

Municipalities – the local level of administration

In 2024, there are a total of 309 municipalities in Finland, of which 108 use the self-designation *city* and 201 municipalities the designation *municipality*.

The municipalities organize public services for their residents. Most of these services are defined by law as being duties of local government. Duties can be assigned to local government only by laying down provisions to this effect in the law.

Tasks and responsibilities of municipalities

Municipalities are responsible for organizing the following public services:

- education and early childhood education and care
- cultural, youth, library, and sports services
- urban planning and land use
- water and waste management
- environmental services

The Municipal Act guides the administration of municipalities in Finland.

The municipality's administration is based on the self-government of the residents

According to Section 121 of the Constitution, the municipality's administration is based on the self-government of the municipality's residents. The municipality's residents elect the municipality's highest institution, the council, in municipal elections held every four years.

The council is responsible for the municipality's finances and operations and exercises the municipality's decision-making power. It decides which institutions there are in the municipality and how the authority and tasks are divided between trustees and office holders.

The provisions of the Equality Act

When choosing institutions, the provisions of the Equality Act must be considered. According to Section 4a of the Equality Act, municipal and inter-municipal cooperation institutions must have at least 40 percent of both women and men each, unless there are special reasons. The provision does not apply to councils.

Who can stand as a candidate in Municipal elections?

There are restrictions to who is eligible to stand as a candidate in Municipal elections.

- The candidate must be a resident of the municipality in which they run for office.
- The candidate must have the right to vote in municipal elections in some municipality.
- The candidate must not be deficient, for example under guardianship.

The management system of the municipality

The Municipal Act creates the framework for the management system of the municipality. It enables a wide range of different management and organizational models. In each model, the municipality's decision-making power is exercised by a council elected by the residents. The council decides on the structure of the administration and how authority and tasks are divided between different actors.

According to the Municipal Act, the mandatory institutions and actors in the municipality are only the council, the municipal government, the inspection board and the central election board. In addition to these, the council appoints boards and executive boards.

Municipal Institutions and management

According to Section 30 of the Municipal Act, the municipal institutions are:

- council
- municipal government and its divisions
- boards or committees and their divisions
- executive boards and their divisions
- committees.

The members of the municipal board, audit committee and other committees are elected at the council meeting held in June after the Municipal elections.

The council

The council is responsible for the municipality's finances and operations and exercises the municipality's highest decision-making power. It decides, which institutions there are in the municipality and how the authority and tasks are divided between trustees and office holders.

Council members and alternate members are elected in the municipal elections held in April. The term of office of the council is four years and it starts at the beginning of June of the election year. The council members are also called municipal trustees.

The municipality chooses the number of councilors, at least the required minimum number. This is determined by the number of inhabitants, according to § 16 of the Municipal Act. The Municipal Act states that the number of councilors differs between 13 to 79.

For example, in 2024 there are approximately 3500 inhabitants in Vieremä and its council consists of 21 councilors. Instead, Tampere, with over 250 000 inhabitants has a council of 67 councilors.

To organize the administration of the municipality, the council must approve the administrative regulations of the municipality, which stipulate e.g., on the division of authority and tasks of the municipality's various authorities.

Municipal government

The municipal government is the central institution of the municipality. Its task is to manage the municipality's operations, administration, and finances. The municipal government is responsible for the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of legality of the council's decisions, and for coordinating the municipality's activities about ownership control of the municipality's operations.

In addition, the municipal government's statutory task is to supervise the interests of the municipality and, unless otherwise stipulated in the administrative regulations, represent the municipality, use its authority to represent the municipality as an employer and is responsible for the municipality's personnel policy care of the municipality's internal supervision and the organization of risk management. More precisely, the board's powers of action and decision-making are defined in the administrative rules approved by the council.

The chairperson of the municipal board

The chairperson of the municipal board leads the political cooperation that is required to conduct the tasks of the municipal board. Other duties of the chairperson of the municipal board are determined in the administrative regulations. The council can decide whether the chairperson and vice-chairmen of the municipal board work as full-time or part-time trustees.

Municipal manager and mayor

The municipality can be managed by an ex officio municipal manager or a mayor. The mayor serves as the chairman of the municipal board. Both manage the municipality's administration, housekeeping, and other activities under the municipal government.

The municipal manager is elected by the council. The municipal manager can be elected either indefinitely or for a fixed period, and he is employed by the municipality. The municipality and the municipal manager draw up a management contract where they agree on the conditions for managing the municipality.

The council elects the mayor. The mayor can be elected for a maximum term of office of the council. A person who is not eligible for election to the municipal board and board can also be elected mayor.

The central election board of the municipality

The municipality's central election board, which is elected for the entire election period, is responsible for the many practical arrangements of the elections. The Central Election Board has five members.

The inspection board

The council appoints inspection board to organize administration and financial audits and evaluations. The number of members of the inspection board is at the discretion of the council, and personal deputies are chosen for the members.

The main task of the board is to assess whether the operational and financial goals set by the council have been realized in the municipality and the municipal group and whether the activities

have been organized in a productive and appropriate manner, and to assess whether the financial balance has been achieved.

Executive boards, committees, and boards

The council decides, which institutions there are in the municipality and how the authority and tasks are divided between trustees and office holders.

Boards of Directors

The board can work directly under the municipal government, but also under the board. In this case, it may be justified to stipulate that the relevant board elects the members of the executive board. For example, the school board may be subordinate to the board responsible for education. The council can also decide that the members of the executive board or a part of them are elected based on the proposal of the residents, staff, or service users.

Committees

The municipal government can directly appoint committees to conduct the assigned task based on the law. Like the board, the members of the committee do not have special restrictions on their eligibility for election. Committees are needed in project-related tasks, for example in the implementation of a construction project. Other institutions can also appoint committees based on the council's decision. The council can give the institution the general right to appoint committees, but it can also limit the authority to, for example, only appointing a building committee. The term of office of the committee can be at most the length of the term of office of the institution that appointed it.

In general, the council chooses the municipality's trustees. However, the election of board members can be transferred to another institution, and the board members are chosen by the institution that appoints the board. Members of the board and committee are not subject to the restrictions on election eligibility that apply to members of the municipal board or board.

Boards

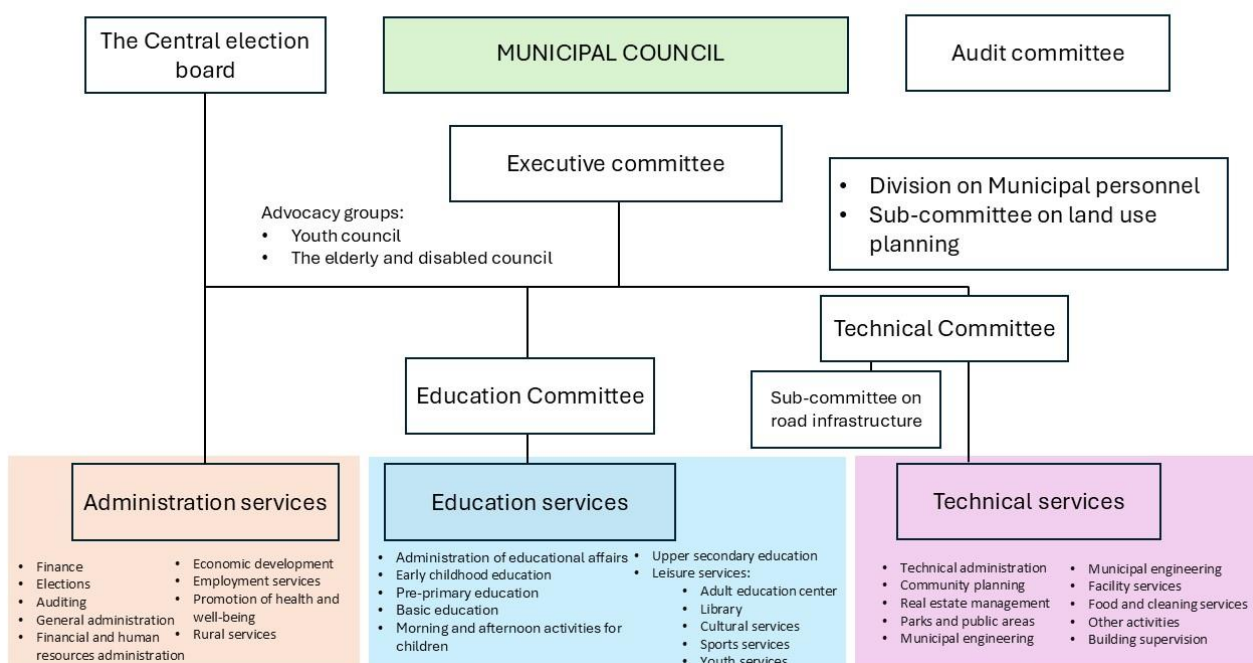
The council decides on the board structure of the municipality in the administrative regulations. The council appoints the committees that operate under the municipal government and decides on their

number of members and their powers of action and decision. The council can decide to appoint committees to manage permanent tasks instead of boards.

The members of the boards are elected for the term of office of the council unless the council has decided on a shorter term of office. Usually, an odd number of members is chosen so that the votes are not equal when voting on individual meeting issues. The board must have a chairperson and the necessary number of vice-chairpersons.

Boards can have divisions. Their members may also include deputy members of the board. If the council so decides, members other than board members or alternate members can be elected as members of the division.

An example of a municipal institutions and management: Vieremä



Resources:

<https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/laki/toimielimet-ja-johtaminen>

<https://vm.fi/en/local-government-s-duties-and-activities>

www.vierema.fi

www.tampere.fi