

**Finland:
Current development in
e-democracy -
Municipal viewpoint**

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Current legislation issues

- Renewed Local Government act has been accepted by the Parliament – coming into force May 2015
- Aiming to opening up municipal administration and decision making better, special note to e-networking
- Some changes for better flexibility of e-meetings and informing the citizens
 - Rules, publicity
 - e-decision process defined
 - Some former voluntary bodies now defined as obligatory
- Open data and internet availability of documents underlined, specially in economic issues
- Experiment of electronic local referendum in preparation
 - Not binding, but consultative

Current, practical challenges

- Network security is a key issue – perhaps too much so – is security to vote more important than right to vote?
- ICT development work is too limited, must be more user orientated, specially in municipalities must ICT development be done more in co-operation with employees and their expertise
- Geographical data and user queries shows some good practises – special reports for municipal amalgamation cases (City of Oulu area)
- Applications tend to be too complicated, to simplify is to serve citizens better
- Financial savings potential should be made from potential to reality – more partnership is needed

Workshop observations and some best practises to share

- State-municipal realationship workshop arranged with the help of Council of Europe center of expertise, november 2013 in Helsinki – aimed to help preparation of the new Local Government Act
 - The Nordic Countries, Estonia, the Netherlands and UK took part
 - Good discussion of common challenges: defining financial framework, statistical development, use of ICT to serve citizens better
 - Lessons to Finland: further development of local government statistic administration, defined by new Local Government Act
 - Estonia continued good work to further develop customer-oriented data on Ministry web site
 - Further co-operation of countries needed in State-municipality relationship development
- Some lessons from Oulu area (municipal amalgamation special report)
 - Municipal ICT development work cannot be done in isolation, but in co-operation of other municipalities and with the expertise of sector personnell from municipality (specially social and health care, education) – concrete results are possible with sector knowledge combined to ICT expertise – yet the huge savings potential of the ICT should be made into reality rather than just the empty promise & vain hope – co-operation, opening up and finding the partnership are key issues to turn savings potential into reality from theory
 - Applications should be more simple to quarantee the critical mass of end users, simple solutions tend to be the most genius ones
 - Specially mapping exercises (defining for example municipal service locations and development potential) for citizens proved to be popular and practical in visualisation the problems
- Financial savings potential should be made from potential to reality – more partnership is needed
 - In Oulu case, one best practise was the common treatment of municipal democracy, municipal economy and municipal employer/employees issues
 - Better view of the whole picture: possibility to obtain better balance of economy, better quality of democracy and the common programme to develop municipal human resources – in situation where it is higher need for financial squeeze and yet growing capacity of social & health sectors
 - Work will continue with the New Government after the April 2015 elections

Services for e-participation

- www.otakantaa.fi, a channel for participation and interaction open to all
- www.kansalaisaloite.fi, a system for the electronic collection of signatures for citizens' initiatives
- www.kuntalaisaloite.fi, a system for the electronic collection of signatures for initiatives to municipal authorities
- www.lausuntopalvelu.fi, a service for responding electronically to official requests for comments (to be made public in spring 2014)