

## **The Ministry of Justice invites comments on a Government Resolution setting out goals for Finnish democracy policy in the 2020s**

Democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental and human rights form the value foundation on which Finnish society is built. The aim of common democracy policy is to ensure that people's political and civil rights are equally realised in Finland and no one is excluded from society. The objective is that Finland continues to be one of the most democratic countries in the world.

Achieving these objectives requires a long-term policy extending beyond government terms and cooperation across administrative branches. There is also a need to increase people's knowledge and improve their skills required for participating and exerting influence.

The draft Government Resolution has been prepared in cooperation between several ministries. The work carried out as part of the National Democracy Programme 2025, which is one of the key projects under the Government Programme of Prime Minister Marin's Government, was utilised in the preparation work.

The policy goals set out in the Government Resolution on Democracy Policy aim to promote a functioning democracy, multiple participatory skills and possibilities, constructive conversational culture, an active and vibrant civil society and open and interactive government. Finland is ambitious when it comes to the promotion of democracy in the EU and internationally. Supporting democracy and democratic development are also objectives for Finland's foreign and development policy.

The period for submitting comments on the Government Resolution is open until 1 September 2022.

### **The goals of the democracy policy in Finland**

The aim of common democracy policy is to ensure that people's political and civil rights are equally realised in Finland and no one is excluded from society. The objective is that Finland continues to be one of the most democratic countries in the world.

The Government Resolution sets out an overall objective for Finland's democracy policy and seven key policy goals that the Government and the ministries undertake to promote. Each policy goal has sub-goals that are presented in the Government Resolution.

#### *Key policy goals set out in the Government Resolution*

1. The electoral system is well-functioning, secure and reliable. Everyone has equal opportunities and sufficient skills to exercise their right to participate.
2. Finland provides versatile opportunities for participation, and an increasing number of people exercise their political and civil rights.
3. Democracy education, human rights education and media education, together with continuous learning, support the realisation of the right to participate.

4. Open, transparent and interactive government strengthens trust. Decisions are made based on knowledge.
5. The culture of debate in Finnish society is open, pluralistic and non-discriminatory and welcomes the participation of different population groups.
6. An active and vibrant civil society is a key element in a well-functioning democracy.
7. Finland supports democracy development both in the EU and internationally.

*Proposed key measures set out in the Government Resolution under each policy goal*

This text presents the themes of the proposed measures. Please see the Government Resolution in Finnish for more detailed information on the proposals.

Policy goal 1: The electoral system is well-functioning, secure and reliable. Everyone has equal opportunities and sufficient skills to exercise their right to participate.

Themes of the proposed measures to improve the functioning of representative democracy:

- Reforming the electoral system
- Improving election security
- Providing more flexible voting options and introducing the electronic voting register into large-scale use
- Improving voter turnout and promoting more diverse nomination of candidates

Policy goal 2: Finland provides versatile opportunities for participation, and an increasing number of people exercise their political and civil rights

Themes of the proposed measures to improve the functioning of representative democracy:

- Promoting equal participation and integrating it more thoroughly into decision-making and preparation processes
- Evaluating and developing the mechanisms for participation in municipalities and wellbeing services counties
- Assessing instruments for launching initiatives and putting different methods for participation and exerting influence into large-scale use. Developing digital participation and online democracy services
- Assessing and evaluating measures that aim to promote participation and improving opportunities for equal participation

Policy goal 3: Democracy education, human rights education and media education, together with continuous learning, support the realisation of the right to participate

Themes of the proposed measures to support democracy education, human rights education and media education:

- Early intervention in the divergence of young people's educational pathways. Ensuring a knowledge base and skills that support participation
- Improving the availability of up-to-date training and learning materials (on democracy and human rights issues). Exploring the possibilities to establish a national centre of expertise for democracy and human rights education and nationwide practical implementation of the results of current pilot projects
- Developing the initial and continuing education of teachers in democracy and human rights issues over the long term
- Strengthening civic skills and open discussion to identify and combat disinformation (including digital and media education)
- Strengthening the role of public libraries and museums in increasing civic participation and improving media literacy
- Strengthening competence relating to democracy, human rights and media literacy among providers of integration training and increasing the role of these issues in integration training and multilingual orientation to Finnish society
- Ensuring that civil society operators have sufficient resources to provide education on democracy, human rights and media literacy

Policy goal 4: Open, transparent and interactive government strengthens trust. Decisions are made based on knowledge

Themes of the proposed measures to promote openness and transparency in government:

- Developing communications within public administration in matters related to the functioning of society.
- Completing the reform of the Act on the Openness of Government Activities. Bringing into force and monitoring the transparency register and assessing any related needs for development.
- Improving the transparency and inclusivity of the legislative process and improving the related expertise of public officials

Policy goal 5: The culture of debate in Finnish society is open, pluralistic and non-discriminatory and welcomes the participation of different population groups

Themes of the proposed measures to improve the culture of debate:

- Recognising that (inter-party) dialogue and cooperation are key elements in a constructive culture of debate in society
- Promoting good relations between population groups through dialogue
- Selecting the right participation instruments to reduce the segregation of participation
- Continuing official activities aiming to address hate speech and harassment and developing authorities' expertise in this area
- Preventing hate speech and increasing public awareness of encounters with hate speech and harassment and of the limits of the freedom of expression

Policy goal 6: An active and vibrant civil society is a key element in a well-functioning democracy

Themes of the proposed measures to support the activities and participation of civil society:

- Recognising the importance of an autonomous and vibrant civil society and promoting partnership-based intersectoral cooperation
- Assessing and monitoring changes related to civil society and the effects of these changes over the long term
- Improving civil society operators' awareness of different forms of financing and fundraising, improving their related competence, and developing new fundraising innovations
- Supporting young people's voluntary activities by engaging schools and educational institutions in this work
- Promoting research on civil society and making better use of research data. Strengthening the knowledge and skills of public officials relating to civil society issues
- Strengthening the role and activities of cultural institutions in immigrant integration and social cohesion, and placing culture at the heart of sustainable urban development

Policy goal 7: Finland supports international democracy development

Themes of the proposed measures to support international democracy development:

- Increasing communications between the relevant actors at the national level and developing Finland's international democracy work as a whole. Utilising Finnish expertise in the field of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in international cooperation
- Strengthening the political participation of groups that are underrepresented in politics by supporting political parties and parliaments internationally. Developing new means to support the realisation of various actors' right to participation and media freedom
- Developing the Government's research activities and monitoring the effectiveness of international democracy work and any related needs for development
- Finland's active involvement in the Team Europe Democracy initiative of the European Union and in the activities of intergovernmental democracy organisations. Finland's support for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

Promoting democracy is a question of long-term and broad-based development that should extend beyond parliamentary terms. Therefore, it is also important to monitor the implementation of the policy goals and the related measures and to create an appropriate monitoring model for this purpose.

It is likely that a separate action plan for implementing the policy goals needs to be drawn up during the next government term. The promotion and implementation of the policy goals is the responsibility of each Government and competent ministry. Decisions on measures affecting the budget will be made separately in connection with deciding on the central government spending limits and annual budgets.

### **Instructions for submitting comments**

Please submit your comments by responding to the request published on the website [Lausuntopalvelu.fi](https://lausuntopalvelu.fi) by 1 September 2022. You do not need to send your comments separately by email or post.

To submit comments, you need to register and sign in to the [Lausuntopalvelu.fi](https://lausuntopalvelu.fi) service. For more detailed instructions on how to use the service, please see the instructions on the [lausuntopalvelu.fi](https://lausuntopalvelu.fi) site. If you need help with taking the service into use, please contact [lausuntopalvelu.om@om.fi](mailto:lausuntopalvelu.om@om.fi).

Comments may also be submitted by parties other than those mentioned on the distribution list. All comments submitted are public documents, and they will be published at [www.lausuntopalvelu.fi](https://www.lausuntopalvelu.fi).

If you cannot submit your comments via the [Lausuntopalvelu.fi](https://lausuntopalvelu.fi) website, you can also send them by email to the Registry of the Ministry of Justice at [oikeusministerio@gov.fi](mailto:oikeusministerio@gov.fi), using the register number VN/8051/2019 as a reference.

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**Links**

[National Democracy Programme 2025](#)

Government Resolution on Democracy Policy (mainly in Finnish, published at [lausuntopalvelu.fi](http://lausuntopalvelu.fi))