

ICA Country Report 2004

FINLAND

1. The Structure of the State Administrative System in Finland

Finland is a constitutional and parliamentary republic, population 5.2 million. The State administrative system is composed of four levels:

- a) the highest organs of government (Parliament, The President of the Republic and the Government)
- b) the central administration (Ministries and central agencies)
- c) the regional administration (provincial administration)
- d) the local state administration

Parliament <http://www.parliament.fi/>

Sovereign power in Finland rests with the people, which is represented by Parliament, elected by the people. There are 200 members of Parliament.

The tasks and power of the Parliament:

- has, together with the President, legislative power
- decides upon the annual state budget
- oversees the financial administration in general and supervises state administration
- has under its direct control the Bank of Finland, the Social Insurance Institution and the Finnish Broadcasting Company

The President of the Republic <http://www.president.fi/english>

The President of the Republic is involved in the use of legislative authority in three ways:

- a) The President has the right to initiate legislation for the enactment of a new act or for the amendment of an existing one
- b) Acts passed by Parliament require ratification by the President in order to come into force
- c) The President has the right to issue decrees within the limits of existing acts

Executive power of the President

The President of the Republic issues most of his or her decisions at a presidential session, at which ministers act as rapporteurs.

- The President can dissolve the Parliament on the initiative of the Prime Minister.
- The President is the supreme commander of the defense forces.
- The President has the authority to decide on Finland's relations with foreign powers.
- The President appoints Members of the Government and most senior civil servants.
- The President oversees administration.

The Government <http://www.government.fi/>

The Government is a body of twelve ministries and the Prime Minister's Office (2001). The Government is headed by the Prime Minister and it works at the plenary session. Following the

tradition of the parliamentary system, ministers must enjoy the confidence of Parliament. A Government plenary session has the power to issue administrative statutes, which are called Government Decisions. Issues that are to be dealt with by the Government are prepared in ministries or in cabinet committees. (Unofficially meetings in 'Evening School').

Sectors of Administration

The administration in Finland is divided into administrative sectors. These sectors are composed of central administration units and, subordinate to them, regional and local administration. The sectors are run by ministers.

The Ministries areas of responsibility are laid down in the Government's Rules of Procedure.

The Government is composed of the following ministries: the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Interior, Defence, Finance, Education, Agriculture and Forestry, Transport and Communication, Trade and Industry, Social Affairs and Health, Employment, Environment.

As far as expenditure is concerned, the largest sectors of administration are the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance.

The Central Administrative agencies and public bodies

http://www.suomi.fi/english/government_agencies_and_public_bodies

The central administration of the state, which is subordinate to the ministries, includes central administrative agencies and national boards.

The central administration of the state includes over ninety government bodies.

Regional administration

Finland is divided into five State Provinces

(http://www.laaninhallitus.fi/lh/home.nsf/pages/index_eng). The State Provincial Offices act as the joint regional authority for seven ministries in the following domains: social and health care, education and culture, police administration, rescue services, traffic administration, competition and consumer affairs and judicial administration. The State provincial offices work under the Ministry of Interior.

Another part of state regional administration is Employment and Economic Development Centres (<http://www.te-keskus.fi/web/ktmyht.nsf/FrameSetENG?OpenFrameSet>) The Employment and Economic Development Centres [T&E Centres] started their operations in the autumn 1997. The previous regional units of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry were united into 15 centers. Each Center offers advice and development services regarding employment and business issues.

Local administration www.localfinland.fi

444 municipalities enjoy considerable independence, safeguarded by the constitution. Basic services (social welfare, health and education, etc.) are managed by municipalities.

The State is involved in certain duties at the local level. Local State districts deal with duties concerning the police, prosecution, recovery proceeding and population administration. Other forms of State local administration are tax offices, employment offices, etc.

2. The strategic approach adopted by Government

The government programme (summer 2003) has four cross-ministerial policy programmes. One of them is the Information Society programme (<http://www.infosoc.fi/>), where the minister responsible for the program is the Prime Minister. The working areas of the program are: telecommunication infrastructure and digital television, citizens' ability to utilise the information society and ways to boost the use of information society services, training, working life, research and development, electronic services in public administration, development of social and health services with the means offered by the information society, electronic commerce, digital contents and services, state data administration and legislative measures.

Contents of the program can be read at:

http://www.tietoyhteiskuntaohjelma.fi/esittely/en_GB/introduction/files/71149570364153359/default/tietoyhteiskuntaohjelma_engl_030404.pdf

Legislation

A change in legislation, which enables combining the social and health card with an ID-card, was issued in June. A citizen can have her social security information printed on the back of his or her ID-card. A separate social and health card is still available and more popular than the combined card.

The ID-card is nowadays available only with the electronic ID (PKI) embedded, but is still not compulsory. The number of electronic ID-cards is at the moment 47 000. There are few services where authentication can be done using either electronic ID-card (PKI) or banks' authentication systems (username and every-time changing password). At the moment citizens prefer authenticating with the banks' system.

2. Organisational Issues

The Ministry of Finance has started a project within the productivity program run by the ministry to harmonize the financial management and salary- and personal administration in agencies. The plan is to have the financial and personal services gathered from more than hundred agencies into a few service centers by 2010. The project is run by the State Treasury.

At the moment a cross-sectoral working group is working on developing Government information management procedures and better overall co-ordination of Government IT. The work is part of the Government information society policy program. The working group will be reporting to the ministerial group in October. The working group submitted an intermediate report in June. Issues raised in the intermediate report were strongly supported by the ministerial group. As a long term goal the report is recommending:

- 1) common services for basic IT and
- 2) common architecture for agency-specific IT.

With the first goal the government plans to cut down the IT-costs (using economies of scale) and increase the quality of services. The second goal aims at better cross-sectoral services for citizens and enterprises. Monitoring the IT-costs in the budget – a more detailed process – is also recommended. If the Government decides to realize the ideas of the working group, the government IT-steering and production of IT-services will be largely re-organized. Implementation will take several years and new legislation is needed to enable stronger steering.

4. Operational issues

Service delivery

The number of e-services in state government rose last year from 259 to 339, including all the services that agencies reported in the yearly questionnaire. Examples of new e-services are reporting an offense

(<http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/pages/A9CCC9A6A06501E1C2256BBA002D412E?OpenDocument>), automatic domain-name booking system (<https://domain.ficora.fi/>) and job-guard. Job-guard is a service delivered by labour officials where an individual can define criteria and get a message to his or her e-mail every time a job fitting the relevant criteria is entered into the employment office system (by the employer or by the office staff).