



Legal Basis



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In terms of legislation, the following acts have provided the most support for openness and public participation in governance: the amended Constitution, the Act on the Openness of Government Activities, the Administrative Procedure Act and the Local Government Act.

- › **Section 2** of the Finnish Constitution emphasises the importance of citizen participation: “Democracy entails the right of the individual to participate in and influence the development of society and his or her living conditions.”
- › **The Act on the Openness of Government Activities** provides for the right of citizens and media to access official documents. As a rule, such documents have been defined as public unless specific grounds exist for keeping them confidential. In addition, pursuant to this act, authorities are obliged to provide information actively.
- › **The Administrative Procedure Act** emphasises citizens’ rights to receive information from authorities and to offer their opinion on matters that have general and wide-ranging effects. When the purpose of the administrative Procedure Act was defined, the focus was on openness and good data management practices in administration, but particular attention was also paid to citizens’ opportunities to influence the use of public power and to monitor the realisation of their rights and benefits and the use of public funds.
- › **Pursuant to the Local Government Act**, municipalities are obliged to ensure that local residents have the opportunity to participate and have a say in the operations of their municipality.

In addition, various areas of specific legislation (such as the Youth Act) lay down certain obligations with regard to openness and participation.