

Euro-Scepticism Is Here to Stay: Finnish Election Results

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Eurocrisis in the
Press

By [Outi Keränen](#)

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The result of Sunday's parliamentary elections in Finland reflects the continuing appeal of the Euro-Sceptic Finns Party, but also the more pronounced division of the country's electorate into urban liberals and rural conservatives.

The elections came at a time when the country's economy is stagnating and consensus within the Conservative-Social Democratic government on the cure for such malaise and on other major political decisions (most notably, the health and social service reform) has been virtually absent. Both parties saw their popular support declining, as the past year was marked by infighting and lack of trust between the coalition partners. The elections signalled a wider discomfort with the left; alongside SDP, the Left Alliance lost two seats in the parliament and was overtaken by Greens as the most popular small party.

The main opposition party, the Centre Party, has achieved a clear victory. Headed by a popular leader, Juha Sipilä, much of the party's support base is in rural areas and in the north of the country. The Centre Party's election campaign was based on policy proposals such as cutting public borrowing and promoting economic growth through entrepreneurship.

The most important story of the election is, however, the success of the Finns Party (formerly known as True Finns). The Euro-sceptic Finns Party made significant gains already in the previous 2011 elections on the back of the Euro zone bailout packages. At that time, their support increased by 15%, making them the third most popular faction in the country. If one doubted whether their popularity was merely a short-term fad given the [lower than expected vote share the 2014 EU elections](#), Sunday's elections proved doubters wrong. With 38 seats in the parliament and 17.6 % of the vote, the Finns Party became the second biggest in the country. The Finns Party have successfully transformed themselves into a key player within the Finnish political architecture.

A closer look at the Finns Party's support reflects, as an editorial in [a leading Finnish daily](#) aptly points out, the growing division of the country into conservative voters in rural areas/small towns, and urban, liberal voters. It is remarkable that support for [Keskusta and Finns Party in Helsinki](#) was significantly lower than the national result, while much of the Greens' support base is in the capital. This raises questions about the perceived winners and losers from European integration and immigration. Such questions are not of course unique to Finland, as the success of UKIP in Britain has demonstrated.

Although the official coalition negotiations under Juha Sipilä's lead will not commence until next week, centre-right government seems to be a likely outcome. Trade unions are keen to see Social Democrats in the governing coalition, but given the party's weak performance in the polls, many of its members reportedly prefer the opposition. On the other hand, the Finns Party favours a coalition with SDP over the pro-EU National Coalition Party, a factor which may change the coalition negotiation dynamics.

In any event, the Finns Party's participation in the new government is highly likely. This makes the election result interesting from the point of view of the Eurozone politics. As the second biggest party in terms of number of seats, the Finns Party's leader Timo Soini is a strong candidate for the Minister of Finance post in the new government. If



this will be the case, then an even more uncompromising position on the Eurozone bailout packages can be expected from Helsinki.

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