

PARLIAMENT  
*of* FINLAND  
2017



Parliament convened for its first 2017 plenary session on 1 February on the substitute premises in the Sibelius Academy, where it still operated for the spring term due to the renovation of the Parliament Building. The honorary speaker of Parliament by age, MP Pertti Salolainen (National Coalition Party), chaired the opening session until the election of the Speaker and two Deputy Speakers. Parliament re-elected Maria Lohela (Finns Party) as Speaker, Mauri Pekkarinen (Centre Party) as First Deputy Speaker and Arto Satonen (National Coalition Party) as Second Deputy Speaker. The opening ceremonies of the parliamentary session took place at Finlandia Hall on 2 February.

### Many changes in the composition of Parliament

There were exceptionally large changes in the composition of Parliament during the parliamentary session 2017. The most substantial change took place in June when the Finns Party Parliamentary Group divided in two soon after the party convention of the Finns Party. At first, the new parliamentary group established on 13 June adopted the name New Alternative. At the end of June, it totalled 19 MPs (Simon Elo, Sampo Terho, Vesa-Matti Saarakkala, Kimmo Kivelä, Timo Soini, Jari Lindström, Martti Mölsä, Ari Jalonen, Anne Louhelainen, Kari Kulmala, Pirkko Mattila, Jussi Niinistö, Kaj Turunen, Tiina Elovaara, Lea Mäkipää, Hanna Mäntylä, Maria Lohela, Reijo Hongisto and Pentti Oinonen). When Veera Ruoho left the Finns Party and joined the National Coalition Party Parliamentary Group, 17 MPs remained in the Finns Party Parliamentary Group. In the autumn, New Alternative changed its name to Blue Reform Parliamentary Group (Blue Reform).

The division of the Finns Party also changed the parliamentary foundation of the Government and the distribution of Parliament seats between the Government and the opposition. The five ministers that belonged to the Finns Party before the division moved into the new parliamentary group and continued in the Government. The Government Programme remained unchanged. Parliament voted on the confidence in the Government on 22 June.

In addition to the formation of the new parliamentary group, Parliament gained several new MPs in 2017 to replace the MPs leaving Parliament.

Olli Rehn (Centre Party) was granted a release from the office of Member of Parliament as of 1 February. Rehn was replaced by Pekka Puska (Centre Party).

Nasima Razmyar (Social Democratic Party) was released from the office of Member of Parliament as of 9 June. Razmyar was replaced by Pilvi Torsti (Social Democratic Party).

Hanna Mäntylä (New Alternative) left Parliament on 30 June. She was replaced on 3 July by Matti Torvinen (New Alternative).

Alexander Stubb (National Coalition Party) was granted a release from the office of Member of Parliament as of 30 July. As of 2 August, he was replaced by Pia Kauma (National Coalition Party).

The government parties, i.e. the Centre Party, the National Coalition Party and the Blue Reform, had a total of 106 MPs at the end of the parliamentary session.



*The parliament convened on 5 September in the newly renovated Parliament House.*

## Time out for the social welfare and health care reform; heated debate about alcohol legislation

The social welfare and health care reform was expected to dominate Parliament's work in 2017. At the beginning of the year, Parliament started to process several extensive legislative packages related to social welfare and health care. However, the Government called a time out in the preparation of the social welfare and health care reform after Parliament's Constitutional Law Committee stated in June that government proposals were not entirely constitutional. According to the statement issued by the Constitutional Law Committee on 29 June, the regions' obligation to corporatise their social welfare and health care services, as proposed by the Government, was unconstitutional. In addition, the government proposal suggested the privatisation of a great deal of public tasks in a manner that did not comply with the constitution with regard to how public administrative tasks can be delegated to others than the authorities.

The Government announced that it will make the changes required by the Constitutional Law Committee to the legislative proposals that are under consideration by Parliament and that a new government proposal on freedom of choice will be submitted in early 2018. As the proposals related to freedom of choice, on the one hand, and to acts on regions and the arrangement of social welfare and health care services, on the other hand, are politically interlinked, the overall reform did not proceed in Parliament in 2017.

In the spring term, Parliament completed two major foreign and security policy entities that had been initiated in the previous year's parliamentary session: the Government's Defence Policy Report and the legislative package on receiving and providing international assistance. According to the report adopted by Parliament, Finland will significantly improve its national defence capability by, for instance, increasing the strength of wartime forces and replacing army, navy and air force equipment. Finland also continues to maintain the option to seek NATO membership. The acts on providing and receiving international assistance mean that the Finnish Defence Forces may assist another state,

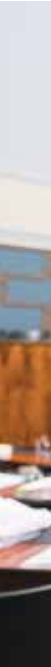
the EU or an international organisation in case of a terrorist attack, a natural disaster or a major accident, for instance. In the same manner, Finland may request assistance related to the Finnish Defence Forces' area of responsibility from these other parties.

In the spring, Parliament decided on a reform of traffic services that discontinues taxi fare regulation and makes it easier to become a transport entrepreneur, among other things. The related acts will, for the most part, enter into force in July 2018. The Postal Act was amended so that in the regions covered by the early-morning newspaper delivery network, letter delivery is only required on three days a week. Furthermore, Posti no longer needs to deliver letters as quickly as before.

Towards the end of the year, Parliament relaxed the regulation concerning the retail sale of alcoholic beverages in stores and restaurants and at the same time raised the alcohol tax. The first consideration of the Alcohol Act in a plenary session was exceptionally exciting as parliamentary groups allowed MPs to vote according to their own personal conscience. In the decisive voting, Parliament decided with votes 98–94 that alcoholic beverages on retail sale may contain 5.5 per cent of alcohol, whereas the earlier maximum was 4.7 per cent.

In addition to enacting legislation, choosing the Prime Minister and deciding on the state budget, Parliament's tasks defined in the constitution include the acceptance of international treaties that are binding to Finland. In 2017, the agreement that evoked the liveliest discussion among citizens was the renewal of the Tenojoki fishing agreement with Norway.

The amendment to the Act on Unemployment Security also evoked a lot of discussion. To get full unemployment benefits, the unemployed must prove that they are active, with a certain period of time in salaried employment or in self-employment or by participating in activities that promote employment. At the same time, the qualifying period for unemployment benefit was shortened from seven days to five days. The citizens' initiative aiming at repealing the act was signed by the required number of citizens (50,000) before the turn of the year and will probably come to Parliament for consideration in 2018.





*Ms. Maija Laine visited Parliament House on the Open House in October. She is holding a photograph illustrating her previous visit in 1947.*

In 2017, four citizens' initiatives were submitted to Parliament, related to legalising euthanasia, abandoning daylight saving time, continuing aviation at Malmi Airport and ensuring the Vaasa Central Hospital services. Of these, the daylight saving time initiative was completed. The initiative was rejected because the matter does not fall under Parliament's decision-making power. Other citizens' initiatives completed during the year were three citizens' initiatives submitted in 2016 related to zero-hour contracts, the pension index and the amendment to the Marriage Act.

#### **The renovation of the Parliament Building was completed**

At the beginning of the autumn term, Parliament could return to its heritage building as the renovation of the Parliament Building was completed. The technical building systems of the Parliament Building, built in 1931, were renewed as part of the renovation, in addition to which the renovation encompassed, for instance, the restoration of windows, interior surfaces and most public space furniture.

To mark the completion of the renovation,

Parliament organised an Open House in the Parliament Building during two weekends in the autumn, attracting more than 6,500 visitors. The guided visits began in mid-October and soon became so popular that there were not enough time slots available as the number of simultaneous visitors in the Parliament Building is limited due to safety reasons.

The target for scheduling the renovation was to hold the jubilee session for the centenary of Finland's independence in the Parliament Building. The target was achieved and in its jubilee session on 5 December, Parliament decided to provide funding to the Itsenäisyyden juhluvuoden lastensäätiö (ITLA) foundation. The aim of the foundation is to support well-being and equal development among both children and families with children who live in Finland.

On 2 May, Parliament made the decision on the establishment of a national park in Hossa, Suomussalmi for the 100-year anniversary of Finnish independence.

Parliament took part in the celebrations of the centenary of Finnish independence by producing more than seventy Finland 100 events both in Finland and abroad.

The Kansanedustajat kouluissa (Members of Parliament at Schools) campaign consisted of nearly 600 visits to schools and 200 visits to kindergartens. Most of the events organised by Parliament were intended for citizens.

#### **Finland 100 visible on international arenas**

The centenary could also be seen in Parliament's international activities. The Speaker and Deputy Speakers represented the official Finland in many events organised abroad to celebrate the centenary, in addition to which Parliament was visited by more international guests than usually.

Finland's Presidency of the Nordic Council coincided with the centenary of our independence and



*The Danish Folketinget Independence Centenary gift to Finland was a memorial dedicated to Danish volunteers who served in the Finnish army during the Winter War. The memorial was unveiled at the Hietaniemi Cemetery while Speaker Pia Kjärsgaard and Deputy Speaker Kristian Pihl Lorentzen visited Finland on 7 December.*

culminated in the 69th session of the Nordic Council held in the Parliament Building from 31 October to 2 November. The main themes of the session were, among other things, the removal of cross-border barriers and the current state of the Nordic trust-based society.

The Nordic Council is one of the nine multilateral inter-parliamentary organisations in which Finland has a delegation appointed by Parliament. The other eight delegations are:

- 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 Executive Board of the Inter-Parliamentary Union IPU
- Finnish Delegation to the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP)
- 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. In 2017, several organisations discussed phenomena that challenge European values, conception of democracy and rule of law. In addition to multilateral organisations, parliaments engage in bilateral exchange. In 2017, Parliament hosted the

speakers of Morocco, Albania, Norway, Hungary, Ireland, Namibia and Denmark, among others.

#### Parliament's expenses were €23 per citizen

Parliament's expenses totalled €124.6 million in 2017, or approximately €23 per every Finnish citizen. The Parliamentary Office's 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.

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. Chairpersons of committees, Finance Committee's sub-committees and parliamentary groups are paid a salary supplement ranging from €475 to €1,188 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.

At the end of 2017, the Parliamentary Office had 537 full-time employees, 104 of them personal assistants to MPs. In addition, 86 MPs receive personal assistant services from their parliamentary group's office.

**TYPE OF THE MATTER / YEAR**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Government proposals .....	221	367	153	273	206
Government statements .....	2	1	2	0	1
Government reports .....	7	10	1	7	7
Prime Minister's announcements .....	4	7	4	3	5
Legislative motions .....	80	116	52	108	97
Petitionary motions .....	60	57	28	66	63
Budgetary motions .....	576	538	362	462	535
Citizens' initiative .....	3	3	5	4	4
Supplementary budgetary motions .....	80	199	6	5	7
Interpellations .....	4	8	5	3	4
Written questions .....	1 232	1 245	432	678	653
Union matters .....	92	48	27	74	73

**THE COMMITTEES HELD THE FOLLOWING NUMBER OF MEETINGS**

**AND DRAFTED THE FOLLOWING NUMBER OF REPORTS AND STATEMENTS IN THE 2015 SESSION**

	MEETINGS	REPORTS	STATEMENTS
Grand Committee .....	61	1	10
Constitutional Law Committee .....	122	3	61
Foreign Affairs Committee .....	102	10	10
Finance Committee .....	65	26	5
Subcommittees of the Finance Committee* .....	209		
Audit Committee .....	76	10	5
Administration Committee .....	115	28	40
Legal Affairs Committee .....	91	15	20
Transport and Communications Committee .....	102	23	29
Agriculture and Forestry Committee .....	92	11	30
Defence Committee .....	80	5	9
Education and Culture Committee .....	106	18	18
Social Affairs and Health Committee .....	114	23	14
Commerce Committee .....	105	23	54
Committee for the Future .....	58	2	6
Employment and Equality Committee .....	93	7	13
Environment Committee .....	98	17	27
<b>Total (including subcommittees) .....</b>	<b>1 689</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>351</b>

\*The Finance Committee generally prepares matters in eight subcommittees. These held the following number of meetings: Administration and Security Subcommittee 32, Tax Subcommittee 51, Education and Science Subcommittee 26, Agriculture Subcommittee 19, Communications Subcommittee 18, Employment and the Economy Subcommittee 30, Municipal and Health Affairs Subcommittee 18, Housing and Environment Subcommittee 15.

# MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT 31.12.2017

## PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS, 200 SEATS TOTAL

Centre Party Parliamentary Group (Cent) 49 MPs  
 National Coalition Party Parliamentary Group (NCP) 38 MPs  
 Social Democratic Parliamentary Group (SD) 35 MPs  
 Blue Reform Parliamentary Group (Blue) 19 MPs  
 Finns Party Parliamentary Group (Finns) 17 MPs  
 Greens Parliamentary Group (Greens) 15 MPs  
 Left Alliance Parliamentary Group (Left) 12 MPs  
 Swedish Parliamentary Group (Sw) 10 MPs  
 Christian Democratic Parliamentary Group (CD) 5 MPs

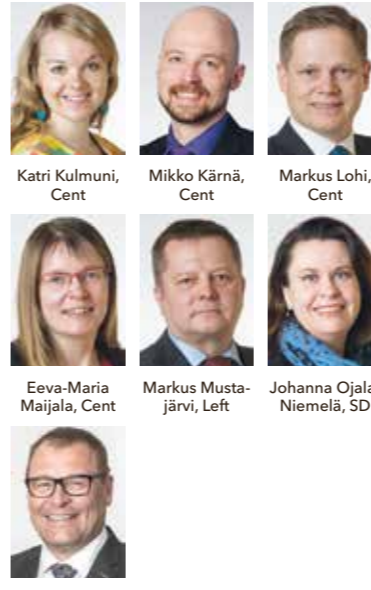
### 10 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF VAASA, 16 MPs



### 11 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CENTRAL FINLAND, 10 MPs



### 13 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF LAPLAND, 7 MPs



### 12 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF OULU, 18 MPs



### 6 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF HÄME, 14 MPs



### 7 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF PIRKANMAA, 19 MPs



### 9 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF SAVO-KARELIA, 16 MPs



### 3 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF VARSINAIS-SUOMI, 17 MPs



### 4 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF SATAKUNTA, 8 MPs



### 5 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF ÅLAND, 1 MP



### 8 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF SOUTH-EAST FINLAND, 17 MPs



### 2 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF UUSIMAA, 35 MPs



### 1 ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF HELSINKI, 22 MPs

