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Marriage in Finland

The registrars of the local register offices carry out civil marriage ceremonies. The marriage ceremony can be short and no-frills, but can also include live music and poetry readings.

At least two witnesses must be present at any marriage ceremony. A church blessing can be carried out in addition to the civil ceremony if agreed upon with a church parish.

An investigation is carried out prior to a marriage in order to ensure that there is no reason why the marriage may not be carried out. The investigation can be carried out either by the local register office or an appropriate church parish.

The certificate of no impediment must be left at the local register office prior to the marriage. In addition, the bride and groom must inform the local register office of the surname or surnames they plan on using.

A successful marriage ceremony requires planning. Make sure to contact the local register office well before you plan on getting married.

Investigation of impediments to marriage

Prior to a marriage, potential reasons preventing the marriage are investigated. The purpose of investigating the potential reasons for preventing a marriage is to ensure that there is nothing preventing the marriage. The investigation can be carried out either by the registry or the Evangelical Lutheran Church or the Orthodox Church to which at least one of the potential spouses belongs. The investigation request must be presented in writing.

The Investigation Request Form is available from the registry. The certificate of the investigation of the impediments to marriage are returned no earlier than seven days from the date upon which the request was submitted. The certificate is valid for a period of four months. The certificate must be left at the local register office prior to the marriage.

When a name changes as the result of a marriage

When spouses chose to share a joint surname, one or the other's name changes. A person's name also changes if he or she decides to use a former name in a hyphenated name.

A couple may notify the local register office of any possible change in surname prior to the marriage by filling out the Notification of the Choice of Surname Form. Following the marriage, the name change is registered in the Population Information System. Both the state and municipal authorities will automatically be informed of the name change.

Most banks, insurance companies and store chains maintain their own customer registers with the help of the Population Information System.

Marriage of foreigners

Before the marriage ceremony an investigation is carried out concerning possible impediments to marriage. This investigation must be requested at the latest one week before the marriage ceremony.

If one of the spouses is a foreigner, this investigation of possible impediments may last several weeks, so it's advisable to start the process in good time.

For the foreigner a statement of marital status from his/her home country is required, or alternatively a statement regarding the foreigner's marital status may be obtained from his/her home country's accredited embassy or consulate in Finland.

The statement of marital status must be authenticated in accordance with the Marriage Decree. The only exceptions to this authentication requirement are those statements issued by officials of Nordic Countries, and those issued by accredited embassies and consulates in Finland.

If required, the statement of marital status must be translated, and if the translation is carried out abroad then the translation must also be authenticated.

Impediments to marriage are investigated primarily by means of the information available in the population register. If the foreign citizen is living permanently in Finland and the required information for investigating impediments to marriage (marital status) is recorded in the Finnish population register, then no statement from a home country official is required. In this situation the impediments to marriage are therefore investigated using only the information from the population register.

If the Finnish fiancé is recorded as non-resident in Finland, he/she must obtain from the officials of his/her country of residence a statement of marital status.



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About Local Register Offices

Local register offices are local state administrative authorities. There are 11 local register offices in Finland.

The operational area of each local register office is comprised of one or more jurisdictional districts. In addition, the local register offices have a number of service units in order to ensure that its services are as available to the public as possible. The offices provide also national consumer advisory services since 2009.

Part of the local register offices operate as departments of jurisdictional districts and some as their own separate bureaux. In the Åland Islands, the State Department of Åland is responsible for carrying out the same tasks.

Local register offices assignments

The local register offices are responsible for maintaining their regional Population Information System and their local information services, as well as for acting as both the local authority handling Trade Register and the Register of Associations matters and the guardianship authority.

Other services offered by the local register offices include notary public services, the investigation of impediments to marriage and performances of civil marriages, name changes and the confirmation of the list of parties to estate inventories.

Population bookkeeping

In terms of population bookkeeping, the history of the tasks carried out by the local register offices extends back to the year 1544, when a local organisation responsible for the drafting of a population register was established.

An annual census has been carried out in Finland since 1634. The Trade Register has been handled since 1895, and the Register of Associations since 1919. District registrars have acted as notary publics since 1961, and as marrying authorities since 1969. The most recently assigned tasks are the boat register and guardianship functions in 1999.

Visit the Register Offices official web page <http://www.maistraatti.fi>



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