



ULKOSUOMALAISPARLAMENTTI
UTLANDSFINLÄNDARPARLAMENTET – FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT

**RESOLUTIONS OF
THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE
PARLIAMENT'S
EIGHTH SESSION
22–23 MAY 2015**

INTRODUCTION

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament was established in August 1997 as a forum for advocacy and co-operation for all expatriate Finns in the world. The Parliament is an open and democratic channel for communicating resolutions jointly taken by expatriate Finns to the Finnish government, businesses, and NGOs. The Finnish Expatriate Parliament also acts as a channel for lobbying so that Finnish expatriate perspectives would be considered in public decision making.

By May 2015, 519 Finnish expatriate communities, from 38 countries, had ratified the by-laws of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament convened into its 8th session at the University of Helsinki on May 22–23, 2015. The Finnish expatriate communities that have ratified its by-laws, and are thereby involved in its activities, submitted a total of 54 initiatives to the Secretariat by the set deadline. The initiatives were combined into 41 draft resolutions, which were handled in eight committees. The committees developed them into 41 proposals for resolutions. These were discussed in the plenary session, where all delegates had the right to vote on adopting, amending, or rejecting the resolutions.

The Speakers' Council of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament is responsible for promoting the resolutions taken in the sessions. The Speakers' Council reports to the plenary session of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament, which has confirmed the composition of the Speakers' Council. The Speakers' Council supervises and directs the advocacy work carried out by the Secretariat (the Finland Society) on behalf of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.

The practical work of the Speakers' Council in furthering the interests of expatriate Finns is done mostly in the Speakers' Council meetings, which are organized twice a year in Helsinki. Between these meetings, the Finland Society as the Secretariat is responsible for monitoring the progress of the resolutions and for other advocacy work. Finland Society is an expert organization in matters related to expatriate Finns and, therefore, plays a crucial role in the work of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and its Speakers' Council.

The core targets for the Speakers' Council during the next parliamentary term, from 2015 to 2017, are based on the resolutions of both the latest session and earlier sessions, as well as on any other topical matters concerning expatriate Finns.

During the next parliamentary term, the Speakers' Council wishes to give priority to the following main aims:

- To have the Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns for 2012–2016 updated and applied in all administrative sectors as from the beginning of 2017;
- to have the status of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament established by defining it in legislation;
- to have postal voting made available for expatriate Finns in national elections (by translating the existing wide consensus about the matter into an amendment of the Election Act, using the funds allocated for the purpose by the Finnish Parliament);
- to secure the operations of Suomi Schools and to support the education, native language, and culture of expatriate Finnish children and young people (by effecting a permanent increase in the sum allocated for this purpose and having a separate budget heading established for Suomi Schools in the state budget);
- to secure continued financial support from the Ministry of Education and Culture to safeguard the operating conditions for Finland Society and the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.

This publication includes the 41 resolutions taken in the session of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament, together with background research into their subject matter. The research has been done by the staff of the Finland Society.

The minutes of the session, resolutions, and list of participants, the opening address by Mr. Ben Zyskowitz, Second Deputy Speaker of the Finnish Parliament, and the keynote speech by Mr. Pekka Haavisto, Member of Parliament, as well as other information about the session can be found on the website of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament at www.usp.fi – Session 2015.

Speakers' Council of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament 2015 - 2017

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I RESOLUTIONS ON POLITICAL AND OFFICIAL ISSUES

1. The Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns for 2012–2016 to be updated from the beginning of 2017

The current Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns is intended to cover the years 2012–2016. Updating the program requires the involvement of several different ministries, which means that it cannot be done very quickly. In order for a new Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns to enter into force at the beginning of 2017, the process of updating and amending the current program should already start in 2015. The new government should also adopt the draft program before it can enter into force.

The current program is good and extensive and serves to support the work, but it was not completely up to date even when it came into force. For example, the goal of introducing postal voting for expatriate Finns in national elections has been presented in less ambitious terms in the program when compared with the political consensus reached at the time. In certain parts, the program will also require sharpening in order to make it possible to implement its stated aims in practice.

The Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns guarantees that the ties of expatriate Finns to Finland and Finnish culture will remain close. The essential aims of the program are to maintain the Finnish identity of those residing abroad, to improve their legal status, and to guarantee that sufficient social security and health care services are provided for them. To this end, Finnish basic education will be provided abroad, university students will be given opportunities to study Finnish and to complete traineeships or periods as exchange students in Finland, and the working and learning conditions in Suomi Schools (Finnish language schools abroad) will be improved by guaranteeing the funding required to meet the relevant conditions and to safeguard their existence. The program also takes into consideration the activities of Finnish expatriate associations and their communication arrangements, as well as the services of the Finnish Broadcasting Company funded by the Finnish government. One of the most important decisions in the current program from the viewpoint of expatriate Finns is to implement the possibility of postal voting in national elections. In social security and health care, the program gives particular emphasis to services received by the elderly.

The impact of the program is significant. Expatriate Finns are a resource for Finland. There are more than 1.6 million expatriate Finns in the world. Of

them, 300,000 are Finnish citizens and 250,000 have the right to vote in Finnish elections.

- If the content of the program corresponds to well-known and recognized aims and needs, such an expert program will help the government put the content into practice.

- During the government term, now drawing to a close, the actions mentioned in the Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns have not had much of a financial impact, because they are already covered by the functions of the authorities. The policies set out in the program mostly serve to strengthen the Finnish expatriate perspective and to make it more concrete.

The responsibility for implementing the actions is distributed between the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Justice.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns for 2012–2016 be updated so that the government may adopt it in time for it to enter into force from the beginning of 2017. The Ministry of the Interior is asked to cooperate with the Finnish Expatriate Parliament in order to coordinate the updating and sharpening of the Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns for the next implementation period in the same way as in preparing the current Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns.

2. Postal voting for expatriate Finns and Internet voting

In several earlier sessions, the Finnish Expatriate Parliament has adopted resolutions in favor of postal voting. In last session's Resolution 6/2012, it was proposed that the Election Act be urgently amended to allow postal voting for expatriate Finns in national elections. For the Finnish Expatriate Parliament, postal voting is a lasting top priority that is finally about to be achieved: it has been the topic of Resolutions 31/2000, 68/2002, 64/2005, 50/2007, and 3/2010.

At the moment, there are a total of more than 242,000 expatriate Finns with a right to vote. About 100,000 of them live permanently in Sweden. Common to all expatriate Finns is their low participation ra-

te in Finnish elections. There are certainly many different reasons for this, but long distances to polling stations definitely constitute one decisive factor.

Now that all Finnish political parties, as well as the last two Ministers of Justice, unanimously support the introduction of postal voting, and other influential stakeholders have been supporting it for years (such as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs since 2005), the only remaining obstacle in the way of putting postal voting into practice is the lack of budget resources. According to the latest estimate received from the Ministry of Justice, approximately 350,000 euros would be sufficient to set up the system and to organize the first election with postal voting. The following elections would involve less cost. According to unofficial estimates by various experts, the investment would pay for itself.

A suitable model would be the Swedish system. As stated in the Finnish Expatriate Parliament's Resolution 3/2010, the Ministry of Justice asked relevant stakeholders to submit their opinions on the Swedish model in 2010. In the Swedish model, the enclosing of the ballot would be monitored by two adult witnesses, who would have to provide their addresses. In some models, no witnesses are used. The problem is not so much related to the potential pressuring of voters or the compromising of election secrecy, because international comparative studies indicate that such cases are rare and the minimum standards are secured in these respects. The problem lies in voters' alienation and lack of voter activity. The question is whether it is possible to allow a procedure in which voting takes place without the presence of an election official. In their written statement to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament on October 30, 2014, Finland Society and the Finnish Expatriate Parliament explained this feasible model. It is likely that adopting the Swedish model would also lead to a corresponding change in voter turnout as in Sweden: when postal voting was adopted in 2006, the voter turnout among expatriate Swedes increased, and it has continued to increase. In the September election, the voter turnout figure among expatriate Swedes, formerly as low as that among expatriate Finns, had already risen to more than 41%.

Of the Member States of the European Union, only Denmark and France do not yet allow their expatriate citizens to vote by post. Some form of postal voting or external voting is already in use in as many as 47 countries. For example the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have already made postal voting possible.

It is important to keep in mind that voting over the Internet is a method of the future, but it should not slow down the implementation of postal voting. The Finnish Expatriate Parliament supports all possibilities of introducing Internet voting (Resolution 8/2012).

In Estonia, online voting is possible, and Finland, like Estonia, is proud of its achievements within the sphere of IT. It is time for Finland to seriously study the possibilities of introducing Internet voting and thereby take into consideration the possibility for expatri-

ate Finns to identify themselves without, for example, Finnish online banking codes. In Finland, the working group appointed by the Ministry of Justice to investigate the possibilities of Internet voting was originally given the mandate to also look into postal voting. However, as the working group completed its work this spring, its achievements were maybe left behind the target by about a decade, because it only looked at the use of the Internet or electronic voting in consultative municipal referendums. This means that it is no longer the aim to make Internet voting possible in the presidential elections of 2018.

The most important reason to implement postal voting urgently is not because it is cheap and easy, but because it can lead to a higher voter turnout.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that because postal voting improves voting conditions for expatriate Finns, it must be speedily implemented. This requires amending the Election Act (714/1998) and allocating funds for this purpose through a framework decision by the government. The Speakers' Council is given the task to speed up the implementation so that postal voting can be made possible for expatriate Finns already in the next national elections. In addition, Internet voting, as another voting method of the future, should be taken seriously and investigated carefully.

3. Expatriate Finns to have a separate electoral district in Finnish parliamentary elections

In the context of national elections, it is time for Finland to take into consideration the fact that a large share of the country's citizens reside abroad.

For a lot of expatriate Finns, possibilities of voting abroad in Finnish national elections are very limited in terms of both time and place. The Finnish political parties represented in the Parliament now have a consensus on introducing the possibility of postal voting, but it has not been possible to allocate the required funding. It is time to lobby the matter toward the political parties so that it can finally be put into practice.

A separate electoral district would make it possible for expatriate Finns to be directly represented in the Finnish parliamentary groups, and this would, of course, significantly improve the possibility of pursuing policies relevant for expatriate Finns. It is also very likely that this would significantly increase the interest of expatriate Finns in participating in the Finnish parliamentary elections. This, again, would make it more attractive for political parties to campaign outside Finland. There are more than 200,000 people who reside abroad permanently and who have the right to vote in Finnish parliamentary elections, which would cor-

respond to an electoral district with approximately 10 Members of Parliament.

In order to prevent irritating voters in Finland, or making the situation unfair for them, there could be a graduated system in which a full amount of seats in Parliament for the expatriate Finnish electoral district (proportionate to the population residing abroad) would require a voter turnout of, for example, 75% of the average voter turnout in electoral districts in Finland. A voter turnout among expatriate Finns of more than 50%, but less than 75%, of the average in Finland would produce fewer seats, etc.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the possibilities of establishing electoral districts for expatriate Finns in parliamentary elections be investigated.

4. Impediments to individual mobility between Finland and expatriate living

The initiative is based on the practical difficulties experi-

enced in Finland by Finnish citizens living internationally between two or more countries, related to the accessibility and/or pricing of services. Specific attention is paid to the time after 2003, when dual citizenship was introduced. Having more than one address in Finland and at least one other country is a disadvantage, or it is not taken sufficiently into consideration in different situations, so that there are real impediments to residing at several addresses. Problems increase as living and working abroad becomes more common and families grow more international. Examples of such difficulties include car taxation for people not registered in Finland, restrictions to receiving credit, such as in the context of opening a mobile phone subscription with full service, and certain problems related to the accessibility of health care and the calculation of pensions.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Speakers' Council investigate what kind of impediments and restrictions to living in Finland are experienced by expatriate Finns.

II RESOLUTIONS ON CITIZENSHIP ISSUES

5. Notifying citizenship of another country to the Finnish population register to be simplified

Multiple or “dual citizenship” has been possible according to Finnish law since June 1, 2003. A Finn no longer loses his or her Finnish citizenship upon becoming a citizen of another country. A foreign citizenship must be registered in the Finnish Population Information System. This registration is free of charge and takes about 2–3 weeks to complete.

Registering citizenship of the United States requires a U.S. Certificate of Naturalization accompanied by an Apostille authentication. U.S. citizenship can be registered directly in a Local Register Office in Finland, or the registration can be done through a Finnish mission abroad. The Finnish Local Register Office will not return the documents, so it is not advisable to submit the original Certificate of Naturalization.

When the registration is done directly in the Local Register Office, it is sufficient to submit notarized copies of both the Certificate of Naturalization and the Apostille authentication (a Certified True Copy is also acceptable). Documents in English need not be translated, so the documents may be submitted to the Local Register Office in either Finnish, Swedish, or English.

When the registration is done via a Finnish mis-

sion abroad, there must be an Apostille authentication for either the original United States Certificate of Naturalization or its Certified True Copy (note that a notarized copy will not be accepted in this case). The document with Apostille authentication should be sent to a Finnish diplomatic mission abroad to be forwarded to the Local Register Office in Finland. More information: www.finland.org (Services for Finns – Registration Issues – Citizenship).

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Finnish consulates must be authorized to verify original certificates of foreign citizenship on behalf of the Finnish population register and to inform the population register about this.

6. Change of domicile at birth in the Finnish passport of a person with dual citizenship

When a child is born in Finland, the domicile of the mother is usually registered as the child's domicile at birth.

When a child is born abroad and the mother is domiciled in Finland, information about the child's country of birth and foreign place of birth can be registered in addition to the domicile at birth.

People have the right to check any data that has been recorded of them in different registers in Finland and verify that the data is correct. This can be done free of charge once a year. The data can be checked either by visiting a Local Register Office or by a written request to the Local Register Office. More information about checking one's own data can be found at the Population Register Centre's website at www.vrk.fi.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament resolved not to handle the initiative but states that the Secretariat of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament must inform expatriate Finns about the possibility to check one's own data and about how important it is to do so. In case of any ambiguities related to the population register, one should turn to the Jakobs-tad (Pietarsaari) Unit of the Local Register Office of West Finland.

7. A mobile passport unit, passport issuing point to be established in Frankfurt

8. A mobile passport issuing point (mobile passport unit) to be established in Europe

At the end of 2013, there were a total of 13,915 Finnish citizens in Germany. In Northern and Eastern Germany (including North-Eastern and North-Western Germany), there were 5,286 Finnish citizens. In Central, Western and Southern Germany (including South-Eastern and South-Western Germany) there were 8,629 Finnish citizens. Individuals with dual citizenship (Finland and Germany) were not included in these figures. (Source: Statistisches Bundesamt.)

In Northern and Eastern Germany, there are two passport issuing points at less than 300 km from one another, even though the number of Finnish citizens residing there is 3,343 less than in Central, Western, and Southern Germany, where there are no passport issuing points. The cost of a Finnish passport when applied for abroad is €140, in addition to which the applicant must pay the cost of travel and possible accommodation because of long distances.

Examples of distances to nearest passport issuing point:

Frankfurt–Hamburg, approximately 500 km

Frankfurt–Berlin, approximately 600 km

Frankfurt–Brussels, approximately 400 km

Frankfurt–Vienna, approximately 700 km

Frankfurt–Luxembourg, approximately 240 km.

The embassy in Luxembourg will be closed in 2015, which means that Finns residing in Luxembourg are likely to start using the services of the honorary con-

sulate in Frankfurt (the distance from Luxembourg to Brussels is approximately 200 km and to Frankfurt approximately 240 km).

There is a Finnish consular officer working in Frankfurt, employed by the embassy. The honorary consulate in Frankfurt has an employment relationship with the embassy, which means that they have a limited right to perform notarial duties. This makes it possible for them to take care of registrations, citizenship matters, notarial services, exams, etc.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that it investigate the possibility to establish a mobile passport unit in Central Europe and another, additional unit in Southern Europe in order to shorten the distances that citizens need to travel in order to apply for a new passport.

9. Handling fee for passports applied for in Finnish missions abroad to be reduced

A Finnish citizen staying abroad may apply for a passport at a Finnish embassy, a consulate led by a Finnish career official, or at another Finnish diplomatic mission whose employee, a Finnish citizen, has been individually authorized by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to issue passports. The price of a Finnish passport, when applied for at a Finnish diplomatic mission abroad, is €140. Apart from the fact that a Finnish passport as such is more expensive when applied for in another country, the passport application costs of many expatriate Finns are topped by extensive travel costs, due to long distances.

According to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the price of a passport is set in the Decree on service fees. The price of a passport applied for abroad is linked to the price determined by the police, to which data communication costs (for continuous connections) and personnel costs are added. This means that the prime cost rate of a passport applied for abroad is about 70%.

A Finnish citizen staying abroad may apply for a passport in person at any police office taking care of passport matters in Finland. In this case, the price of a passport is €48.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that the price of a passport applied for at a Finnish diplomatic mission abroad be reduced to the same level as the price of passports applied for in Finland.

10. Filing an application for a passport of a European Union Member State with the authorities of another European Union Member State

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has the legal responsibility for passport application procedures abroad. According to law, a passport application may be received by a civil servant with a criminal liability for acts in office regarding passport applications. A Finnish citizen staying abroad may apply for a passport at a Finnish embassy or at a consulate led by a Finnish career official. According to the Passport Act and the Aliens Act, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs may individually authorize a Finnish citizen serving at an honorary consulate abroad to perform certain duties related to passports and residence permits.

When applying for a passport, the applicant must appear in person and present a valid identification document confirming his or her identity. If an applicant cannot present an ID, the authority receiving the passport application will have to identify the person.

According to the Ministry of the Interior, the current properties of identification documents with their data security requirements, as well as the required connections to electronic systems, basically do not make it likely that anyone else except the Finnish authorities, specifically appointed for this purpose, could be involved in the process of issuing documents.

European Union (EU) legislation does not provide for the procedures of applying or issuing passports. Instead, the procedures are based on national legislation and practices. Council Regulation (EC) No 2252/2004 on standards for security features and biometrics in passports and travel documents issued by Member States (the EU passport regulation) provides for security features and biometric identifiers used in passports. The details are defined in a separate decision, taking into account the provisions of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), including those of document No 9303 on Machine Readable Travel Documents.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament resolved not to handle the initiative, because the matter is not yet topical.

11. Online passport applications to be made possible also for Finnish citizens residing abroad

It became possible to apply for a Finnish passport electronically through the Police Online Services on December 1, 2014. A passport application can be filed electronically. A passport application can be filed in a

simplified procedure without visiting a police station, provided that the following criteria are met:

1. A passport has been issued to the applicant no more than six years ago, and the applicant has given his or her fingerprints and signature for an earlier passport and been identified at the time by an authority issuing passports. The applicant must have been at least 12 years old when the previous passport was issued, because otherwise no fingerprinting has been done.

2. The name of the applicant must be the same as in the earlier passport. If the applicant's name has changed as a result of, for example, marriage or divorce, and the previous passport has been issued under the old name, the applicant must visit a police station in person to give his or her signature.

3. The application must be accompanied by a sufficiently recent photograph, supplied in electronic format, which complies with the relevant quality criteria. The photograph must be submitted through the license services photograph server (if the passport register already contains a photograph of the applicant that is not older than 6 months, the system will allow it to be used in the application). The police will compare the new photograph to any earlier photographs. If the officer responsible for processing the application is not able to verify that the photographs were taken of the same person, he or she will invite the applicant to a police license services point for identification. Even though the applicant is using the simplified application procedure, he or she may need to visit a police license services point or a police station in person, for example, to allow for a reliable identification.

A new passport may be issued to a Finnish citizen without a visit to a police station on the following conditions:

1. The person has the possibility to log into the Online Services of the Police of Finland. This requires strong electronic authentication, which is possible by using either Finnish online banking codes, a mobile ID offered by Finnish mobile phone operators, or a Citizen Certificate attached to an identity card issued by the police (this is an identity card with a chip which requires a card reader and card reading software).

2. The person is registered in the Finnish Population Information System.

3. When ready, passports are usually collected from an R-kiosk shop. It is possible to authorize someone else to do it by giving this person an authorization letter. If a passport application has been submitted through the Online Services, it is not possible to select a Finnish mission abroad as the point of collection.

Even if the applicant has a foreign address, if he or she meets these three criteria, it is possible to apply for a passport online from the police. In most cases, applications filed within the simplified procedure are allocated to a certain police station on the basis of the applicant's address registered in the Population Information System. If the applicant's address does not allow direct allocation to a police station (as is the case with, for example, expatriate Finns), the application will be handled by the Helsinki Police Department.

The Online Services only allow direct collection, which is the main method of collection for passports. When a passport application has been submitted online, it is not possible to request collection from a police station (and forwarding to another country).

An applicant using the simplified application procedure must, in most cases, submit every second passport application in person. If he or she applies for a new passport within six years of the date when the previous passport was issued, he or she has to file a passport application in person approximately every ten years.

A passport may be issued to an applicant for a second time using a simplified procedure, if six years have not yet passed from the last time he or she applied for a passport in person and if the other criteria are fulfilled. For example, if a passport applied for using the simplified procedure is lost shortly after it has been issued, the next passport application may be submitted in the simplified procedure, if six years have not passed after a passport application was submitted in person.

An online passport application (initiating a passport application) and applying for a passport using a simplified procedure are two different things. The simplified procedure only concerns standard passports. Applications for other types of passports may be initiated online, but the further steps of the application procedure always require a visit to a police station.

An electronic passport application and a simplified application procedure cannot be applied for in Finnish missions abroad at the moment, because the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Police, who deal with passport applications in Finland, do not have compatible information systems that would make it possible to apply for passports online. An official receiving an online passport application must be able to communicate with the applicant about, for example, where and how the application was initiated, where the applicant can be invited to visit if needed, and from where the passport will be collected. If the applicant is located abroad, a photograph in electronic format may only be linked to the passport application through the license services photograph server if the applicant is able to use a strong authentication, which in practice means that he or she needs to comply with the same criteria as in the entire simplified passport application procedure. This requires relatively good IT skills. Foreign photography studios cannot send photographs electronically via the license services photograph server.

Most expatriate Finns also do not have the necessary tools needed for a strong electronic authentication. In 2012, the European Commission gave a proposal (COM (2012) 0238) for a Regulation on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market, the so-called eIDAS Regulation. The aim of the Regulation is to enable electronic identification in public sector services in all Member States. On certain conditions, Member States would have to mutually recognize and accept electronic identification schemes used by other Member States. An electronic ID issued in, for example, Sweden, Germa-

ny, or the UK could be used to access public services in Finland, too. The proposal is still being processed.

Since the legislation was amended in April 2013, an applicant, in most cases, no longer has to collect a passport from a police station. Instead, the passport is sent in a sealed envelope as a trackable item (corresponding to a registered letter) to an R-kioski shop located close to the applicant's address. This law amendment also makes it possible to deliver a passport to an applicant abroad as a registered letter or as a corresponding trackable item. A passport can be mailed to the applicant's home address in countries where postal services are reliable. In other countries, efforts will be made to gradually start using trackable shipment as soon as it becomes possible with regard to document security in the country in question.

In the Government Proposal (85/2014) concerning online services for passport applications, it was proposed that the use of online services be introduced with a Decree. The aim was to make it possible to introduce electronic passport applications and a simplified application procedure also abroad as soon as the authority receiving the application has the requisite technical, financial, and other resources, as referred to in the Act on Electronic Services and Communication in the Public Sector, and it is deemed appropriate.

A related amendment to the Government Bill was made in Parliament. However, both the Administration Committee and the Constitutional Law Committee of the Finnish Parliament considered it necessary that a more comprehensive introduction of online procedures in passport matters be implemented later by amending the law. When the issues within the competence of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, such as those related to software applications, are solved, an amendment of legislation will be necessary to make online access possible abroad. The Ministry of the Interior has indicated that it is ready to implement such a government bill relatively quickly.

More information about Finnish passports at www.poliisi.fi/passport.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior actively continue their efforts to develop online services so that it becomes possible to introduce electronic passport applications and a simplified passport application procedure also in Finnish missions abroad.

12. The validity of Finnish passports to be extended to 10 years

In its 2010 and 2012 sessions, the Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposed that the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior take action to extend the validity

of Finnish passports to ten years instead of five years (Resolutions 4/2010 and 9/2012).

Government Proposal (85/2014) for a new Passport Act discusses the validity of passports as follows: The facial photograph on the data page of the passport is used to visually identify the holder of the passport. The same photograph is also recorded in the chip for computerized facial recognition. The older the photograph, the less reliable will both the visual and the computerized facial recognition be. The fastest changes happen in young children. Using a recent photograph is of particular importance in a simplified passport application procedure, where the applicant is not present in person so that the photograph submitted with the application must be compared to an earlier photograph that has been saved in the passport and identity card system. The requirement to use a recent photograph makes fraud prevention easier.

The biometric identifiers and other personal data saved in the chip must be reliably protected against abuse. The data security level of the chip is high, but technology updates are made every few years. If the validity period of passports were extended from the present to, for example, ten or even seven years, the data security features of the chip might become obsolete before the end of its life cycle. The longer the validity period is, the more slowly new passport models with more advanced data security features will replace older models.

Even the need to safeguard the security of the passport book speaks for a validity period of five years. With a shorter validity period, it is possible to follow developments in information technology faster and adopt new technologies and security features more easily. This makes it possible to prevent fraud and makes it more difficult, for example, to forge passports.”

The justifications for not taking into use a ten-year passport, in a nutshell:

1) identification: the older the photograph, the less reliable both the visual and the computerized facial recognition will be;

2) data security: the data security of the chip might become obsolete before the end of its life cycle; and

3) fraud prevention: a shorter validity period makes it possible to adopt new, more advanced technologies for the physical security features of passports (the du-

rability of the chip is not a core point, and some countries issue ten-year passports with chips).

Online services are one way of helping alleviate the problem of not being able to re-introduce ten-year passports. The system of direct collection has been implemented to make the passport application process smoother.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior actively continue investigating the possibility of issuing Finnish passports for ten years instead of five years.

13. The process of renewing Finnish passports to be developed

The Passport Act provides that the standard validity period of passports is five years. Many countries require that for a person to be able to enter the country, his or her passport must be valid for two to six months after entering the country. Applying for a new passport abroad is cumbersome and expensive. This is why many expatriate Finns choose to renew their passports during their holidays in Finland even months before their old passport expires. In this way, they lose months of validity of the old passport that they already paid for.

For example, in the UK, the standard practice is that the “unused” months of the old passport, up to six months, are added to the validity period of the new passport.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that in connection with renewing passports Finland adopt the practice in use in the UK, where any unused months of the validity period of the old passport, up to six months, are added to the validity period of the new passport.

III RESOLUTIONS ON SENIOR ISSUES

14. Pensions

The statutory pension system in Finland consists of earnings-related pension accrued in paid employment and self-employment, as well as national pension and guarantee pension that ensure minimum security. In the private sector, earnings-related pension schemes are managed by about 40 authorized pension provi-

ders (pension insurance companies, company pension funds and industry-wide pension funds), which are coordinated by the Finnish Centre for Pensions (ETK). The Finnish Centre for Pensions, in turn, operates under the supervision of the Financial Supervisory Authority and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. In the public sector, earnings-related pension provision is managed by Keva, former Local Government Pensions

Institution (covering employees in central and local government, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland). An earnings-related pension is paid out by the pension provider with which the pension applicant was last insured.

Prior to 2005, the earnings-related pension started to accrue as of the age of 23. Since 2005, the pension has accrued from any work done at or after the age of 18. Authorized pension providers mail pension records to the home addresses of Finnish residents aged between 18 and 67. A pension record includes details of all work earnings from which pension has accrued. A pension record may also list details of work done under the age of 23, but these have no effect on the amount of pension.

If you live abroad, and your foreign address is available in the Finnish population register, you can request your pension record by calling +358 29 411 2825. Otherwise, you can order your pension record by writing to Eläketurvakeskus, FI-00065 Eläketurvakeskus, Finland, or by faxing to +358 29 411 2595. Public-sector pension records can be obtained online from Keva's Your Pension Information service or by calling Keva's pension advisory service on +358 20 614 2837.

The Finnish national pension is a basic security pension determined by the years lived in Finland between the ages of 16 and 65. The minimum residence requirement is three years. National pensions are also payable to other European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) countries and to countries with which Finland has signed social security agreements, generally referred to as "social security agreement countries". The amount of national pension payable is reduced by a Finnish earnings-related pension and most pensions paid from other countries. If other pension income and benefits amount to a total of about 1,170 to 1,310 euros per month, a national pension is not necessarily paid out at all. The amount of national pension is not affected by statutory residence- or insurance-based pensions received from other EU and EEA countries. To receive a full national pension, a person must have resided in Finland for 40 years between the ages of 16 and 65. If the period of residence is shorter, the amount of national pension will be calculated in proportion to the number of years the person has resided in Finland. The national pension guarantees a basic subsistence income to all pensioners and covers the entire population. The national pensions system is managed by Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, operating under the supervision of the Finnish Parliament.

In addition to the earnings-related pension and national pension schemes, the Finnish pension system also includes the guarantee pension. Kela is also responsible for managing the guarantee pension scheme according to the National Pensions Act (568/2007). A guarantee pension is only payable to a pensioner living in Finland whose other pension income falls below the amount of guarantee pension, which is €746.57 in 2015.

If necessary, the insurance periods accrued in another

EU Member State can also be taken into account when establishing pension rights. The EU's social security regulations ensure that pensions are paid from one country to another if a pension applicant has been insured under the social security schemes of two or more EU Member States and has accrued pension entitlements from two or more EU Member States. When a pension applicant has been insured under the social security schemes of several EU Member States, he or she should only file a pension application with the social insurance institution of one of these countries, which is generally the institution operating in the applicant's country of residence. This institution will then forward the application to all those Member States from which the applicant is applying for a pension.

Pensions are determined on the basis of national legislation effective in each EU Member State. Most Member States only pay out pensions on the grounds that an applicant, or a deceased person through whom the benefit is derived, has worked in the country in question. The Nordic Countries and the Netherlands may also grant pensions based on residence.

Granting pension decisions based on EU rules:

An EU pension decision applies to cases where a pension applicant has been insured in two or more EU Member States, and the pension is calculated according to EU provisions. Such a decision is an EU pension decision even if the applicant had only applied for a pension in Finland. EU pension decisions are granted in accordance with the provisions of the EU's social security regulations.

A "contact institution" refers to an institution responsible for processing EU pension applications and participating in information exchange concerning applications between EU Member States. The contact institution is the institution operating in the applicant's country of residence, if the applicant or the deceased has been insured in that country. If the applicant or the deceased has not been insured in the applicant's country of residence, the contact institution is the institution of the EU Member State where the applicant or the deceased was last insured. In the latter case, the applicant may also reside outside the European Union.

Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 September 2009 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems:

"Article 46

Certificates and information to be submitted with the claim by the claimant

1. The claim shall be submitted by the claimant in accordance with the provisions of the legislation applied by the institution referred to in Article 45(1) or (4) of the implementing Regulation and be accompanied by the supporting documents required by that legislation. In particular, the claimant shall supply all available relevant information and supporting documents relating to periods of insurance (institutions, identification numbers), employment (employers) or self-employment (nature and place of activity) and residence

(addresses) which may have been completed under other legislation, as well as the length of those periods.”

“Article 47

Investigation of claims by the institutions concerned

A) Contact institution

1. The institution to which the claim for benefits is submitted or forwarded in accordance with Article 45(1) or (4) of the implementing Regulation shall be referred to hereinafter as the ‘contact institution’. The institution of the place of residence shall not be referred to as the contact institution if the person concerned has not, at any time, been subject to the legislation which that institution applies. In addition to investigating the claim for benefits under the legislation which it applies, this institution shall, in its capacity as contact institution, promote the exchange of data, the communication of decisions and the operations necessary for the investigation of the claim by the institutions concerned, and supply the claimant, upon request, with any information relevant to the Community aspects of the investigation and keep him/her informed of its progress.”

When a person who has been insured in Finland applies for a pension while residing in another EU Member State where he or she has also been insured, the insurance institution of that country will function as the contact institution in the matter. In such cases, contacts with the foreign contact institution will be dealt with in Finland by Kela’s Centre for International Affairs. The contact institution is responsible for forwarding the pension application and any other information required to make a decision on the matter to all those EU Member States where the applicant – or in the case of a survivors’ pension, the deceased – has been insured and from which the applicant is applying for a pension; for providing the applicant, on request, with information pertaining to Community aspects in investigation of the matter; for keeping the applicant up to date with the progress of the pension application process; and for submitting a summary of pension decisions to the applicant once all the institutions involved in the pension application process have issued their respective decisions.

You can apply for both an earnings-related pension and a national pension using the Finnish old-age pension application form (ETK/Kela 7001e). Any periods of residence and/or employment abroad should be declared using appendix form ETK/Kela 7110e, also known as Appendix U. You can also apply for a Finnish private-sector earnings-related pension from the pension insurance company with which you have been insured during your last employment relationship. Public-sector earnings-related pensions can be applied directly from Keva. When you apply for an earnings-related pension directly, your application will not be channelled as an EU pension application through the contact institutions defined by the EU; instead, your pension will be paid out according to the earnings-related pension accruals in the registers maintained by the Finnish Centre for Pensions and/or Keva. If your pension accruals predate the 2005 reform of earnings-related pension legislation, any employment periods under the

age of 23 will not be counted toward the total accrual.

If a pension applicant resides abroad, a Finnish pension provider may immediately issue a final pension decision, provided that the details of the insurance periods in the applicant’s country of residence and any other information required to calculate the amount of pension are enclosed with the pension application. In the event that an application submitted from another EU Member State does not include sufficient information to calculate the amount of accelerated accrual, for example, the decision can still be issued immediately as a final decision. If the information required to calculate the accelerated accrual is submitted at a later date, the pension provider will issue a new decision, adjusting the amount of pension as of the start of the pension.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament does not express an opinion on the initiative as such, because the pension application processes and decisions of expatriate pension applicants are affected at an individual level by a wide variety of factors, such as periods of residence and employment in different countries, and such information may also be requested by the pension authorities of EU Member States and social security agreement countries, as well as the Finnish authorities. The Finnish Expatriate Parliament concludes that Finnish earnings-related pensions can already be applied directly from authorized pension providers based on the data included in the pension accruals registers maintained by the Finnish Centre for Pensions and Keva.

15. Kela pension decisions in EU languages

European Union (EU) pension decisions are granted in accordance with the provisions of the EU’s social security regulations. An EU pension decision applies to cases where a pension applicant has been insured in two or more EU Member States, and the pension is calculated according to EU provisions. Such a decision is an EU pension decision even if the applicant had only applied for a pension in Finland. An individual may submit a pension application or an appeal in his or her own native language or any other official EU language. However, pension decisions are always issued either in Finnish or Swedish, according to each applicant’s preference indicated on the application form. In Finland, authorities issue their decisions in compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003), which is a general act governing the administration’s operations, applicable to all central and local government authorities, as well as any private parties discharging public administrative duties. Provisions on languages to be

used in administration are laid down in the Language Act (423/2003). According to section 17 of the Constitution of Finland (731/1999), the national languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish. In Finland, pension providers issue their decisions and responses in Finnish or Swedish, depending on the language in which the application was submitted.

There are 24 official languages in the EU, one of which is Finnish. An individual may submit a pension application or an appeal in his or her own native language or any other official EU language. For instance, a Finn residing in Sweden may either fill out his or her pension application in Finnish or Swedish, or in any other official EU language.

According to a judgment by the European Court of Justice (Maris C-55/77), "the authorities, institutions and tribunals of the Member States are bound, notwithstanding any provision of their national laws to a different or contrary effect, to accept all claims or other documents which relate to the implementation of the said regulation and which have been drawn up in an official language of another Member State".

Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems:

Title V – Miscellaneous provisions – Article 76 – Cooperation

"7. The authorities, institutions and tribunals of one Member State may not reject applications or other documents submitted to them on the grounds that they are written in an official language of another Member State, recognised as an official language of the Community institutions in accordance with Article 290 of the Treaty."

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament concludes that Finnish authorities issue pension decisions in an official EU language, either Finnish or Swedish, and any pension decisions issued within the European Union in an official EU language are valid in another EU Member State according to the EU's social security regulation. Nevertheless, the Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that each decision be supplemented with a certificate/translation of its content in an official language of the pension applicant's country of residence.

16. A Declaration on the Rights of Older Persons for the UN

In global terms, the proportion of the over 65-year-old population will increase from the current 7% to 25% by 2050. Those aged over 60 will account for 40% of the European population in 2050. Likewise, the number of those aged over 75 will increase in Finland from the current 400,000 to 720,000 by 2030, while the number

of those aged over 65 will stand at 1.2 million.

In 2002, the United Nations adopted the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the Political Declaration. According to the Political Declaration, older people are entitled to independence, participation, self-fulfillment, and good care. The declaration entreats the Member States to recognize and guarantee the rights of older people; to protect older people from neglect, abuse, and violence; and also to recognize their role as a societal resource. It emphasizes that everyone is entitled to good psychological and physical health. The opinions of older people must be heard, in particular, in long-term care. Everyone is also entitled to a safe environment and an opportunity for active participation in economic, social, cultural, and political decision making and activities. Finally, it states that promotion of older people's health calls for a new kind of thinking.

It has been proposed that a special rapporteur on the rights of older persons be appointed within the United Nations (UN) Commission on Human Rights. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has been assigned to also pay attention to the rights of ageing women. The Committee has asked the States Parties to also report on the position of ageing women as part of their periodic reports. In particular, Argentina has been very active in calling for a UN Convention focusing on the rights of the elderly. For its own part, it has set an example by establishing a department to deal with elderly affairs within its Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and a steering group for elderly policy within its Ministry of Social Development and Environment.

The human rights agreements of the United Nations also refer to the human rights of elderly people. In 1991, the United Nations General Assembly clinched 18 Principles for Older Persons, which include the following statement: "Older persons should be able to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms when residing in any shelter, care or treatment facility." The instrument also emphasizes the right to reside at home. It recognizes older people's human dignity and respect for their beliefs, needs, and privacy. Older people should be treated fairly and be valued independently of their economic contribution. Article 25 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union includes the rights of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence.

Elderly abuse and age-related discrimination suggest that the human dignity of frail elderly people, in particular, is under threat. In 1975, the United Nations adopted the Dying Person's Bill of Rights, where the first article states: "I have the right to be treated as a living human until I die."

The Declaration on the Rights of the Child mentioned in the initiative was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1959. The Declaration is very generic and it is not legally binding to states. It was not until 1989 that the rights of the child were enshrined in a binding UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by almost all the

states in the world. The ten principles of the Declaration were incorporated into the Convention. (www.unicef.fi)

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament urges the Speakers' Council and the Secretariat to investigate opportunities to propose adoption of a Declaration on the Rights of Older Persons, as the percentage share of elderly people is rising sharply both globally and in Europe in particular. Such United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Older Persons would draw attention to the needs and rights of the elderly population and to the extent to which human rights are realized among elderly people.

17. Cooperation between Finnish and Australian authorities in Finns' pension applications

The Agreement between the Republic of Finland and Australia on Social Security entered into force in July 2009. As a result, Australian residence-based old-age pensions are payable to people residing in Finland and Finnish national pensions are payable as old-age pensions to those residing in Australia. The pension application procedures depend on whether an applicant lives in Finland or Australia. The agreement makes it easier to apply for earnings-related and national pensions from Finland and Australia, because applicants are assisted by a liaison body and common application forms in both countries. Earnings-related pensions earned in Finland are payable around the world, which means that earnings-related pensions had already been paid out to people residing in Australia on the basis of earnings-related pension legislation before the social security agreement entered into force. Pension applications submitted from social security agreement countries and EU/EEA countries are forwarded by the relevant liaison body or contact institution to Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland. Pension applications submitted from Finland to other countries are forwarded to liaison bodies and contact institutions by the Finnish Centre for Pensions.

The Agreement between the Republic of Finland and Australia on Social Security (36/2009) defines a "competent authority" as follows:

"1. (b) 'Competent Authority' means,

in relation to Australia: the Secretary to the Commonwealth Department responsible for the legislation specified in subparagraph 1(a)(i) of Article 2, except in relation to the application of Part II of the Agreement (including the application of other Parts of the Agreement as they affect the application of that Part) where it means the Commissioner of Taxation or an authorised representative of the Commissioner; and,

in relation to Finland: the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health;

(c) 'Competent Institution' means,
in relation to Australia: the institution or agency which has the task of implementing the legislation in subparagraph 1(a) of Article 2; and

in relation to Finland: an institution or body in charge of the implementation of the legislation and schemes referred to in subparagraph 1(b) of Article 2; [...]"
"Article 21

Administrative Arrangements

1. The Competent Authorities of the Parties shall by means of an Arrangement, establish the administrative measures necessary for the application of this Agreement.

2. The Competent Authorities shall appoint liaison bodies which are to be listed in the Administrative Arrangement."

(<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/sopimukset/sopimussarja/2009/20090015.pdf>)

A person living in Australia files a pension application with Centrelink. The Finnish Centre for Pensions is the international contact institution and liaison body in Finland, which means that it forwards all applications made by those living in Finland for pensions from abroad.

A person living in Australia can obtain Finnish national pension application forms from Centrelink, where they will also be filed. Centrelink will forward the applications to Kela. If Kela needs to request further specifics from Australia, the investigation and decision-making process becomes slower. Processing a foreign old-age pension application may take from about six months up to several years. An application can be submitted 6 to 9 months prior to the desired start of a pension. At the latest, an application should be filed during the month when a pension is intended to start. National pensions are payable as old-age pensions to Finnish and Australian nationals who have resided in Finland for at least three years after their 16th birthday. The amount of national pension is not affected by an Age Pension received from Australia. Conversely, any possible Superannuation Guarantee pension and other supplementary pensions will be taken into account as foreign pensions reducing the amount of national pension. Likewise, any earnings-related pension paid from Finland will reduce the amount of national pension. According to the National Pensions Act (568/2007), the amount of national pension will be calculated in proportion to the number of years a person has resided in Finland. To receive a full national pension, a person must have resided in Finland for at least 80% of the time between the ages of 16 and 65.

A person living in Finland can get a copy of an old-age pension application from a Kela office, a pension provider, or the Finnish Centre for Pensions and can file his or her completed form with any of these. The Finnish Centre for Pensions will submit the Australian forms to the applicant and will later forward the completed forms to Australia. An Australian pension may be paid out retrospectively, at the earliest as of the date when the application was submitted. The amount of Australian pension received by a Finnish resident is

not affected by any possible national pension that he or she may receive from Finland, but a Finnish earnings-related pension is counted toward income. If the period of residence in Australia is less than 25 years, the amount of earnings-related pension counted as income will be proportionate to the period of residence in Australia. According to Australian legislation, the amount of pension will also be affected by the individual's other income and property. With regard to a Finnish national pension payable to a Finnish resident, any possible Age Pension and Superannuation Guarantee pension that he or she may receive from Australia will affect the amount of national pension in the same way as a Finnish earnings-related pension. The amount of national pension will be calculated in proportion to the number of years the person has resided in Finland. An Australian Age Pension may also affect a Finnish resident's other Kela benefits.

Further information is available for Finnish residents from the Finnish Centre for Pensions, Department for International Pension Matters, tel. +358 10 751 4218,

and for Australian residents from Kela's Centre for International Affairs, tel. +358 20 634 2550.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament urges the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health as the Competent Authority referred to in the Agreement between the Republic of Finland and Australia on Social Security as well as the Finnish Centre for Pensions and Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, as the liaison bodies for pension matters to work toward the creation of a flexible practice for processing Finnish and Australian pension applications submitted by expatriates in order to clarify and accelerate the process in cooperation with the Australian liaison body, Centrelink. The Finnish Expatriate Parliament considers it important that pension applicants are informed of the pension application process.

IV RESOLUTIONS ON SOCIAL ISSUES

18. Kela's maternity packages for expatriate Finns

Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, has stopped selling maternity packages on the grounds that the maternity package is a benefit included in the Finnish social security system, which is based on entitlement. A benefit is not a product that could be sold. The current legislation does not allow the sale of a social security benefit. In addition, maternity packages are subject to a competitive bidding process, which also means that they cannot be resold. Kela only distributes maternity packages to mothers who fall within the Finnish social security system, whose pregnancy has lasted for 154 days and who have had a medical examination by the end of the fourth month of pregnancy. Adoptive parents falling within the Finnish social security system are also entitled to a maternity package, provided that they enclose, with their application, a certificate attesting that a child is to be placed in the care of their adoptive family.

In June of 2013, three Finnish fathers took up the challenge and established a company called The Finnish Baby Box, which puts together similar packages for sale. These are also delivered abroad. To test the idea, the company set up a pre-order website, which indicated that there would be demand. The company assembles its baby boxes using products from the same companies that also supply products for the maternity packages distributed by Kela. The products in these baby boxes match very closely with those included in Kela's maternity packages, but the company has also

made some minor changes. You can order baby boxes to be delivered abroad with products suitable for different climates, such as jumpsuits with warmer or lighter padding. The price of a baby box is €399. Boxes have already been delivered to countries such as the United States, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Germany, and China. In a new development, the company has signed a contract for products with Moomin designs in the spring of 2015, and it is now possible to order "The Moomin Finnish Baby Box" for €499.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Secretariat of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament has verified that the maternity package is a benefit available for mothers falling within the Finnish social security system. Similar packages are currently available for purchase through a private company.

19. Dissemination of information about access to health care

Finland is responsible for covering the medical expenses of pensioners residing in another EU/EEA country or in Switzerland, who only receive pensions from Finland, and of the family members of cross-border workers working in Finland, who reside in another EU/EEA country or in Switzerland and are outside the labor force. These groups of people are entitled to medically ne-

cessary treatment during a temporary stay in Finland.

The access of these groups to health care during a temporary stay in Finland has expanded as of January 1, 2014. The change also applies to those family members of pensioners residing abroad and only receiving pensions from Finland, who are outside the labor force. In practical terms, this expansion of access to health care means that these groups are entitled to receive necessary medical treatment within the Finnish public health care system during a temporary stay in Finland. Pensioners and their family members can prove their right to treatment within public health care using the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) issued by Kela, which includes information on the holder's access to health care in Finland and in other EU/EEA countries or Switzerland on the reverse side. Family members of cross-border workers can prove their right to treatment within public health care using a certificate of entitlement to medical treatment in Finland issued by Kela, which includes information on the holder's access to health care in Finland. As of January 1, 2014, access to public health care is available to those family members of cross-border workers who hold an outdated certificate of entitlement to medical treatment in Finland. Regardless of the outdated certificate, they have extended access to health care, i.e. the right to receive necessary medical treatment. Such family members of cross-border workers should contact Kela to obtain an updated certificate of entitlement to medical treatment in Finland. Pensioners and their family members and cross-border workers' family members will pay the same fees for their treatment as anyone who is domiciled in the municipality in question. Public health care units are entitled to receive government compensation from Kela for the costs of medical treatment provided for these groups.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament urges parties involved in the Finnish health care system to inform public health care services more effectively of the legislative amendments governing access to health care effective as of January 1, 2014.

20. A permanent social worker for the Spanish Costa del Sol

In the Spanish Costa del Sol, a pilot project of support provided by a social worker for Finns residing or staying in the area was carried out in 2011–2013. The project was implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The social worker was tasked with the provision of advice and guidance relating to access to social services, school social work, creation of effective contacts with local authorities and parties in Spain, needs assessment of advice, guidance and other sup-

port measures relating to social services, and preparation of recommendations to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The social worker prepared a report on the work for use by the Ministries for a follow-up assessment of the project.

On March 21, 2013, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs appointed a working group charged with the task of charting the currently valid national legislation on assisting citizens abroad, especially in the case of social problems. The objective of the working group was to go through key national legislation and the competence of the authorities, to chart problem situations and related subject areas, and to investigate the need for any possible further action, such as any possible need to amend legislation. The working group also aimed to determine the number of Finns in need of assistance abroad, the areas in which these needs concentrate, and the different reference groups that need help. The working group made use of experiences gained from the pilot project with a social worker in the Spanish Costa del Sol. The term of the working group ended on March 31, 2014, when the group submitted its report to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (*Missä kulkevat suomalaisen hyvinvointivaltion rajat? Ulkomailla oleskelevien suomalaisten avustaminen sosiaalialan ongelmissa – normikehyksen selvittäminen ja nykytilan arviointi at www.formin.finland.fi [in Finnish, abstract available online: "What are the limits to the Finnish welfare state in assisting Finns staying abroad"]*).

The working group concludes that the expectations of Finns staying abroad do not match the possibilities of the authorities to provide assistance. The Finnish society, with its rights and responsibilities, is not carried over with Finns to other countries, which always operate according to their own laws and regulations instead. Moving abroad is always an individual's own choice. This may entail a transition from Finnish social security to another country's social security system, which may differ significantly from the Finnish system in terms of eligibility criteria and standards. It must be borne in mind that social security is not based on being a Finnish citizen or paying taxes to Finland but, rather, on residing in Finland. In addition, employment provides eligibility for certain benefits, such as earnings-related pension and accident insurance. People moving between EU/EEA countries and Switzerland are subject to EC Regulation No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems.

The guiding principle of the Regulation is that employees/entrepreneurs are insured in the country of employment, while other people fall within the social security system of their country of residence. Based on a brief investigation, conducted by the above-mentioned working group, it is estimated that social support needs, similar to those identified in Spain, occur in several countries where Finns have significantly increased their presence over the last few years. Such countries include Estonia, Turkey, and Thailand, among others. In the working group's view, Finnish citizens' cross-border mobility will continue to increase, as will their needs. There is a need to strengthen support measures in Fin-

land. Cooperation between different authorities should be intensified in order to solve problems occurring abroad. This boils down to exchange of information and seeking common solutions. The working group proposes the pooling of information about parties offering assistance abroad. In the working group's view, the cross-administrative publicserviceinfo.fi website, set up in November 2013, would be the most appropriate place to compile information and advice also for use by Finns staying abroad. Finland is not in a position to provide specific social services for Finns staying or residing abroad. Each country's services are organized in keeping with its own system of health care and social services as a whole. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs are working together to investigate how to frame the working group's proposal on a single information point in concrete terms.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs reconsider the establishment of a permanent social worker's post in the Spanish Costa del Sol.

21. Expanding the coverage of the European Health Insurance Card to Turkey

In response to an initiative submitted to the 2012 session of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament with regard to organizing health care for Finns residing in Turkey, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health stated that it was not going to take action at this point to establish an agreement on providing health care for Finns residing in Turkey. By way of justification, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health referred to its 2011 statement on the same topic, containing, among other things, the following:

"With regard to access to health care, it is up to countries to decide for themselves what kind of health care they wish to provide to foreign tourists or individuals otherwise staying temporarily in the country, who suddenly fall ill, and what kind of fees they wish to levy for these services.

For EU Member States, the EU social security legislation contains provisions on the right of persons, residing temporarily in another Member State, to receive necessary health care during their stay on the same terms as the country's own nationals. There is an agreement on reciprocity and mutual reimbursement of costs between the Member States. Finland has a limited number of social security agreements on health care. At the moment, Finland has such health care agreements in force with the Canadian province of Quebec (1986), and with Australia (1992). The agreement with Quebec only covers temporary workers, posted wor-

kers, and students, but not tourists.

In recent years, no new health care agreements have been made. Nowadays, such a health care agreement would be based on a system in which the country whose social security legislation is applied to a person will also be responsible for the costs of health care provided to this person in the other contracting state. This involves a heavy administrative burden of cost reimbursement and invoicing. In practice, a health care agreement with Turkey would also result in increased net costs to the Finnish government.

As a general policy, the Ministry is rather reserved about concluding new agreements on anything but securing accumulated pension rights and avoiding double social security payments.

According to the Finnish legislation, a person who falls within the scope of the Finnish National Health Insurance is entitled to receive health insurance compensation for health care services received outside Finland, if he or she has been taken ill while staying abroad, and if he or she is not covered by a national health insurance of the country providing the health care services, or if he or she is not entitled to health care on local terms in the country where he or she is staying. The level of compensation corresponds to what is compensated for similar treatment in Finland (Health Insurance Act 1224/2004, Chapter 2, Section 6, paragraphs 1 and 3). Therefore, Finns temporarily residing in Turkey may apply for health insurance compensation for their health care costs."

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament urges the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to take action to expand the coverage of the European Health Insurance Card to also apply to Finns vacationing and residing in Turkey.

22. Taxation of expatriate Finns as summer workers in Finland

Unlimited and limited tax liability (Finnish Tax Administration):

Finnish income taxation is divided into two types of tax liability, namely, unlimited and limited tax liability. People living in Finland are subject to unlimited tax liability, and those residing abroad are subject to limited tax liability. Those subject to unlimited tax liability pay tax to Finland on income received both from Finland and abroad (global tax liability). Those subject to limited tax liability only pay tax to Finland on income received from Finland.

Taxation of those with limited tax liability:

If you live abroad and come to Finland for a maximum period of six months and you still have a home abroad, you are subject to limited tax liability in Finland. The final tax collected from a person with limit-

ed tax liability will either be tax at source independent of the amount of income or, alternatively, taxation will be implemented in the same way as for Finnish residents, i.e. through the taxation procedure based on the amount of total income.

1. Tax at source

If you are staying temporarily in Finland, you are subject to limited tax liability. This means that your employer will collect a 35% tax at source on your pay. You can apply for a tax-at-source card, which includes a note on a tax-exempt amount of 510 euros per month or 17 euros per day. For instance, if you have a one-month employment contract and your pay is 1,000 euros, your Finnish employer will collect tax at source on your pay, less the tax-exempt amount. In other words, the amount of tax is $35\% \times (\text{€}1,000 - \text{€}510) = \text{€}171.50$. The tax at source is the final tax. You are not required to file a tax return in Finland.

2. Progressive taxation

You are entitled to demand that your earned income (excluding dividends) be taxed at a progressive rate instead of tax at source, if you live within the European Economic Area or in a state with which Finland has signed a tax agreement.

In order for your income to be taxed at a progressive rate, you will need to apply for a tax card issued for those with limited tax liability to submit to your Finnish employer. In your application, you should declare any income you have earned in Finland, any earned income taxable in your country of residence, and any deductions made from these. Finland only collects tax on the income that you have earned in Finland, but any taxable income earned in your country of residence will increase the tax payable on your Finnish earnings.

Progressive tax on earned income will be calculated according to the State's income tax scale and the average municipal tax rate. Travel expenses to and from

work and certain other work-related expenses, among others, may be taken into account as tax deductions. Your tax rate depends on the amount of your income and expenses.

In addition to tax, your employer will collect social security and insurance contributions (totaling about 7%) from your pay, unless you have a certificate attesting that you are insured in some other country.

In Finland, those with unlimited tax liability do not have to pay any tax on a very low income. The total amount of tax consists of state and municipal taxes, plus basic health insurance and earned income contributions (social security payments). Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church or the Greek Orthodox Church will also have to pay church tax on their earnings. You will only have to pay state income tax if your income exceeds the minimum of 16,700 euros per year (in 2015). Municipal income tax and church tax, as well as basic health insurance and earned income contributions, are payable if your earnings from employment exceed 1,210 euros per year (in 2015). The contributions are included in the tax rate indicated on your tax card. If your earnings (such as pay and study grants) for the whole year will definitely remain below 1,210 euros, you can request the Tax Administration to issue a tax card with a 0% tax rate.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament demands that the Finnish Tax Administration promptly amends the taxation of pay received from Finnish summer jobs by young expatriate Finns to correspond to that of pay received from summer jobs by young people permanently residing in Finland.

V RESOLUTIONS ON STUDY AND TRAINING ISSUES I

23. Authorization to provide Basic Education in the Arts to be granted also for education provided abroad

The number of Finns residing in St. Petersburg is increasing. The current Finnish residents of St. Petersburg mostly work in the spheres of business and culture, with especially small and medium-sized enterprises expanding their activities to Russia. The growing Finnish community in St. Petersburg creates an increasing demand for service businesses. The purchasing power of the middle class is increasing, and the demand is good in all sectors. Finns and Finnish expertise are valued in St. Petersburg. As the export sector is doing well, the number of Finnish enterprises is inc-

reasing, and their employees are relocating to St. Petersburg together with their families.

The educational needs of Finnish children and young people in St. Petersburg are currently being catered for only by the Finnish School in St. Petersburg, which has authorization to provide basic education. Both the Basic Education Act and the Act on Upper Secondary Education make it possible, since the beginning of 1999, to provide education abroad, based on the following sentence: "The authorization may also be granted for education provided abroad". This forms the basis for the Finnish School's authorization to provide education. The Finnish School in St. Petersburg has an established position.

From the start of its operations, the mission of the

Finnish Music Institute in St. Petersburg has been to offer basic education in the arts, according to a curriculum based on the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education in the Arts, issued by the Finnish National Board of Education. Education is provided in accordance with the Act (633/1998) and Decree (813/1998) on Basic Education in the Arts. The instruction is intended for Finnish children and young people residing in St. Petersburg, it is goal-oriented and organized in progressive stages. The Music Institute also provides early education for children under school age as well as instruction for adults. There are no entrance tests; instruction is provided to anyone who wishes to attend.

The Finnish Music Institute in St. Petersburg became a service client of the Association of Finnish Music Schools in 2009. The Music Institute does not meet the criteria for membership proper, because it does not have authorization to provide basic education in the arts in accordance with the advanced syllabus. According to the current interpretation of the law, such authorization cannot be granted to a music institute operating abroad. In practice, this means that studies completed in the Finnish Music Institute in St. Petersburg are not recognized by other member institutes of the Association of Finnish Music Schools, and the students cannot complete level exams approved by the Association of Finnish Music Schools. At the moment, because of the lack of authorization, students do the level exams in the Kotka Region Music Institute or in the Lappeenranta Music Institute.

At the moment, the future of the Finnish Music Institute in St. Petersburg is uncertain. So far, instruction has been given by Finnish music education professionals who happen to be staying in St. Petersburg. Teachers change often. Every spring, new teachers are sought for the next term. Without the authorization to provide basic education in the arts, it is impossible to establish a continuity of operations and to get competent Finnish-speaking personnel to commit themselves to working in the institute.

Due to insufficient language skills and a culturally different approach to leisure interests, it is difficult for Finnish-speaking children and young people to participate in basic education in the arts offered in Russia. In Russia, arts education is mostly intended to train professionals, not so much to provide a hobby. The Finnish Music Institute in St. Petersburg offers students diverse options for pursuing music as a hobby according to the Finnish curriculum of basic education in the arts. The Music Institute also actively cooperates with the Finnish School in St. Petersburg. The school contributes to facilitating the operation of the institute by offering classrooms for its use. Most students of the Music Institute are also students of the Finnish School. Parents highly appreciate the opportunity to pursue a hobby in Finnish as well as the fact that the institute operates in the school premises.

Providing basic education in the arts for children and young people is extremely important, as most students spend a fixed period of time abroad because of their parents' work secondment. It should be possible to

continue music studies initiated in Finland seamlessly during the period spent abroad. Likewise, it should be possible to continue basic education in the arts initiated in St. Petersburg seamlessly after moving back to Finland. In this way it could be guaranteed that children's and young people's goal-oriented leisure interests continue even after their parents' secondment abroad ends. Students who have studied in the Finnish Music Institute in St. Petersburg have, without exception, been enrolled to study in member institutes of the Association of Finnish Music Schools after returning to Finland. This indicates the high standard of instruction offered and also shows that the education is being provided in accordance with the Act (633/1998) and Decree (813/1998) on Basic Education in the Arts.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that Section 3 of the Act on Basic Education in the Arts (authorization to provide education) be amended by adding the following sentence as the last sentence of the second subsection: The authorization may also be granted for education provided abroad.

24. Remedial teaching in Suomi Schools for children with beginner-level skills in Finnish

A lot of classes in Suomi Schools have children whose skills in Finnish are at such an elementary level that they need either beginner-level teaching or remedial teaching. The work of the rest of the class is hampered, as the teacher often has to use a lot of time to help such students in another language apart from Finnish. These children would benefit from additional instruction. In some cases, there are so many children with elementary-level Finnish that they could form a group of their own to be instructed separately.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes to the Ministry of Education and Culture that, in order to secure the teaching of children with elementary level Finnish in Suomi Schools, the group size required for state subsidy be reduced from six to four students so that teaching can be tailored to individual needs.

25. Completing a National Certificate of Language Proficiency outside Finland

According to the current Finnish legislation on National Certificates of Language Proficiency, it is not possible

to take a general language proficiency test abroad. As laws are agreements made by human communities and can, therefore, be amended, this law should be amended to make it possible to take general language proficiency tests abroad in the future. The National Certificate of Language Proficiency assesses the candidate's written and oral language skills needed in different situations of language use.

In Finland, the National Certificate of Language Proficiency is available in nine languages: English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Russian, Saami, Spanish, and Swedish. This initiative is only about organizing the National Certificate of Language Proficiency test in Finnish outside Finland, because tests in almost all of the other languages listed above are available from other organizers. For Saami and the variant of Swedish spoken in Finland, there are so few students outside the Nordic countries that it would not pay off to organize tests in these languages, and it is unlikely that appropriate organizers would be available to take on the responsibility for the arrangements.

In a few exceptional cases, National Certificate of Language Proficiency tests have been arranged abroad, at least in London and Düsseldorf. These test arrangements have been very successful and experiences of them have been positive.

As the current legislation on National Certificates of Language Proficiency does not provide for taking the tests outside Finland, there are no provisions, for example, for handling fraud or complaints. It is unclear which country's legislation would be applicable to such irregularities. The law must be amended in order to address this problem. In planning the amendment, one could look at the international test arrangements in other languages in corresponding situations. For example, the Cambridge English Proficiency tests, the Goethe-Institut's German language examinations, and the SWEDEX Swedish examinations can be completed outside their countries of origin.

Finland's membership in the European Union has afforded the Finnish language a new kind of international status that it has never had before. Finnish is a living national language, and we Finns are responsible for its future. We think that our language is worth all available support and appreciation, also outside Finland. One opportunity to "market" our language is to make it possible to complete a National Certificate of Language Proficiency in Finnish also outside Finland.

Most likely there will only be interest in arranging language proficiency tests in Finnish in countries with many Suomi Schools. The students of these schools would benefit from the opportunity to demonstrate their language skills and to obtain an official certificate of their skills. However, the Suomi Schools alone do not have sufficient resources to organize the tests. They need to cooperate with local partners, such as adult education centers. In many cases, these potential partners also provide instruction in the Finnish language.

Sources: [www.jyu.fi \(/hum/laitokset/solki/yki/yleista/tietoakielitutkinnoista\)](http://www.jyu.fi (/hum/laitokset/solki/yki/yleista/tietoakielitutkinnoista)) and [www.oph.fi \(/english/services/yki\)](http://www.oph.fi (/english/services/yki)).

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that in order to support the official languages of Finland, the law on National Certificates of Language Proficiency be amended to make it possible to take the general language proficiency tests in the official languages of Finland even outside Finland.

26. Activities for children under 3 years in Suomi Schools to be included in the state subsidy

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture subsidizes the activities organized in Suomi Schools for children from 3 to 18 years of age in groups of at least six children. The public funding for Suomi Schools should be extended to cover children younger than three years, because the first years of life are crucial for language development. Suomi Schools offer significant help to families with children under three years of age in both maintaining the Finnish language and developing the child's identity.

The Ministry of Education and Culture grants the subsidy to the Finnish National Board of Education. It is then forwarded to the Finland Society where it is distributed to the Suomi Schools according to the criteria determined by the National Board of Education. The total appropriation has remained the same for several years, although the number of Suomi Schools has grown and the value of the funds has decreased with inflation. The amount budgeted for Suomi Schools by the government is not sufficient to support the activities for children under three years of age, even if a decision was made to include them in the scope of the aid. If such a decision is taken, the amount of funding reserved for Suomi Schools must be increased accordingly.

After the 2007 session of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament, the Speakers' Council and the Secretariat have discussed the matter with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Finnish National Board of Education, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The importance of the matter is well understood, particularly as Finland is going to need a larger workforce from abroad in the future. For this reason, expatriate Finns and their descendants will be an important resource.

At the moment, however, the situation is somewhat unclear: in principle, matters related to children under 3 years of age fall within the domain of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, but the financial appropriations from the Ministry are passed on through local authorities; therefore, there is no budget heading for such subsidies. The central government transfers to local government are undergoing a reform in Finland, with an aim to include all education, including that of children under 3 years of age, within the domain of the educational authorities. If this is accomplished, matters concerning children under 3 years of age in Suo-

mi Schools would also naturally fall within the competence of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health determine which of the two ministries is responsible for supporting the activities organized in Suomi Schools for children under 3 years of age. The Finnish Expatriate Parliament also proposes that the responsible ministry extend the state subsidy to cover educational activities offered by Suomi Schools to children under 3 years of age and to increase the budgetary appropriation reserved for Suomi Schools accordingly.

27. Funding for Suomi Schools to be secured

The funding situation of Suomi Schools has been relatively uncertain over the years. It is almost intolerable that every year the schools have to live in uncertainty about how much money is allocated to their activities and when the money is received. It is a matter of appreciating the work done in Suomi Schools and of developing and maintaining the level of the students' skills in the Finnish language and culture. The Finnish government cannot afford not to support this resource. Both the teachers and the students in Suomi Schools are representatives of Finland in their country of residence.

Suomi Schools receive a government subsidy that is included in the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Ministry of Education and Culture allocates the funds to the Finnish National Board of Education which transfers it to the Finland Society to be further distributed to the Suomi Schools. The distribution is done according to the criteria defined by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Board of Education.

For years, the total sum of the subsidies had been €450,000. This sum has also covered the annual training events organized for Suomi School teachers in Helsinki as well as the grants for country-specific teacher training events. In 2011, after a great deal of effort and lobbying by the Finnish Expatriate Parliament, the Education and Culture Committee of the Finnish Parliament and the Subcommittee for Education and Science, operating under the Finance Committee in the Finnish Parliament, finally decided to allocate an additional €200,000 for the purpose. For 2012, the additional appropriation was €150,000. It was supposed to be a permanent appropriation, but this has not been the case: this year, we again had to fight for it. By granting additional appropriations to the Suomi Schools, the Finnish Parliament has clearly signaled

to the Ministry of Education and Culture that the aid allocated to the Suomi Schools must be increased. The Ministry of Education and Culture has not, however, implemented this in its budget.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament reminds the Ministry of Education and Culture that it must comply with the will of the Finnish Parliament and increase the subsidy allocated to the Suomi Schools by making a permanent increase in the budgetary appropriations to the Suomi Schools.

28. A separate state budget heading to be established for Suomi Schools

The state aid reserved for Suomi Schools is included in state budget heading 29.10.51, subheading 29.10.51.2 (State aid for NGOs). According to the justifications given for the budget heading, the appropriations may be used to allocate subsidies to NGOs promoting cooperation between home and school; to the Development Centre Opinkirjo; to supporting extracurricular activities offered in schools; to the Finnish Association of Art Schools for Children and Young People; to the Finnish Association for Environmental Education; to the Summer High School Association; to the Association Supporting the Finnish Language Schools Abroad; to distance education school activities; to supporting certain organizations providing student exchange; to supporting international science olympiad activities for upper secondary school students; and to the operation and development of Suomi Schools.

Since 2011, the Finnish Parliament has, as proposed by the Finance Committee's Subcommittee for Education and Science, allocated an additional appropriation for the state subsidy directed to Suomi Schools to be added to the budget heading mentioned above. Each year, however, there have been difficulties in having these sums directed to Suomi Schools, because the same budget heading contains funding allocated for several different bodies. Without persistent lobbying and monitoring by the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and the Finland Society, the additional appropriation granted for Suomi Schools might have been distributed to other NGOs operating under the same budget heading, even though the Parliament specifically allocated the additional appropriation to state aid for Suomi Schools. This problem could be solved if the state aid for Suomi Schools was transferred to a separate heading in the state budget. This is also justified by the large number of Suomi Schools and the large number of students in them (around 140 schools with more than 4,000 students in the academic year 2014–2015). Source (in Finnish): budjetti.vm.fi (2015 → Yhdistelmä ajantasaisesta talousarviosta 13.3.2015 →)

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that a separate budget heading for Suomi Schools be established in the state budget.

VI RESOLUTIONS ON STUDY AND TRAINING ISSUES II AND YOUTH ISSUES

29. Vocational education and training and higher education to be kept free of charge for students from outside the EU

International relations in Europe are becoming increasingly strained due to the crisis in Ukraine. The EU, for example, has introduced sanctions against Russia. Among expatriate Finns living in Russia, these developments are giving rise to a fear that the long-term plans of introducing tuition fees in Finnish vocational and higher education institutions for students from outside the EU may turn into reality. Most expatriate Finns residing in Russia are Ingrian Finns, who are able to study in Finnish but have only Russian citizenship. If they had to pay tuition fees, it would become impossible for them to study in Finland because of, among other things, the falling currency exchange rate of the rouble against the euro. Expatriate Finns in Russia, who are oriented towards Finland, would thus be completely deprived of opportunities to study in Finland. This would also harm Finland's reputation as a country offering top-level education.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament appeals to the Finnish authorities to keep studying in Finnish vocational and higher education institutions free of charge also for Finnish expatriate students from outside the EU.

30. Securing the operating conditions for Finnish comprehensive schools abroad

At the moment, there are six Finnish comprehensive schools abroad: in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Tallinn, Tartu, Brussels, and Fuengirola in the Spanish Costa del Sol. These schools provide basic education in line with the Finnish national curriculum. The Finnish school in Costa del Sol also provides general upper secondary education in accordance with the Finnish national curriculum.

The authorizations to provide education granted to these schools mention "temporary residence" as the

precondition for student enrolment. There have been problems in defining the length of temporary residence related to the interpretation of this precondition according to Section 5 of the Act on Domicile and to the requirement by the Ministry of Education and Culture that an extract from the Population Information System must be provided. When discussing the law proposal (379/1981), the legislator stated that, in the case of schools abroad, the temporary nature of residence may sometimes be difficult to determine. The law is based on the philosophy that as long as a child, young person, or adult has not migrated from Finland, their residence abroad is temporary. Finnish comprehensive schools abroad have not been informed that extracts from the Population Information System would be used as the basis for determining the period of school attendance. An entry in the population register may be completely wrong and the possibility of defining the length of residence on an individual basis, offered by the Act on Domicile, has not been used. Furthermore, in some cases, the law of the host country requires that any longer stay in the country must always be registered in the local population register, which leads to the removal of the entry on temporary residence abroad from the Finnish population register.

The Finnish school in Costa del Sol is one example of a school from which students return to Finland to continue their comprehensive school or general upper secondary education, or to pursue further studies after completing their comprehensive school or general upper secondary education. People spend long periods of time in Costa del Sol because of health and employment reasons, but it is typical of such families that neither parents nor children perceive themselves as residing in Spain so permanently that they would start defining themselves as migrants.

As society changes, two-way mobility has emerged alongside permanent migration. In such situations, a flexible return to the home country, i.e. Finland, must be guaranteed to allow for favorable conditions for pursuing further studies and careers.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Ministry of Education and Culture specify the

content of the authorizations of the existing Finnish comprehensive schools and upper secondary school abroad so as to safeguard the possibility of Finnish citizens to flexibly receive education within the Finnish educational system in Finnish and return to Finland.

31. Participating in the entrance exams of Finnish higher education institutions outside Finland

It is often impossible for expatriate Finns to participate in the entrance exams of Finnish higher education institutions, i.e. universities and polytechnics (also known as universities of applied sciences), in the year when they graduate from the upper secondary school in their country of residence, because the local final exams often take place almost at the same time as the entrance exams of Finnish universities. For this reason, it is often very difficult to arrange travel to Finland in order to participate in entrance exams.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Speakers' Council take action to encourage Finnish universities and polytechnics (universities of applied sciences) to start investigating the possibility of organizing their entrance exams abroad at the same time as in Finland, for example in Finnish embassies and honorary consulates.

32. Taking the entrance exams of Finnish higher education institutions in English

The entrance exams of Finnish higher education institutions, i.e. universities and polytechnics (also known as universities of applied sciences), are often only available in Finnish. The tests can only be taken in English for degree programs in which instruction takes place in English. The language skills of many expatriate Finns, though good, are not necessarily sufficient to successfully take the tests in Finnish. It is unfortunate if admission to a school is denied just because of spelling mistakes.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament requests the Speakers' Council to take action to encourage Finnish universities and polytechnics (universities of applied sciences) to investigate the possibility of preparing entrance exams also in easy-to-read plain language.

33. Good learning conditions to be secured in European Schools

European Schools are educational institutions jointly controlled by the governments of the Member States of the European Union. There are a total of 14 European Schools in different European countries. Their operations are based on the Statute of the European Schools that has been ratified by the authorities in the Member States who have signed the Convention defining the Statute. The Schools receive their funding from the European Commission and from the Member States. There are a total of around 640 Finnish pupils in the European Schools. Most of them are enrolled in the Finnish language sections in Brussels (about 360 pupils) and Luxembourg (about 170 pupils).

According to the Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns for 2006–2011, the Finnish government wants to promote application and entry to the European Schools by, for example, participating in the development of the activities in the European Schools.

Children and young people who go to school in Finland have a subjective right to remedial teaching and special needs education. Children and young people enrolled in European Schools are not treated equally in this respect, because the European Schools do not have the same obligations. Instead, they apply a document concerning the integration of pupils with special needs into the school that was approved by the Board of Governors of the European Schools in 2005. For this purpose, the school may offer learning support (LS). If a child has been diagnosed with special educational needs (SEN), the school is to sign a fixed-term agreement with the pupil's parents. The agreement defines the amount of support needed and the way the costs are to be divided. The agreement may be extended, but it may also be terminated, with the recommendation that parents seek another school that is better able to cater to the pupil's special needs.

Children's and young people's learning difficulties may manifest themselves as difficulties with language or as problems with attention and concentration. It is estimated that, for example, difficulties in reading and writing are present in 3–10% of school-age children, depending on how they are defined. It is crucial to identify learning difficulties and to begin with support measures as early as possible in order to prevent the pupil's development from being negatively affected.

Special needs education is needed both in primary and secondary school. The European Schools concentrate on preparing the pupils for the theoretically oriented European Baccalaureate (EB) and do not offer other diploma options apart from the EB. The number of pupils in the European Schools in Brussels has increased in recent years, and some of the schools are severely overloaded. Entry to the schools has been restricted, and learning conditions in the schools have deteriorated. All of this will contribute to the increasing need for special needs education and make things even more difficult for children with special educational needs.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Finnish authorities take action to improve the learning conditions of Finnish pupils in the European Schools, to increase the effectiveness of catering to pupils with special educational needs, and to introduce allocations for the necessary per-

sonnel into the budget of the relevant administrative sector.

The Secretariat together with the Speakers' Council should also investigate whether the European Schools could issue a proof of education, for example, corresponding to the Finnish comprehensive school leaving certificate, to those pupils who do not complete the European Baccalaureate.

VII RESOLUTIONS ON CULTURAL, INFORMATION, AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

34. Adding a special day for expatriate Finns to the Finnish calendar, marked with a flag symbol as a flag-flying day

August 5 is to be proposed to the University of Helsinki Almanac Office as the Day of Expatriate Finns, which will be marked with a flag symbol on the calendar to indicate a voluntary customary flag-flying day.

There are over 1.6 million expatriate Finns in the world, just on the basis of selected country-specific national population census data from 2010 onwards. The number of expatriate Finns is even higher, but many countries only record those born in Finland in their national population census data, excluding subsequent – i.e. the second and third – generations of people who identify themselves as ethnic Finns. 300,000 expatriate Finns are Finnish citizens, and about 250,000 of these have the right to vote.

As society changes, the group of new expatriate Finns will also increase, as will the significance of being an expatriate Finn itself. The significance of Finnish identity and the appreciation of Finnish culture remain high among expatriate Finns. Finland is also made visible abroad thanks to expatriate Finns. When they return to Finland, former expatriates are a resource to their home country, as are contacts with expatriate Finns abroad.

Established in 1927, the Finland Society is widely known and recognized as an upholder of the network of expatriate Finns and their Finnish contacts as well as the pillars of Finnish identity abroad, such as language and culture. The Finland Society functions as the Permanent Secretariat of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament, established by expatriate Finns on August 5, 1997. It is the joint and politically unaffiliated advocacy forum of expatriate Finns, providing them with a link toward Finnish society and decision makers. It has already gathered expatriate Finns for a joint negotiation and decision-making session in Finland eight times now. Resolution 29/2012 of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament to include a flag-flying day for expatri-

ate Finns in the calendar pointed out that “[t]he Minister of the Interior, Ms. Päivi Räsänen, is responsible for matters related to expatriate Finns” and therefore proposed that the Ministry of the Interior “recommend” and that the University of Helsinki “take measures” toward including the flag-flying day in the calendar and in the State Calendar.

In its statement issued on this resolution on June 24, 2013, the Ministry of the Interior pointed out, among other things, that the two proposals made in recent years by the Ministry to the University of Helsinki Almanac Office for inclusion of new flag-flying days in the calendar concerned two prominent personalities (Minna Canth and Jean Sibelius), as requests for flag-flying days in their honor had a long history and wide support among Finns. The Ministry suggested that the Day of the Finnish Identity on May 12 could also be celebrated as the Day of Expatriate Finns. As grounds for refusing its support, the Ministry raised its desire to limit the number of flag-flying days in order to avoid “flag-flying fatigue” and “increasing costs”.

There are no other flag-flying days in August, even though the month is favorable for flying a flag. Finland has six statutory flag-flying days, which are calendar holidays, as well as all election days and the Inauguration Day of the President of the Republic. There are 13 customary flag-flying days, which are also calendar holidays. These are not governed by any Act or Decree, but they are recommended and usually marked on the calendar. Expatriate Finns also deserve their own special day. The compelling majority of them is not suffering from flag-flying fatigue. The Day of the Finnish Identity, or Snellman's Day, on May 12 falls in one of the busiest flag-flying months (there are 5 flag-flying days in May). The difference here is that expatriate Finns want to celebrate their Finnish identity regardless of their domicile, name, or even language. A special day would bind together the descendants of historical American immigrants, Swedish Finns, Ingrian Finns, as well as EU and global arts and science experts moving back and forth in a meaningful way, irrespective of national borders.

In the history of Finland, emigration to and repatriation from neighboring and far-away countries form a significant economic, social, and cultural feature. This unique characteristic of our country is understood. For this reason, a special day to bring expatriate Finns into the spotlight is necessary. It would, therefore, be desirable for schools and other educational institutions, for example, to mark such a special day of expatriate Finns, thus promoting the significance and added value of internationalism and an international Finnish identity to our country.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the University of Helsinki Almanac Office take action to include the Day of Expatriate Finns in the calendar and that it recommend the day as a customary voluntary flag-flying day by marking the date with a flag symbol no later than the beginning of 2017, as was done with the Europe Day and the United Nations Day subsequent to including these in the calendar. The flag symbol is proposed to be added in honor of the centennial of our national independence in 2017, which is also the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament. The Ministry of the Interior is asked to support the undertaking such that it will recommend August 5 as the customary flag-flying day. Expatriate Finns are encouraged to adopt the flag-flying day, and the Secretariat of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament is urged to encourage the introduction of the flag-flying custom at home and abroad, which will improve the chances of achieving the objective as it catches on.

35. Tourist information about Finland in German

People living in German-speaking countries are highly interested in traveling in Finland. According to the Visit Finland website, the Germans, British, and French emerged as the largest groups of foreign tourists staying overnight in Finland in February 2015. Therefore, tourist information is needed in German both on the Internet and in the form of brochures.

A unit of Finpro, Visit Finland is a national expert agency and an active player in the tourism sector, which is responsible for promoting foreign tourism to Finland. Finpro is an expert and service organization working to facilitate the internationalization of Finnish companies. Visit Finland supports tourism enterprises and groups of enterprises in their efforts to develop and market tourism services intended for international markets.

Visit Finland has two websites, www.visitfinland.com and www.visitfinland.fi. The German-language subsite, intended for tourists and consumers, is at www.visitfinland.com/de. You can also access the subsite through

www.visitfinland.com, where you can switch the language from the menu at the top right-hand corner. You can choose from the following nine languages: English, Swedish, German, Russian, French, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese. The Visit Finland website at www.visitfinland.fi is specifically designed to cater for Finnish tourism enterprises and other stakeholders. This site is also available in Swedish and English. Furthermore, Visit Finland offers a German-language brochure on Finland and a multilingual map of Finland (including German).

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament urges Visit Finland to transfer the content on the current visitfinland.fi website under another (domain) name in order to avoid confusion. The reason for this is that the visitfinland.com and visitfinland.fi websites are clearly intended for different target groups and their almost identical (domain) names cause mix-ups around the world. The Finnish Expatriate Parliament further urges Visit Finland to maintain its websites in as many languages as possible.

36. TV broadcasts from Finland

Finns residing in Sweden are dissatisfied with broadcasts from Finland to Sweden, because the programming includes reruns, while the share of subtitled Swedish-language programs has increased. Elderly viewers wish for more Finnish-language programming. TV Finland has removed live broadcasts from its programming, with only one live newscast in Finnish and one in Swedish remaining. Sweden's TV2 channel occasionally broadcasts Finnish-language programs, which are often the same as those on offer in TV Finland's compilations.

Response of the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) to the initiative:

"TV Finland is allowed to compile its programming from four Yle TV channels, which are Yle TV1, Yle TV2, Yle Teema, and Yle Fem. TV Finland's programming is exactly the same as on the main channels, as TV Finland is not entitled to broadcast any shows that are not included in the programming of these main channels. TV Finland makes use of reruns offered by the main channels as efficiently as possible, but new and as-yet-unseen programs are always given precedence. This spring's new arrivals included a drama series (Syke, or "Pulse"), a food show (Ruoka-Suomi, or "Food in Finland") and a documentary series (Kandit, or "Medical Graduates").

One of Yle's TV channels is Yle Fem, geared toward the Swedish-speaking population, and TV Finland is entitled to pick shows from its programming. TV Finland does not deliberately increase or decrease the share of Swedish-language programs, which varies ac-

ording to Yle Fem's programming. If Yle Fem offers plenty of programs to which TV Finland has broadcasting rights at the same time, this is directly reflected in the latter's programming. Some Swedish Finns want to follow events in Finland in Swedish, and we also want to cater to them. However, the share of Swedish-language programs is relatively small.

TV Finland is free-to-air on the terrestrial network in the Greater Stockholm area and in the Uppsala and Västerås areas. In addition, TV Finland is available on many cable networks all over Sweden.

TV Finland changed its programming structure in January 2014, when live broadcasts were discontinued, with the exception of two live daily newscasts. The reason for this solution was to release broadcasting resources for other services offered by Yle. However, the channel is prepared to offer live broadcasts of events on specific days. For instance, the parliamentary election results show was also available live at the same time to viewers living in Sweden via the television service.

According to Yle's policy, the online Yle Areena service is the main service for domestic programming available to viewers abroad. On Yle Areena, Yle's contents and services are available to everyone around the world. In addition to TV programs, it is also possible to listen to all of Yle's radio stations live on Yle Areena."

However, many programs on Yle Areena are not available outside Finland due to copyrights and the costs involved for Yle. The Speakers' Council of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and the Finland Society have discussed this issue with Yle's management on several occasions.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament urges the Finnish Broadcasting Company to continue to broadcast programs to Sweden and ensure their diversity and the balance between Finnish- and Swedish-language programming. Finns residing in Sweden are dissatisfied with the change in TV Finland's programming structure, which took place in January 2014. The Finnish Broadcasting Company is urged to develop its services on TV Finland and Yle Areena so as to make an increasing number of programs available to viewers outside Finland.

37. Possibilities of expatriate Finns to follow the Finnish media

The Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) has discontinued satellite broadcasts of Radio Finland and TV Finland and moved its programming to Yle Areena. For copyright reasons, not all broadcasts are available to listeners or viewers abroad. The issue has been negotiated with the Finnish Broadcasting Company for several years now, but Finns living abroad are still in

an unequal position when compared with those living in Finland. However, many pay their Yle fees to Finland. Commercial operators' TV broadcasts are also not available to viewers abroad. Online broadcasts are not even close to being a viable alternative to television everywhere due to connections and costs.

The Finnish Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns for 2012–2016 states that the government policy is to enhance the effective dissemination of information geared toward expatriate Finns. The government encourages the Finnish Broadcasting Company to continue providing expatriate Finns with diverse programming and proposes that Finland work toward amending or supplementing international agreements on intellectual property rights so as to facilitate the acquisition of international distribution rights for television programs.

Finns living abroad also have the need to access the kind of information that is easily available to those living in Finland as a matter of course. Such information includes Kela's services, studying in Finland, repatriation, citizenship issues, issues relating to moving abroad, and taxation. It is difficult to follow societal and cultural events in Finland, because online newspapers also charge fees. In the absence of a channel disseminating this type of information, the Finnish Broadcasting Company or some other party should establish such a channel and it should receive government support.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament urges the Ministry of Transport and Communications to investigate the ways in which Finnish communication services are offered to expatriate Finns. The Ministry is also urged to investigate the availability of the programming offered by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) in different parts of the world and the ways in which communication geared toward expatriate Finns is being developed. Furthermore, the Ministry is urged to propose the establishment of a channel intended for expatriate Finns to the Finnish Broadcasting Company or some other relevant party.

38. The FEP's financial accounts and budget

The operations of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament are completely financed by the Finland Society. The expenses from different activities are detailed in the Finland Society's accounting, in which the cost center number 501 represents the operations of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament. Every year, the office of the Finland Society prepares a draft budget to be presented to the Finland Society's Board, which is responsible for the accounts. The Board of the Finland Society has authorized the Executive Director to explain to the Finan-

cial Committee of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament the content of the accounts of the Finland Society as far as the Finnish Expatriate Parliament is concerned.

According to Resolutions 59/2005, 49/2007, 58/2010, and 36/2012 of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament, Finland Society shall continue to support the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and to present a report on the expenses related to the FEP's operations to the Financial Committee and the Speakers' Council.

In the years when the Finnish Expatriate Parliament has a session, its expenses amount to approximately 100,000 euros, which represents a remarkable share of the Finland Society's finances. In its Resolution 36/2012, the Finnish Expatriate Parliament urged the Ministry of Education to take this into consideration when allocating funds to the Finland Society.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament proposes that the Finland Society continue to support the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and present a report on the expenses related to the operations of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament to the Financial Committee and the Speakers' Council also at the next session of the FEP. The Finnish Expatriate Parliament urges the Finnish Parliament and Ministry of Education to pay attention to the Government Policy Programme for Expatriate Finns, which states that the policy of the Finnish government is to secure the operating conditions of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.

VIII RESOLUTIONS ON STATUTORY ISSUES

39. The status of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament to be reviewed

For 18 years, since its establishment in 1997, the Finnish Expatriate Parliament has functioned as a link between expatriate Finns. Its activities are well established, its contacts with decision makers in society are good, allowing effective advocacy, and the work of the governing bodies representing its members has been successfully carried out in line with its resolutions. Its well-known and respected status should be made official through legislation, and it should be included in the scope of direct state aid. An official status would increase visibility that in turn would better facilitate advocacy work and positively increase the interest of Finnish expatriate communities in its activities.

An official status could be established in the same way as was done with the Swedish Assembly of Finland (Folktinget). It would require preparing a law on the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and its state aid. The position and tasks of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament would mainly remain as they are now. According to the proposal, the law should include provisions on the tasks, legal capacity, composition, sessions, office, and accounts of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament. The law should also lay down provisions on funding to be allocated in the state budget to the tasks pertaining to the Finnish Expatriate Parliament under the law. This would mean that the responsibility for granting state aid to the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and the control of its use would be transferred from the Ministry of Education and Culture to the Ministry of Justice.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament tasks the Speakers' Council with taking immediate action to es-

tablish the status of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and to have it enshrined in legislation. The Finnish Expatriate Parliament also urges the Finland Society to investigate how the status of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament can be made official in practice and to take action to promote the matter.

40. The right of the Speakers' Council to submit initiatives

The Speakers' Council of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament consists of representatives elected by the regions. It convenes regularly to discuss matters pertaining to the Finnish Expatriate Parliament. Therefore, the Speakers' Council resolved in one of its autumn meetings in 2013, to propose to the Finnish Expatriate Parliament that the by-laws of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament be amended so as to also allow the Speakers' Council to submit initiatives.

The practical significance of this amendment is to help benefit from the efforts and wider perspective of the Speakers' Council. The right of the Speakers' Council to submit initiatives may improve the possibilities of promoting the initiatives. It is not intended to limit the right of member associations to submit initiatives. The collective right of the Speakers' Council to submit initiatives is not in conflict with the summoning of committees, even if the members of the Speakers' Council may be active in this process. For example, it has often been the case in practice that the summoner of a committee, who has been nominated by the Secretariat, is appointed to chair the committee. The secretary of the committee collects additional background information for the draft resolution, but the actual proposal for the resolution is made by the committee. The plenary either adopts or rejects this proposal. Amending the by-laws represents one step to-

ward making the advocacy work of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament more effective.

Amending the by-laws of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament requires a two-thirds majority in the session of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

Article 5 of the by-laws shall be amended as follows: “Each Finnish expatriate community, having ratified the by-laws, the Speakers’ Council, and the Finland Society have the right to submit initiatives to the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.”

41. Amendments to the Standing Order of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament

The need to amend the Standing Order is related both to the amendment of the by-laws that was passed in the 2010 session and to changes in working practices.

The Speakers’ Council of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament decided, in its 2013 autumn meeting, that the following initiative on amending the Standing Order would be submitted to the next session in the name of the Finland Society (amendments in boldface):

4 §

The Finland Society will send the registrants the agenda for the session, including all motions **as well as requested expert opinions by officials and other parties**, no later than one month before the session. A report on the procedures carried out to execute the decisions of the previous session is to be issued at the same time. **A summary of the motions and the report of activities shall be published on the website of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.**

6 §

Parliamentary sessions are led by the **speakers’ council speaker. If he or she is unable to attend, the session shall be led by a vice chair of the Finland Society or, if they are unable to attend, a deputy speaker elected by the speakers’ council.**

7 §

At the beginning of each session, the Parliament will **decide on the size of the committees, elect members of the standing committees**, decide on establishing **other possible** committees **and elect their membership**. The speaker will appoint summoners for the committees. The committees will elect the necessary officials by themselves. The committee sessions are closed.

8 §

After coming to order, the Parliament’s work will proceed with a general debate on the Finland Society’s report. At the same time, the discussion will act as the preliminary debate on the motions. **The decisions on referring the bills to proper committees will be made at the end.** During the general debate,

every representative is entitled to state his or her opinion on any issue related to Finnish expatriates or expatriatism, regardless of whether there has been a motion made on the matter. Permissions to speak are to be requested in writing and allotted in the order received. By the Parliament’s permission, the speaker can limit the length of the allotted speaking times, digress from the agenda or declare the discussion finished. Short counter-statements or rebuttals are allowed in connection with each statement. In regard to the general debate, a decision can be made on including an urgent matter in the agenda and its referral to the appropriate committee. Committees may consult experts if they wish.

12 §

The Finland Society will draw up the minutes of the parliamentary session, to be inspected by the **speakers deputy speakers**. No later than two months after the session, the minutes are to be sent to **all member communities of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and to all participants of the session representatives as well as the communities which they represent**. **The minutes shall be published on the website of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.**

To amend the Parliament’s standing order, a simple majority is required at the Expatriate Parliament’s session.

RESOLUTION OF THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT:

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament resolves to amend the Standing Order as follows (amendments in boldface):

4 §

The Finland Society will send the registrants the agenda for the session, including all motions **as well as requested expert opinions by officials and other parties**, no later than one month before the session. A report on the procedures carried out to execute the decisions of the previous session is to be issued at the same time. **A summary of the motions and the report of activities shall be published on the website of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.**

6 §

Parliamentary sessions are led by the **speakers’ council speaker. If he or she is unable to attend, the session shall be led by a vice chair of the Finland Society, or, if they are unable to attend, a deputy speaker elected by the speakers’ council.**

7 §

At the beginning of each session, the Parliament will **decide on the size of the committees, elect members of the standing committees, decide on establishing other possible committees and elect their membership**, decide on the proposal by the **speakers’ council on the committees in accordance with article 7 in the by-laws**. The speaker will appoint summoners for the committees. The committees will elect

the necessary officials by themselves. The committee sessions are closed **for outsiders**.

8 §

After coming to order, the Parliament's work will proceed with a general debate on the Finland Society's report. At the same time, the discussion will act as the preliminary debate on the motions. ~~The decisions on referring the bills to proper committees will be made at the end.~~ During the general debate, every representative is entitled to state his or her opinion on any issue related to Finnish expatriates or expatriatism, regardless of whether there has been a motion made on the matter. Permissions to speak are to be requested in writing and allotted in the order received. By the Parliament's permission, the speaker can limit the length of the allotted speaking times, digress from the agenda or declare the discussion finished.

Short counter-statements or rebuttals are allowed in connection with each statement. In regard to the general debate, a decision can be made on including an urgent matter in the agenda and its referral to the appropriate committee. Committees may consult experts if they wish.

12 §

~~The Finland Society~~ secretariat of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament will draw up the minutes of the parliamentary session, to be inspected by the ~~speakers~~ deputy speakers. No later than two months after the session, the minutes are to be sent by e-mail to all member communities of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and to all representatives and observers who participated in the session. The minutes shall be published on the website of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.

FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT BY-LAWS

Article 1

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament consists of the representatives of Finnish communities abroad. Communities joining the Expatriate Parliament have to confirm the by-laws of the Expatriate Parliament and inform the Secretariat on the ratification of the by-laws, in writing.

Article 2

Each community is entitled to send one representative to the plenary session of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament. A community with more than 500 members may send two representatives, and a community whose membership exceeds 1000, may send three representatives.

The community has to inform the Secretariat of its desire to participate in the plenary session within the time limits set in the standing order. The Parliament will make the final decisions on representation rights.

Article 3

The Expatriate Parliament convenes every second or third year. The Parliament may also convene at the expatriate communities' initiative, if the Speakers' Council so decides. A more extensive formal session will be arranged every fifth year, during anniversary years of the Republic of Finland.

Article 4

The Chairman of the Finland Society will act as the Speaker of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament. The plenary session will elect the Deputy Speakers and their alternates from among those candidates who have been nominated in the regional meetings preceding the plenary.

The Deputy Speakers and alternates should represent different geographical areas, which have been confirmed by the plenary of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament. They must live in the region they represent. The Speaker and the Deputy Speakers together form the Speakers' Council, which convenes also between sessions.

The Speakers' Council should represent, in as wide a manner as possible, different groups of expatriate Finns.

Article 5

Each Finnish expatriate community, having ratified the by-laws, the Speakers' Council and the Finland Society have the right to submit initiatives to the Finnish Expatriate Parliament. The initiatives must be submitted to the Secretariat by a set deadline. Respectively, the initiatives, and the expert opinions acquired by the Secretariat concerning them, must be sent to the parliament representatives well before the session.

Article 6

When the Finnish Expatriate Parliament is in session, the representatives convene in the plenary sessions and participate in committee work. The committees formulate draft resolutions, which will be presented to and discussed at the plenary session.

Article 7

The standing committees are: the Citizenship Committee, the Cultural Committee, the Youth Committee, the Study and Training Committee, the Committee for Political and Official Issues, the Social Committee,

the Senior Committee, the Statutory Committee, the Finance Committee and the Information Committee. Other committees can be set up if needed.

Geographical representation should be guaranteed in the committees.

Article 8

The Speakers' Council will convene together with the committee chairmen in an extended Speakers' Council session, if needed.

Article 9

The languages used by the parliament are Finnish, Swedish, English and Russian.

Article 10

Minutes are kept at all Finnish Expatriate Parliament's sessions.

Article 11

The office of the Finland Society acts as the Secretariat of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament. It is committed to act according to the decisions made by the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and to promote their execution by approaching Finnish authorities and where possible foreign authorities, as well as other parties, and actively reporting the decisions.

Article 12

To amend these by-laws, a two-thirds majority is required at the Expatriate Parliament session. To amend the Parliament's standing order, a simple majority is required at the Expatriate Parliament session.

THE FINNISH EXPATRIATE PARLIAMENT'S STANDING ORDER

1 §

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament will assemble in session every second or third year.

2 §

The Finland Society will send an invitation to all registered Finnish organizations no later than six months before the session.

3 §

The Finnish organizations are to inform the Finland Society of their participation no later than three months before the session. The motions which each organization wishes to be considered are also to be submitted at the same time. The Finland Society should also be given the names of the representatives and any possible observers no later than six weeks before the session.

4 §

The Finland Society will send the registrants the agenda for the session, including all motions, no later than one month before the session. A report on the procedures carried out to execute the decisions of the previous session is to be issued at the same time. A summary of the motions and the report of activities shall be published on the website of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.

5 §

At the beginning of the session, all the registered organizations, a list of representatives and an agenda including all the issues discussed during the session will be approved. Observers present are to be noted as well.

6 §

Parliamentary sessions are led by the speaker. If he or she is unable to attend, the session shall be led by a vice chair of the Finland Society, or,

if they are unable to attend, a deputy speaker elected by the Speakers' Council.

7 §

At the beginning of each session, the Parliament will decide on the proposal by the Speakers' Council on the committees in accordance with article 7 in the by-laws. The speaker will appoint summoners for the committees.

The committees will elect the necessary officials by themselves.

The committee sessions are closed for outsiders.

8 §

After coming to order, the Parliament's work will proceed with a general debate on the Finland Society's report. At the same time, the discussion will act as the preliminary debate on the motions. During the general debate, every representative is entitled to state his or her opinion on any issue related to Finnish expatriates or expatriatism, regardless of whether there has been a motion made on the matter. Permissions to speak are to be requested in writing and allotted in the order received. By the Parliament's permission, the speaker can limit the length of the allotted speaking times, digress from the agenda or declare the discussion finished. Short counter-statements or rebuttals are allowed in connection with each statement.

In regard to the general debate, a decision can be made on including an urgent matter in the agenda and its referral to the appropriate committee.

9 §

Standing and temporary committees will draw up a report on each referred bill which will include a draft resolution. This can be either

a stand on the matter or a decision not to take a stand on the issues mentioned in the bill. Committees may consult experts if they wish.

10 §

In the final session, the committees' representatives will present the committees' bills for the Parliament's approval. The motions are to be issued to all of the representatives in writing before the final decision. Possible counter-statements presented in the session, except for those related to a rejection, are also to be issued in writing before the resolution.

11 §

The Parliament will make its resolutions either by consensus or by voting. Votes are to be carried out by a show of hands.

As to the election of individuals, a closed ballot is to be carried out if required.

At least half of the representatives are to be present when taking a vote.

The Parliament's deputy speakers will act as vote-counters.

12 §

The secretariat of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament will draw up the minutes of the parliamentary session, to be inspected by the deputy speakers. No later than two months after the session, the minutes are to be sent by e-mail to all member communities of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament and to all representatives and observers who participated in the session. The minutes shall be published on the website of the Finnish Expatriate Parliament.

13 §

In other respects, the Parliament will follow the Finnish law governing associations.



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