

# How Finland became Finland

Over the course of time, Finland has developed into a proactive Nordic welfare state characterised by equality, social safety networks and equal opportunities for all.



5000BCE

The settlement of Finland begins.



1155

Finland becomes part of the Swedish realm, through a crusade.



1640

The first university in Finland.



1809

Sweden loses Finland to the Russian Empire after a war.



1812

The capital of Finland is moved from Turku to Helsinki.



1848

Later chosen as the Finnish national anthem, Our Land is first performed on May 13.



1849

The national epic The Kalevala is published.

More than 10,000 years ago, northern Europe was covered by ice that was believed to have formed 110,000 years earlier. When the ice finally retreated, people begin to arrive in the area that now is Finland. Regional rulers and administrative organisations were typical of the following eras. Key sources of livelihood included hunting and fishing, as well as international trade, even with faraway countries.

Christianity reached Finland from the east and the west. Perhaps as early as in 900, Christi-

anity prevailed in a significant portion of southern Finland. Beginning in the 12th century, crusades from Sweden sealed the faith of Finns. The force of the cross and the sword integrated Finland into Sweden and Catholic Europe for over 600 years.

The Reformation began in Sweden and Finland in the early 16th century. It was followed by religious wars in the 17th century that involved Sweden, including Finns. Sweden and Russia had battled over the location of their border for centuries. The wars with Russia did not end until Sweden

lost the Finnish War in 1808–1809. Finland became a Grand Duchy under Russian rule, but retained its earlier legislation and administration.

Finland was part of the Russian Empire for more than 100 years. This marked an era of progress, particularly during the last decades. Finland developed from the eastern periphery of Sweden into an autonomous and the most highly developed part of Russia. Finland established a parliament and adopted its own currency under Russian rule. Its business and industry developed.



**1860**

Finland adopts its own currency, markka, which is replaced by euro in 1999.



**1866**

A national school system, independent of the Church, was set up.



**1899**

Jean Sibelius composes the widely known tone poem, Finlandia.



**1906**

A unicameral parliament, Finland becomes the first country in the world to grant full political rights to women.



**1917**

Finland gains independence from Russia.



**1918**

The Finnish Civil War from January to May. The flag of Finland is officially confirmed.



**1920**

The first childcareclinics are established.

The publication of *The Kalevala* in 1849 was probably the most important event in terms of national identity. The Kalevala is an extensive heroic epic based on folklore. It gave Finland a history and was a source of inspiration for artists, composers and authors. Composer **Jean Sibelius**, poet **Eino Leino** and painters **Akseli Gallen-Kallela** and **Albert Edelfelt**, among many others, created the Golden Age of Finnish Art — the cultural core of Finland — in the late 19th century. The Kalevala also inspired the idea of independence. Finns put

up resistance when Russia arbitrarily began to change the laws of Finland and otherwise subdue the country in the late 19th and the early 20th century. In northern Europe, the World War I ended with the collapse of the Russian Empire and the independence of Finland in 1917.

#### INDEPENDENT FINLAND

The Finnish Civil War broke out in early 1918. The Reds wanted to maintain close ties with Soviet Russia. The Whites supported Finnish independ-

ence for nationalistic and political reasons. The war divided Finland into two camps for decades.

The first years of Finnish independence mainly marked a period of development and growth. Significant reforms included the establishment of childcareclinics in the 1920s. Expecting and young mothers were included in public health care services, and the infant mortality rate declined steeply. Around the same time, the elementary school system reached even the remotest parts of the country, and school attendance became



1921

The League of Nations affirms that the Åland Islands is an autonomous part of Finland.



1938

Maternity Grants Act enters into force, first maternity packages given to new mothers.



1939

The Winter War against the Soviet Union breaks out.



1943

Writer-illustrator Tove Jansson draws the first version of the Moomintroll.



1948

Free, healthy lunch offered for every student in Finnish schools.



1952

Helsinki Summer Olympics.



1964

Textile artist Maija Isola designs the Unikko "poppy" flower print for Marimekko.

compulsory. During the great land reform, the landless population in the countryside was provided with arable land to dismantle class structures.

The two wars in 1939–1944 disrupted the favourable development. The Winter War broke out after the Soviet Union attacked Finland. Despite its superior enemy, Finland remained independent. The Continuation War broke out in 1941 after Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Finland made peace with the Soviet Union in 1944 and repelled the German troops from its territory. As a result of

the two wars, Finland lost a significant portion of its total area. The population of the areas ceded to the Soviet Union was moved to Finland, meaning that the country needed to resettle more than 400,000 people. It was an extensive undertaking.

After the war, Finland began to develop into an industrial nation. The country remained a democracy. Its heavy war reparations turned out to be a blessing in disguise: Finland had to create many industries, particularly the metal industry, practically from scratch.

### FINLAND IN THE WORLD

Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland founded the Nordic Council in 1952 to facilitate cooperation. Finland joined the Nordic Council in 1955, after international tension had eased. The countries agreed on the Nordic Passport Union and a joint labour market.

The year 1952 was a time of great changes — a new beginning. Finland had paid its heavy war reparations and the Helsinki Summer Olympics attracted visitors from all over the world.





1991

World's first GSM call is made in Finland.



1995

Finland joins the European Union.



1996

The Sámi Parliament of Finland is officially called Sámediggi. Above the Sámi flag.



2000

Tarja Halonen is elected as the first female president of Finland.



2008

Martti Ahtisaari, former president of Finland, wins the Nobel Peace Prize.



2017

Equal Marriage Act grants same-sex couples the right to marriage and enables adoption.



2035

Finland's target year to reach carbon neutrality.

Trade with the Soviet Union provided significant financial benefits. Finland imported raw materials, oil in particular, and exported industrial products. Finland also systematically strengthened its ties with the West. It joined the United Nations in 1955 and became an associate member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1961 and a full member in 1986. Finland entered into a free trade agreement with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. This trend culminated in Finland joining the European Union in 1995.

#### MODERN FINLAND

Cooperation between private enterprises and the public sector is highly typical of Finland, as is a strong third-sector input. Organisations play an important role, particularly in health care and recreation, and many significant foundations operate in the fields of science and culture.

Finland's economy has benefitted from industrial peace: employee and employer organisations have been able to agree on difficult issues. Finland is a Nordic country with strong political and

cultural ties with the other Nordic countries. It is a European democracy, a member of the European Union and an active member of the United Nations.

For decades, Finns have participated in peacekeeping operations and conflict resolution all over the world. **Martti Ahtisaari**, a former president of Finland, won the Nobel Peace Prize for his conflict resolution work. In 1988, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces, including around 20,000 Finns.

**2019 Finland made history:**

Women leading every party in the coalition government.

**Sanna Marin 34**  
Social Democratic Party  
Prime Minister

**Anna-Maija Henriksson 55**  
Swedish Peoples Party of  
Finland



**Maria Ohisalo 34**  
Green League

**Li Andersson 32**  
Left Alliance

**Annika Saarikko 36**  
Centre Party