

STRATEGY 2016 - 2021

Political Parties of Finland for Democracy - Demo Finland



BACKGROUND: DEMOCRACY SUPPORT

Supporting democracy is supporting peace, development, equality and human rights. They exist more often in pluralistic multiparty democracies than in other forms of government.

Political parties that represent citizens are at the core of genuine democracy. Without them, representative democracy cannot function. They form the parliament and government and channel citizens' requests and needs to decision-making.

In a genuine multiparty democracy, development and economic growth do not only benefit the elite but are distributed more equally between citizens. Governments are accountable to citizens, there are checks and balances, the role of opposition is recognized and voters have the opportunity to change their decision-makers in free and fair elections.

According to the democratic peace theory, democracies do not go to war against each other. In addition, there are less internal conflicts and violence in democracies than in other forms of government. In genuinely democratic societies, all groups can have their voice heard, and political parties ensure that women, youth and minorities have equal opportunities to participate, which is a prerequisite for democracy. Without a representative and accountable multiparty system, citizens lack the opportunity for participation. In a pluralistic political system, conflicts can be solved in a peaceful way by political debate. For these reasons, democracy support is part of Finland's foreign and security policy.

Demo Finland's work is human rights-based, in line with Finland's development policy. Human rights-based development cooperation both respects and promotes human rights. In its activities, Demo Finland enhances especially civil and political rights, political parties being right-holders and duty-bearers alike.

In traditional development cooperation, the role of political parties has been neglected. However, taking parties into account is important from the democracy point of view, because aid may otherwise increase social inequality and benefit only those in power. In development cooperation, focus is often on the executive, hence the government. Additionally, donors have their own terms and programs. This may weaken the role of other democratic institutions in the partner country, such as political parties and parliament. It can also decrease political debate in the partner country and prevent political parties from developing their own political programs. Supporting civil society organizations alone is not enough because political parties bear responsibility on sustainable development of a society.

However, parties and political systems are often weak in developing democracies. There is a growing need for democracy support, and state actors need independent actors to complement their efforts for supporting democracy. Political parties cannot be directly funded by donors, which is why actors like Demo Finland are needed. Peer-support from Finnish political parties is encouraging for political actors that work in challenging circumstances.





BASIS OF DEMO FINLAND'S WORK

The experience and expertise of Finnish political parties and politicians, including former and current members of the parliament, is the core of Demo Finland's work. In partner countries, there is a lot of interest towards Nordic political system, good practices and cross-party cooperation of Finnish political parties, participation of women and youth in politics, role of opposition and solution-oriented thinking. Cross-party dialogue between Finnish political parties and political movements in developing democracies offers tools for strengthening pluralistic democracy.

At the same time, Finnish politicians have a chance to get to know about democratization in different contexts, to learn from the experiences of others and to increase their understanding on the possibilities and challenges of democracy support. As an organization of the political parties, Demo Finland is a unique actor in democracy support.

MANDATE

Demo Finland is an association founded on a political resolution, and its foundation by political parties was based on the recommendation of the Advisory Board for Relations with Developing Countries, which was the predecessor of the current Development Policy Committee. The Parliament and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs also participated in the planning phase. Hence, Demo Finland has a strong mandate of the Development Policy Committee, parties, the Ministry and the Parliament to promote democracy in developing countries. To fulfil this task it has all the expertise of the Finnish political system as a resource.

According to the statement of the Advisory Board for Relations with Developing Countries (28.3.2002), "Finnish political parties can promote democracy in ways that are not possible for the official development cooperation of Finland. Therefore the parties can bring a new functional dimension to Finnish development cooperation that has been lacking until now."

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VISION

In international development policy, political parties are recognized as duty-bearers of development, and Finland's foreign and security policy promotes peace and development by supporting pluralistic political systems.

MISSION

Demo Finland is a cooperative organization of the Finnish parliamentary parties, a unique actor that contributes to the development policy goals and that enhances pluralistic democracy by supporting the work and cross-party cooperation of political parties in partner countries. Demo Finland is a leading Finnish expert of democracy support.

WHAT DEMO FINLAND WANTS TO LOOK LIKE IN THE FUTURE

Demo Finland is a more and more appreciated actor in Finland's democracy support and it has its own, established and valued role among Nordic, European and other international actors on the field. Parties are widely taking part in Demo Finland's work, and there is constant cooperation with the Parliament. The organization is an influential expert of development policy in Finland.

Demo Finland continues to grow steadily. In addition to the basic funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that secures its work, it further widens its funding base and builds new partnerships and collaborative projects. Growth is based on analysis on where Demo Finland can bring added value the most by complementing the work of other actors.



DEMO FINLAND'S WORK IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

In every country, democracy arises from local needs and gets its own form. Demo Finland does not intend to export any particular form of democracy. Instead, it offers peer support from the perspective of good practices in Finnish politics. At the same time, Finnish politicians get a chance to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the Finnish system; it is all about mutual learning.

Democratization is often slow and fragile. Thorough understanding on the partner country's political context and recognition of risks is crucial.

Work in partner countries is Demo Finland's priority, which is supported by its other activities.

Our work is guided by the following principles:

We grasp opportunities, we react quickly and our engagement is long-term.

We have tools and commitment of political actors that ensure the best possible peer-support for our partners.

We do thorough context analysis, we coordinate our work with other democracy support actors, and we know the essential actors in our partner countries.

Our work is an example of transparent, accountable and equal cooperation.

Our objectives in partner countries:

1. Political parties have improved their ability to work in an equal and representative way.

Women, youth and minorities have equal opportunities in parties, and all actors in parties are supportive to this.

Actors in different levels of the party organization have active interaction, and views of the local level are channelled to decision-making.

Political parties work according to common, democratic rules and respect transparency and accountability.

2. Political parties have the ability and will to cooperate across party lines

As part of multi-party system, parties take responsibility and work for mutual interests.

Parties accept election results and understand the role and importance of the opposition.

Parties seek solutions and act in a peaceful way, respecting the principles of democracy.

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DEMO FINLAND'S WORK IN FINLAND

As an organization of the parliamentary parties, Demo Finland's task is to contribute to the discussion on and interest in development policy in Finland, as well as to offer opportunities for participation in democracy support for actors in its member parties. Constructive cooperation and participation of the member parties give a strong example and mandate to Demo Finland's work in its partner countries.

Our objectives in Finland:

1. Parties' membership in Demo Finland is active and versatile.

Political party actors actively use the opportunity to participate in democracy support via Demo Finland and hence contribute to Finland's development policy goals.

Political party actors support Demo Finland's advocacy work and hence, strengthen the foundations of Demo Finland's work.

Parties demonstrate strong commitment to Demo Finland's work and communicate about it within their networks.

2. Strong, well established cooperation with the Parliament.

Combining the prestige of the Parliament and the independence of Demo Finland brings added value to Finland's democracy support.

Demo Finland's expertise and experience is taken into account in the international activities of the Parliament, and this leads to concrete cooperation initiatives.

Members of the Parliament know Demo Finland, support it and take part in its work.

3. The leading expert of democracy support in Finland.

Demo Finland advocates for development policy that acknowledges the important role of democracy support. Demo Finland is heard on development policy issues, and the nature of democracy support is understood.

STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATIONS OF DEMO FINLAND

Our objectives:

1. Demo Finland and the results of its work are well known among political parties, Parliament, partners and donors.
2. Demo Finland is an important actor in international networks of democracy support, and it participates in the essential Nordic, European and international forums.
3. Demo Finland has a strong and appropriate financial basis to carry out its work.

