FI – Country information

Indicators on political participation

of persons with disabilities

2014

DISCLAIMER: The background country information reports contain background material for the comparative report on *The right to political participation for persons with disabilities: human rights indicators* by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). The bulk of the information in the background country information reports comes from ad hoc information reports prepared under contract by the FRA’s research network FRANET. The views expressed in the background country information reports do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of the FRA. These reports are made publicly available for information purposes only and do not constitute legal advice or legal opinion.

FRANET contractor: Finnish League for Human Rights

1. **STRUCTURE INDICATORS**

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| **Structure indicators** | **Source and supporting information** |
| Has [country] ratified the CRPD without a reservation to Article 29? Please give details of any reservation. | CRPD signed on the 30 Mar 2007, not yet ratified[[1]](#footnote-1)As per Programme of the Finnish Government, a working group was appointed for the period 16th of May 2011 until the 31st of December 2013. The objective of the working group is to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. The working group charts the measures required to ratify the convention and drafts a memorandum to the Government.[[2]](#footnote-2) |
| Has [country] ratified the CRPD without a reservation to Article 12? Please give details of any reservation. | CRPD signed on the 30 Mar 2007, not yet ratified[[3]](#footnote-3) |
| Has [country] ratified the CRPD without a reservation to Article 9? Please give details of any reservation. | CRPD signed on the 30 Mar 2007, not yet ratified[[4]](#footnote-4) |
| Please indicate the legislation which applies to European Parliament and municipal elections in your country. Please highlight possible amendments in view of the 2014 European Parliament elections.Does the same law apply for national, federal, local and regional elections, and referendums? | European Parliament, national, municipal and local elections and referendums are regulated by section 14 (entitled “Electoral and Participatory Rights”) of The Constitution of Finland ([*Suomen Perustuslaki/Finlands Grundlag*) (731/1999)](http://www.finlex.fi/linkit/ajansd/19990731)[[5]](#footnote-5) and the Election Act ([*Vaalilaki/Vallag*) (714/1998)](http://www.finlex.fi/linkit/ajansd/19980714)[[6]](#footnote-6). Furthermore, municipal elections are regulated by the Local Government Act ([*Kuntalaki/Kommunallag*) (365/1995)](http://www.finlex.fi/linkit/ajansd/19950365)[[7]](#footnote-7).There is no constitutional legislation about the participation of people with disabilities in political and public life in place, nor is there any legislation that regulates voting and/or general participation in political and public life for people with disabilities. |
| Is there a requirement under law to register to vote? If so, please specify the relevant legislation. | There is no requirement under law to register to vote in Finland. Finland has a passive system of voter registration, and voter lists are extracted from the Population Information System (*Väestötietojärjestelmä/Befolkningsdatasystemet*). Polling cards with information on how and where to vote are sent directly to each voter by the Population Register Center (*Väestörekisterikeskus*, VRK/*Befolkningsregistercentralen*, VRK). Homeless citizens can collect polling cards in district offices and vote at specified polling stations.[[8]](#footnote-8) |
| Is there any limitation foreseen by law which could affect the right of persons with disabilities to vote in European Parliament and municipal elections? Please give details of any restrictions on the right to vote of persons with disabilities, including any link between a particular type of impairment (e.g. psychosocial/intellectual disability) or substituted decision making (e.g. loss of legal capacity, placement under guardianship)and the right to vote in elections.Does the same law regarding voting rights apply for national, local/regional elections and referendums? | Limited participation:Section 27 Constitution of Finland concerns the eligibility and qualifications for the office of a representative in the Parliament, and does not concern voting. There is no reference to disability in this section, and the section only stipulates that persons under guardianship cannot be candidates in Parliamentary elections. Participation:Section 14 Constitution Section 2 Election Act. This section provides that in Finland every Finnish citizen who has reached the age of 18 is equally entitled to vote.A person under guardianship cannot be a candidate in elections. The provisions to this effect are laid down in the Constitution and the Municipality of Residence Act. According to the Ministry of Justice, all citizens have the right to vote despite of being under guardianship.For further information, see the country report regarding Finland of the OHCHR.[[9]](#footnote-9) |
| Do all persons with disabilities have the right, under law, to stand for and be elected to public office, in municipal elections, on an equal basis with others? And in elections to the European Parliament?Does the same election law apply for other elections (e.g. national, local and regional) and referendums? | There have been no developments occurring in 2012 concerning the participation of persons with mental health problems or with intellectual disabilities in elections as a candidate or a voter. However, it could be stressed that the limitation of section 27 of the Constitution Act on eligibility for the office of Representative applies only to those persons who have been declared incompetent by a court and not persons with mental health problems or intellectual disabilities in general. |
| Is there legislation in place regulating how people living in long-term institutions may vote? | Section 9 entitled “Advance polling stations and polling stations on polling day” of the Election Act ([*Vaalilaki/Kommunallag*) (714/1998)](http://www.finlex.fi/linkit/ajansd/19980714) stipulates that “hospitals, operational units of the social services offering round-the-clock treatment and other units determined by the municipal board and prisons (institution)” are advanced polling stations. This means that people living in the institutions are entitled to vote at the institution. Furthermore, home voting is available for homebound voters and their caregiver.[[10]](#footnote-10) Following section 46 § (21.5.2010/431) of chapter 5 entitled “Advance voting” of the same Election Act “An enfranchised person who is in hospital, in a facility with round-the-clock treatment care or in any other operational unit of social services designated by the municipal executive board as an advance polling station, or in prison, may vote in advance in the said institution. An enfranchised person who is member of the crew on a Finnish ship may vote in advance on board the ship while it is in foreign waters. Enfranchised persons whose ability to move or function is limited to the degree that they are unable to come to the polling or advance polling station without undue hardship, may, pursuant to the provisions in section 55, vote in advance at home in the Finnish municipality which has been registered as their municipality of residence in the voting register.”  |
| Is there a duty under law to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in voting procedures? For example, is there a duty to provide assistance at the polling station (e.g. braille or large print ballot papers, independent support person to assist with voting chosen by the person with a disability) or to allow for alternative means of voting (e.g. postal ballots, voting in advance, home-based voting, voting at institutions, mobile voting)? | The Election Act of 1998 provides a right to vote in advance for all voters either in the general advance voting polling stations or in the Finnish diplomatic missions abroad. The Election Act provides for special arrangements for persons with disabilities among other individuals who are unable to attend the vote on the Election Day. The Election Act (section 55) provides an option for a person whose ability to move or function is limited to a degree that he or she is unable to be present either at the polling station on the Election Day or at an advance polling station without undue hardship, that he or she may vote in advance at his or her home in the municipality of residence in which he or she is registered to vote. The entitled person shall notify the election authorities in advance following a procedure regulated in the said section.According to Section 46, a person who is in hospital, in a facility with round-the-clock treatment or in any other operational unit of social services designated by the municipal executive board as an advance polling station, or in prison, may vote in advance in the said institution. The vote takes place in the facility. Sections 58 and 73 state that a person whose ability to make a mark on the ballot paper is essentially weakened may use the help of an assistant of his or her choice with the exception of a person who stands as a candidate for the elections. It requires that each polling station has a dedicated election assistant who wears distinctive marks or signs and is nominated by the Election Committee who, at the request of the voter, will assist him or her in marking the ballot paper. This option is always available if the voter does not wish to be assisted in the voting by his or her personal assistant. Furthermore, transportation costs of disabled voters to and from polling stations can be covered by the state.The Government has made a proposal to the parliament (Government Proposal 8/2010 of 5 March 2010) for amendments to the Election Act establishing that a family member who is a dedicated assistant to a person entitled to vote at home, would also be allowed to vote at home. Further information is available in the reports of the OSCE regarding the parliamentary elections of the 17th of April 2011[[11]](#footnote-11) and the presidential election of the 22nd of January 2012[[12]](#footnote-12). |
| Is there a duty under law for public and private providers of internet and web-based information to ensure that public information is subject to accessibility requirements (e.g. equivalent to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA standard) | There is no such duty under law. There is no national legislation to regulate the accessibility of internet and web-based information.[[13]](#footnote-13)The recommendations for developing and implementing web services in public administration (JHS 129*: Julkishallinnon verkkopalvelun suunnittelun ja toteuttamisen periaatteet*)[[14]](#footnote-14) approved by the Advisory Committee on Information Management in Public Administration (*Julkisen hallinnon tietohallinnon neuvottelukunta*, JUHTA/ *Delegationen för informationsförvaltningen inom den offentliga förvaltningen*, JUHTA) include accessibility guidelines for public providers of web-based services. These recommendations are currently in the process of being updated. The recommendations are not binding, and thus far it seems that they have not been followed. The section 4.6.2 of the recommendations suggests that standards and instructions concerning the accessibility should be followed, and that an accessible web service should at least conform to A level according to the WGAC guidelines on accessibility.Furthermore, as an instrument of Finnish communications policy, a programme called ‘Towards an accessible information society; an action programme 2011-2015 (*Kohti esteetöntä tietoyhteiskuntaa; Toimenpideohjelma 2011-2015*)’ is in place in order to increase accessibility to guarantee all citizens the opportunity to work, study, pursue a hobby and participate irrespective of their age, gender, state of health, ethnic background and social, mental or physical capabilities. The measures in the programme aim at advancing accessibility to and reviewing the accessibility requirements of communication services, such as telephone, television, radio and internet services.The programme refers to participation in the society and the availability of public services and information in an electronic format on a general level, but does not have concrete reference to the accessibility of voting.[[15]](#footnote-15) |
| Is there a duty under law for public and private providers of media (including newspapers, TV, radio and internet) to ensure that their information and communications are subject to accessibility requirements? | The Act on Television and Radio Operations (*Laki televisio- ja radiotoiminnasta/Lag om televisions- och radioverksamhet*) (744/1998)[[16]](#footnote-16) and the Government Decree on Audio and Subtitle Services in Television Programming (*Valtioneuvoston asetus televisio-ohjelmiin liitettävästä ääni- ja tekstityspalvelusta/ Statsrådets förordning om införande av ljud- och textningstjänst i televisionsprogram*) (292/2011)[[17]](#footnote-17) regulate audio and subtitle services in radio and television broadcasting.Specifically, the amendment 19a (27.8.2010/733) of the Act on Television and Radio Operations regulates how subtitles and audio track must be provided when broadcasting in Finnish and Swedish, and an audio description when programming in other languages is subtitled. These services must be provided in both public service and private broadcasting, when the programming serves the public interest. The target percentage of subtitled or audio described programming between the years 2011–2016 is 10-50 % in private broadcasting and 50-100 % in public broadcasting. |
| Is there legislation requiring that polling stations and voting processes be accessible to persons with disabilities (e.g. a certain percentage of polling stations must be accessible, one polling station per electoral district must be accessible etc.)?Please indicate whether the legislation requires that polling stations and voting processes are accessible for all persons with disabilities or for particular impairment groups (e.g. persons with visual, hearing, physical impairments etc.). | The Ministry of Justice issues for each election written instructions to the election authorities for the conduct of elections. The instructions include advice on various aspects of the election process including best practices in ensuring that the voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to use. The instructions include specific advice concerning persons with disabilities, e.g. on building slopes for wheelchairs, providing special booths with lower tables, purchasing of materials, parking lots for persons with disabilities, etc.In addition, the Election Act (section 190) provides for transportation services for persons with disabilities who wish to vote at the polling station. The Election Act refers to the Law governing the organisation of services and supporting functions for the disabled (No.380 of 1987) which is applicable to the transportation services for the purpose of voting. |
| Does the law foresee training for election authorities and election officials on non-discrimination on the grounds of disability, accessibility and reasonable accommodation? | The law does not foresee training for election officials on non-discrimination. The applicable law would be the Election Act ([*Vaalilaki/Vallag*) (714/1998)](http://www.finlex.fi/linkit/ajansd/19980714), which has no mention of training for election officials.The instructions from the Ministry of Justice for the election committees include information about accessibility.[[18]](#footnote-18) These are written instructions provided for all election committees by the ministry, and there is no official or compulsory training on the contents of the instructions. The instructions are not available for the public. |
| Does the national strategy/action plan on disability cover the right to political participation of persons with disabilities? | A national disability policy programme from 1996 was in place. In March 2012, the government adopted the National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights 2012–2013. Action Plan project number 43 ‘Promoting the equal implementation of participation rights (the project Political Rights for All)’ includes as key themes facilitating the voting of disabled persons and provision of electoral information in plain language.Moreover, Finland has a Disability Policy Programme for 2010–2015 (*Vammaispoliittinen ohjelma 2010–2015, VAMPO/ Finlands handikappolitiska program 2010–2015, VAMPO*).[[19]](#footnote-19)The programme outlines the concrete disability policy actions for the next few years (2010–2015). The societal developments to achieve sustainable and accountable disability policy are outlined in the same context. They demand measures in both the next few years and in a longer term. The programme’s aim is to develop all the relevant policy sectors from the perspective of the rights, freedoms and equal opportunities of persons with disabilities. The programme is divided into 14 content areas that are important from the point of view of disability policy. It comprises altogether 122 concrete measures to tackle the drawbacks.The measures directly concerning political participation of persons with disabilities included in the programme are the following: 34. Ensuring the accessibility of polling stations with instructions and follow-up of their implementation. Instructing and ensuring that voting in a polling station is always primary to home voting. Responsibility: The Ministry of Justice.35. Ensuring that the needs of the disabled persons are taken into account when developing electronic voting in order to enhance the possibility to independent voting by disabled persons. Responsibility: The Ministry of Justice.The first evaluation report was published in 2013[[20]](#footnote-20). Most of the 122 concrete measures had been started in the spring of 2013. 27 measures have not begun, or there was no information available about them. Insufficient data had been collected at the point of the monitoring process (spring 2013). There were still measures that have not been started at all. The report also shows that indicators for monitoring are incomplete and indicators should be developed in the future. The monitoring themes for 2012 were the improvement of the socioeconomic position of persons with disabilities and the combating of poverty, and promotion of political participation of persons with disabilities is not focused on in the evaluation. |
| Are all persons with disabilities, including those who have been deprived of their legal capacity, able to access redress and complaint mechanisms in cases where they have not been able to exercise the right to vote? | Within the electoral administration structure, there is no specific system established for lodging complaints related to different aspects of the elections. Instead, reports of problems were dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis. The Administrative Judicial Procedure Act (*Hallintolainkäyttölaki/ Förvaltningsprocesslag*) (586/1996)[[21]](#footnote-21) and the Local Government Act ([*Kuntalaki/Kommunallag*) (365/1995)](http://www.finlex.fi/linkit/ajansd/19950365)[[22]](#footnote-22) provide provisions for general complaints and appeals relating to administrative bodies. Citizens can also make complaints concerning the actions of authorities, civil servants and other persons performing public tasks, to the Parliamentary Ombudsman (*Eduskunnan oikeusasiamies/Riksdagens justitieombudman*) or to the Chancellor of Justice (*Oikeuskansleri/Justitiekanslern*), including on election-related matters. The legal provisions stipulating the right to complain to these institutions are the Parliamentary Ombudsman Act (*Laki eduskunnan oikeusasiamiehestä/ Lag om riksdagens justitieombudsman*) (14.3.2002/197)[[23]](#footnote-23), the Act on the Chancellor of Justice of the Government (*Laki valtioneuvoston oikeuskanslerista/Lag om justitiekanslern i statsrådet*) (25.2.2000/193 )[[24]](#footnote-24) and the Act on the division of the obligations between the Chancellor of Justice of the Government and the Parliamentary Ombudsman (*Laki valtioneuvoston oikeuskanslerin ja eduskunnan oikeusasiamiehen tehtävien jaosta/Lag om fördelningen av åligganden mellan justitiekanslern i statsrådet och riksdagens justitieombudsman*) (21.12.1990/1224 )[[25]](#footnote-25). However, neither institution can prescribe corrective actions for individual remedies. According to the OSCE, consideration could be given to establishing a clearly publicised mechanism for processing administrative complaints within the various levels of the electoral authorities.[[26]](#footnote-26)In principle, there are no structural obstacles to keep persons with disabilities from accessing redress mechanisms, but there is no redress mechanism in place especially for persons with disabilities. There is no official data available on the ability of persons with disabilities to access redress mechanisms.Chapter 8, entitled “Demand for rectification” of the Election Act (714/1998) stipulates the rights of appeal, grounds of appeal and the process of appeal when a person wishes to demand a rectification to the decision by which the result of the election has been confirmed. The persons who feel that their interests or rights are violated, and those persons who have been candidates in the election, and the party who has made a candidate application, have a right to lodge an appeal on the grounds that the decision is unlawful. Furthermore, every person who is eligible to vote in the electoral district or municipality and in municipal elections, a member of the municipality, have a right to lodge an appeal on the grounds that the election has been carried out in an incorrect order and that this might have had an effect on the result of the election. The appeal shall be sent to a competent Provincial Administrative Court within 14 days from the confirmation of the election results. However, in European Parliamentary elections, the appeal is, always sent to the Provincial Administrative Court of Uusimaa. |

1. **PROCESS INDICATORS**

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| **Process indicators** | **Source and supporting information** |
| Do political parties have accessibility guidelines/action plans in place? Please give details of provisions related to information and communications material (e.g. manifestos, information about candidates, website, meetings etc.) | The MoJ made efforts to expand voter education and the electoral information available, including extensive website content. Personal letters were sent to all new voters, while pamphlets and booklets were sent to schools for teaching purposes. The MoJ established a presence in social media, such as Facebook, where they held a number of well-attended live question and answer sessions. Information guides were distributed in 20 languages. For the first time, candidate lists were provided on audio CD and in Braille making it possible for the visually impaired to independently study candidate lists in their district.For further information, see the report of the OSCE regarding the Parliamentary elections of the 17th of April 2011.[[27]](#footnote-27)  |
| Are there mechanisms in place to ensure that disabled people’s organisations (DPOs) are consulted and involved in the development of laws and policies in electoral matters? Please give details of the mechanisms through which DPOs are involved. | The Constitution of Finland ([*Suomen Perustuslaki/Finlands Grundlag*) (731/1999)](http://www.finlex.fi/linkit/ajansd/19990731), section 14 entitled “Electoral and participatory rights”, stipulates that “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.” There are no specific mechanisms in place with regard to electoral matters and DPOs. However, citizens, NGOs and other civic groups are heard when government prepares draft decisions. Public bodies that ask for citizens’ views include ministries, central government agencies and municipal authorities. During a round of comments government circulates its draft decision for comments to selected experts and civic groups. For such preparatory work to be successful, it is important to ensure that comments are obtained from an adequate range of persons and organisations. An NGO often acts as an expert. For example, a DPO can comment on disability policies. An NGO can also use its own initiative to submit a comment without being invited to do so by government. In the drafting of legislation by ministries, citizens are primarily heard through the procedure, before obtaining any comments[[28]](#footnote-28) The National Council on Disability, VANE is a co-operative organ for authorities, disability organisations and organisations for relatives of disabled people. It closely follows the decision-making in the society, gives statements and promotes the real implementation of human rights of disabled people. The Council is working in close connection with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.The Council has for example given a statement to the Ministry of Justice on the disabled persons’ right to secrecy of their vote (*Vammaisten ihmisten oikeus äänestyssalaisuuden säilyttämiseen*) on the 14th of May 2012.[[29]](#footnote-29)The statement concludes that the needs of the disabled voters should be considered in the development of electronic voting in order to enhance their possibilities to independent voting. |
| Is training provided to election authorities and election officials on non-discrimination on the grounds of disability, accessibility and reasonable accommodation? | The Ministry of Justice provides general training on the arrangements of elections to the staff of Municipal Central Election Committees. Instructions provided by the Ministry of Justice on the conduct of elections include instructions on how to make the polling stations and the facilities accessible. These are part of the training. |
| Have national judicial redress mechanisms considered any cases related to the right to political participation of persons with disabilities?Please give details of relevant case law and any available data on the number of such cases. | No information was found.[[30]](#footnote-30) |
| Have national non-judicial redress mechanisms (e.g. National Human Rights Institutions, Equality Bodies, Ombuds institutions) considered any cases related to the right to political participation of persons with disabilities?Please give details of relevant case law and any available data on the number of such cases. | No information was found.[[31]](#footnote-31)The annual reports and the decision databases of the Parliamentary Ombudsman (*Eduskunnan oikeusasiamies/Riksdagens justitieombudman*)[[32]](#footnote-32) and of the Chancellor of Justice (*Oikeuskansleri/Justitiekanslern*)[[33]](#footnote-33), do not mention decisions dealing with the right to political participation of persons with disabilities during the last five years. |
| Is information about how and where to complain in the case of problems with exercising the right to political participation accessible to all persons with disabilities?  | Citizens can make complaints concerning the actions of authorities, civil servants and other persons performing public tasks, to the Parliamentary Ombudsman (*Eduskunnan oikeusasiamies/Riksdagens justitieombudman*) or to the Chancellor of Justice (*Oikeuskansleri/Justitiekanslern*), including on election-related matters. However, neither of both institutions can prescribe corrective actions for individual remedy. The Parliamentary Ombudsman’s website provides information about redress in Finnish sign language[[34]](#footnote-34) and in Finnish Swedish sign language[[35]](#footnote-35). The Chancellor of Justice’s website provides information about redress in Finnish sign language[[36]](#footnote-36). In the Ministry of Justice’s elections webpage there is no information about redress mechanisms in an accessible form.[[37]](#footnote-37) None of these websites provide information in easy read format or audio format.As mentioned above according to the OSCE report, the ultimate competent authority was not always clear to stakeholders.[[38]](#footnote-38) |

1. **OUTCOME INDICATORS**

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| **Outcome indicators** | **Source and supporting information** |
| What was the voter turnout rate for persons with disabilities in the most recent municipal elections and in the 2009 European Parliament elections? How does this compare with the voter turnout rate among the general population?What was the voter turnout rate for persons with disabilities in the most recent national elections? How does this compare with the voter turnout rate among the general population? | There is no available official data about the voter turnout rate for persons with disabilities in the most recent municipal elections and in the 2009 European Parliament elections, nor in the most recent national election which is the presidential election of 2012. Furthermore, no data about home voting with regards to disability is available.[[39]](#footnote-39) |
| How many members of the current national parliament identify as having a disability? | There is no available data about how many members of parliament identify as having a disability. The National Council on Disability, VANE (*Valtakunnallinen vammaisneuvosto 2013-2015, VANE/Riksomfattande handikapprådet, VANE*) has estimated that disabled persons are underrepresented in national political bodies.[[40]](#footnote-40) |
| How many members of current municipal governments identify as having a disability? | There is no available data about how many members of municipal governments identify as having a disability. The National Council on Disability, VANE (*Valtakunnallinen vammaisneuvosto 2013-2015, VANE/Riksomfattande handikapprådet, VANE*) estimates that disabled persons are underrepresented in municipal political bodies.[[41]](#footnote-41) |
| What proportion of polling stations is accessible for persons with disabilities? Please indicate whether polling stations are accessible for all persons with disabilities or for particular impairment groups e.g. persons with visual, hearing, physical impairments etc) | One of the goals in Finland’s Disability Policy Programme 2010–2015 (*Vammaispoliittinen ohjelma 2010–2015, VAMPO/ Finlands handikappolitiska program 2010–2015, VAMPO*) is to make all polling stations accessible to physically disabled persons. The Ministry of Justice has issued guidelines for all polling stations to be accessible, but they have not been followed by all.[[42]](#footnote-42) These guidelines are not available for the public.Not all polling stations are wheelchair accessible and not all polling stations have special voting booths. There is no statistical data available on wheelchair accessible polling stations. Although candidate lists are now available in Braille, ballots or other method of independent voting for the blind are not. The vote for blind people is currently compromised as they continue to be dependent on an assistant to mark their ballot.This is confirmed in the OSCE report regarding the 2011 parliamentary elections, stating that full compliance is yet to be reached with various international and Finnish legal documents that require every citizen to be guaranteed the right to a secret ballot and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability.[[43]](#footnote-43) |
| Does the website to provide instructions for voting and information on candidates run by the ministry responsible for organising elections meet accessibility standards (e.g. equivalent to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA standard)? | Currently, the website of the Ministry of Justice providing information on voting and elections (<http://vaalit.fi/>) only partly complies with the WCAG 2.0 standards. However, the website is in the process of being updated according to these standards.[[44]](#footnote-44) The website provides some information in Finnish sign language and videos in easy read format, but there is no possibility to zoom in or audio described content.For the national parliamentary elections of 2011 as well as for the municipal elections of 2012, the Ministry of Justice made efforts to expand voter education and the electoral information available, including extensive website content. For the first time, candidate lists were provided on audio CD and in Braille making it possible for the visually impaired to independently study candidate lists in their district.[[45]](#footnote-45)As part of Finland’s Disability Policy Programme 2010–2015 (*Vammaispoliittinen ohjelma 2010–2015, VAMPO/ Finlands handikappolitiska program 2010–2015, VAMPO*), the Ministry of Justice produced plain language (easy read) election videos[[46]](#footnote-46) in Finnish and Swedish on how to vote in the municipal elections, and how to cast a ballot in an advanced voting station. The Ministry of Justice intends to keep on producing election materials in clear language.[[47]](#footnote-47) |
| What proportion of main public and/or private television broadcasts providing instructions for voting and information on candidates has national language subtitles? | There is no official data available about the proportion of election broadcasts with subtitles.The regulations in place do not stipulate for any data collection on the proportion of television broadcasts providing instructions for voting and information on candidates with national language subtitles.According to the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (*Viestintävirasto, FICORA/Kommunikationsverket, FICORA*), the public administration body under whose mandate it is to follow the implementation of the requirements of the above legislation, in 2012 the proportion of subtitled television programming was 84% in public and 32% (MTV3), 29% (Nelonen) and 47% (Fox) in private broadcasting.[[48]](#footnote-48)  |
| What proportion of main public and/or private television broadcasts providing instructions for voting and information on candidates has audio description? | There is no official data available about the proportion of election broadcasts with audio description. According to the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (*Viestintävirasto, FICORA/Kommunikationsverket, FICORA*), in 2012 the proportion of audio described programming in public television broadcasting was 89%, and in private broadcasting 90% (MTV3), 100% (Nelonen) and 41% (Fox).[[49]](#footnote-49)  |
| What proportion of main public and/or private television broadcasts providing instructions for voting and information on candidates has sign language interpretation? | There is no official data available about the proportion of election broadcasts with sign language interpretation. The submission by the Finnish Disability Forum, FDF (*Vammaisfoorumi ry/Handikappforum rf*) on Finland to the Human Rights Committee states that the amount of broadcast programmes in sign language has not increased since 1996.[[50]](#footnote-50) |
| How many political parties, out of the total who participated in the most recent European Parliament and municipal elections, made their manifesto/campaign material accessible to persons with disabilities (e.g. large print, braille, easy-to-read, audio versions etc.)? | 16 political parties took part in the municipal elections of 2012 and 13 political parties in the European Parliament Elections of 2009. Seven parties answered our query concerning accessible campaign material. Five out of these seven parties had produced campaign material in the last European Parliament and municipal elections, all in braille.[[51]](#footnote-51) Furthermore, one of these five parties, the National Coalition Party (*Kansallinen kokoomus/Samlingspartiet*) has a practice of interpreting all major speeches during elections and party conferences in sign language.[[52]](#footnote-52) |
| What proportion of public authority national and municipal buildings is accessible to persons with disabilities? | There is no official data available on the proportion of accessible public authority national and municipal buildings[[53]](#footnote-53). Measure number 43 of Finland’s Disability Policy Programme 2010–2015 ( *Vammaispoliittinen ohjelma 2010–2015, VAMPO/ Finlands handikappolitiska program 2010–2015, VAMPO*) is to make public administration offices and spaces accessible by the year 2020. The criteria used to determine accessibility is F1, Finland’s building regulations collection on accessible buildings.[[54]](#footnote-54) The implementation of this goal has been started, and accessibility is considered in all renovation and building projects. There is no estimate about the proportion of buildings accessible to persons with disabilities in the evaluation reporting of the programme.[[55]](#footnote-55) |
| How many complaints related to infringements of the right to political participation of persons with disabilities were recorded in 2012? What proportion of these complaints was successful? | The 2012 annual reports and the decision databases of the two relevant institutions, Parliamentary Ombudsman (*Eduskunnan oikeusasiamies/Riksdagens justitieombudman*) and the Chancellor of Justice (*Oikeuskansleri/Justitiekanslern*), do not mention complaints dealing with the right to political participation of persons with disabilities in 2012.There is no information available and the persons contacted did not know about complaints dealing with the right to political participation of persons with disabilities in 2012.[[56]](#footnote-56) |

1. <http://www.un.org/disabilities/countries.asp?navid=12&pid=166>; <http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&lang=en> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Information about the working group in Finnish from the Government Project Registry website HARE (accessed 7.8.2013): <http://www.hare.vn.fi/mHankePerusSelaus.asp?h_iId=17591> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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