



INTERNSHIP REPORT AND SUMMARY

Identification of the participant

Surname: Flot

First name: Julia

Nationality: French

Seniority: 18 months

Identification of the internship

Host jurisdiction: Supreme Administrative Court of Finland

Town/city: Helsinki

Country: Finland

Dates of the internship: 1 week (18 to 22 May 2026)

SUMMARY

This internship allowed me to gain an insight into the workings of the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland as a senior administrative judge, through numerous discussions with my colleagues and by attending hearings, as well as giving me a broader understanding of the country's administrative and judicial systems through visits to various courts.



Thanks

I would like to thank all the members of the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland who gave me such a warm welcome throughout this week-long internship, and in particular Mr K. K, President of the Court, Ms J. R, Secretary General, Ms A. S. and Ms M. H., Associate Judges who organised my internship, and Ms I. W., Administrative Secretary, as well as all the judges and associate judges with whom I had the opportunity to speak, both at the Supreme Administrative Court and in the other courts we visited.

I would particularly like to thank them for teaching me so much about how the Finnish Supreme Administrative Court operates, and for taking the trouble to introduce me to the other courts within the administrative system and the Supreme Court of Justice, thus providing me with a comprehensive overview of this judicial system.

I. The internship programme was as follows:

1. 18 May 2026:

- Welcome and introduction to the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland by the President of the Court;
- Visit to the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland;
- Presentation by an associate judge of the cases heard on 19 May 2026;
- Visit to the Supreme Court of Finland, the highest court in the judicial system, discussions with the President of the Court and a judge;

2. 19 May 2026:

- Attendance at a hearing of the Supreme Administrative Court (electoral law, procedure), in English and Finnish (panels of five judges and then three judges);
- Presentation by judges and legal secretaries of the Court on their duties;

3. 20 May 2026:

- Visit to Helsinki Administrative Court (court of first instance). Discussions with a Chamber President and judges;
- Visit to the Market Court, a court specialising in competition law, public procurement and intellectual property law. Discussions with the President of the Court and a judge;
- Presentation by an associate judge of the cases heard on 21 May 2026;

4. 21 May 2026:

- Attendance at a hearing of the Supreme Administrative Court (environmental law, town planning), in English and Finnish (panels of five judges and then three judges);
- Cultural event organised by the Supreme Administrative Court.

5. 22 May 2026:

- Presentation of the French Council of State to the judges and associate judges of the Court;
- Closing discussions at the end of the internship.

II. The host institution:

The Supreme Administrative Court of Helsinki was established in 1918, following the independence of Finland.

It has jurisdiction to hear disputes concerning the legality of administrative decisions. It is the court of last resort in the administrative hierarchy, which hears appeals against decisions made by the country's seven regional administrative courts (two levels of jurisdiction). It also has jurisdiction at first instance, for example where the contested decisions were taken by the Finnish Council of State.

It comprises the President, 21 judges, 35 associate judges and 40 administrative staff, headed by the secretary general. It is divided into two chambers and delivers around 4,000 judgments a year.

The Court also performs advisory functions when it is asked to give an opinion on a draft text. It may also take up a matter on its own initiative in order to issue an opinion and make proposals for changes to legislation. However, this accounts for only a small proportion of the Court's work (25 to 30 opinions are issued each year).

III. The law of the host country, examined through a specific aspect:

As part of my internship, I had the opportunity to learn about Finland's administrative structure, which is highly decentralised, with local authorities enjoying a great deal of autonomy.

One of the hearings I attended concerned a case relating to the Åland Islands (6,500 islands situated between Finland and Sweden, with a population of 30,654), a Swedish-speaking region that enjoys a status of self-government guaranteed by the Finnish Constitution. It has its own parliament and government, and may, in certain areas, enact its own legislation, for example in relation to town planning or land use.

This territory has a specific legal framework. For example, the law applicable in the Åland Islands restricts access to land ownership in order to protect the Swedish-speaking local population and territorial autonomy. These specific aspects are recognised under European Union law.

In certain areas, this gives rise to a conflict of laws, raising the question of whether Finnish law or the local law of the Åland Islands should take precedence, and complex issues regarding the division of powers are thus brought before the Court.

IV. The comparative law aspect of the internship:

Generally speaking, it seems to me that, despite several notable differences between the French and Finnish court systems, our court systems are similar in that they both rely on essentially written proceedings, based on the exchange of written submissions between the parties.

In addition, the Court has a procedure for screening applications, which enables it to grant or refuse applications for leave to appeal at the initial stage. If it grants such leave, the case will be heard and the details communicated to the various parties, and the Court will give its ruling in a reasoned

decision. If it does not grant leave, the Court will issue a decision setting out brief reasons for refusing it. Leave is granted in fewer than 10% of cases. This screening procedure, which is common in supreme courts, is similar to our procedure for admitting appeals to the Court of Cassation.

One of the key differences to note is that, unlike the French Council of State, the Supreme Administrative Court is not a court of cassation, but rather an appellate court for decisions made by regional administrative courts, thereby acting as the second and final instance of jurisdiction in the case. Nevertheless, the screening procedure referred to above enables it to focus on its primary function, which is to establish legal precedents.

Furthermore, the written proceedings in Finland that I mentioned do not give rise to public hearings in the vast majority of cases, whereas this is always the case before the French Council of State. Thus, in recent years, an average of two to three public hearings have been held each year before the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland. Nevertheless, hearings are held on a regular basis to establish the facts in certain cases where this is necessary.

In addition, under the law, the Supreme Administrative Court comprises judges, who vote and deliberate, and associate judges, who prepare cases, whilst holding the status of full judges, with the same guarantees of independence as the former. We do not have such a model in France.

Moreover, collegiality is not practised in the same way. In the Council of State, voting is conducted by a panel and is secret; neither the result of the vote nor the opinion of each judge is disclosed in the decision. I was able to note that in the Finnish Supreme Administrative Court, the result of the vote is made public and judges who voted in the minority may publish a dissenting opinion. This option is also available to the associate judge who prepared the case, even if he or she does not vote. I had the opportunity to observe a case in which a disagreement led to one of the judges drafting such a dissenting opinion, which was very instructive.

Finally, Finland does not have a Constitutional Court. There is a committee within parliament responsible for reviewing the constitutionality of laws prior to their adoption, and the ordinary courts carry out a case-by-case review of constitutionality after the fact in cases brought before them.

These are, of course, just a few of the key points I noticed.

V. The European aspect of the internship:

During my discussions with the various people I met, as well as during my visit to Helsinki Administrative Court, we discussed the implementation of the European Pact on Asylum and Migration, comprising nine regulations and one directive, which comes into force on 12 June 2026.

As in France and many other European countries, the rapid entry into force of these provisions is a cause for concern, given that in both our countries, cases involving immigration account for around 40% of all applications filed with the administrative courts. We were able to discuss how to tackle common issues.

As I was finishing my internship report, a bill to amend Finnish law in this area was being debated in

parliament but had not yet been passed. Judges are wondering how this legislation will be implemented in practice.

I also had the opportunity to discuss with those I met the Remling judgment delivered on 24 March 2026 (Case C-767/23), in which the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that Article 267 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union precludes national legislation under which a national court of last instance may rule on a question concerning the interpretation or validity of a provision of EU law raised by one of the parties to the dispute by giving a summary statement of reasons for its decision, unless that court explains the specific reasons why it is refusing to refer the matter for a preliminary ruling.

As in France, the implementation of this decision prompted internal discussions within the Court to propose a wording that would meet the criteria set by the Court.

VI. The 'good practice' aspect within the jurisdiction visited:

As part of my internship, I attended a hearing of the chamber dealing with cases relating to environmental law and town planning, and spoke with the judges and associate judges sitting on the bench. One of the aspects that stood out to me was the handling of cases with a technical dimension, which struck me as particularly relevant at a time when most of Europe's supreme administrative courts are dealing with cases relating, in particular, to environmental litigation that is particularly complex to grasp, given the lack of specific training and technical expertise in these areas.

To ensure that the facts are established in cases relating to the environment, town planning or land use, Supreme Court judges regularly exercise their powers to visit sites and carry out on-site inspections in order to verify the material facts first-hand, as well as to conduct oral hearings of witnesses.

Finland also has a system based on the appointment of 'specialist judges'. Within the Supreme Court, there are eight judges specialising in environmental matters and four judges specialising in intellectual property, all appointed for a five-year term. They are experts in these fields who sit on the bench and vote during the deliberations on these cases in order to assist the court in reaching a decision. They hold the status of magistrates and enjoy the same guarantees of independence as other members of the Courts. The administrative courts of first instance also have 'expert judges' in other fields (for example, in cases relating to labour disputes, there are expert judges specialising in health or psychiatric assessment). It struck me that the contribution of this expertise, integrated into the Court, was particularly interesting, as this system guarantees the complete independence of the expertise within chambers, and allows it to be drawn upon at a very early stage in the preparation of the case.

VII. Benefits of the internship:

This internship enabled me to broaden my understanding of the various judicial systems in Europe and strengthened my interest in comparative law.

I also found it very useful and educational to spend time immersed in a country with a legal system





that is quite different from my own, for the reasons set out above. This internship thus gave me a better understanding of a legal culture different from my own, and of the advantages and disadvantages of the differences between them.

VIII. Suggestions:

The internship I undertook seemed perfectly suited to my needs as it stood. I was fortunate to benefit from a particularly rewarding internship programme, thanks to all the people I encountered, who took the time to explain their various roles to me and to introduce me to the Finnish judicial system as a whole. Consequently, I have no specific suggestions to make.

