2016 EPIIC Finland Delegation Briefing Paper

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**Introduction**:

We are excited to be here at this conference, and hope it will garner prosperity across all the nations who have sent representatives to discuss the future of Europe. For the future of Europe means more than a single country's economy or a border dispute between another two, it represents the future of the world. Europe remains the strongest coalition of countries to ever be formed. We seek, more than anything, it’s continued strength and security through this conference, by any means necessary.

Finland, as a nation, is stronger than ever before. While our economy has faltered since the debt crisis, we have never been brought to the point of requiring a bailout, and seek a great flow of currency in our markets through renewed growth over time.

We have opened our borders, and though refugees turn away themselves we have always been open to the possibility of helping those who are in need. We are a relatively fresh born country, and the actions of some to turn away those who are seeking refuge we find, despicable. Over the course of these discussions, we hope to work with other strong, welcoming, nations to figure out how we may set up this strong order of countries which long outlast the self-destruction of those irresponsible and reckless throughout the world.

**Key Points:**

**A. Cross Border Issues**

We have a very convoluted past with Russia and Sweden. We, however, do not see how the past could cloud our vision for the future. We do not have any current disputes with Russia, and we don’t predict any new conflicts to come. The biggest issue we have at the moment is our stance with Russia and how they may view us. We have been seen as a lesser country in the past and we don’t believe we identify with that label today. Our history shouldn’t affect our future.

We, as a member of the Schengen Area, do not have any major complications at the moment. We are aware of the attacks on Paris and, if need be, we will allow the people of Paris to enter our country. It is important to us that the people of Paris feel safe in entering our country for refuge. We give them all our prayers and condolences. We welcome anyone and everyone who feels the need to come to our country for support. The Schengen Area is the area where inhabitants of the Schengen Area is allowed to travel in and out of each other’s borders without a passport, which will make it much easier for refugees to enter our country.

We disagree that there needs to be a securitization of borders. In the future there may be more instances similar to the attacks on Paris. We see no reason to secure the borders for there might a possibility that people of other countries may also need to seek refuge, and we would like them to see us as a place they can seek safety in. On that note, we are also improving our police units and security to make us a safer country. We have been very cautious upon noticing the Paris attacks and we wish to increase our readiness level for any terrorism attacks that may come. We are determined to make ourselves an extremely safe country for our citizens as well as anyone who wishes to seek refuge in our country.

We have no corruption, but in some cases there are signs of personal ties. In 2008 there was a terrible lack of transparency, and in 2007 GRECO, an organization against corruption in government stated that We have not taken corruption into consideration when it comes to funds. We have no tax avoidance in our country, which in comparison to other nearby countries impressive. Our lack of tax avoidance let us have a good amount of funds in our government. But we did have some cases of corruption, like in the Olkiluoto nuclear plant incident. Which didn’t check for foreign workers’ circumstances, and many workers left the country before criminal evaluation. Another case of corruption was the Salora-case, in which the Zalora company avoided taxes, but later were faced with a fine of $3000. Because of our lack of corruption, there are not many policies against corruption, so organizations like GRECO wants us to put more money into fighting against corruption. Some areas, that we can improve on is in construction and tax avoidance. Most of the cases of corruption in our country are tax avoidance and construction, and there has been very little to no cases of corruption in our government.

We somewhat agree with the securitization of borders, for example in the Finnish-Russian borders we had three meter tall walls. Which also had barbed wires, and we have no protection of illegal border crossers, so defectors of Russia during the Cold War were turned back to Russia. We also banned people biking through the border from getting through, because that was a way that illegal immigrants were getting through the border. Our border with Sweden is also regularly checked every 25 years, but that is due to our good relationship with Sweden. However, people from countries who are in the Schengen zone are free to enter our country. The security of the border with Russia is so strong, because during the cold war many refugees sought asylum in our country, which caused our borders to be so secure with Russia. However our borders are lax with Sweden is due to our great relationship with Sweden, and our borders are very lax with Norway, because we are both in the Schengen area. Overall our borders are only very secure in some areas.

 We have most of our energy production placed in nuclear power, and the state owns half of our main energy production company, Fortum. We have been working on getting rid of carbon emission, and we have a plan to cut it down by about 40% by 2030. Finland is located north of most of Europe, and is very vulnerable to climate raising and land disappearing due to global warming. Temperatures are rising higher in Finland than anywhere else and the nordic European countries are having massive climate problems with lakes freezing earlier and ice covering land quicker than usual. This hurts Finland as our trees are blooming earlier and seasons are shortening. Later on as the temperature rises, our icy north land will begin to disappear. It is not our main priority, but climate issues will begin to become a major problem for us unless we decide to take action.

We are very strict on immigration only letting in a very, very small amount of people to the country. We are not a very sought after destination for immigrants anyways, but those who do apply have to go through a very arduous test as well as many other forms and requirements that gave to be met. Before we let immigrants in they have to live in Finland for a year on temporary stay to make sure they can complete the salary requirements that our country set up to make sure immigrants are able to support their families as well as have steady savings. Most refugees are not welcome in Finland as we have only accepted about 7000 total refugees. Most of those have repealed or abandoned their chances of becoming temporary citizens of Finland, as they find the environment harsh and the cold dark winters depressing and unpleasant. We have good relations with our bordering countries, are main enemy is Greece, who we recent for bringing down our economy as well as hogging funding from the European Union. We have some off and on problems with Russia. The border between us is constantly being changed due to disagreements and armed conflicts. The border between us is heavily guarded and watched as we are looking for any surprises and loss of land. We have not yet entirely recovered from the economic crash, but we are slowly working to build up our economy. Our main partners for economic imports and exports are Germany Sweden and Russia.

We are part of the European Union, and participate and participate in the trades and politics that it involves. We contribute more than we spend by about 700 million dollars, but we only contribute about .87% of our GNI (Gross National Income) to the EU. Most of our money in the EU goes to building new roads and funding projects for protecting the environment, which is a key part of keeping our land from subsiding, and our weather patterns staying consistent. The EU has been working in Finland to create jobs as well as green companies to sustain a healthy climate. The EU also is helping Finland develop and grow some of its less rural areas by supporting agricultural growth. Finland with the help of the EU hopes to regain so of its economic stability, but with Greece still in the EU it is hard since they are leeching so much of the funding that could be used to industrialize Finland, or go towards climate change. Right now Greece is taking 7 billion dollars a year from the EU and only contributing about 1.7 billion. If there was to be a vote to kick Greece out of the EU we would strongly push to have it done as we still do not forgive them for our economic crisis after their crash. Finland is one of the only members of the EU in its region, as well as one of the only socialist economies.

**B. Foreign Policy**

Our country conducts its foreign policy within the European Union, as demonstrated by our compliance with the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy. We support the development of a joint-EU policy, and have a voice in current EU decisions. In all possible scenarios, we must aim to influence the direction of Russian development by pursuing close, open and comprehensive cooperation both bilaterally and multilaterally within the EU framework. Russian commitment to international cooperation is in our interests. We have a diplomatic mission in Ukraine. Stability in the region can best be enhanced by supporting reforms aimed at establishing democracy, the rule of law, and the market economy in these countries. Since the beginning of 1990, we have participated in peace processes within the region. An additional aim of this is to provide our expertise for peace mediation in future.

As a country we are deliberating on whether or not we endorse the European Union sanctions on Russia and the Crimean peninsula. We have no official position on the matter as we both support inclusion of Russia and are interested in preserving and maintaining Ukrainian sovereignty and democracy. The EU has been unwavering in its support for the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty. It sees the full implementation of the Minsk agreements as the basis for a sustainable political solution to the conflict in the country's east. Since spring 2014, the European Union has been stepping up its support to economic and political reforms in Ukraine.

We support this because we realize the importance of autonomy to move forward economically and the progression of a democratic and independent state. We believe that the European Union should work closely with the United States on foreign policy issues because the US provides a large consumer market. For us, it is important for the United States to remain committed to European security. Because of this, we should aim to sustain the United States’s interest in Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea region.

The vast majority of our relations with the United States are conducted through the European Union. US-EU trade accounts for 34% of total world merchandise trade and for 40% of total services trade. Together, these two economic areas account for almost 50% of world GDP. Our country’s trade with the United States totals almost $5 billion annually. The United States receives about 7% of our exports (mainly pulp and paper, ships, machinery, electronics, instruments, and refined petroleum products) and provides about 7% of our imports (mainly computers, semiconductors, aircraft, machinery). 48% of our citizens approve of the United States’ leadership, with 34% disapproving and 18% uncertain. Overall, our relationship with the US is a generally positive one. The US was one of the first countries to recognize us as our own country following our declaration of independence from the Soviet Union on December 6, 1917. Despite us cooperating with the Axis powers World War II and them being a part of the Allied forces, we managed to maintain diplomatic relations with the US, although they were temporarily severed, and are currently maintaining a positive relationship.

**C. Governance**

Citizens of Finland cannot be prevented from entering Finland, deported from Finland, or transferred to another country against their will. We have a general duty to defend our country and must contribute to this defense. Once men have reached the age of 18, military service is compulsory. Voting is also legal in national and local elections at the age of 18. Non-citizens in Finland are given nearly equal rights when compared with citizens of Finland. The difference being that non-citizens, cannot vote in parliamentary elections and cannot get Finnish passports. However, this is also a point of much political contention, as xenophobia has supposedly been running rampant in our state. Another significant point of contention is that many members of the True Finns party proudly believe in racism and are a definite supporter to anti-immigration. In fact, the whole party of the “True Finns” seems to be a point of political contention in itself. This party has a stark contrast to the way we conduct ourselves and the decisions we make in the European Union. We, Finland, has from our start in the EU, to the very end of our time in this union, continue to support our guarantee to defend “the inviolability of human dignity and the freedom and the rights of the individual and promote justice in society” as stated in our constitution. There is currently an ongoing controversy as to whether the president or the prime minister is the primary representative of Finland to the EU. The 2000 rewrite of the constitution did not address this problem. Implicitly it places EU matters under domestic policy and therefore in the prime minister’s domain. At the same time, discourse with other leaders of state constitutes exercising of foreign policy, which is the president's responsibility. An amendment has recently been made to the constitution to demarcate at least the responsibility for EU military operations, which are unambiguously matters of national security and foreign policy. Nevertheless, a full demarcation has not been done.

The concept of a democratic deficit within the European Union is the idea that the governance of the European Union in some way lacks democratic legitimacy. The term was initially used to criticize the transfer of legislative powers from national governments to the Council of Ministers of the European Union. This led to an elected [European Parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Parliament) being created and given the power to approve or reject European Union legislation. Therefore the European Union has two sources of democratic legitimacy: the European Parliament, directly elected by the people of the European Union as a whole, and the Council (together with the European Council) representing the peoples of the individual states, the civil service being appointed by the two bodies jointly. We, a nation with a parliamentary democracy, think that it is important to balance legislative powers between our national government and the council of ministers in the European Union. This balance means that we do not want to lose our sovereignty while benefitting from being a member of the European Union.

We will be representing the Centre Party at the conference. But we, the Centre Party are are unlike many other large parties in Europe because our ideology is not primarily based on economic systems. Rather the ideas of humanity, education, the spirit of the land, peasant-like freedom, decentralization, "the issue of poor people," environmentalism and progressivism play a key role in Centrist politician speeches and writings. From the very beginning of its presence, our party has supported the idea of decentralisation which is The process of redistributing or dispersing functions, powers, people or things away from a central location or authority. We are also on the conservative side, but our ideals coincide with Finnish values. On the other hand, we are a major party so liberalism is also accounted for through enthusiasm for free will, free and fair trade, and small enterprise. This also covers social liberalism, a political ideology that seeks to find a balance between individual liberty and socialjustice. The good of the community is considered harmonious with the freedom of the individual.

 **D. Eurozone**

Our great nation was affected by the Greek economic crisis. Our economy has taken a downturn in the past few years and although we are still recovering from that recession, we are building our economy back up to its former glory. Currently, our economy is five percent below what is was before Greece’s economic crisis and yet we are hopeful about the future. We will soon return to the great and united nation that we were before especially when changes in the euro community have been made. Currently we have the seventh-highest labour costs in the Eurozone, joint with Germany.

Irresponsible and careless nations should be encouraged to exit the euro. They should exit because of their very negative influence on other nations part of the euro currency. Only careful and accountable nations should be part of the euro. Greece's gross domestic product is $242.2 billion, while Massachusetts' is $420.75 billion.The only way for the euro to continue as it once was before the European debt crisis is for nations which are affecting the economic state of other countries to exit. We have developed world-class expertise in sectors like cleantech, forestry, metal and machinery manufacturing, ICT industry and services, and health and wellbeing. Other nations have not been as innovative or skilled in contributing to the global economy, which should be a standard requirement for being seen as a first-rate nation.

Some nations should be encouraged to exit the euro so that there is smaller risk of crisis again for the other nations which are currently part of the euro. As Finland, we will continue to use the currency of the euro and would like to convince other nations such as Greece that are negatively influencing other economies to egress from the european union. Once these countries leave the euro, we will be able to build back the euro from the crisis and be as great as we once were. The International Monetary Fund will thus also be strengthened due to a decrease in the number of bailouts over the next decade.

As to now, the euro debt crisis has been a challenge for many nations. We will try our best to return to a prosperous nation as we were before the debt crisis. For the euro to continue successfully though, nations like Greece, who have a negative effect on the euro must leave. Once these irresponsible nations leave the eurozone, we believe that the euro may finally return to its former glory and working together, we will restore the nations’ great debts. In this sense the challenge of the Euro is more about unification rather than dissolvement, for no sensible country wishes to see the European Union dissolved and at the same time it should be a reward for those countries fiscally responsible enough to remain a part of.

While the economic progress of our great nation has been hindered by the recent economic downturns with nations like Greece, we are optimistic about our future as a part of the European Union. Our manufacturing centers are booming and the agricultural output of this small, yet strong country is unmatched. While since the downturn our economic sphere has yet to completely rebound by setbacks brought on by the laziness of other nations, we as a united nation understand that these fiscal shackles are not permanent, and we will gain recognition as a growing economic nation within the coming years. The largest sector of the our economy is services at 65 %, followed by manufacturing and refining at 31 %. Primary production is at 3 %. Our main industrial products are paper and board, electronics and metal products. Engineering and high technology industries are the leading branches of manufacturing. We have a highly industrialized, largely free-market economy with per capita output almost as high as that of Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, or Sweden.

The laziness and economic inefficiency, as well as irresponsibility, lead to the crushing crisis which devastated our beautiful country. We hope that those countries responsible, which can hopefully hold themselves accountable for the fiscal downturns other nations have been forced to endure to cover their inability to function as a first rate nation. Greece is the country which started this crisis, and to think anything else is merely ignorant. Place blame where blame is due and understand that for the greater good each country must be aware and accountable for the position in which in places the countries in the Union. Greece finally gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1830. The country has spent 90 out of 196 years since then in financial crisis. Overall, Greece's unemployment rate remained steady at 25.6% for March 2015. It hit an all-time high of 28% back in September 2013.

The European Union is a terrific idea for the unification and development of many nations which shape the world and it’s policy today, however as beneficial to the rest of the world as political policy is, it should not be won at the sacrifice of monetary policy, which can be just as degradating. A common philosophy around world affairs is key to developing at a faster rate, however the unification of our economies has obviously lead to unforeseen consequences. As a nation with a significantly smaller population than those around us, we do not have the cushion that other leading nations do when it comes to situations such as these. We are unable to bounce back as quickly without such large markets and Germany and the UK share, and as a result our economy has rebounded more slowly in comparison to others.

The European Union is united. However, it is not as united as it should be for a standard currency to take hold and thrive without leading to devastating repercussions as we have seen in our own country. The EU can be thought of as a half built house simply because the system which has been created puts on a false sense of unity which is not accurately reflected to the level by which countries within in are united. We are united, and yet still so independent that we are unable to work together efficiently in order to meet each other’s economic means. Some have said that The creation of the single market and the corresponding increase in trade and general economic activity transformed the EU into a major trading power. The EU is trying to sustain economic growth by investing in transport, energy and research, while also seeking to minimise the environmental impact of further economic development.

We are in favor of austerity measures being put in place in Greece, however not if it is to come to terms with government bailouts. We need to look internally towards rebuilding our economy and returning to our previous levels of growth, avoiding contraction, and this cannot be done if the money that we put into the International Monetary Fund continues to be spent on a nation which has been unable to pull itself together using austerity measures in the past. We understand that Angela Merkel in the past has been unwilling to meet Greece’s pleas for another bailout because she sees it as their responsibility to fix their own economy, and we agree with this view. "If Greece had better control of corruption — not to Swedish standards, but even at Spain's level — it would have had a smaller budget deficit by 4% of gross domestic product"

 **E. Security**

We, the Republic of Finland have witnessed what has happened in the past years, concerning the Russian annexation of Crimea, the effects and influences of the Syrian Civil War, and the Syrian refugee crisis. With the growing threat of ISIS and other Islamic extremist groups in the Middle East, thousands of Syrian and Middle Eastern refugees have flocked to nations all over the world. Many have come into Europe, as well as following members of ISIS, which have recently resulted in the November Paris bombings. Many countries around the world, including ourselves, have responded to this, calling for more security measures and engagements with ISIS. Along with this, we acknowledge the Russian Federation’s actions towards the disputed area of Crimea, and how they annexed it. We, as a neighboring nation of Russia, have realized our proximity to the powerful nation, and how they are able to influence our sovereignty, and how we utilize and form other security and defense measures.

We take security measures very seriously in Finland, and actively patrol our border and internet traffic. We most certainly acknowledge the threat of ISIS, in the Middle East and all around the world, as 50 inductees into ISIS in the past year have come from Finland. In 2015 alone, 1,000 Syrian refugees arrived to Finland. We do have an active voice and a stance in the fight against terrorism, even if our last terrorist attack on Finland soil happened over 10 years ago. Concerning military security, we have a military of about 230,000 soldiers, mainly for homeland defence, and a budget of 2.9 billion euros, our standard currency. We as well have had over 43,000 Finnish peacekeepers since 1956 take part in NATO and UN-led missions. As stated before, we acknowledge the threat that the Russian Federation has posed to its former Soviet States, an example being Russia’s intervention in Ukraine. We fear the threat that Russia poses to us, and how their growing animosity towards other countries has effects on us.

The recent events, especially the Paris bombings, have shocked our nation, and we have taken more security measures, especially in our embassies, borders, and online, to combat terrorism and other threats to our nation, and to other countries in the EU. Concerning Russia’s annexation of Crimea, Finland sees how the nation is capable of overtaking Belarus, the Baltic states, and ourselves, as stated by the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. We acknowledge the threat Russia poses to our little nation, and thus have only increased our border security. We do not wish to engage in any military conflict with Russia, or any other nation at the moment. We are simply not in a solid financial state to help with the conflict between ISIS and other extremist groups in the Middle East, and western countries, such as those in North America, and the EU. With these threats on numerous countries’ national sovereignty, we find that cyber and border security work best for ourselves, and we continue to implement and promote those methods.

As a member of the EU, we actively participates in the actions of the EU, even though we are the most northern and most sparsely-populated country in the EU. In the past years we have witnessed the Greek financial crisis, and how it can affect their ties with the European Union. We are active in the EU’s foreign affairs activities and foreign aid. We are also heavily tied to our other Nordic sister nations, especially Sweden and Denmark, with whom we share extensive linguistic and cultural influences. We are not officially a member of NATO, but we are included in its Partnership for Peace programme, and have donated peacekeepers to NATO missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo. We value what NATO and the USA have done in these missions, and how they have dealt with the threat of ISIS. Although, we are not interested at the moment to join NATO. As for the OSCE, it was formed in our capital city, Helsinki, and we very greatly admire and take part in its security decisions and activities.

For importing energy, we rely on Russia, Norway, Denmark, and Kazakhstan for petroleum. Our petroleum consumption makes up 24 percent of our entire energy consumption. We are solely dependant on Russia for natural gas, however it is not commonly used in homes. As for coal, we import it from Russia and Poland. We own four nuclear reactors, and we mainly use water and wood residues for renewable energy. In terms of coercion, our energy reliance on Russia has strengthened our ties with them. While we have issues with Russia’s pollution of the Baltic Sea, as well as other air and border skirmishes, the economic benefit we have with our reliance on Russia is overwhelming, and we greatly appreciate their help.

**F. Migration**

 We welcomed many Russian refugees at the end of WWI. Even though we haven't accepted many immigrants we are getting a lot of feedback from the natives. This year a group of people calling themselves the soldiers of Odin wanted to protect the people from the immigrants. Our officials are getting really tired of the anti-immigrant vigilantism. The group The soldiers of Odin have blamed the immigrants for the increase in the crime rate. The number of harassments filed have also increased. Our government has made it clear that we have no place for vigilantes. Although there have been some negative responses to immigrants we are still accepting as many immigrants as we can.

We believe that allowing immigrants to take refuge in our country will lead to more crime, more debt, and more integration. On a survey taken on August 2015 the majority of Finns surveyed said that we would rather live next to an alcohol rehabilitation center than a mosque. The majority of our natives believe that immigration will lead to asylum seekers that are not willing to learn Finnish. This is a problem because us Finns feel threatened by the wave of muslim refugees flooding our country. On September 2nd 2015 Archbishop Kari Makinen, head of Finnish Lutheran Church, urged members to take in refugees. Shortly after 196 people resigned from the church in one day (compared to 80 people on a typical day). Members of our community who are usually very respected are now losing their sense of importance due to this “obligation” to take in refugees.

 Our government is willing to double the amount of refugees we were willing to take in from 15,000 to 30,000. Most applications filled out by immigrants who are wanting to live in our country are from Somalia and Iraq. We receive 2,000 to 6,000 applications to asylum annually. While some Finns are excited to share their homeland with others, certain Finnish representatives’ feelings are not mutual. Olli Immonen, member of Finnish Parliament, tweeted saying that multiculturalism is a nightmare. This led to a varying array of responses ranging from agreement to strong disagreement. Finland hopes to allow refuge and create a sense of hope to all immigrants wishing to take asylum in our beautiful country, regardless of certain Finnish representatives’ beliefs.

We are one of five pre-2004 European Union states to automatically give voting rights to non-EU Citizens. To be eligible to vote, you first must be of 18. Any citizen old enough is capable to vote in national elections and referenda, no matter where they may live. As a non-citizen, you have relatively the same rights as a citizen, as long as you live within our borders.

**G. Identity and Integration**

We are an admittedly very homogenous country, with 78 percent of our population belonging to the Lutheran church. The Syrian Civil War prompted the our government to allow Syrian immigrants into Finland. According to a poll by the organisation Taloustutkimus, most of our citizens would rather live next to a alcohol rehabilitation center than a mosque. With that being said we have increased our inflow of immigrants because we believe that it is our government's responsibility to bear the burden of these refugees.

We has become more diverse, although the minority population is still negligible, as Finland separated and declared its freedom in 1917. Since then, many people have came into the country, including 2,071 Bosnian speakers during the Bosnian War. Finland is still a mostly homogenous country however.

 The Ministry of labour is focused on immigration and integration and one of the major goals of the ministry is to promote multiculturalism and prevent racism within Finland. Thanks to the extremely low immigrant and minority population this isn’t much of a problem and since the largest ethnic minority are the Swedes who are culturally similar to Finland. The extreme homogony in Finland creates a sort of paradox in the effectiveness of our integration policies. Since minorities make up less than 10% of Finland’s population and since non-whites make up less than 1% of the population many Finns don’t meet very many minorities and as such have a stereotyped and bigoted view of non-Finns.

We do not have many minority ethnic divisions. As of 1998, 93% of our population was Finnish, 6% Swedes, and many other minorities constituting of a very small part of our population. This makes ethnic divisions somewhat of a non-issue, however there is a certain level of bigotry within the country it’s just that this bigotry isn’t acted on because there are so few minorities.

Human rights are not a big problem in Finland and as such individual rights are not stressed so severely.We are not currently facing a secessionist movement, however we did secede from Russia in 1918 as a part of World War I. Then, the Reds murdered 1,650 people. When we won our Independence, we became a monarchy. Upon Germany’s defeat in World War II, we became a representative democracy.

**Backround**:

We, Finland, have a parliamentary democracy in which the party (or a coalition of parties) with the greatest representation in the [parliament](http://www.britannica.com/topic/parliament-government) (legislature) forms the government, its leader becoming [prime minister](http://www.britannica.com/topic/prime-minister) or [chancellor](http://www.britannica.com/topic/chancellor). Executive functions are exercised by members of the parliament appointed by the [prime minister](http://www.britannica.com/topic/prime-minister) to the [cabinet](http://www.britannica.com/topic/cabinet-government). The parties in the minority serve in opposition to the majority and have the duty to challenge it regularly. The prime minister may be removed from power whenever he loses the confidence of a majority of the ruling party or of the parliament. Our prime minister is Juha Sipilä; he is head of the Centre Party. He is head of government and therefore exercises executive power. Sauli Niinistö is the our president: he is head of state, he leads foreign policy and he is commander-in-chief of the defense forces.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, we were unfortunately forced into recesssion as trade with the other members of the union and Russia decreased rapidly. At the time, numerous companies went bankrupt, which led to many people losing their jobs.After the recession, plenty of high-technology industry and related jobs were created in our beautiful country. More and more people were also working in various private sector professions.In the 1990s, immigration to our country increased spectacularly. Refugees arrived in the capital from many countries, along with people from the former Soviet Union who had a who had roots in our nation. In 1995, Finland became a member of the European Union (EU). In 2002, Finland adopted the common EU currency, the euro, among the first EU countries, thereby relinquishing its own currency.

The post-war period was a time of rapid economic growth and increasing social and political stability for Finland. Five decades after World War II saw Finland turn from a war-ravaged agrarian society into one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world, with a sophisticated market economy and high standard of living. Finland retained a democratic constitution and free economy during the Cold War era. The major political parties in Finland are the Centre Party, the Finns Party, the National Coalition Party, and the Social Democratic Party of Finland. The dominant party, with Prime Minister Juha Sipila as the chairman, is the Centre Party.

48% of our citizens approve of the United States’ leadership, with 34% disapproving and 18% uncertain. Overall, our relationship with the US is a generally positive one. The US was one of the first countries to recognize us as our own country following our declaration of independence from the Soviet Union on December 6, 1917. Despite us cooperating with the Axis powers World War II and them being a part of the Allied forces, we managed to maintain diplomatic relations with the US, although they were temporarily severed, and are currently maintaining a positive relationship.