



PLAIN LANGUAGE
BROCHURE

CAN THE PARLIAMENTARY OMBUDSMAN HELP YOU?



PARLIAMENTARY OMBUDSMAN OF FINLAND

PARLIAMENTARY OMBUDSMAN

What does the Parliamentary Ombudsman do?

The Parliamentary Ombudsman supervises the work and actions of the authorities.

The authorities must follow the rules and comply with the law. The Parliamentary Ombudsman makes sure that the authorities follow the law.

An authority may be a person or an agency.

Examples of authorities are the police, the chief executive in a municipality, and doctors at municipal health centres. Government offices, such as Kela and the Tax Administration, are also authorities.

The offices of a municipality and courts of law are also authorities. The Parliamentary Ombudsman makes sure that the authorities follow the law in their work, perform their duties and do their work right.

In particular, the Ombudsman makes sure that fundamental rights and human rights are respected.

There is one Parliamentary Ombudsman in Finland and two Deputy-Ombudsmen. They all do the same job but work independently of each other. They have the same rights and authority to do their work. These rights and authority are stated in the law.

The Parliament selects the Ombudsman and the Deputy-Ombudsmen. They are selected for four years at a time. The Ombudsman reports to the Parliament on the work he has done every year.

How does the Parliamentary Ombudsman do his work?

The Ombudsman investigates complaints made to him.

A person makes a complaint when they think that an authority has treated them wrongly.

They then file a complaint: they tell the Ombudsman about it. The Ombudsman can tell the authority what it should have done.

The Ombudsman can also investigate a shortcoming he has noticed himself. A shortcoming means something that is unfair or wrong in some way.

The Ombudsman inspects closed institutions, garrisons and agencies.

A prison or an approved school is an example of a closed institution. The people who live or work in the institution can talk to the Ombudsman during the inspections. They can talk with him in confidence.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman will not tell anyone what they said.

The Ombudsman receives thousands of complaints every year. The Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman inspects over 100 places every year.



*From left
Parliamentary Ombudsman
Petri Jääskeläinen,
Deputy-Ombudsman
Maija Sakslin and
Deputy-Ombudsman
Jussi Pajuja.*

CAN THE PARLIAMENTARY OMBUDSMAN HELP?

You can ask the Ombudsman for help

- if you think that an authority has not followed the law
- if an authority has not done what they have a duty to do
- if fundamental rights and human rights have not been respected.

Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

You can complain if an authority has treated you wrongly or unfairly. For example, if you have had to wait for an authority's decision for too long, or if you have not been given a treatment that you have a right to.

You can also make a complaint for somebody else.

To do so, you need a letter of attorney. A letter of attorney means that you have another person's written permission to make a complaint for him or her.

Who can you make a complaint about?

You can make a complaint to the Ombudsman about authorities.

Central government and municipal offices and institutions are authorities. The elected officials in municipalities are also authorities. They include local councils, municipal and city executives and municipal committees.

Other examples of authorities are

- courts of law
- the police
- distraint officers
- social workers
- doctors at a health centre
- municipal chief executives
- comprehensive school teachers
- building inspectors
- judges.

You can complain about institutions that take care of public tasks. Examples of these are an unemployment fund and insurance institutions.

They pay compensation, benefits and pensions to people. If a municipality buys services from a private company, that also takes care of public tasks. A children's home may be a company of this kind.

Before you make a complaint, talk directly with the authority that has done something wrong. Talking may solve the problem, and then you do not need to make a complaint.

Who can you not make a complaint about?

You can only complain about authorities or people who have public tasks.

You cannot report an offence to the Parliamentary Ombudsman. You must report an offence to the police.

You cannot complain to the Ombudsman about the Parliament, Members of the Parliament or the Chancellor of Justice of the Government. One of the Chancellor of Justice's tasks is to make sure that the Government and the President follow the law.

You cannot complain to the Ombudsman about foreign authorities. You can only complain about Finnish authorities.

You cannot complain to the Ombudsman about international organisations.

You cannot complain to the Ombudsman about ideological organisations. These include sports clubs or political parties.

The following are examples of companies and people that you cannot complain to the Ombudsman about:

- banks or businesses
- housing companies
- solicitors or private doctors
- ordinary people.

What can a complaint be about?

The law says what the Parliamentary Ombudsman can and cannot investigate. The Parliamentary Ombudsman will not investigate a complaint if it does not belong to the Ombudsman.

You can make a complaint when an authority does not follow the law.

For example, the authorities break the law if

- they violate people's fundamental rights or human rights
- they do something that they do not have the right to do
- they use their rights wrongfully
- they do their work very slowly or do not give proper reasons for their decisions.

Authorities can not be careless in their work or behave badly. Authorities must also give the customers advice so that the customers know how to do things right.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman will not investigate a complaint about something that happened

more than two years ago unless the case is very serious. The Ombudsman will not investigate a complaint if a court is dealing with the case at the same time. The Ombudsman will not investigate a complaint if the matter is not resolved or if you can ask an authority to make a change.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman will not investigate a complaint if you do not put your name on it.

How does the Parliamentary Ombudsman investigate a complaint?

When the Ombudsman investigates a complaint, he will decide in every case if the authority has followed the law.

The Ombudsman also makes sure that fundamental rights and basic rights are respected.

When the Ombudsman investigates a complaint, he contacts the authority to inform that someone has complained. He asks for reports and other information from the authorities. He may order inspectors or the police to investigate the matter.

The authorities have the right to give their opinion on what happened. At the same time, they always get to know who has complained about them.

Complaints are usually public. However, information about the health or social benefits of the person who complained are secret.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman can ask some other authority to start investigating the complaint if this is necessary. In that case, he will tell the person who complained that the case has been taken over by somebody else.

What happens after you make a complaint?

This depends on what the Ombudsman finds out when he investigates the matter.

If somebody is guilty of an offence, he may bring charges. He may give the authority a reprimand if the authority has done its work badly or not followed the law. The Ombudsman can tell the authority what they should have done according to the law.

The Ombudsman may also tell them what good governance should be like or how they can implement the rights of the person who complained.

He may also ask that the authorities correct a mistake or make it up to the customer.

If the Ombudsman finds out that the authorities are doing something wrong, he can ask them to change the way they do it.

The Ombudsman cannot change decisions that the authorities have made.

He cannot change a decision that a court has made.

He cannot take up questions that have to be proven or decided by a court. The Ombudsman cannot do anything about an authority's work if the authority has followed the law and has not done anything wrong. The Ombudsman cannot order anyone to pay compensation for damages. The Ombudsman cannot give advice on legal questions.

**Detach the
complaint
form here**



HAVE YOU ALREADY COMPLAINED
ABOUT THIS MATTER TO SOMEBODY ELSE? *

☐

YES

☐

NO

WHICH AUTHORITY HAVE YOU TOLD ABOUT IT?

WHEN DID YOU DO IT?

DID YOU ALREADY RECEIVE A DECISION IN
THIS MATTER? *

☐

YES

☐

NO

DATE *

SIGNATURE *

You can send in all papers, decisions and documents that support your complaint. You can send them as mail or e-mail.
Our address: Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman, 00102 Eduskunta. E-mail: oikeusasiamies@eduskunta.fi

When you send in material that contains confidential or sensitive information by e-mail, you should use a secure connection.
Secure e-mail: <https://turvaposti.eduskunta.fi>. Recipient: oikeusasiamies@eduskunta.fi

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WHAT HAPPENED?

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PLEASE TURN OVER



PARLIAMENTARY OMBUDSMAN OF FINLAND

COMPLAINT TO THE PARLIAMENTARY OMBUDSMAN

Fill in all the sections marked with a star (*). Explain why you want to make a complaint. Explain why you think the authorities did something wrong or did not follow the law. If you do not have enough space, you can write more on another piece of paper.

You can send in all papers, decisions and documents that support your complaint. If you are complaining about an authority's decision, send in the decision or a copy of it with the complaint. The Parliamentary Ombudsman will send these papers back to you later.

FAMILY NAME *

FIRST NAME *

ADDRESS *

ZIP CODE *

TOWN *

DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER

FAX

E-MAIL

WHICH AUTHORITY DO YOU THINK DID SOMETHING WRONG? *

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.....

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.....

.....

WHEN AND WHERE?

.....

WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO TELL?

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.....

WHY DO YOU THINK THAT THE AUTHORITY'S ACTIONS OR DECISION WERE AGAINST THE LAW? *

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HOW DO YOU MAKE A COMPLAINT?

If you want to make a complaint, you can write a letter to the Ombudsman. In the letter you can explain in your own words what happened.

You can also make a complaint by filling in the complaint form. You can find the form in this brochure.

You can also find the complaint form on the Internet on the Ombudsman's website. The address is *www.oikeusiamies.fi*.

To discuss a possible complaint, please call on (0)9 4321.

Remember to say in the complaint which authority you are complaining about. Also tell us what you think is against the law. Explain why you think it is against the law or wrong.

The complaint must have the name and address of the person who is complaining.

If you do not put your name in the complaint, the Ombudsman will not investigate it. It also helps if the complaint has the telephone number and e-mail address of the person making it.

Attaching documents to a complaint and sending them to the Ombudsman

When you send a complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman, attach to it copies of decisions and documents. They will give the Ombudsman more information about the situation.

You can send the complaint to the Ombudsman by post, by fax or by e-mail. The Ombudsman will let you know when he has received your complaint.

There is no charge for investigating a complaint. Investigating a complaint may take a lot of time. The Ombudsman tries to investigate all complaints in less than a year.

A decision on a complaint

When the Ombudsman makes a decision on a complaint, he will tell the person who made the complaint about it. At the same time, the Ombudsman will return the papers that this person has sent to him.

If you have sent the Ombudsman more information by e-mail, it will not be sent back to you.

The Ombudsman explains some of his important decisions on his website. The Ombudsman may also tell the media about his decisions. Even so, he will not publish anyone the name of the person who made the complaint. He will also not tell the media any secret information.

WHAT ARE FUNDAMENTAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS?

When the Ombudsman investigates complaints, he considers if fundamental rights and human rights have been respected in the case.

The people in Finland are protected by laws. Some of the most important laws are about fundamental rights in Finland, fundamental rights of the European Union and international human rights.

Every person has fundamental rights. They are rights that are stated in the Constitution of Finland.

They are basic values that are important for everyone.

The fundamental rights protect each person's freedom. The government, municipalities or authorities may not take away a person's freedom.

An example of fundamental rights is that everyone has the right to life.

Everyone has the right to personal freedom and integrity. Everyone has the freedom to move and to protect his or her private life.

Everyone has the freedom of speech and the freedom of taking part in meetings and being a member of an association.

Everyone's property is protected. This means that you cannot take or destroy things that belong to another person.

The fundamental rights include economic rights, social rights and cultural rights. Examples of these are the right to work and social security and the right to education.

The Constitution also protects equality.

The Constitution contains the right to take part in elections.

The Constitution gives every Finnish citizen the right to use his or her own language.

The Constitution also protects the environment.

Every Finnish person has legal protection. It means that the laws protect their rights.

The fundamental rights defined by the European Union also belong to Finnish people.

The European Union has a Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The Charter explains what people's fundamental rights are. The Member States of the European Union and their authorities must comply with the fundamental rights.

Human rights belong to everyone. They are stated in international human rights treaties. The Finnish Government has promised to make sure that all Finnish citizens and everyone living in Finland have these rights.

The purpose of human rights is to make sure that everyone can have a life where they are treated with respect.

WHAT IS GOOD GOVERNANCE?

When the Ombudsman investigates complaints, he also checks for good governance. Everyone has a fundamental right to good governance. Everyone has the right to have good governance.

It is part of good governance that the authorities treat everyone fairly. The authorities must not take sides. The authorities must also do their work carefully and right, and their work must not take too long.

An example of good governance is that the authorities answer any appropriate questions that people may have. The authorities listen to the customer in a matter that concerns him or her. The authorities let the customer speak his or her mother tongue. The authorities also give the reasons for their decisions.

You can find more information about good governance in the Administrative Procedure Act.

CONTACT DETAILS

MAILING ADDRESS

Parliamentary Ombudsman
00102 Eduskunta

VISITING ADDRESS

Office of the Parliamentary
Ombudsman Arkadiankatu 3,
Helsinki
(Annex to the Parliament,
Pikkuparlamentti)
Opening hours Mon – Fri
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

TELEPHONE

(0)9 4321 (telephone exchange of
the Parliament)

E-MAIL

oikeusasiat@eduskunta.fi

SECURE E-MAIL

When you send in material that
contains confidential or sensitive
information by e-mail, you
should use a secure connection.

secure e-mail:

<https://turvaposti.eduskunta.fi>

recipient:

oikeusasiat@eduskunta.fi

FAX

(0)9 432 2268

WEBSITE

www.oikeusasiat.fi

CUSTOMER SERVICE

To discuss a possible complaint,
please call on (0)9 4321.

If you have already made
a complaint, you can call us and
ask if it has been investigated yet.
In that case, telephone the
Registry. The number is
(0)9 432 3381.

If you need more information
about the Parliamentary
Ombudsman, you can ask
the Information Officer. The
Information Officer's number is
(0)9 432 3352.

