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COUNTRY REPORT 2024 OF THE FINNISH BAR ASSOCIATION

The Finnish Bar Association would like to provide the following information regarding its work and legal developments in Finland from the previous year.

1. Change of name, logo & brand for the Finnish Bar Association

As is visible from also from the header of this document, the Finnish Bar Association has changed its Finnish and Swedish name from Suomen Asianajaliitto / Finlands Advokatförbund. Since 1.1.2025 we have been called Suomen Asianajajat / Finska Advokater. However the English name “The Finnish Bar Association” remains unchanged. The name change will sharpen the role of Finnish Bar alongside the other actors in the administration of justice, such as National Courts Administration, the Prosecutor's Office and the pre-trial and enforcement authorities with the key message that the Finnish Bar is an independent regulatory & supervisory organization founded by public law – not the interest organization for attorneys-at-law but one of the irreplaceable player for the administration of justice and the rule of law in Finland.

2. Working Group on Safeguarding the Independence of the Judiciary

After the first ever Governmental report on administration on justice was published in 2022 a new working group “Guarantees of the rule of law and the development of the judiciary” was formed. One of the subgroups of the working group is tasked with introducing new legislative safeguards for the judiciary as a whole by proposing amendments to the Finnish constitution. These amendments would secure and safeguard also the independent prosecutors and attorneys-at-law as well as the regulatory entity, Finnish Bar Association, in the constitutional level.

Regarding the future constitutional amendments the Bar Association has proposed the following:

- 1) the inclusion of attorneys-at-law in the Constitution
- 2) recognition of the status of the Bar in accordance with Article 124 of the PL; and
- 3) the protection of legal professional privilege at constitutional level.

The Finnish Bar Association is represented both in the working group and in the referred subgroup. In the beginning of March 2025 the working group will also be setting up 31 different project groups, which will carry out deeper analysis on the chosen development areas and the goal is that this would lead to legislative initiatives for the next governmental program of Finland (2027 onwards).

3. The Geographical and Demographic Challenges Need Attention – New Professorship on Advocacy and Enhanced Cooperation with the Law Faculties Introduced

It is becoming increasingly evident also in Finland that the rural areas and countryside for our large country are the “losers” of the urbanization trend that strongly continues. In the end of the year 2024 65.5 % of attorneys-at-law in Finland were concentrated in the Helsinki/Uusimaa-region with the number of young lawyers outside the big growth centers continuously decreasing. Simultaneously it can't be overlooked that our population – including among attorneys-at-law – is aging rapidly. For example, a study report conducted during spring of 2024 revealed that at 2031 another 17% of the current membership of the Finnish Bar Association will reach the normal age for pension. Even currently 11 % of attorneys-at-law have already reached the age where they would be eligible for pension.

As a result of the challenges described above, the Finnish Bar Association has been increasing its cooperation with universities and law faculties all around the country in order to better reach and educate the possible future attorneys-at-law.

We have agreed on a new professorship of practice on advocacy in the University of Helsinki, and there is a new professor of practice is a very experienced attorney who starts to teach advocacy and attorney legislation in Helsinki University but also giving lessons in other law faculties in Finland. Additionally, we have several attorneys nominated as professors of practice in other Universities (University of Turku and University of Lapland), and we are a party of new law students' introductory period for new law students in all law schools, where we go to present both the tasks of an independent bar association as well as the work of a lawyer for new law students.

4. Two cases and a new regulation on legal aid fees – work for a sufficient level of fee continues

In late 2024 from the Finnish Supreme Court gave a preliminary [ruling](#) concerning the level of legal aid fee paid to private practitioners for legal aid cases. In its ruling the Supreme Court stated that the Article 6 of the Government regulation on the basis of which legal aid fees are to be paid, which provides for an hourly fee of EUR 110, couldn't be applied on the basis of Article 107 of the Constitution. The Court found that because the fee paid to the defender on the basis of the provision of the Decree would not have been reasonable as required by Article 17 of the Legal Aid Act, the regulation can't be applied. In the same case, the court ruled that the fee of 130 eur/hour, which the attorney in question had demanded from the court, was reasonable for the case and ordered this amount to be compensated to the private practitioner.

Unfortunately, soon after this, on 11.12.2024 the Supreme Administrative Court gave a contrary [ruling](#) (although in administrative case and involving a licensed trial counsel, not an attorney). In this judgement the Supreme Administrative Court held that there were no grounds for not applying the hourly rate of legal aid provided for in the Council of State Decree on the basis of Article 107 of the Constitution.

This situation has led to a chaotic legal order, where the level of remuneration for legal aid cases was not uniform but varies from court to court and even from judge to judge. Due to the legal uncertainty, the Finnish Ministry of Justice gave a new regulation that raised the level to EUR 120 per hour. The new regulation was heavily criticized by the Bar Association, as well as by the majority of the courts, including both supreme courts and other judicial actors, as it fails to comply with the legal framework set by the Supreme Court in its judgment. It has only been approximately a month since the new regulation entered into force, but there are already multiple verdicts, where the courts have not followed the level of 120 set by the new regulation as it fails to comply with the Supreme Court's 2024 verdict. Latest addition came from the Eastern Finland Court of Appeals, which gave a unanimous [plenary judgement](#) signed by 23 judges on 21.2.2025. In its judgement the Court confirmed that the level of reasonable fee in civil courts should still be the 130 EUR as the Supreme Court has so indicated in the 2024 judgement.



The Finnish Bar sees that the level of legal aid fee is still completely insufficient and needs to be raised at least to the level set by the Supreme court verdict and we also propose an addition of a mechanism that would ensure that the level of the legal aid fee will be examined more frequently. The Ministry of Justice has informed that a legislative changes are in process in order to correct the situation however it remains unclear what this will mean in practice.

5. National legal policy field remains very active – Criminal justice and immigration reforms ongoing

In its national legal policy the Finnish Bar has remained “fully employed” due to the current governments policy agenda. During the whole 2024 the current Orpo’s government continued to push through multiple legislative proposals and initiatives in the field criminal law with the general direction leading towards harder and longer sentences, quicker and easier processes and putting more processual responsibility towards the parties themselves in also criminal cases. There has even been a memorandum on the possibility of introducing preclusion to criminal proceedings, which would be unprecedented in the Finnish legal system.

In the field of migration and asylum the government has made multiple simultaneous legislative projects which aim to make the Finnish “asylum” process “faster and more efficient” as well as to tighten the requirements for gaining the Finnish citizenship and resident permits.

Generally the Finnish Bar sees that the legislative proposals in these fields lack proper impact assessments and may therefore lead to unexpected circumstances. Simultaneously in many cases they do not properly consider basic and fundamental rights of the accused or detained persons nor immigrants/asylum seekers. It is also very clear, that the legislator is unwilling to hear what various experts, NGO’s and other interest groups state, if what is stated is against the political goals.

In Jul 2024 the Finnish Parliament adopted the so-called legislation on temporary measures to combat instrumentalized migration (the “pushback legislation”). In this case it was deemed extremely worrying, that despite the legislation being in clear contradiction with Finland's fundamental and human rights obligations, such as the absolute ban on refoulement, the proposal was passed in Parliament. The temporary legislation reached the end of its validity in the summer of 2025 and therefore there is already new proposal to keep the legislation in force. However none of the issues brought up by the Finnish Bar and various other actors are addressed in the new proposal as it remains unchanged from the one that was passed in 2024.

According to media information, the legislation is currently being reviewed by the Commission but there is still no further information on what is the Commissions point of view in the matter

In Helsinki, 25 February 2025

Eero-Pekka Uotila
President of the Finnish Bar Association

6. Statistics

Member statistics (31.12.2024)

Altogether number of members: **2359** (2023: 2300)

- men **61 %** (63 %)
- women **39 %** (37 %)

Of new members

- men **38 %** (45 %)
- women **62 %** (55 %)

Working as

- an attorney in private sector **96 %**
- as a legal aid attorney in public sector **4 %**

Age groups:

- 30:	2 % (2023: 1 %)
30 -37:	22 % (2023: 22%)
38-45:	24 % (2023: 23 %)
46-53:	20 % (2023: 21 %)
54-62:	16 % (2023: 17 %)
63 - :	16 % (2023: 16 %)

Number of law firms: **742** (2023: 746)

Of which were new firms: **29** (2023: 12)

Membership fee: **1252 €** (of which 280 EUR is considered a “supervisory fee”)

Members disbarred: **1**

Legislative Involvement in 2023:

The Finnish Bar Association’s judicial policy statements are drawn up by our 19 teams of legal experts. The members of the teams are attorneys and also frequently heard by Parliament on legislative amendment projects. The teams include roughly **150 attorneys** as experts of various substances of law.

- legal opinions given: **62** (2023:54)
- legal expert hearings attended: **32** (2023:32)
- new committee nominations made: **19** (2023:22)
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In 2023 the Finnish Bar Association made four legislative initiatives:

- Initiative to amend the Income Tax Act
- initiative on the centralisation of tax matters in administrative courts
- an initiative to amend legal expenses insurances

- an initiative to increase legal aid fees

Disciplinary Matters:

Number of complaints at the Disciplinary Committee in 2023: **570** complaints (2022: 573) of which **465** disciplinary matters (2022: 483) and **105** fee disputes (2022: 90)

- Complaints on attorneys: **367** (2021: 314)
- Complaints on licensed legal counsels: **82** (2021: 75)
- Complaints on public legal attorneys: **34** (2021: 27)

Resolutions:

In all matters: **623** (2023: 699)

- Disciplinary matters: **526**
 - o No sanctions: **319** (2023: 364) no consequences **2** (2023: 17)
 - o Admonishment **124** (2023: 130), warning **27** (2023: 51), fine **5** (2021: 3), disbarment: **3** (2023: 12*), cancellation of license: **0** (2023: 0)
 - o Inadmissible/question on applicability: **46** (2023: 58)
- Fee disputes: **97** (2023: 105)
 - o No sanctions: **73** (2023: 76)
 - o Fee decrease: **12** (2023: 19)
 - o Inadmissible: question on applicability/withdraw: **12** (2023: 10)

* Two attorneys, multiple cases.

The office of the Finnish Bar Association (as of 1 September 2024):

Staff altogether: **28** (2023: 29)