangement that constitutes a less than convincing compensation for a regular Constitutional Court. In addition, although courts are independent in Finland, they do not decide on the constitutionality or the conformity with law of acts of government or the public administration. Instead, the supreme supervisor of legality in Finland is the Office of the Chancellor of Justice. Together with the parliamentary ombudsman, this office monitors authorities' compliance with the law and the legality of the official acts of the government, its members and the president of

the republic. The chancellor is also charged with supervising the legal behavior of courts, authorities and civil servants.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, parliamentary oversight came under pressure in Finland. As outlined in an OECD report, the operations of the legislature were threatened by health and safety concerns, and the government asked the legislature to accommodate swift policy action, either through faster budget procedures or by improvising new ones (OECD 2020).

The government cabinet, jointly with the president of the republic, declared that Finland was in a double emergency: a health emergency and an economic emergency. The emergency declaration itself was not reviewed by parliament, but when the cabinet issued a decree to use specific powers under the Emergency Powers Act (EPA) the decree was subject to scrutiny (Scheinin 2020). However, as outlined in Finnish legislation, the Constitutional Law Committee (CLC) of the parliament carefully assessed whether the special legislation and government decrees were compatible with the constitution.

Most of the measures to contain the spread of the virus in Finland took the form of recommendations (e.g., regulations concerning the right of assembly, and contact restrictions) (Tiirinki et al. 2020). However, at times, there were problems in communicating these recommendations. For example, the government may have exceeded its mandate when it ordered elderly citizens to remain indoors. When this oversight was discovered, the government argued that it had issued a recommendation, not an order. As public trust in authorities is high, Finnish people tend to take recommendations quite literally.

Citation:

“Hallituksen painostus jyräsi oikeuskanslerin pyrkimykset korjata ongelmallisia lakiesityksiä – oikeustieteen professorit tyrmistyivät”; <http://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000005011266.html>

Kimmel, Kaisa-Maria and Ballardini, Rosa Maria, 2020. Restrictions in the Name of Health During COVID-19 in Finland. Harvard Law Blog. Accessed 11.1. 2021.

<https://blog.petrieflom.law.harvard.edu/2020/05/14/finland-global-responses-covid19/>

OECD, 2020. Policy Responses to Corona. Accessed, 28.12. 2020. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policyresponses/>

legislative-budget-oversight-of-emergency-responses-experiences-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-ba4f2ab5/

Scheinin, Martin, 2020: The COVID-19 Emergency in Finland: Best Practice and Problems, VerfBlog, 2020/4/16. Accessed 18.12. 2020. <https://verfassungsblog.de/the-covid-19-emergency-in-finland-bestpractice-and-problems/>, DOI: 10.17176/20200416-092101-0.

Appointment of
Justices
Score: 5

There are three levels of courts: local, appellate and supreme. The final court of appeal is the Supreme Court, and there is also a Supreme Administrative Court and an Ombuds office. The judiciary is independent from the executive and legislative branches. Supreme Court judges are appointed to permanent

Corruption
Prevention
Score: 9

positions by the president of the republic. They are not subject to political influence. Supreme Court justices appoint lower-court judges. The ombudsman is an independent official elected by parliament. The ombudsman and deputy ombudsman investigate complaints by citizens and conduct investigations. While formally transparent, the appointment processes do not receive much media coverage.

The overall level of corruption in Finland is low, with the country offering a solid example of how the consolidation of advanced democratic institutions may lead to the reduction of corruption. Transparency International's 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Finland at third place out of 180 countries. The country was also ranked third in 2017 and 2016. Several individual mechanisms contribute to the Finnish success, including a strict auditing of state spending; new and more efficient regulations over party financing; legal provisions that criminalize the acceptance of bribes; full access by the media and the public to relevant information; public asset declarations; and consistent legal prosecution of corrupt acts. However, the various integrity mechanisms still leave some room for potential abuse, and a 2014 European Commission report emphasized the need to make public-procurement decisions and election funding more transparent. It is also evident that positions in Finland are still filled through political appointment. Whereas only about 5% of citizens are party members, two-thirds of the state and municipal public servants are party members. Recently, several charges of political corruption involving bribery and campaign financing have been brought to light and have attracted media attention.

Citation:

Hung-En Sung, "Democracy and Political Corruption: A Cross-National Comparison," *Crime, Law & Social Change*, Vol. 41, 2004, 179-194.

Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2018,"
<https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018>

Good Governance

I. Executive Capacity

Strategic Capacity

Strategic
Planning
Score: 9

Strategic planning has considerable influence on government decision-making in Finland. The strategic goals of the government program are recorded in specific government-strategy documents. These strategy documents cover a one-year period and include a plan for pursuing priority goals, a notice of intent for upcoming key decisions and indicators for evaluating government performance. The implementation of the government program is assessed by a report halfway through the cabinet's tenure, which defines how strategic goals should be attained through the rest of the cabinet's time in office. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) assists the prime minister and the government in their work and is responsible for the planning of social policy legislation that does not fall within the competence of any other ministry. The government often launches policy programs to ensure its key objectives are met. Meanwhile, the preparation and monitoring of programs is delegated to ministerial groups. In addition, the Committee for the Future deals with future-related matters. As a former entrepreneur, former Prime Minister Juha Sipilä gave the government program an even more strategic turn. For some of its policy objectives, the government utilized trial projects to assess reform impacts. The basic-income trial project, which was run with 2,000 participants nationwide in 2017 and 2018, was an example of this kind of new strategic evidence-based planning.

Finland did have a pre-existing crisis management system in place before the pandemic, but its ability to detect and monitor an incipient crisis through use of an effective early warning system, appropriate risk assessment mechanisms and relevant expertise was limited. In an address to the parliament in April 2020, Prime Minister Marin stated: "At the beginning of the year, we had no idea that the crisis would be so profound and serious. Although Finland has a high level of preparedness for different situations when compared to many

other countries, we were also surprised by the epidemic and its social and economic effects” (Prime Minister’s Announcement 2020).

Citation:

Kangas, Olli, Signe Jauhiainen, Miska Simanainen, Minna Ylikännö (eds.). The Basic Income Experiment in Finland 2017-2018. Preliminary Results. Reports and Memorandums of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2019:9.

Prime Minister’s Announcement 2020. Corona Crisis Management. Accessed, 28.12. 2020.
<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/10616/paaministerin-ilmoitus-koronakriisin-hoidosta>

Expert Advice
 Score: 7

The government predominately organizes the collection of scholarly advice informally, for example, by consulting scientific experts on committee report drafts. Some formal bodies, such as temporary working groups, ad hoc committees and permanent councils, also exist. In general, various permanent and non-permanent committees play an important role in structuring scholarly advice in government decision-making. An example of a permanent group that advises the government and ministries in research and technology matters is the Research and Innovation Council. A government resolution on a comprehensive reform of state research institutes and research funding, which aims to make the use of sectoral research in governmental decision-making more efficient and focused, was adopted in 2013, and implemented between 2014 and 2017. The Prime Minister’s Office makes a yearly plan for realizing strategic research objectives and calls for the systemic use of research projects and data for decision-making, steering and operating procedures. Projects under the government’s strategic research goals are managed by the Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland. The PMO appointed a scientific expert panel to study the effect of the pandemic in the spring of 2020.

Interministerial Coordination

GO Expertise
 Score: 9

As a ministry in itself, the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) has the capacity to evaluate proposed policy. The PMO’s resources have been increased considerably over the last decade. The primary function of the PMO is to support the duties of the prime minister, who directs the work of government and coordinates the preparation and consideration of government business. The PMO monitors the implementation of the government program and coordinates Finland’s EU policy. In addition, the PMO is tasked with coordinating communications between the government and various ministries, planning future-oriented social policies, and promoting cooperation between the government and the various branches of public administration. The PMO has six departments: the Government EU Affairs Department, the Government Administration Department, the Ownership Steering Department, the Government Communications Department, the Government Strategy Department and the Government Session Unit. The PMO has a state secretary,

a permanent state undersecretary and some 550 employees distributed across several task-specific units.

Citation:
<http://vnk.fi/en/frontpage>

Line Ministries
 Score: 9

The guiding rule in Finland is that each ministry is, within its mandate, responsible for the preparation of issues that fall within the scope of government and also for the proper functioning of the administration. Given this framework, rather than line ministries involving the Prime Minister's Office in policy preparation, the expectation is that the Prime Minister's Office involves ministries in its own policy preparations. In practice, of course, the patterns of interaction are not fixed. For one thing, policy programs and other intersectoral subject matters in the cabinet program are a concern for the Prime Minister's Office as well as for the ministries, and efforts must be coordinated. The government's analysis, assessment and research activities that support policymaking across the ministries are coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). In addition, because decision-making is collective and consensual in nature, ministry attempts to place items on the cabinet's agenda without involving the Prime Minister's Office will fail. Finland has a recent tradition of fairly broad-based coalition governments, although the Sipilä government was an exception, as its majority in parliament had shrunk to 52.5% by the end of its term. The Rinne government enjoyed the support of 58% of parliamentarians when it came into office. The tradition of broad-based coalition necessarily amalgamates ideological antagonisms, and thereby mitigates against fragmentation along ministerial and sectoral lines.

Citation:
 Jaakko Nousiainen, "Politiikan huipulla. Ministerit ja ministeriöt Suomen parlamentaarisessa järjestelmässä," Porvoo: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, 1992, p. 163.

Cabinet
 Committees
 Score: 10

Cabinet committees effectively prepare cabinet meetings. The government has four statutory ministerial committees: the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy (which meets with the president when pressing issues arise), the Ministerial Committee on European Union Affairs, the Ministerial Finance Committee and the Ministerial Committee on Economic Policy. Additionally, ad hoc ministerial committees can be appointed by the government plenary session. All these committees are chaired by the prime minister, who also chairs sessions of the Economic Council, the Research and Innovation Council, and the Title Board. In addition, there are several ministerial working groups. The primary task of these committees and groups is to prepare cabinet meetings by helping to create consensus between relevant ministries and interests. In all, a large majority of issues are reviewed first by cabinet committees and working groups.

Ministerial
Bureaucracy
Score: 10

Citation:

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/government/ministerial-committees>

Cabinet meetings are prepared by ministry officials and civil servants. Findings from a large-scale analysis several years ago into the internal politics and practices of the cabinet and ministries emphasized the existence of a cyclical culture of dependence between ministers and senior officials. One expression of this mutual dependence, according to the same analysis, was that ministers put greater trust in the advice of their subordinate civil servants than in the advice of ministerial colleagues. This pattern extends to all aspects of the cabinet's agenda. At times, civil servants can exercise significant influence. The former state secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Raimo Sailas, was widely considered to be highly influential. With regard to policy programs and similar intersectoral issues, coordination between civil servants of separate ministries happens as a matter of course. In specific matters, coordination may even be dictated. For instance, statements from the Ministry of Finance on economic and financial matters must be obtained by other ministries. On the whole, given the decision-making culture, civil servants in different ministries are expected to engage in coordination. An unwritten code of behavior prescribes harmonious and smooth activity, and ministers or ministries are expected to subject projects that are burdensome or sensitive to a collective examination and analysis.

Citation:

Jaakko Nousiainen, "Politiikan huipulla. Ministerit ja ministeriöt Suomen parlamentaarissa järjestelmässä." Porvoo: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, 1992, p. 128; Eero Murto, *Power Relationship Between Ministers and Civil Servants*, pp. 189-208 in Lauri Karvonen, Heikki Paloheimo and Tapio Raunio, eds. *The Changing Balance of Power in Finland*, Stockholm: Santérus Förlag, 2016.

Informal
Coordination
Score: 10

Intersectoral coordination has generally been perceived as an important issue in Finnish politics, but rather few institutional mechanisms have in fact been introduced. One of these is the *Iltakoulu* (evening session), an informal meeting between the ministers with the objective of discussing and preparing key matters to be handled in the government's plenary session the following day. In addition, there are other informal government meetings and items can also be referred to informal ministerial working groups. To a considerable extent, then, coordination proceeds effectively through informal mechanisms. Recent large-scale policy programs have enhanced intersectoral policymaking; additionally, Finland's membership in the European Union has of course necessitated increased interministerial coordination. Recent research in Finland has only focused tangentially on informal mechanisms, but various case studies suggest that the system of coordination by advisory councils has performed well.

Digitalization for
Interministerial
Coordination
Score: 9

Citation:

Eero Murto, Power Relationship Between Ministers and Civil Servants, pp. 189-208 in Lauri Karvonen, Heikki Paloheimo and Tapio Raunio, eds. The Changing Balance of Political Power in Finland, Stockholm: Santérus Förlag, 2016.

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/government/informal-government-meetings-and-ministerial-working-groups>

Finland is a global leader for information and communications technology, and the digitalization of public services was a key project in Sipilä's government program. In line with this ambition, the government set out to digitalize internal administrative processes. The government administration department within the Prime Minister's Office, which has a central role in interministerial coordination, has a special Information Management and ICT Division. The government plenary session adopted an electronic tool for session materials in 2015. Ministers follow the progress of decision-making at plenary sessions on tablet computers. Finland is ranked second overall in the European Union's Digital Economy and Society Index (2021), and also holds third place with regard to digital public services.

Citation:

"Inclusive and competent Finland – a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society - Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government 2019," <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/marin/government-programme>

"Digital Economy and Society Index," <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi>

Evidence-based Instruments

RIA Application
Score: 9

Systematic impact assessment is today a routine part of the Finnish legislative drafting process. Regulatory impact assessment activities have comprised, for instance, a series of evaluation reports by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that deal with principles of development policy, partner countries and geographic regions. Furthermore, assessments have investigated the activities of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and an international evaluation of the Finnish national innovation system, commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, has been performed.

The general framework for regulatory impact assessments is grounded in a program-management system governing intersectoral policy programs. This framework was initiated in 2007 and is still valid as a guide to impact assessment. An independent Council of Regulatory Impact Analysis was established in December 2015 at the Prime Minister's Office as part of the Sipilä government's program. The Council is responsible for issuing statements on government proposals and on their regulatory impact assessments. In April 2019, the government appointed the second term of the Council (April 2019 to April 2022). The Council considered 30 draft government proposals in 2017, and 27 in 2018. The verdict has not been

favorable as regards the overall quality of lawmaking, as the Council has found impact assessments to have been deficient in a significant proportion of proposals.

Several government bills have been rejected by the Constitutional Committee in parliament. These included proposals on social and healthcare reform as well as proposals to contain the spread of COVID-19 virus. The government proposals were criticized by the committee as being poorly prepared, and as lacking sufficient impact assessment.

“Impact Assessment in Legislative Drafting. Guidelines,” Ministry of Justice, Finland. Publication 2008:4; Auri Pakarinen, Jyrki Tala and Laura Hämynen, “Regulatory Impact Assessment in the Finnish Government’s Proposals in 2009,” National Research Institute of Legal Policy, Research Communications no. 104; “Better Regulation,” Helsinki, Ministry of Justice, 2014; <http://oikeusministerio.fi/en/index/basicprovisions/legislation/parempisaantely.html> Prime Minister’s Office, Finland: “Finnish Council of Regulatory Impact Analysis,” <http://vnk.fi/en/council-of-regulatory-impact-analysis>. “Finnish Council of Regulatory Impact Analysis Annual Review 2018,” <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-287-772-7>”

Quality of RIA
Process
Score: 8

Impact assessment guidelines adopted in 2007 still provide a general framework for the process of regulatory impact assessment. The Revision Bureau of the Ministry of Justice’s Law Drafting Department monitors compliance with these impact assessment guidelines. Impact assessments cover the economic, administrative, environmental and social impacts of proposed legislation. The guidelines describe what kind of impact may be involved, how the impact may be assessed, and what methods and information sources are available. The guidelines also specify the extent to which this information must be provided in the assessments. For instance, assessments may deal with proposals’ potential economic impact on households, businesses and public finances as well as overall economic impact. Concerning methodology, guidelines recommend the use of statistical data, questionnaire data, expert analyses and when necessary, qualitative methods. Generally speaking, the regulatory impact assessment process is well-structured and of a high quality. However, in its annual review for 2017 assessment, the Finnish Council of Regulatory Impact noted that although guidelines for drafting laws were available, the guidelines tended to be somewhat inconsistent and overlapping. In its corresponding report for 2018, the Council noted that the quality of impact assessments had improved, but also pointed out that more resources were needed in order to strengthen ministries’ expertise in drafting legislation. During the pandemic, ministries’ capacity to prepare new legal proposals and carry out impact assessments was overstretched. This was particularly true of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, which prepared a large number of law proposals and decrees relating to efforts to contain the COVID-19 virus.

Citation:

Ministry of Justice (2008): "Impact Assessment in Legislative Drafting – Guidelines." Helsinki, Publication 2008:4.

<http://oikeusministerio.fi/fi/index/toimintajataavoitteet/lakiensaaminen/parempisaantely/vaikutustenarviointi/saadosehdotustenvaikutustenarviointiohjeet.html>.

http://vnk.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/arviointineuvosto-vaikutusten-arviointien-tasoa-on-parannettava

"Finnish Council of Regulatory Impact Analysis: Annual Review 2017.", <https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/7861578/Finnish+Council+of+Regulatory+Impact+Analysis+Annual+Review+2017/>

"Finnish Council of Regulatory Impact Analysis Annual Review 2018," <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-287-772-7>"

Sustainability
Check
Score: 9

The Finnish government understands that regular and complete assessments of regulations are fundamental to the governing of complex and open societies and economies. In consequence, the country has a comprehensive regulatory impact assessment program in place. Also, Finland has formally adopted a regulatory impact assessment strategy that contains instructions to be carried out when drafting legislative proposals, complemented by separate instructions issued by ministries. Assessments involve the use of multiple indicator sets, various interests are consulted and different techniques used. Generally speaking, aspects of sustainability form an integral part of the assessment process. Variations between forecasts and actual outcomes are monitored over time. Every four years, the government submits a report to parliament on the progress made in implementing Agenda 2030 goals in Finland.

Quality of Ex
Post Evaluation
Score: 9

Consultation with experts and stakeholders is a natural phase in the Finnish lawmaking process. In addition, the public is invited to comment on draft proposals online. Furthermore, all proposals for changing statutes must be accompanied by an assessment of their impact across several aspects of society (e.g., the economy and environment). However, the OECD has pointed out that although ex post evaluations are frequently carried out, Finland lacks a systematic strategy for the ex post evaluation of regulations. The pandemic has not impacted the process of parliamentary consultation.

Citation:

"Säädösehdotusten vaikutusten arviointi," Oikeusministeriö, http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/76082/saadosehdotusten_vaikutusten_arviointi_ohjeet.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

OECD: "Better Regulation in Europe: Finland." <http://www.oecd.org/gov/regulatory-policy/45054846.htm>.

OECD (2018), OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook 2018, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264303072-en>.

Opinion service webpage: lausuntopalvelu.fi

Governments Registry for Projects and Initiatives (<http://valtioneuvosto.fi/hankkeet>).

Societal Consultation

Public
Consultation
Score: 8

In Finland's consensus-oriented political system, interest organizations and associations are regularly consulted. Although the corporatist system adopted in the 1960s has now declined, the exchange of views and information with a variety of social interests is still part and parcel of the everyday activities of the Finnish government. Through various mechanisms such as committee hearings, joint-council memberships and expert testimony, bills and drafts are circulated to interested parties who are then invited to critique the draft legislation. Various laws and guidelines, such as the Act on the Openness of Government Activities, contain provisions on consultation and participation. By and large, the system functions reasonably well. Admittedly, consultation tends to favor organized groups and neglects outside participation. It is also the case that consultation is carried out mainly to build consensus rather than to gather support or assess impact. However, in the long run, this helps to generate public support for government policies. Recent developments have indicated a weakening in the role played by the tripartite negotiation of labor-market agreements between the government, employers' associations and employee organizations.

According to Greve et al. (2020), the role of trade unions and work councils as social partners has been more limited in Finland than in other Nordic countries. They were consulted during the preparation of the government support packages, but not as extensively as was the case in Denmark, for example. One reason for this could be that many unemployment-related issues (e.g., short-term work and wage supplement systems) were already covered by national regulation.

Apart from health authorities and appointed expert groups, the government did not consult with societal actors such as children's rights activists or cultural workers in preparing its COVID-19 strategy response.

Citation:

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/rinne/government-programme/finland-built-on-trust-and-labour-market-equality>

Greve, B, Blomquist, P, Hvinden, B, van Gerven, M. Nordic welfare states – still standing or changed by the COVID-19 crisis? Soc Policy Adm. 2020; 1– 17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12675>

Policy Communication

Coherent
Communication
Score: 7

Since the prime minister's position is one of *primus inter pares* (first among equals), rather than one of absolute leadership, it is natural that the government's policy positions are advanced through discussion and

consultation rather than through directives and commands. Furthermore, as directives and commands would challenge the principle of freedom of speech, such communication would probably be regarded as illegitimate and foster opposition. In practice, therefore, contradictory statements are rare. However, the fact that Finland has a tradition of broad-based umbrella coalitions that accommodate diverse interests and ideological shadings serves to diversify communication. This was true of communications from the Sipilä government, which were notably vague and often undecided, reflecting tensions or even conflicts between the Finns Party and the other government parties. The first months of the Rinne government, which was ideologically broader than the Sipilä government, revealed internal disagreements between the coalition partners with respect to a number of policy areas. The existence of an agreed-upon and fairly detailed government plan in principle serves to streamline communications. However, the Sipilä government demonstrated that the plan can be interpreted in different ways by different parties, and the same conclusion seemed appropriate for the Rinne government. At the end of 2019, Rinne resigned as prime minister and was replaced by Sanna Marin, who has been highly successful in aligning her communication with government strategy.

As infection rates rose again, the government reintroduced the state of emergency in March 2021, along with fairly strict lockdown measures in the most affected areas. In addition, the government took the contentious decision to concentrate all communication activities in the Prime Minister's Office under the Emergency Powers Act.

The government tried to pass laws containing even stricter restrictions, but was forced to back down after the parliament's Constitutional Law Committee criticized the proposal. The incident made clear that the government lacked sufficient legislative tools to contain the epidemic. Furthermore, municipal elections were postponed from mid-April to June at the last minute, exposing weaknesses in pandemic preparations.

A third controversial item of public discussion concerned the prioritization of vaccinations in the most affected areas. The question became politically contentious, and the government was not able to implement the decision early enough to reduce hospitalizations and mortality.

Implementation

Government
Effectiveness
Score: 7

Government measures designed to soften the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis have been relatively successful. The government and regional authorities have had sufficient funds and trained staff available to

allow them to implement the measures. Similarly, the organizational competencies and policy instruments available to the implementing authorities have allowed them to implement needed measures.

Citation:

Ville Pitkänen, "Kenen ääni kuuluu hallitusohjelmassa?," Kanava, 2015, Nr 6, pp. 40-42;
 valtioneuvosto.fi/implementation-of-the-government-programme;
 valtioneuvosto.fi/hallitusohjelman toteutus/karkihankkeiden-toimintasuunnitelma.;
 "Finland, a land of solutions: Government action plan 2018-2019.,"
http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/160985/29_18_Finland_a_land_of_Solutions_2018-2019_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
 "Economic Policy County Report 2018," https://www.talouspolitiikanarviointineuvosto.fi/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Report2018_fixed.pdf.

Ministerial
Compliance
Score: 8

A number of mechanisms are in place that serve to bind ministers to the government's program. Government programs result from negotiations between the political parties forming the government; in consequence, the coalition partners and ministries closely monitor implementation. Cabinet agenda issues are generally prepared, discussed and coordinated in cabinet committees as well as in informal groups and meetings. On the whole, ministers are closely watched and are expected to be integral parts of cooperative units. They would no doubt find it difficult as well as unrewarding to pursue paths of narrow self-interest.

Monitoring
Ministries
Score: 8

The government monitoring of ministries is indirect in nature and the same mechanisms that foster ministerial compliance tend to have monitoring functions as well. These include the preparation and coordination of matters in cabinet committee meetings as well as other formal and informal meetings. In general, the various forms of interministerial coordination also fulfill monitoring functions. However, these forms are characterized by cooperative and consultative interactions rather than critical interactions. While the Prime Minister's Office does monitor ministries, the monitoring is implicit rather than explicit.

Monitoring
Agencies,
Bureaucracies
Score: 8

All ministries use results-management practices to monitor agencies in their various task areas. In many cases, a balanced score system is used. However, not all agencies are monitored to the same extent. Some agencies, such as the National Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes), which operates under the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment have a high degree of autonomy, with monitoring taking place only on a general level. Other agencies are accorded a somewhat lesser degree of autonomy. However, as a rule, they do have autonomy with respect to day-to-day operations. Monitoring takes many forms and a system of political undersecretaries of state has been designed to support the individual ministers in their monitoring activities. A Tekes review examining the pandemic support measures targeting firms revealed irregularities that related to the hasty execution of the support program.

Task Funding
Score: 8

Municipal governments have a right to assess taxes, collecting more than twice as much as the central government in income taxes. A government grant system additionally enables local governments to continue to provide public services even when experiencing a funding gap. In essence, a portion of locally collected taxes is put into a common pool, from which transfers are made to financially weak local governments. The central government establishes strict standards and service-provision requirements intended to cover all citizens. However, local governments are tasked with providing these services, which means that some municipalities are unable to meet the standards without increasing taxes. Given that local government units differ greatly in size and resources, they are in unequal positions in terms of capacity and performance efficiency. A large-scale reform of municipalities and services, started in 2006 has led to a considerable reduction in the number of municipalities. Among other goals, the reform aims to secure sufficient financing and an efficient provision of services across the country. The social and healthcare reform will create 21 new public entities (“regions”) which will take over the responsibility of organizing social services and healthcare in 2023.

Citation:
<http://alueuudistus.fi>

Constitutional
Discretion
Score: 9

Municipalities in Finland have a long tradition of independence in specific policy areas, while also implementing policies of the central government. In particular, municipalities are responsible for the implementation of educational, healthcare, social and infrastructural services. Municipalities may not be burdened with new functions or with financial or other obligations, nor may they be deprived of their functions and rights, except by an act of parliament. The control that the state exercises over municipalities does not imply any general state right to intervene. Control may be exercised only in accordance with specific legal provisions. Thus, subnational autonomy is guaranteed and protected by law. Still, the autonomy of local government may be curtailed in practice by financial pressures.

National
Standards
Score: 7

Since local authorities have the constitutional right to use their own discretion, the central government has limited capacity to ensure that national standards are consistently met. Local governments are separate from the central government, with municipal authorities recognized as existing independently of the state. Still, appeals to administrative courts regarding decisions taken by local authorities are possible on grounds that the decisions were not made in proper order or were otherwise illegal. In certain and very few specific matters, such as environmental or social-care issues, local government decisions must be confirmed by state authorities. A reform of municipalities and services aims to increase the effectiveness of public-services provision in

Effective
Regulatory
Enforcement
Score: 9

peripheral regions and improve local governments' fiscal sustainability. Such a reform is likely to enhance the status of the subnational level further vis-à-vis the national level. However, the extent to which these reforms will meet the stated goals remains an open and much-debated question. The new public entities called regions will assume responsibility for organizing social services and healthcare in 2023.

In general, powerful vested interests are not favored in Finland. To a certain extent, this can be explained by the fact that Finnish governments tend to be coalition governments, often made up of parties from both the left and right.

Adaptability

Domestic
Adaptability
Score: 9

Most important adaptations have resulted from Finland's EU membership. Finland was among the first EU member states to adopt the euro and government structures have in several instances been adapted to EU norms. The Parliamentary Grand Committee is tasked with preparing and adopting EU legislation. Furthermore, oversight of the EU secretariat, responsible for the coordination of EU affairs, has been transferred from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister's Office. A coordination system exists to ensure that Finland maintains positions in line with its overall EU policy. This system involves relevant ministries, a cabinet committee on EU affairs and various EU subcommittees. These subcommittees are sector-specific governmental organs and constitute the foundation for the promotion of EU affairs within the state's structures. The National Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2022 was adopted in 2014, introducing measures to mitigate the adverse consequences of climate change. The implementation of the plan is coordinated by a national monitoring group. The National Climate Change Act, which lays down provisions on the planning system for climate change policy and monitoring of the implementation of climate objectives, has been in force since June 2015. A medium-term climate change policy plan under the act was adopted by the parliament in March 2018.

In 2021, Finland was still very much in crisis mode. The pandemic was far from over, and public authorities' main focus was to continue containing the negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis. As of the time of writing, it was not known whether the government had evaluated its crisis management system or initiated reforms to enhance preparedness. However, a number of expert groups have discussed these topics in their reports. As early as April 2020, the Prime Minister's Office appointed a working group tasked with planning Finland's exit from the COVID-19 crisis and determining what measures would be implemented to deal with its aftermath.

The Prime Minister's Office also appointed a 13-member multidisciplinary scientific panel to support the working group. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Finance appointed a working group of four economists to prepare an expert assessment of the impact of the coronavirus crisis and recommend measures that could be used to limit the damage to the Finnish economy. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment appointed a high-profile group to propose measures to enhance well-being and equality in the aftermath of the coronavirus epidemic. The aim was to produce proposals to prevent the emergence of lasting problems, social exclusion and an increase in inequality following the lifting of the restrictive measures used to tackle the epidemic (OECD 2020).

Citation:

Ministry of the Environment, "National climate change policy," http://www.ym.fi/en-US/The_environment/Climate_and_air/Mitigation_of_climate_change/National_climate_policy

OECD, 2020. OEDC Survey on the STI Policy Response to Covid-19. Accessed 28.12. 2020. <https://stiplab.github.io/Covid19/F inland.html>

International
Coordination
Score: 8

Typically, global public goods are best addressed collectively, on a multilateral basis, with cooperation in the form of international laws, agreements and protocols. Finland is a partner to several such modes of cooperation and contributes actively to the implementation of several global frameworks. In its climate policy, Finland is committed to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and EU legislation. The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for coordinating climate negotiations, and specifically, within the framework of the European Union, Finland is committed to bringing down its national annual average carbon emissions. Finland held the chair of the Arctic Council between 2017 and 2019, the presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2021, and the presidency of the Nordic Council in 2022. These and other commitments notwithstanding, Finland cannot be regarded a dominant actor with regard to protecting global public goals. Given its relatively high level of knowledge, strong research capacities, and the existence of frameworks for policy coordination and monitoring, Finland does have the institutional capacities to participate in global governance. However, the capacities are not utilized to their fullest extent. The Rinne/Marin government's program underlined the importance of climate protection and ecological sustainability, and aimed at solidifying Finland's pioneering role in this area worldwide, but it remains to be seen how these goals will be realized.

Given the global characteristic of the pandemic, the Finnish government made remarkably little effort to promote international coordination. On the contrary,

it has focused strongly on national efforts to contain the spread of the virus, centered on virological and epidemiological concerns. However, experts from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health have attended meetings of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare have liaised with the ECDC and WHO. This collaboration has ensured that the impact of national policies on these global challenges have been assessed, and then incorporated into the government's formulation, coordination and monitoring of policies. The Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare has established connections with similar agencies in other Nordic countries. These contacts have been used to exchange information and experiences on a weekly basis. However, decisions regarding the closure of borders between nation states have been taken at the national level, a practice that has created tensions between the Nordic countries.

The country's national responses have demonstrated little solidarity with regard to the situation beyond Finland's borders. However, the Finnish R&I sector has worked with its European and global counterparts to find ways to respond to the COVID-19 epidemic by using and leveraging existing collaborations, partnerships and projects (OECD 2020).

Institutions such as the Nordic Council could have provided a platform for coordination within the Nordic region. However, it seems that the Finnish government has been unwilling to engage effectively in regional cooperation. Finland has appropriate interministerial coordination groups in place, led by figures from the center of government, but their activities have focused almost exclusively on domestic matters. This indicates that the impact of national policies on global challenges has not been systematically assessed and incorporated into the formulation, coordination and monitoring of policies across government.

OECD, 2020. OECD Survey on the STI Policy Response to Covid-19. Accessed 28.12. 2020.
<https://stiplab.github.io/Covid19/Finland.html>

www.motiva.fi/en/energy_in_finland/national_climate_and_energy_strategy
http://valtioneuvosto.fi/documents/10184/1427398/Ratkaisujen+Suomi_EN_YHDISTETTY_netti.pdf/8d2e1a66-e24a-4073-8303-ee3127fbfcac

Organizational Reform

Self-monitoring
 Score: 10

The monitoring and evaluation of existing institutional models forms an important element of the Finnish political and administrative system. Earlier attempts to improve the proportionality of the electoral system and alter

constituency sizes are examples of how evaluation and monitoring processes in Finland mainly focus on administrative and steering issues. A system of program management that introduced new measures for monitoring the government plan was implemented several years ago. This monitoring system has been adopted as well as improved by subsequent governments. The Stubb cabinet (2014 – 2015) made monitoring data publicly available. The same policy was followed by the Sipilä cabinet. For example, progress toward realization of the 26 main goals and five main reforms listed in the government plan were reported online and updated monthly. The Rinne government launched a joint communication model for its major reform projects, managed by the Government Communications Department. One of this body's central tasks is to provide an overview of the implementation of reforms.

However, the pandemic has disrupted many government plans. The Marin government has not made any changes to its program, but the pandemic has clearly weakened the government's capacity to implement its stated goals.

Citation:

<http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/implementation-of-the-government-programme/information;>

"Government Programme Monitoring Data," <https://www.avoindata.fi/data/fi/dataset/hallitusohjelman-seurantadata>;

Valtioneuvoston kanslia, "Jyrki Kataisen ja Alexander Stubbin hallitusohjelmien loppuseuranta 2015," <http://valtioneuvosto.fi/documents/10184/321857/Hallitusohjelmien+loppuseuranta+032015.pdf/44d7de02-958c-4b1c-8633-201038a0f2f5>;

Toimintasuunnitelma strategisen hallitusohjelman kärkihankkeiden ja reformien toimeenpanemiseksi 2015-2019. Päivitys 2016. Hallituksen julkaisusarja 2/2016.

"Government Communications Strategy." Publications of the Finnish Government 2019:30

Institutional
Reform
Score: 7

While institutional arrangements have not changed much, the Marin government has continuously considered plans to promote and implement strategic aims within government. The government initially appointed six strategic ministerial working groups, in which ministers from different departments guided and directed the implementation of government-program items within specific policy areas. The pandemic disrupted efforts to develop institutional arrangements further. Three additional ministerial working groups have since been appointed to deal with the issues of sustainable growth; the digital transformation, the data economy and public administration; and coordination of the COVID-19 response.

Citation:

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/marin/ministerial-working-groups>

II. Executive Accountability

Citizens' Participatory Competence

Political
Knowledge
Score: 9

Democracy requires that the public and its representatives have the means to hold government accountable. In this respect Finnish democracy is effective, though not perfect. Information on government policies and decisions is widely available online and many policy fields are debated at great length on television or in other media. Newspaper readership rates are still high in Finland. Nevertheless, while some issues are widely debated in the media and attract broad general attention, other less media-friendly or stimulating issues pass largely unnoticed.

The public's evaluative and participatory competencies constitute a weak spot. Survey results suggest that the level of political knowledge among young people, particularly those with a low level of education, is rather low. At the same time, evidence suggests that the degree of interest and participation varies significantly across policy issues and levels of authority. Results indicate, for instance, that young cohorts tend to be familiar with supranational politics, while women are familiar with matters close to people's everyday lives. Recently, the extensive use and consumption of social media for the purposes of political and everyday communication has been said to enhance the public's political knowledge while also endangering the production of independent and broad-based information.

Finnish people have high levels of trust in the media. Nevertheless, the country is not immune to the fragmenting news landscape. Among certain parts of the population, people trust social media influencers more than they do the mainstream media (Heikkilä 2020).

During the pandemic, the government has persistently explained its policy measures and why it was choosing specific measures. This has included communication describing the crisis assessments underlying specific policy measures and timelines. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare has also provided information for the general public. Information has been communicated via press conferences, social media posts, websites and press releases.

As with other areas of the government's crisis management, the communication of the measures taken has in a sense been a victim of its own success. The repeated press conferences, and the communication of detailed

and complex information related to COVID-19, have increased the population's psychological distress. The government has never been satisfied with the population's reactions and behavior. Consequently, it has intensified its communications, adopting an increasingly paternalistic tone in communicating its measures.

Citation:

Elo, Kimmo ja Rapeli, Lauri. 2008. "Suomalaisten politiikkatietämys." Helsinki: Oikeusministeriön julkaisu 2008:6

Rapeli, Lauri. 2014. "Comparing Local, National and EU Knowledge: The Ignorant Public Reassessed." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 37: 428-446.

Heikkilä, Melissa, 2020. Influencer to fight Corona Virus. Accessed, 28.12. 2020.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/finland-taps-influencers-as-critical-actors-amid-coronavirus-pandemic/>

Open
Government
Score: 9

According to the Statistics Act (280/2004), there are four official statistical authorities in Finland.

Statistics Finland, the Natural Resources Institute Finland, the National Institute for Health and Welfare, and Finnish Customs. Each authority is mandated to collect data. In addition, there are a number of other authorities that produce official statistical materials. Statistical figures are published by Official Statistics of Finland, which publishes nearly 300 statistical datasets covering 26 different topics. The basic data of the Official Statistics of Finland is publicly available on the internet, free of charge.

In principle, the government of Finland has tried to publish information actively on the COVID-19 pandemic. It has disseminated up-to-date information on infection rates and their temporal development, the local distribution of infections, details on specific outbreaks, and the indicators upon which it bases its risk assessments. The underlying data has been communicated in plain language. It has published information on its crisis management policies, and in all of its communication, stressed the scientific basis for its coronavirus actions. Furthermore, the government has encouraged citizens to pay attention to updates on its website and the website of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), both of which provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on issues related to the pandemic. The government website contains government decisions, information produced by the ministries on the effects of the coronavirus on different administrative sectors, as well as topical material on the coronavirus produced by all government ministries (OECD 2020).

Other public authorities and research agencies have also actively produced information on the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. For example, the Helsinki Graduate School of Economics established an economic Situation Room, with the aim of supporting rapid decision-making during the

coronavirus crisis. The Situation Room consists of leading economists from Helsinki GSE and the VATT Institute for Economic Research, as well as representatives of several public agencies.

However, in the spring of 2020, the leader of an economic expert group appointed by the government publicly complained that the government had not shared the assumptions used in epidemiological models to predict the spread of the virus. Only after extensive public pressure (Lahti, Wallgren, Kulmala 2020) did the government release this information. The affair concerned the R0 number used in statistical models, which is used to predict the way the virus will spread in the future. According to the critics, the government prevented independent epidemiological experts from forming their own assessments of the spread of the virus among the population.

Citation:

Lahti, Leo & Wallgren, Thomas & Kulmala, Markku (2020): Laskentamallit eivät lähtökohtaisesti ole salassa pidettäviä [Statistical Models are not by Definition Classified Information], Helsingin Sanomat 3.5.2020, <https://www.hs.fi/mielipide/art-2000006494641.html>

OECD, 2020. OECD Survey on the STI Policy Response to Covid-19. Accessed 28.12. 2020.

<https://stiplab.github.io/Covid19/Finland.html> Tilastokeskus, "Katsaus kansalliseen tilastotoimeen 2015,"

https://www.stat.fi/static/media/uploads/org/tilastotoimi/katsaus_tilastotoimeen_2015.pdf

National Statistical Service, https://www.stat.fi/org/tilastotoimi/index_en.html

Legislative Actors' Resources

Parliamentary
Resources
Score: 9

Parliamentarians' resources for obtaining information were greatly improved in the 1990s through the creation of a parliamentary assistant system. Currently, some 130 assistants work in a parliament of 200 sitting legislators. However, critics have argued that this system has become too comprehensive and expensive. The assistants perform a variety of tasks, some of which relate closely to the procurement of information and general expertise. Members of parliament are also assisted by the Parliamentary Office, whose task it is to establish the necessary conditions for the parliament to carry out its duties. Employing a staff of 440, the office is also responsible for providing personal assistants. Furthermore, members of parliament are assisted by the Information and Communication Department, which includes the Library of Parliament, the Research Service and the Parliament Information Office. The Library of Parliament has about 40 employees and maintains a number of service entities. A Committee Secretariat provides secretarial services for the parliamentary committees and handles the preparation of matters brought before the committees. Additionally, the Research Service supplies information, documents, publications and other materials that are required by members of parliament and other actors involved in parliamentary work. As legislators each serve on an average of two parliamentary committees, they also benefit

from the information and knowledge provided by the various experts regularly consulted in committee hearings.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the parliamentary oversight process came under pressure in Finland. As outlined in an OECD report, the operations of the legislature were threatened by health and safety concerns, and the government asked the legislature to accommodate swift policy action, either through faster budget procedures or by improvising new ones (OECD 2020). The government cabinet, jointly with the president of the republic, declared that Finland was in a double emergency: a health emergency and an economic emergency. The emergency declaration itself was not reviewed by parliament, but when the cabinet issued a decree to use specific powers under the Emergency Powers Act (EPA) the decree was subject to legislative oversight (Scheinin 2020). As outlined in Finnish legislation, the Constitutional Law Committee (CLC) of the parliament carefully reviewed the special legislation and government decrees to determine whether they were compatible with the constitution. Among legal scholars there is a “consensus that the principles of democratic decision-making have been respected in the handling of the pandemic, as parliamentary oversight functions well, and the parliament still wields the highest legislative power in Finland” (Kimmel and Ballardini, 2020).

Citation:

<http://lib.eduskunta.fi/Resource.phx/library/organization/people.htm>

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tietoaeduskunnasta/Organisaatio/eduskunta-tyonantajana/Sivut/default.aspx>

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tietoaeduskunnasta/kirjasto/tietoaikirjastosta/tekijat/Sivut/default.aspx>

Kimmel, Kaisa-Maria and Ballardini, Rosa Maria, 2020. Restrictions in the Name of Health During COVID-19 in Finland. Harvard Law Blog. Accessed 11.1. 2021.

<https://blog.petrieflom.law.harvard.edu/2020/05/14/finland-global-responses-covid19/>

OECD, 2020. Policy Responses to Corona. Accessed, 28.12 2020.

<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policyresponses/>

[legislative-budget-oversight-of-emergency-responses-experiences-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-ba4f2ab5/](https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policyresponses/legislative-budget-oversight-of-emergency-responses-experiences-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-ba4f2ab5/)

Scheinin, Martin, 2020: The COVID-19 Emergency in Finland: Best Practice and Problems, VerfBlog,

2020/4/16. Accessed 18.12. 2020. [https://verfassungsblog.de/the-covid-19-emergency-in-finland-bestpractice-](https://verfassungsblog.de/the-covid-19-emergency-in-finland-bestpractice-and-problems/)

[and-problems/](https://verfassungsblog.de/the-covid-19-emergency-in-finland-bestpractice-and-problems/), DOI: 10.17176/20200416-092101-0.

Obtaining
Documents
Score: 10

Reports drafted by committees provide the basis for legislative decisions. Committees prepare government bills, legislative initiatives, government reports and other matters for handling in plenary sessions. Given these tasks and functions, it follows that the government is expected to report in full its motives for proposing legislation and that committees are able to obtain the desired documents from the government upon request.

Summoning
Ministers
Score: 10

Committees are able to summon ministers to hearings and do so regularly. Committee meetings usually begin with a presentation by a ministry representative. Ministers can take part in committee meetings and debates but cannot be regular members of the committee. Furthermore, when deemed necessary, committees invite the Ombudsman, the Deputy Ombudsman or their representatives to a formal hearing as experts on questions of legislative drafting.

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/valiokunnat/Pages/default.aspx>

Summoning
Experts
Score: 10

Parliamentary committees are able to summon experts for committee meetings, which they do regularly and increasingly frequently. A committee starts its work with a recommendation by the committee's own experts on which additional experts to call. This may include ministerial representatives or other individuals who have either assisted in preparatory work or represent specific agencies, organizations or other interested parties. The scope of hearings varies greatly. In some cases, only one expert may be called, but in major legislative projects a committee may hear dozens of experts. Data from earlier research shows that committees in 1938 consulted advisers in 59% of all cases on which they prepared reports. The corresponding figure for 1960 was 94% and 100% in 1983. The number of experts consulted has likewise been increasing. All expert opinions provided since 2015 can be downloaded from the parliament's homepage.

The only problem with the experts' statements is that they are not made public before a legal proposal is accepted or rejected. Therefore, the public has no opportunity to critique the statements before they have been processed by the parliamentary committee.

Citation:

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/lakiensaaminen/valiokunnat/Pages/default.aspx>

Dag Anckar, "Finland: Dualism and Consensual Rule," in Erik Damgaard, ed.: *Parliamentary Change in the Nordic Countries*, Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1992, pp. 182-186.

Suutari, Jari. 2018. "Valiokuntien asiantuntijalausuntojen saatavuus," <https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tietoaeduskunnasta/kirjasto/aineistot/eduskunta/valtiopaivaasiakirjat-tietopaketti/Sivut/asiantuntijalausuntojen-saatavuus.aspx>

Task Area
Congruence
Score: 10

A total of 16 permanent special parliamentary committees along with the Grand Committee (which focuses mainly on EU issues) prepare government bills, legislative initiatives, government reports and other matters for plenary sessions. Reforms of the committee system in the early 1990s aimed to improve parliamentary committees' alignment with ministry responsibilities. These reforms have been highly successful and committees are now thematically bound within the scope of a corresponding ministry. The Grand Committee is in practice a committee for the handling of EU-related matters.

Media

Media Reporting
Score: 8

The World Press Freedom Index 2020 ranked Finland second worldwide with regard to the freedoms and rights exercised by the media, just behind Norway, and ahead of Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands (Reporters without Borders 2020).

As with many other European countries, Finland has experienced polarization between political elites and nationalistic populist elements. This development became ever more pronounced after the establishment of a coalition government dominated by center-left parties, each led by a woman, in 2019.

Legislation in Finland does not prohibit the (deliberate) provision of misinformation. However, the Council for Mass Media (CMM) acts as a self-regulating organization; in doing so, it seeks to interpret and encourage good professional practices, and defends the freedoms of speech and publication. The CMM was established by publishers and journalists in the field of mass communication.

The council does not exercise legal power or public authority, but its decisions are closely followed and observed (Council of Mass Media 2020). The rules and practices of government supervision in Finland provide the publicly owned media with sufficient independence. Privately owned media organizations are subject to licensing and regulatory regimes that ensure independence from government.

In Finland, the media has not been subject to the influence of government or actors associated with the government during the crisis. Finnish politicians do not orchestrate media reactions. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, media and politics became more closely entwined, and there was less critical distance between the media and the government than there had been before the outbreak of COVID-19.

Although news coverage of the coronavirus crisis was credible and news media proactively debunked coronavirus-related misinformation that circulated on social media platforms, the media uncritically reported the way the government communicated its response. During 2020, both the media and the government chose to strengthen the authority of medical experts.

Alternative perspectives were effectively given less credence and dismissed as “conspiracy theories.” The media has – apparently on its own initiative – published daily statistics about the spread of COVID-19 (Heikkilä 2020).

Citation:

Council of Mass Media, 2020. What is the CMM? Accessed, 28.12. 2020. <https://www.jsn.fi/en/>
 Heikkilä, Heikki, 2020. Finland: Coronavirus and the media. Blog. Accessed, 28.12. 2020. <https://en.ejo.ch/ethics-quality/finland-coronavirus-and-the-media>
 Reporters without Borders, 2020. Ranking. Accessed, 28.12. 2020. <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

Parties and Interest Associations

Intra-party
 Decision-Making
 Score: 8

At the time of writing, nine parties held seats in the Finnish parliament (Eduskunta). Of those, five parties held more than 10% of the seats, and can be considered as major parties. Although empirical research on intra-party democracy has to date dealt mainly with the Center Party (Kesk), the findings of this research can be assumed to apply to other major parties as well. In general, candidates for parliamentary elections are proposed by local party organizations. The final decision on which candidates will be nominated is taken at the district level of the party organization (which usually coincides with the electoral district) in a vote open to all members of the party in question. However, it is also evident that the structure of internal decision-making systems within political parties has developed in two directions. While active party members operate in voluntary, subnational organizational units, national policy functions are decided by career politicians who constitute the party elite. This dualism places power in the hands of party elites, and most particularly the party chairs. This has led to a marginalization of party members from the executive functions within each party. As intra-party meetings are the highest decision-making institutions within political parties, the average party member participates in party meetings only indirectly by helping to elect delegates.

As a result of the pandemic, municipal elections were postponed by six weeks in the spring of 2021. It is apparent that the difficult pandemic situation made it more difficult for potential candidates to sign up for elections and to carry out campaigns.

Citation:

Karina Jutila, "Yksillä säännöillä, kaksilla korteilla," Dissertation, University of Tampere, 2003; Rauli Mickelsson, "Suomen puolueet. Historia, muutos ja nykypäivä," Tampere: Vastapaino, 2007; Vesa J. Koskimaa, Intra-Party Power: The Ascendancy of Parties' Public "Face," in Lauri Karvonen, Heikki Paloheimo and Tapio Raunio, eds. The Changing Balance of Political Power in Finland, Stockholm: Santérus Förlag; Lauri Karvonen, "Parties, Governments, and Voters in Finland," ECPR Press, 2014, p.62.

Association
 Competence
 (Employers &
 Unions)
 Score: 8

Employers' and employees' organizations became involved in a series of comprehensive income-policy agreements in 1968 concerning wages, working conditions, and social-welfare programs and legislation. While this institutional arrangement for cooperation between government and associations has since slightly eroded, it created a framework for advancing

responsible, considered and expert-based policy proposals on the part of the large economic-interest associations. Other mechanisms, including associations' participation as members and experts in the committee system, have worked in the same direction. This corporatist structure is regularly criticized. Although not uncontroversial, this consensus style of policymaking has led to reasonable policies with fairly broad support. Recent trends indicate that corporatism is becoming increasingly important as support for and membership in traditional political parties is decreasing.

According to Greve et al. (2020) the role of trade unions and work councils as social partners has been more limited in Finland than in other Nordic countries. They were consulted during the preparation of the government support packages, but not to the extent seen in Denmark, for example. One reason for this could be that many unemployment-related issues (e.g., short-term work and wage supplement systems) were already covered by national regulation.

Citation:

Voitto Helander and Dag Anckar, Consultation and Political Culture. Essays on the Case of Finland, Commentationes Scientiarum Socialium, nr 19, 1983, Helsinki: The Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters.
Blom, Anders. 2018. Taloudelliset eturyhmät politiikan sisäpiirissä: Tutkimus liike-elämän poliittisesta vaikuttamisesta kolmikantaisessa Suomessa 1968–2011. Turun Yliopiston julkaisuja.
Blom, Anders. 2019. "Suomen malli murroksessa – edunvalvonnan ja korporatismin uudet kuviot," <https://politiikasta.fi/suomen-malli-murroksessa-edunvalvonnan-ja-korporatismin-uudet-kuviot/>

Greve, B, Blomquist, P, Hvinden, B, van Gerven, M. Nordic welfare states – still standing or changed by the COVID-19 crisis? Soc Policy Adm. 2020; 1– 17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12675>

Association
Competence
(Others)
Score: 8

Most associations' policy-relevant positions are based on expert knowledge and feasibility analyses. In this sense, associations clearly contribute to the general quality of decision-making. True, exaggeration and one-sided arguments are in the very nature of interest organizations and the ensuing negotiation process, but the prevailing style of policymaking grants access to various and often competing interests. The contribution of interest associations' expert knowledge is therefore on the whole a valuable asset that enhances the quality of policymaking. Interest associations also have a high profile in public discourse, and often help shape public opinion. The fact remains, however, that the function of interest associations is to promote certain interests at the potential expense of others.

Independent Supervisory Bodies

Audit Office
Score: 10

Legislative accountability is advanced by the audit office, which is accountable to parliament. Formerly, parliamentary oversight of government finances was performed by parliamentary state auditors. However, this institution has been abolished. In its place is the parliamentary Audit

Committee, which was created by combining the tasks performed by the parliamentary state auditors with the related functions of the administrative and audit section of the Finance Committee. The office of the parliamentary state auditors has also been replaced by the National Audit Office of Finland, which is an independent expert body affiliated to parliament. The role and duties of the National Audit Office of Finland (NAOF) are defined in the country's constitution. The NAOF audits central government finances, monitors fiscal policy, and oversees political party and election campaign funding (National Audit Office of Finland 2020).

It is also tasked with auditing the legality and propriety of the state's financial arrangements, and reviewing compliance with the state budget. Specifically, the office is expected to promote the exercise of parliament's budgetary power and the effectiveness of the body's administration. It also oversees election and party funding. The office is directed by the auditor general, who is elected by parliament. With about 150 employees, the office has four impact areas: sustainable general government finances; sustainable governance and public administration; a safe, healthy and affluent society; and information governance. However, in 2021, the audit office was caught up in a scandal which undermined its operative capacity. Parliament ultimately decided to fire the body's general director.

National Audit Office of Finland, 2020. Accessed, 28.12. 2020. <https://www.vtv.fi/en/>

"National Audit Office"; <http://www.vtv.fi/en/>;

"The Audit Committee," <https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/lakiensaataminen/valiokunnat/tarkastusvaliokunta/Pages/default.asp>

"Scandal in 2021": <https://yle.fi/news/3-12292381>

Ombuds Office
Score: 10

Parliament has an ombudsman office consisting of one ombudsman and two deputy ombudsmen. Established in 1920, it is the second-oldest ombuds office in the world and employs about 60. The officeholders are appointed by parliament, but the office is expected to be impartial and independent of parliament. The office reports to parliament once a year. Citizens may bring complaints to the office regarding decisions by public authorities, public officials, and others who perform public duties (examples of authorities include courts of law, state offices and municipal bodies). The number of complaints decided by the ombuds office in 2020 reached a record high of more than 7,000 cases. A considerable number of matters have been investigated and resolved on the initiative of the ombudsman himself, who may conduct onsite investigations when needed.

Citation:

<https://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/en/web/guest/the-parliamentary-ombudsman-of-finland>

“The Parliamentary Ombudsman’s 2017 Annual Report presented to the Speaker of the Parliament,”
https://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/en_GB/-/oikeusasiamies-luovutti-kertomuksensa-vuodelta-2017-eduskunnan-puhemiehelle
<https://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/documents/20184/39006/summary2020/2de02ec5-378a-4cf3-8948-89f346b2be3a>

Data Protection
 Authority
 Score: 10

There are two data protection authorities in Finland: the Data Protection Board and the Data Protection Ombudsman. Affiliated to the Ministry of Justice, the Data Protection Board is the most important decision-making agency concerning personal data issues. The Data Protection Ombudsman supervises the processing of personal data according to the objectives of the Personal Data Act 1999. The office has about 40 employees, and can be called upon for guidance in private matters or to advise organizations.

The Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman safeguards data protection rights. The office was fully operational during 2020 and 2021. The Data Protection Ombudsman is a national supervisory authority which supervises compliance with data protection legislation. The Data Protection Ombudsman is an autonomous and independent authority, with the ombudsman appointed by the government. The ombudsman’s term of office is five years (Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman 2020).

The Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman has resources to effectively advocate data protection and privacy issues vis-à-vis the government and has continued to do so during the coronavirus crisis. Publication of COVID-19-related data that cannot be used to identify individuals (e.g., anonymized statistics), is not prohibited by the data protection legislation.

Data protection has been an issue in Finland. In 2020, a private mental healthcare provider (Vastaamo) was blackmailed by online hackers who got access to electronic records containing sensitive health information. This case was not related to COVID-19, but it brought large-scale public attention to the issue of data protection.

Citation:

Ministry of Justice, “The Data Protection Board,” <https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/the-finnish-data-protection-board>

Finlex “Personal Data Act (523/1999),” https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1999/en19990523_20000986.pdf

The Data Protection Ombudsman, <https://tietosuoja.fi/en>

Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman, 2020. The Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman safeguards your data protection rights- Accessed, 28.12. 2020. <https://tietosuoja.fi/en/office-of-the-data-protectionombudsman>

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