

ESU Conference 14.11.2024/Varapuhemies Paula Risikko

Honorable foreign guests,

Dear friends,

I am pleased to welcome you to Eduskunta, the Parliament of Finland. We are very honoured to have you as our guest today.

My name is Paula Risikko, I am the First Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Finland.

This is my sixth term as a Member of Parliament, my first term started in 2003. I have held four different ministerial portfolios. In the Parliament, I have been also the Speaker of the Parliament.

In Eduskunta we have two hundred (200) members from ten (10) parliamentary groups. Members are elected from thirteen (13) electoral districts. Elections are held every four (4) years.

My parliamentary group is the National Coalition Party. The National Coalition Party won last' year's elections and received the mandate to form the government. The parliament elected Mr. Petteri Orpo as Prime Minister in June two thousand and twenty-three (2023).

The current coalition government has four (4) parliamentary groups: the National Coalition Party, the Finns Party, the Swedish People's Party and the Christian Democrats. The Government has a majority with one hundred and nine (109) seats from the Parliament.

Next, I will say a few words about the history of the Parliament.

The Parliament of Finland was established in nineteen-o-six (1906). Finland then held an autonomous position under the Russian Empire. The same year Finnish women became the first in the world to gain the right to vote and stand for office.

The first parliamentary elections were held the following year. Ten years later Finland gained its independence on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December nineteen-seventeen (1917).

Then, I wish to say a few words about the current situation in Finland.

In Finnish politics, one of the main issues under discussion is public finances ja security.

In foreign policy, there is broad consensus in Finland. This is reflected in the support toward the Nato membership and in the firm support to Ukraine against Russia's aggression.

The Parliament has sixteen (16) permanent special committees and the Grand Committee. The Grand Committee functions as the EU committee of Parliament. The most important task of the Grand Committee is to ensure parliamentary influence and oversight in EU decision-making.

All the Parliament's decisions are prepared in the committees.

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Dear friends

The position and services for senior citizens are important themes in the Parliament, as Finland is one of the fastest-aging countries in Europe.

A longer lifespan has been a significant societal goal, which has indeed been achieved.

The elderly are a diverse group, with over 1.3 (one point three) million people over the age of sixty-five (65). Most of the elderly are in good health, actively participating in society and making significant contributions to the well-being of others and the functionality of society.

However, there are large differences in health and well-being among senior citizens. For some individuals, challenges have accumulated earlier in life or gotten worse as their functional capacity lowers, or as life circumstances change unexpectedly.

The National Coalition Party (Kokoomus) wants to influence attitudes towards the elderly above all – we want senior citizens to be full-fledged members of society.

Kokoomus aims to secure the development and purchasing power of pensions, inter-generational fairness, and the sufficiency of pension funds for future generations as well. Financial stability provides a foundation for a dignified old age.

We want housing and services to be more diverse. Housing arrangements can increase overall safety, combat loneliness, and encourage physical activity and functional independence. In the planning of residential areas, attention must be paid to enabling as much accessibility as possible.

Living at home for as long as possible is the wish of many, but in practice, this is not always possible or safe. The number of home care services and around-the-clock care must be measured to match actual needs, and services must always be rehabilitative.

Ensuring freedom of choice in all services is important to Kokoomus.

We also want to increase senior citizens' possibilities to participate in society. The work of statutory senior councils plays a part in ensuring and defending their rights.

Dear friends,

“If we are lucky, all of us will grow old.”

With these words, I wish you a warm welcome to Finland and I hope you have wonderful stay here in Eduskunta and in Finland.