

PARLIAMENT
of FINLAND
2016



Parliament convened for its first 2016 plenary session on Monday, 2 February in the Sibelius Academy, where it moved to in spring 2015 due to the renovation of Parliament house. Parliament re-elected Maria Lohela (Finns Party) as Speaker, Mauri Pekkarinen (Centre Party) as First Deputy Speaker and Paula Risikko (National Coalition Party) as Second Deputy Speaker. The opening ceremonies of the parliamentary session took place at Finlandia Hall on 3 February.

During the 2016 parliamentary session, a number of changes took place in the composition of Parliament and the speakers, as well as in the number of seats held by different parliamentary groups. MP Arto Satonen (National Coalition Party) was elected to replace Risikko as deputy speaker on 23 June, after Risikko was appointed as Minister of the Interior.

On 22 June, Parliament granted MP Carl Haglund (Swedish People's Party) release from the office of Member of Parliament as of 30 July, when he moved to the business world. Haglund was replaced by Veronica Rehn-Kivi from the Uusimaa electoral district. She assumed her post on 9 August.

The Minister of Social Affairs and Health changed on 25 August, as Hanna Mäntylä (Finns Party) left her duties for family reasons. The President of the Republic appointed MP Pirkko Mattila (Finns Party) as the new Minister of Social Affairs and Health.

On 3 December, MP Olli Rehn (Centre Party) was released from the office of Member of Parliament as of 1 February 2017, following his appointment as board member of the Bank of Finland. MP Mika Lintilä was appointed to replace Rehn as Minister of Economic Affairs on 29 December.

The Members of Parliament appointed as ministers will continue in their roles as MPs.

MP Maria Tolppanen (Finns Party) left her party's parliamentary group and joined that of the Social Democratic Party on 22 June. Following Tolppanen's move, the Finns Party parliamentary group and the National Coalition Party parliamentary group both came to have 37 MPs.

Seats in the Parliament on 31 December 2016



King Harald V and Queen Sonja of Norway visited the Parliament of Finland on 6 September 2016. Speaker Maria Lohela and Secretary-General Maija-Leena Paavola welcomed the royal couple.

Centre Party Parliamentary Group 49
National Coalition Party Parliamentary Group 37
Finns Party Parliamentary Group 37
Social Democratic Parliamentary Group 35
Green Parliamentary Group 15
Left Alliance Parliamentary Group 12
Swedish Parliamentary Group 10
Christian Democratic Parliamentary Group 5

At the end of the year, Parliament had 84 female Members of Parliament. Measured by the number of parliamentary seats, Finland enjoys better equality than most other countries. However, it is difficult to make straightforward comparisons due to differences in the electoral systems of countries and the adoption of, for example, quotas for women.

Cover: The renovation of Parliament's properties, launched in 2007, is now in the final leg. The renovation will be completed in autumn 2017.

The year in politics was coloured by the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe and the United Kingdom's vote in June to leave the European Union. The latter, commonly known as Brexit, showed in Parliament's EU activities, but did not yet call for a concrete stand on issues.

However, several changes were made to the immigration policy. Among other things, Parliament tightened the criteria for family reunification and amended the Aliens Act to exclude humanitarian protection as grounds for the granting of residence permits.

In response to the tense international security environment, Parliament amended the Conscription Act, enabling reservists to be assigned to reservist training at once if required to raise the country's defence preparedness.

In the field of human rights, Finland made a big advance in May by ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The ratification was made possible, among other things, by Parliament passing an amendment to the Act on Special Care for the Mentally Handicapped, strengthening the right of self-determination of people with disabilities. Parliament approved the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015.

In domestic politics, the greatest attention focused on the social welfare and health care reform, as well as the efforts made to improve competitiveness and enhance labour market activities. At the close of the 2016 parliamentary session, the acts regarding the social welfare and health care reform were still under preparation in Government, but in December, as part of the overall package, Parliament made a decision on the hospitals providing extensive emergency care in the future.

In connection with the Competitiveness Pact, employees' unemployment contributions and earnings-related pension contributions were raised, the conditions for adult education subsidies were tightened and taxation was eased slightly.

To balance central government finances, Parliament scaled back the duration of earnings-related unemployment benefits to 400 days, and cut the amount of child benefits, national pensions,

guarantee pensions, disability benefits and basic unemployment allowance.

Parliament also passed a bill on a universal basic income experiment. The goal of the experiment is to determine whether a universal basic income can promote employment and help reform the social security system. Improvements made to the tax credit for domestic expenses also aim to boost employment.

During the 2016 parliamentary session, Parliament concluded the consideration of 268 government proposals.

Parliament received four citizens' initiatives, which concerned the tying of employment pensions to the index of wage and salary earnings, the legal position of children of female same-sex couples, the revocation of the gender-neutral marriage act, and the organisation of a referendum on Finland's membership in the eurozone. As for the initiative on leaving the eurozone, the Constitutional Law Committee decided against passing a report on the proposal, thus preventing the initiative from proceeding to a plenary session. The other initiatives were under consideration at the close of the parliamentary session.

In 2016, the committees held 18 open hearings, all of which were broadcast live online. Two publication and seminar events of the Committee for the Future, as well as all the plenary sessions were also broadcast online. The Finnish Broadcasting Company, Yle, televises the government's question hours and the main plenary session discussions.

The duties of a Member of Parliament are international

In Parliament's international cooperation, the Speakers and Members of Parliament promote matters that are important to Finland's foreign policy, such as democracy, rule of law, human rights, regional transboundary cooperation, Arctic cooperation and transatlantic relations. Members of Parliament participate in interparliamentary organisations, and parliaments engage in active bilateral exchange. In 2016, Parliament hosted the speakers of Sweden, China and Kazakhstan, among others.

The following nine delegations participate in the work of multilateral international organisations:

- Finnish Delegation to the Nordic Council
- Finnish Delegation to the Council of Europe
- Finnish Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
- Finnish Delegation to the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region
- Finnish Delegation to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference
- Finnish Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
- Finnish Delegation to the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting
- Finnish Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
- Finnish Delegation to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly

The Parliament of Finland has a total of 103 seats in these organisations.

MP Ilkka Kanerva's (National Coalition Party) two-year term as the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly ended in summer 2016. In the autumn, he was appointed Special Representative on Mediation of the organisation. Maria Guzenina (Social Democratic Party), chair of the Finnish Delegation to the Council of Europe, served as co-rapporteur of the 2016 Parliamentary Assembly.

Celebrating women's suffrage

The position of women and equality were reflected in Parliament's activities in many ways. On 1 June, Parliament marked the 110th anniversary of universal and equal suffrage with a special plenary session. The session took the form of a topical debate on the role of equality in promoting social stability and progress.

In conjunction with approving the 2017 Budget, Parliament decided to establish an innovation award for women, focused on technology and the economy. Worth €110,000, the award will be granted in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

The renovation of Parliament's properties, launched in 2007, is now in the final leg. The renovation has targeted the MP's offices on both sides of Parliament House, the administration buildings completed in 1952 and 1978 behind Parliament House, as well as the underground facilities designed for

states of emergency. The renovation of Parliament House will be completed in autumn 2017.

Youth Parliament convened for the tenth time

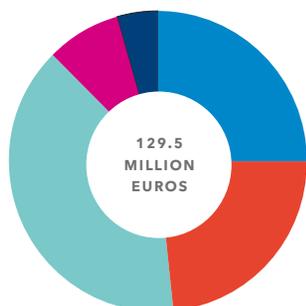
Arranged every two years, the Youth Parliament took place on 15 April. The plenary session took the traditional form of a question hour, with ministers answering questions that pupils had prepared at their parliament clubs at school. The topics discussed included climate change, Finnish security policy, penalties for sexual crimes, the refugee crisis and economic sanctions against Russia. A total of 199 student representatives from 109 upper comprehensive schools all around Finland attended the session. The Youth Parliament was organised for the tenth time.

Parliament also prepared for the 100th anniversary of Finland's independence and launched its series of events with MP visits to schools. During the anniversary year, Parliament will arrange around 60



The Youth Parliament was organised for the tenth time in April 2016.

PARLIAMENT'S EXPENSES 2016 (MILLION EUROS)



● MPs, their assistants and parliamentary groups	32.8
● Staff expenses	30.3
● Renovation and estate expenses	50.9
● Information management expenses	10.5
● Other expenses	5.0

Parliament's expenses 2016: total 129,5 million euros

Finnish and international events. The jubilee session will be held on 5 December 2017.

Price of democracy: €23,50

Parliament's expenses totalled €129.5 million in 2016, or €23,50 per every Finnish citizen. The figure for the previous year was €21.80.

As of 1 February 2016, the monthly salary of a Member of Parliament totals €6,407 per month, and for Members of Parliament who have held the office for 12 years or more, €6,887 per month. The monthly salary of the Speaker of Parliament totals €11,792 per month, and that of Deputy Speakers of Parliament, €9,830 per month. The salary is taxable income. In addition, MPs receive tax-free reimbursement of travel expenses ranging from €987 to €1,809. The amount of the reimbursement depends on the MPs' domicile and whether they keep a second residence in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

The Parliamentary Office's operating costs consist of, for example, personnel, real estate and information management costs. The overall costs of Parliament also include the costs of MPs, their assistants and political groups. The figures do not include VAT

or the costs of organs operating in affiliation with Parliament (the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Finnish Institute of International Affairs and the National Audit Office).

At the end of 2016, the Parliamentary Office had 553 full-time employees, 122 of them personal assistants to MPs. A further 67 personal assistants to MPs are employed by the parliamentary groups.

The Office Commission, composed of MPs and headed by the Speaker, directs, supervises and develops Parliament's administration and financial management. It appoints Parliament's highest officials and resolves significant issues regarding Parliament's administration and financial management.

At the end of 2016, the Office Commission comprised Speaker Maria Lohela, Deputy Speakers Mauri Pekkarinen and Arto Satonen, and Members of Parliament Eero Heinäluoma (Social Democratic Party), Markus Lohi (Centre Party), Anne Louhelainen (Finns Party) and Jukka Kopra (National Coalition Party). The Commission's Deputy Members were Heli Järvinen (Greens), Jari Myllykoski (Left Alliance), Stefan Wallin (Swedish People's Party) and Päivi Räsänen (Christian Democratic Party)

TYPE OF THE MATTER / YEAR

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Government proposals	205	221	367	153	273
Government statements	3	2	1	2	0
Government reports	6	7	10	1	7
Prime Minister's announcements	1	4	7	4	3
Legislative motions	91	80	116	52	108
Petitionary motions	51	60	57	28	66
Budgetary motions	602	576	538	362	462
Citizens' initiative		3	3	5	4
Supplementary budgetary motions	99	80	199	6	5
Interpellations	8	4	8	5	3
Written questions	1 057	1 232	1 245	432	678
Union matters	82	92	48	27	74

THE COMMITTEES HELD THE FOLLOWING NUMBER OF MEETINGS AND DRAFTED THE FOLLOWING NUMBER OF REPORTS AND STATEMENTS IN THE 2016 SESSION

	MEETINGS	REPORTS	STATEMENTS
Grand Committee	65	-	9
Constitutional Law Committee	114	3	67
Foreign Affairs Committee	104	12	10
Finance Committee	55	35	8
Subcommittees of the Finance Committee*	245		
Audit Committee	75	5	3
Administration Committee	107	30	47
Legal Affairs Committee	91	15	20
Transport and Communications Committee	99	27	29
Agriculture and Forestry Committee	94	21	19
Defence Committee	80	3	10
Education and Culture Committee	104	21	12
Social Affairs and Health Committee	101	44	11
Commerce Committee	103	33	45
Committee for the Future	49	-	7
Employment and Equality Committee	93	15	11
Environment Committee	94	20	26
Total (including subcommittees)	1 673	284	334

*The Finance Committee generally prepares matters in eight subcommittees. These held the following number of meetings: Administration and Security Subcommittee 35, Tax Subcommittee 68, Education and Science Subcommittee 28, Agriculture Subcommittee 24, Communications Subcommittee 18, Employment and the Economy Subcommittee 31, Municipal and Health Affairs Subcommittee 22, Housing and Environment Subcommittee 19. Total 245.