

The Constitution of Finland 11 June 1999 (731/1999)

Chapter 1 - Fundamental provisions

Section 1 - The Constitution

Finland is a sovereign republic.

The constitution of Finland is established in this constitutional act. The constitution shall guarantee the inviolability of human dignity and the freedom and rights of the individual and promote justice in society.

Finland participates in international co-operation for the protection of peace and human rights and for the development of society.

Section 2 - Democracy and the rule of law

The powers of the State in Finland are vested in the people, who are represented by the Parliament. Democracy entails the right of the individual to participate in and influence the development of society and his or her living conditions.

[...]

Section 4 - The Territory of Finland

The territory of Finland is indivisible. The national borders cannot be altered without the consent of the Parliament.

[...]

Chapter 2 - Basic rights and liberties

Section 6 - Equality

Everyone is equal before the law.

No one shall, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently from other persons on the ground of sex, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or other reason that concerns his or her person.

[...]

Section 11 - Freedom of religion and conscience

Everyone has the freedom of religion and conscience.

Freedom of religion and conscience entails the right to profess and practice a religion, the right to express one's convictions and the right to be a member of or decline to be a member of a religious community. No one is under the obligation, against his or her conscience, to participate in the practice of a religion.

Section 12 - Freedom of expression and right of access to information

Everyone has the freedom of expression. Freedom of expression entails the right to express, disseminate and receive information, opinions and other communications without prior prevention by anyone. More detailed provisions on the exercise of the freedom of expression are laid down by an Act. Provisions on restrictions relating to pictorial programmes that are necessary for the protection of children may be laid down by an Act.

Documents and recordings in the possession of the authorities are public, unless their publication

has for compelling reasons been specifically restricted by an Act. Everyone has the right of access to public documents and recordings.

Section 13 - Freedom of assembly and freedom of association

Everyone has the right to arrange meetings and demonstrations without a permit, as well as the right to participate in them.

Everyone has the freedom of association. Freedom of association entails the right to form an association without a permit, to be a member or not to be a member of an association and to participate in the activities of an association. The freedom to form trade unions and to organise in order to look after other interests is likewise guaranteed.

More detailed provisions on the exercise of the freedom of assembly and the freedom of association are laid down by an Act.

Section 14 - Electoral and participatory rights

[...]

The public authorities shall promote the opportunities for the individual to participate in societal activity and to influence the decisions that concern him or her.

[...]

Section 17 - Right to one's language and culture

The national languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish.

The right of everyone to use his or her own language, either Finnish or Swedish, before courts of law and other authorities, and to receive official documents in that language, shall be guaranteed by an Act. The public authorities shall provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations of the country on an equal basis.

The Sami, as an indigenous people, as well as the Roma and other groups, have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. Provisions on the right of the Sami to use the Sami language before the authorities are laid down by an Act. The rights of persons using sign language and of persons in need of interpretation or translation aid owing to disability shall be guaranteed by an Act.

[...]

Chapter 3 - The Parliament and the Representatives

[...]

Section 25 - Parliamentary elections

[...]

For the parliamentary elections, the country shall be divided, on the basis of the number of Finnish citizens, into at least twelve and at most eighteen constituencies. In addition, the Åland Islands shall form their own constituency for the election of one Representative.

[...]

Chapter 4 - Parliamentary activity

[...]

Section 51 - Languages used in parliamentary work

The Finnish or Swedish languages are used in parliamentary work.

The Government and the other authorities shall submit the documents necessary for a matter to be taken up for consideration in the Parliament both in Finnish and Swedish. Likewise, the

parliamentary replies and communications, the reports and statements of the Committees, as well as the written proposals of the Speaker's Council, shall be written in Finnish and Swedish.

[...]

Section 53 - Referendums

The decision to organise a consultative referendum is made by an Act, which shall contain provisions on the time of the referendum and on the choices to be presented to the voters.

Provisions concerning the conduct of a referendum are laid down by an Act.

Chapter 5 - The President of the Republic and the Government

[...]

Section 58 - Decisions of the President

[...]

Notwithstanding the provision in paragraph (1), the President makes decisions on the following matters without a proposal for a decision from the Government:

[...]

(4) Matters referred to in the Act on the Autonomy of the Åland Islands, other than those relating to the finances of the Åland Islands.

[...]

Chapter 6 - Legislation

[...]

Section 73 - Procedure for constitutional enactment

A proposal on the enactment, amendment or repeal of the Constitution or on the enactment of a limited derogation of the Constitution shall in the second reading be left in abeyance, by a majority of the votes cast, until the first parliamentary session following parliamentary elections. The proposal shall then, once the Committee has issued its report, be adopted without material alterations in one reading in a plenary session by a decision supported by at least two thirds of the votes cast.

[...]

Section 75 - Special legislation for the Åland Islands

The legislative procedure for the Act on the Autonomy of the Åland Islands and the Act on the Right to Acquire Real Estate in the Åland Islands is governed by the specific provisions in those Acts.

The right of the Legislative Assembly of the Åland Islands to submit proposals and the enactment of Acts passed by the Legislative Assembly of Åland are governed by the provisions in the Act on the Autonomy of the Åland Islands.

Section 76 - The Church Act

Provisions on the organisation and administration of the Evangelic Lutheran Church are laid down in the Church Act.

The legislative procedure for enactment of the Church Act and the right to submit legislative proposals relating to the Church Act are governed by the specific provisions in that Code.

[...]

Section 79 - Publication and entry into force of Acts

[...]

Acts are enacted and published in Finnish and Swedish.

[...]

Chapter 8 - International relations

[...]

Section 94 - Acceptance of international obligations and their denouncement[...]

A decision concerning the acceptance of an international obligation or the denouncement of it is made by a majority of the votes cast. However, if the proposal concerns the Constitution or an alteration of the national borders, the decision shall be made by at least two thirds of the votes cast. An international obligation shall not endanger the democratic foundations of the Constitution.

Section 95 - Bringing into force of international obligations

[...]

A Government bill for the bringing into force of an international obligation is considered in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure pertaining to an Act. However, if the proposal concerns the Constitution or a change to the national territory, the Parliament shall adopt it, without leaving it in abeyance, by a decision supported by at least two thirds of the votes cast.

[...]

Chapter 11 - Administration and self-government

Section 119 - State administration

In addition to the Government and the Ministries, the central administration of the State may consist of agencies, institutions and other bodies. The State may also have regional and local public authorities. More detailed provisions on the administration subordinate to the Parliament are laid down by an Act.

The general principles governing the bodies of State administration shall be laid down by an Act, if their duties involve the exercise of public powers. The principles governing the regional and local authorities of the State shall likewise be governed by an Act. In other respects, provisions on the entities of State administration may be laid down by a Decree.

Section 120 - Special Status of the Åland IslandsThe Åland Islands have self-government in accordance with what is specifically stipulated in the Act on the Autonomy of the Åland Islands.

Section 121 - Municipal and other regional self-governmentFinland is divided into municipalities, whose administration shall be based on the self-government of their residents.

Provisions on the general principles governing municipal administration and the duties of the municipalities are laid down by an Act.

The municipalities have the right to levy municipal tax. Provisions on the general principles governing tax liability and the grounds for the tax as well as on the legal remedies available to the persons or entities liable to taxation are laid down by an Act.

Provisions on self-government in administrative areas larger than a municipality are laid down by an Act. In their native region, the Sami have linguistic and cultural self-government, as provided by an Act.

Section 122 - Administrative divisions

In the organisation of administration, the objective shall be suitable territorial divisions, so that the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations have an opportunity to receive services in their

own language on equal terms.

The principles governing the municipal divisions are laid down by an Act.

Section 123 - Universities and other education providers

The universities are self-governing, as provided in more detail by an Act.

Provisions on the principles governing the other educational services arranged by the State and the municipalities, as well as on the right to arrange corresponding education in private educational institutions, are laid down by an Act.

Section 124 - Delegation of administrative tasks to others than the authorities

A public administrative task may be delegated to others than public authorities only by an Act or by virtue of an Act, if this is necessary for the appropriate performance of the task and if basic rights and liberties, legal remedies and other requirements of good governance are not endangered.

However, a task involving significant exercise of public powers can only be delegated to public authorities.

[...]

Chapter 13 - Final provisions

Section 130 - Entry into force

This Constitution shall enter into force on 1 March 2000.

Detailed provisions necessary for the implementation of the Constitution are laid down by an Act.

Section 131 - Repeal of Constitutional Acts

This Constitution repeals the following constitutional Acts, as amended:

- (1) The Constitution Act of Finland, of 17 July 1919;
- (2) The Parliament Act, of 13 January 1928;
- (3) The Act on the High Court of Impeachment, of 25 November 1922 (273/1922); and
- (4) The Act on the Right of Parliament to Inspect the Lawfulness of the Official Acts of the Members of the Council of State, the Chancellor of Justice and the Parliamentary Ombudsman, of 25 November 1922 (274/1922).