



Since the beginning of March, Finns have had a new form of participation on the state level - a citizen's initiative. The initiative may be organized by one, or several, Finnish citizens who are entitled to vote. If they manage to collect 50,000 signatures supporting the initiative within six months, Parliament is obliged to consider it.

The first issue to unite Finns politically, geographically and socially was the question of the fur industry. The initiative "fur farm free Finland" by four environmental and animal rights organizations was signed by close to 70,000 supporters and their message was clear: people want to ban fur farming in Finland altogether.

"This is a historic moment for Finnish democracy. We hope that Parliament will take this citizen's initiative seriously, because it is the first of its kind. It is clear that fur farming will end in Finland sooner or later" said Leo Stranius, head of The Finnish Nature League.

Even though all those who supported the campaign were excited over its success, it seems unlikely that Parliament would pass a law banning the fur industry. The Finnish newspaper Huvudsatdsbladet asked all 200 members of the Finnish Parliament how they would vote on the issue if the voting were to be organized today. 102 said that they are against the ban, only 13 supported it, 14 had not made up their mind and 71 choose not to reply.

To support new citizen's initiatives, Finns launched a project for crowdsourced legislation, The Open Ministry. On the ministry's webpage everyone can share their ideas and propose new laws. Ideas vary from establishing basic income to legalizing cannabis and changing taxation. At the moment even the most popular ideas are supported by only a few hundred, so it will still take some time before another citizen's initiative is presented to Parliament. Yet encouraging people to participate has already strengthened democracy and what works in Finland might also work in other countries.