

Finnish MEP – Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats– Position Paper

Committee: European Parliament – Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)

Delegation: Finnish MEP – Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats

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Topic One: Enlargement of the European Union – Yes, No, and How?

Finland has been a member of the European Union since 1995 and has always promoted its fundamental values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. As a Nordic country, Finland believes that strong welfare and social development place the EU in the position to promote common values by fostering sustainable economic growth. The discussion of EU enlargement has become notably important with recent geopolitical developments, especially in Eastern Europe and in the Western Balkans.

The EU enlargement has impacts on Finnish security, trade, and political influence. With the inclusion of countries with high levels of democracy, the EU enhances geopolitical influence and responds to regional instability at its eastern borders. Companies in Finland can economically benefit from having greater access to markets. Furthermore, Finland has experience in areas of governance, digitalization, and green technology. However, such enlargement could lead to some negative impacts, particularly to the cohesion within the EU. There is a need for careful integration in this regard to avoid economic disparities between the various member states.

Finland supports EU enlargement on the precondition that new members will strictly respect democratic and legal standards. Acceding countries should also pursue sound sustainable economic policies, have well-established institutions, and guarantee respect for human rights. It is in this respect that cohesion can be achieved with regional stability.

Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto highlighted that Finland welcomes all the efforts to integrate the Western Balkans and that EU enlargement is one of the most important tools for strengthening the Union and for enhancing democracy and stability.¹ The Finnish S&D MEPs stressed that accession policies must be responsible.²

Finland supports the EU candidate countries through technical assistance instruments, such as Twinning and TAIEX,³ which helps administrations align with EU standards and enhances public governance. The big challenge lies in their proper use and implementation.

Finland is committed to the Treaty on European Union, Articles 49 and 7, and takes part in the Copenhagen Criteria evaluations regarding the political, economic, and legal criteria for candidate states.⁴

Finland supports a structured EU enlargement process that combines a set of pre-accession and institution-building programs with mechanisms for evaluation to ensure accountability, democratic norms, and sustainability. Their goals are to ensure new members can fulfill the EU's legal and democratic requirements, enhance mechanisms for support, and remain committed to regional stability and security by using partnerships. In this process, Finland collaborates with Nordic countries, Germany, and France, as they forge a cautious but constructive approach through both engaging with candidate governments and fending off backlash and animosity from member states.⁵

¹ Pekka Haavisto, "EU:n laajentuminen on Suomen etu" ["EU Enlargement is in the Interests of Finland"], Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 9 July 2019, https://um.fi/current-affairs/-/asset_publisher/gc654PySnjTX/content/ulkoministeri-haavisto-eu-n-laajentuminen-on-suomen-etu

² Finnish MEPs, S&D Group statements, European Parliament, 2023. https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sds-opatija-western-balkans-progressives-enlargement-means-peace-and-democracy?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, "Twinning: EU Instrument for Institutional Capacity Building," 15 March 2024, <https://um.fi/twinning-eu-instrument-for-institutional-capacity-building-in-partner-countries>

⁴ Consolidated Treaty on European Union, Article 49, Official Journal C 326, 26.10.2012. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu/2012/art_49/oj?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁵ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Enlargement of the European Union*. Finland: Government of Finland. Available at: <https://um.fi/enlargement-of-the-european-union>

Topic Two: The Role of the European Union in the Governance of Antarctica

Finland is very scientifically ambitious nation with deep expertise in polar research. It has been a Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty since 1989 and maintains a seasonal research station, Aboa, in Queen Maud Land.⁶ Under the Finnish Antarctic Research Programme, FINNARP, Finland carries out annual expeditions focused on glaciology, geophysics, meteorology, and climate studies.⁷

The governance of Antarctica through the Antarctic Treaty System has direct implications for Finland's scientific interests. The impacts of climate beyond the Arctic region, such as ice melting and rising sea levels, has implications for the Finnish economy, environmental policy and infrastructure. Moreover, Finland uses the data from Antarctica to enhance its environmental modeling related to cold climates and to build its influence in global climate diplomacy.

Finland strongly supports multilateral cooperation and environmentally-centered governance in Antarctica. It emphasizes that scientific activity must go hand in hand with environmental protection, and that military use of the continent must remain banned according to the Treaty. Finland contributes through FINNARP and in cooperation with other nations via research programs under the EU and other international frameworks. It also calls for coordination within the EU member states in order to unify strategies on Antarctic research, funding, and environmental monitoring.

The Foreign Minister of Finland, Pekka Haavisto, has reiterated the commitment of Finland to protecting "Antarctica's unique environment and promoting international scientific cooperation."⁸ Finnish legal experts and polar researchers also support a stronger European Union role at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings, believing that EU influence could contribute to increasing environmental protection standards and benefiting scientific cooperation.⁹

⁶ Finnish Meteorological Institute. *Finland and the Antarctic Treaty*. Helsinki: FMI. Meteorological Institute, 2023 <https://en.ilmatieteenlaitos.fi/antarctic-treaty>

⁷ Finnish Meteorological Institute. *Antarctic Research and FINNARP Operations*. Helsinki: Finnish Meteorological Institute, <https://en.ilmatieteenlaitos.fi/antarctic-research>.

⁸ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. *Finland's Activities in Antarctica*. Helsinki: Government of Finland <https://um.fi/finlands-activities-in-antarctica>.

⁹ EU-PolarNet. *Polar Research Infrastructure Directory: Aboa Station (Finland)*. Brussels: EU-PolarNet, 2022. Available at: <https://eu-polarnet.eu>.

Recently, the Research Council of Finland opened a call for Antarctic research amounting to €3 million for the period of 2025–2028, favoring international and multidisciplinary projects.¹⁰

Among government activities are Finland's annual missions to the Aboa station, led by FINNARP, maintaining geodetic and meteorological infrastructure and enabling the continuity of long-term studies. Coordinated with the Finnish Meteorological Institute and funded through the Research Council, these missions carry high logistical and environmental costs, carefully planned and mitigated through international cooperation, at the same time strengthening Finland's scientific contributions to global climate research.

Internationally, Finland has been a Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty since 1989¹⁰ and ratified the Madrid Protocol, which banned mineral exploitation and required environmental impact assessments.¹¹

Finland proposes a common EU Antarctic policy that gives priority to joint funding of research, standardization of environmental monitoring, and effective application of the Madrid Protocol. It further proposes a European Antarctic Observatory Network, integrating national stations sharing scientific output, open access to data, and periodic reporting to ATCM.

Objectives range from increasing EU research funding to securing a permanent EU role within ATCM for the promotion of shared logistics with the aim to minimize environmental impact. Finland shares a common ground with other scientifically active EU states such as Germany and France, although it also realizes the opposite stand taken by the non-EU Consultative Parties. The necessity for a unified EU in Antarctic governance is thus stressed.

¹⁰ Research Council of Finland, “Research Council of Finland invests funding in Antarctic research,” press release, April 2024. https://www.aka.fi/en/about-the-rcf/whats-new/press-releases/2024/research-council-of-finland-invests-funding-in-antarctic-research/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹¹ Finnish Meteorological Institute, *Antarctic Treaty and Madrid Protocol*, 2023. Available at: <https://en.ilmatieteenlaitos.fi/antarctic-treaty>