

Democracy Innovations Used and Developed in Finland

November 2025

This compilation showcases democracy innovations that are used in Finland at the national or regional level. The innovations include Finnish ones as well as those invented elsewhere that have been proven to fit into Finland's context. Some of the innovations have been in use for decades, and some are only now undergoing a testing phase.

A **democracy innovation** means a new initiative that promotes civic participation in democratic decision-making. Democracy innovations are often seen as solutions to many challenges representative democracy faces, and their role is usually to complement representative democracy, not to replace it.

The Youth Election, The Finnish National Youth Council and Youth Sector (Nuorisola)

The Youth Election is a national voting event in comprehensive, upper secondary and vocational schools, as well as other youth activities such as workshops or hobby groups. Youth turnout in Finland is low, and the event tackles this challenge by making voting familiar to children and young people. In the Youth Election, the participants practice voting by casting votes for the same candidates and parties as in the actual election. The results of the Youth Election are usually widely covered in the media. In the latest Youth Election, organised during the Municipal and Regional elections in spring 2025, around 75,000 votes were cast in 192 municipalities.

The Youth Election increases the voting skills of children and young people. At the same time, it makes elections a part of the youth's everyday life before they can actually vote in an election. Even though the Youth Election result does not have a concrete influence, it produces highly valuable information on the views of a demographic whose access to actual elections is limited.

Read more: [Nuorisola: Youth Elections](#)

Polis Participation Platform

The open-source participation platform Polis is a democracy innovation of which the purpose is to enable constructive exchange of opinions on a particular topic. In a discussion on Polis, the

participants can anonymously express their opinions on statements regarding the topic of the discussion, as well as add their own statements for others to vote on.

What makes Polis a special participation platform is the power of initiative granted to the participants as they have the power to influence the topics of the votings. Polis is a platform suitable for many organisations, helping with the need to gather opinions from a large group of people, e.g. inhabitants of a region or employees of an organisation, to aid decision-making or preparation.

In Finland, Polis has already been used on all levels of administration and in non-governmental organisations. The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra has funded long-term testing of the platform in municipalities and wellbeing services counties. Currently, Sitra supports the testing of a new, separate platform, based on the source of Polis, called Voxit.

Read more: [Espoo City: Voxit participation platform will bring up residents' views](#)

Participatory Budgeting

The participatory budgeting model is used in regional decision-making in Finland. Participatory budgeting means that a certain part of, e.g. a municipality's budget is used for ideas that the citizens get to generate and vote on. In many municipalities, a certain portion of the budget is annually allocated to participatory budgeting. In addition, some cities, like Helsinki, have a separate Youth Budget dedicated to ideas generated by citizens between the ages of 13 and 17.

Participatory budgeting is a means of direct democracy that allows citizens to have a say on economic policies not only through elections, as is traditional, but also during election terms. The opportunity to influence budgeting can also increase the citizens' interest in municipal decision-making, for example. In addition, a budget dedicated to certain groups, like young people, can act as a way of increasing the influence of underrepresented groups.

Read more: [OmaStadi: Participatory budgeting in Helsinki](#)

The Statutory Task of Libraries to Promote Democracy

In the second paragraph of the Public Libraries Act, it is stated as follows: "The objectives of this Act are to promote – – active citizenship, democracy and freedom of expression." The law was renewed in 2016, and the task of promoting democracy was added to the tasks public libraries carry. On a practical level, this had been something libraries had already done earlier.

Libraries can, of course, organise activities which support democracy and participation, but actually a wide and, above all, free library system in itself maintains democracy. Equal access to information increases influence and participation opportunities, which Finland recognises in the law.

Read more: [Finlex: Unofficial Translation of the Public Libraries Act](#)

Voting Advice Applications

Voting advice applications (VAAs), also known as election compasses or vote compasses, are applications that help voters find candidates or parties in preparation for elections. Both candidates and voters enter their answers to policy-related questions into the VAA. By comparing the answers, the VAA identifies the most suitable candidates, and often also the least suitable ones. The criterion for suitability is usually the similarity of opinions on key issues.

The first VAA was published by the Finnish national broadcasting company YLE for the European Parliament election in 1996. VAAs have since become an established part of Finnish democracy: there are few countries in the world where they are used as widely. In the parliamentary election in 2023, 57% of Finnish voters used a VAA for support in making their voting decision.

Its own innovation is also a VAA targeted at young people, i.e. the Youth voting advice application, also launched in 1996 by the Finnish National Youth Council and Youth Sector. In the European Parliament election in spring 2024, the VAA, which was published in both text and video forms, was used over 45,000 times.

VAAs support voters in finding a fitting candidate and party and can thus help increase voter turnout. There has also been critical discussion surrounding VAAs, regarding the candidates possibly changing their views to get more votes. The question of whether the VAAs guide voting decisions even too much has also been posed. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to how the VAAs are built and tested – a theme on which wide competence exists in Finland.

Read more: [YLE: Voting compass for the 2025 county and municipality elections](#)

Deliberative Citizens' Panels

A deliberative citizens' panel is a group of ordinary citizens chosen by random sampling to discuss a societally or regionally impactful question. So far, citizens' panels have been used in different experiments, especially in municipalities. Globally high-levelled research on deliberative democracy has also been conducted in Finland, meaning that the expertise on arranging citizens' panels is still somewhat concentrated in universities.

In municipalities, deliberative citizens' panels have been used e.g. in Pieksämäki to deliberate the municipality's financial situation and to form budget suggestions. In Turku, a citizens' panel considered the balancing of the city's finances from the point of view of children and young people. The panel also gave suggestions already in the planning phase of the city's budgeting. In wellbeing services counties, citizens' panels have deliberated, among others, themes like digital services and supporting young people's wellbeing. Experiments have been conducted in at least four different wellbeing services counties.

Deliberative citizens' panels strengthen constructive societal discussion and can support the effectiveness of representative democracy. The panels work especially well for complex questions that have proven difficult for decision-makers to answer. The strength of the panels is the participant group chosen by random sampling, making the representativity high. This way, a situation can be avoided where only people already societally active would get their voices heard.

Read more: [Demo Finland: The wave of citizens' assemblies reaching Finland](#), [Sitra: Better deliberated decisions through citizens' panels](#)

Timeout-Dialogue

Timeout is a way of conversation to make societal discussion easier, based on constructive and equal dialogue. The aim of the dialogue is to widen the participants' understanding of a chosen topic and possibly the other participants, too. The goal is not to find unanimity or quick resolutions. The Timeout-Foundation offers both support and pre-made materials in order to prompt dialogues in varying settings. The dialogues are used, for example, by the Prime Minister's Office, multiple municipalities and cities, as well as ministries, churches, organisations and schools all around Finland.

Timeout-dialogues enable peaceful discussion even on difficult topics. Since the goal of the discussions is not to reach conclusions, they provide an opportunity to share significantly different opinions without the discussion ending in a deadlock. Ready-made dialogue models provide a low-threshold way to discuss issues even during and after crises. A major challenge for joint decision-

making is a lack of understanding of other people's thoughts and motives, and Timeout also addresses this issue.

Read more: [Timeout: Let's become the best in constructive dialogue](#)

Futures Day (Kansallinen Tulevaisuuspäivä)

Futures Day is an annual encouragement for Finns to reflect on and foresee the future. The theme of Future Day 2025 was peace, and to honor it, people were encouraged to execute future prototypes. The goal was to concretise how different shapes of peace might look in the future. The message of Futures Day is that the future is not secured, and the best way to influence it is by foreseeing different possibilities.

National foresight promotes democracy by creating opportunities for long-term decision-making and societal discussion in a culture that is more fast-paced than ever. In addition, Futures Day aims to increase participation in creating the desired future through democratic means instead of settling for waiting.

Read more: [Tulevaisuuspäivä: Futures Day \(in Finnish\)](#)

The National Forum for Cooperation of Religions in Finland (CORE Forum)

The CORE Forum is a collaborative organisation representing eight different religions. Its member organisations are congregations and religious organisations in Finland. The goal of the forum is to support peace in society by strengthening co-operation between religions as well as religious literacy. As an organisation, the forum is one of a kind and progressive even on a global scale, also advocating for e.g. human rights issues.

Freedom of religion is a central part of a democratic society. The CORE Forum's work promotes interaction between different religions, which may increase chances of co-operation even in decision-making. In addition, representative democracy is best carried out when members of different religions have equal opportunities.

Read more: [CORE Forum: Religions brought together](#)

Digital Citizens' Initiative

Each Finnish citizen entitled to vote can make a citizens' initiative and support ones made by others in a digital initiative service. The initiatives have six months to gather signatures, and ones that have acquired a minimum of 50,000 signatures proceed to the Parliament. Thus far, 88 initiatives have proceeded to the Parliament (11/2025). Of those 88, eight have been approved as they were or with amendments.

The first approved initiative, which also gathered wide public attention, was an initiative on equal marriage law in 2014. Other successful citizens' initiatives include ones on prohibiting female genital mutilation, opposing the privatisation of the national water supply and guaranteeing free psychotherapy studies.

In addition to the citizens' initiative, in all municipalities and wellbeing services counties, citizens have the right to make initiatives as well. These initiatives can be made on a digital platform too. All initiative services are listed on the website demokratia.fi, which is maintained by the Ministry of Justice.

Read more: [Digital and Population Data Services Agency: Citizens' initiative](#), [Demokratia.fi: Finnish democracy services](#)

Youth Councils

Youth councils are groups of young representatives that operate as part of the administration of municipalities and wellbeing services counties. According to the Local Government Act, every municipality must have a youth council to ensure that young people have the opportunity to participate, and the same applies to wellbeing services counties.

Youth councils increase young people's opportunities to claim power, e.g. in committees and councils. In an increasing number of municipalities, youth council representatives also have the right to speak at and attend municipal board meetings. In addition, youth councils play a role in democratic education, as their members are elected by young people.

Read more: [The Union of Local Youth Councils in Finland: What is a Youth Council?](#)

Faktabaari (Factbar) Fact Checks

Faktabaari ('Factbar' in Finnish) is a politically independent fact-checking service that promotes fact-based public debate and digital literacy. Faktabaari is an open and participatory online media

outlet that conducts digital fact-checking based on its own monitoring and open requests. Faktabaari analyses claims made in public by comparing them with information available from various sources. This allows the accuracy of a claim to be confirmed or the claim to be found partially or completely inaccurate.

Part of Faktabaari's mission is to support participatory democracy in the digital age. Promoting a fact-based culture of discussion also increases social trust. In fast-paced digital discussions, those making claims are not always required to provide justification or clarification. Faktabaari therefore improves the accountability of those in power for their statements. At the same time, it increases digital literacy and thus opportunities for participation.

Read more: [Faktabaari: Fact-checking](#)

The Committee for the Future in the Finnish Parliament

The Committee for the Future is a parliamentary committee whose work is focused on themes surrounding the future. Besides future research, the themes include sustainable development, society's capacity for change and technological development. The Committee for the Future also prepares the Parliament's response (Parliament's Future Report) to the Government's Report on the Future at least once per election term. In addition, the Government's implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is submitted to the Committee during each electoral term.

The Committee for the Future enables dialogue within the Parliament and Government on big picture of the future. The Government's Report on the Future and the response to it help decision-makers recognise political themes and changes early on, which can stabilise decision-making.

Read more: [The Finnish Parliament: The Committee for the Future](#)

Demo Finland

Political Parties of Finland for Democracy – Demo Finland is a co-operative organisation of all Finnish parliamentary parties. It enhances democracy by strengthening the political participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities in particular and by supporting dialogue between political parties.