



The EU Parliament Election Program 2014

INTRODUCTION- A LESS POWERFUL EU IS A BETTER EU: LESS IS MORE

THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF THE FINNS PARTY'S EURO ELECTION PROGRAM ARE:

- 1. The development of the EU into a federal state must be halted – and member states' rights of self-determination assured.**
- 2. Bailout and similar support policies must be stopped.**
- 3. Economic co-operation among member states must continue to be developed.**
- 4. The EU's democratic processes must be strengthened.**

The Finns Party's EU policy is both constructive and critical. The European Union is not an inviolable entity but its form and processes should be continuously scrutinized. Currently it is an overly bureaucratic organization that often disregards democratic principles. The member states are themselves supposed to be servants of their citizens and their sovereignty must be preserved. The EU will work best as a loose confederation of independent states working for free trade and economic benefits.

The Finns Party takes definite notice of the EU's shortcomings and does raise issue with them. At the same time, we support projects we consider to be appropriate, rational and well thought out. We are not opposed to the EU but for its development and reform. We wish to offer positive suggestions together with our critical evaluations.

The Finns Party wants to be an influential party in the EU Parliament and at present consider ourselves to be in the group of skeptics. The EU is a tool to serve the member states – not an objective in itself. Support for reform processes has grown throughout the EU countries during the last years. The EU is a political project and leaving the EU is a future option if Finland feels that it is accruing more damages than benefits.

The Finns Party accepts Finnish membership in the Euro group as a fait accompli – a situation which nevertheless could change. Apart from other Finnish political parties, the Finns Party is not committed to the Euro as part of its own policy – and we look at the situation only with regard to Finland's well-being.

We believe that there is a realistic possibility for a significant change regarding the Euro whereby Finland's membership in the group would be affected. However, we see no need at the present to actively pursue any movement in this regard.

We support the removal of trade barriers together with development and strengthening of the economic union provided the independence of the member states is not affected.

We definitely oppose any salvage operations for the EU which use so-called bailout policies which are actually in opposition to EU's basic principles on which it was founded. If economic benefits and independence are opposing options then priority goes to independence.

The Finns Party's function in the EU Parliament is to promote the interests of Finnish citizens as well as their rights for decision-making and self-determination. This perspective is justified as the matter of independence is never-ending. The Finns Party is to be accountable to the Finnish citizens that have given their vote to our representatives.

The Finns Party heartily encourages the EU's intentions to be close to citizens and for further development of democratic practices. We are opposed to any further expansion to the East – with especial emphasis on being against Turkish membership in the EU.

1. NO TO A FEDERAL STATE, YES TO ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

The EU is developing into a federal state – bit by bit. The independence and autonomy of member states has been chipped away – piece by piece. Before the economic crisis of recent years this unwelcome development was not so noticeable. But the attempts to shore up and save the Euro have sped up these developments of integration and unification. Building a federal state without the citizens of the EU giving their formal support and approval (eg via referendums) is not a correct or acceptable procedure.

With the purpose of securing future peace in Europe, a unification process was begun with its focus on creating economic benefits. The EU is first and foremost a free trade union. Using that structure, the individual nation states can certainly decide on and put into operation matters that require international co-operation for their success. We very much support the principle put forth by the Netherlands: decide matters at the EU level when it is absolutely necessary but decide on other matters at national levels when at all possible.

The EU should not become a federal state. The rich and varied European traditions do not fit into an arbitrary mold of harmonization. The very nature of different national cultures defies forced integration – different economies, languages, cultures, histories. Instead there is every reason to support the taking down of trade barriers and minimizing new regulations.

Revenue transfers between and among member states should not increase – rather the development should be the opposite: a decrease in transfers. Finland needs to negotiate for a correction of the amount it pays to the EU as related to the rebate system – alternatively Finland should be supporting the abolition of the rebate. At the present, Finland is partly paying for the rebates going to the UK, Sweden and Denmark, among others.

Finland's tax revenues which are cycled through Brussels are not to Finland's benefit. Part of the funds are lost in administration, part just simply disappears (the EU's own audits have revealed large errors for 18 years running) and part goes to other EU members. It's possible to apply for some of the funds to be returned through very heavily bureaucratic procedures – and such funds are then often earmarked for badly impacted projects or ones that have non-existing returns. It's estimated that a Euro from the EU for Finnish economic development is actually worth 50 cents.

Thus the EU budget should not be allowed to increase – nor should the EU be given taxation rights for a country's own resources.

The concentration of power and decision-making to Brussels is not in Finland's interest. For example, Finland has 13 seats of the 766 in the European Parliament – that is 1.7%. On that basis Finland has 1.7% influence – and everyone else 98.3%. It's foolish to think that far-away Brussels or other member states will know and/or understand better than Finland's own parliament, what is the best legislation for Finland.

Further European unification or integration shouldn't be a goal in itself. The development of the EU should not be using Prime Minister Katainen's vision of 'the middle way of a fair integration' as that assumes a deepening unification. 'Fair integration' is simply support for federalization.

2. THE END OF 'BAILOUT PACKAGE' POLICY

The Finns Party is the only party that has been – from the first Greek bailout package onwards – consistently against such policies. The foundation agreement of the EU is opposed to guarantees and loan payments of a EU member state coming from the taxpayers of the other member states. All the other Finnish parties have, in turn, committed the Finnish taxpayers to be responsible for even tens of billions of Euros in the worst case.

The bailout packages are an unsuccessful and unjust policy – a policy that citizens oppose and harms European unity. Presently these bailout packages damage the recipients as well as the payers and each is bitter towards the other. The Euro, as a common currency, was to be a symbol of - and reference to - a unified Europe but the unsuccessful salvage policies have it becoming a symbol of disintegration.

The Finns Party is opposed to the various stability mechanisms as illustrated by the Stability and Growth Pact and Fiscal Stability Treaty - and filled out by the Six Pack and Two Pack programs. Such common fiscal responsibility dilutes individual member states' moral obligations and central management only serves to further narrow national independence.

Economic discipline is an attitude and an approach – not a contract – and its realization is the responsibility of the nation - for reasons of its own benefit as well as the EU. The consequences of loose and sloppy economic management should be left at the door of the member state!

Common fiscal responsibility among the member states is as unprincipled as it is ludicrous. The different nations have different social structures, tax policies, income distribution patterns, economic and resource dependencies and so on – it's not really possible to lump Finland and Cyprus into the same economic picture. For these reasons, it can't be correct that higher tax rate countries make up the budget deficits of low tax rate countries. A taxpaying Finn certainly does not want to pay the bills of crisis countries where tax evasion is more than common and actually a way of life in many.

Future Eurozone countries that would fall into a crisis situation should disengage from the Euro in a controlled process. Countries which have already gotten bailout funds should get no more. Banks in a crisis country should not get support via any kind of 'common fiscal responsibility.' The Finns Party believes that in the place of 'common fiscal responsibility' there should be simply 'investor responsibility' – those investing with the goal of profits should be also taking the risk of losses!

3. THE FINNS PARTY'S POSITION ON THE EURO

The Euro crisis is a severe example of what the problems of the Euro are. For a number of Euro countries, the relinquishing of its own currency and monetary policy were bigger costs than the unclear benefits it got from adopting the Euro. The Euro is for member countries a non-functional currency where similar problems that we have now – will also surface in the future. Some of the corrective measures taken in recent years have even worsened the situation. The bailout packages have been especially as unprincipled as they have been unsuccessful.

If the Euro had been an economic policy alone it should have been long gone or it would never have been initiated. The Euro however has been above all a political project and for the Euro-elite it was to be the crown jewel – a shining symbol of the European project.

The Finns Party is not tied to the Euro – only to what is good for Finland. We are not in the present circumstances actively trying to disengage from the Euro but rather believe preparations should be made for any possible disintegration of the Eurozone. The Bank of Finland and other national banks should be kept in a functioning condition in case there should be a need for a return to national currencies. Finland should have comprehensive plans for any such development even if such a situation never comes to fore. Such a plan is analogous to lifeboats for a ship – they are used if needed but otherwise not.

The Finns Party is ready to consider taking initiatives for disengagement from the Euro if for example bailout packages become a permanent part of the scene or if the Eurozone moves into a federal state type of environment with common debt or if centralized budgetary management becomes excessive. Finland's membership in the Eurozone is primarily an economic decision and its membership can be dissolved if such disengagement is shown to be a better economic solution. There is, of course, the consideration that Finland leaving the Euro will have a political cost as well as a direct financial one.

The Finns Party believes that all opposing parties should be telling voters the price they are willing to pay to preserve Finland's place in the Eurozone and also to tell what are the possible ancillary costs: common debt responsibility, unified tax policies, EU control of the labor market, pension and social policy, as well as other goals of a federal state policy. If those would be the costs to stay in the Eurozone, voters should know what parties are willing to pay those costs. The Finns Party is not willing!

4. THE EUROPEAN UNION: REFORM A MUST

The Finns Party is an internationally networked party that values and respects Europe. It is thus necessary to ask if the EU in its present form provides the best place for its citizens to live and for its enterprises to operate. The EU does not own the idea of 'Europe,' so criticism of the EU does not imply opposition to the concepts of being international or European.

The present EU suffers a definite deficiency in democracy and its interminable bureaucracy often creates more problems than it solves. The EU must learn to listen to its citizens better. Ideas regarding unification and federalization should not progress without considering the opinions of the citizens. Especially the formation of the EU Commission must be rethought along more democratic lines – for example, commissioners could be elected via individual national elections.

The results of national referendums must be respected and not subject to 'do-overs' when the European elite objects to the outcome – as happened with the approval of the founding Constitution.

EU directives, as presently devised and implemented, are often not good solutions for problems. They can and do produce more work and indeed new problems. Directives and regulations should be drawn up to address generally known grievances and injustices. Properly done, creative legislation should provide as much freedom as possible for individuals, organizations and enterprises.

The Finns Party supports the United Kingdom's call for having an EU with reduced levels of power and authority – and more of this power and authority repatriated to the individual member states. The Party also backs the Netherlands government's publishing of a list of 54 powers that the Dutch think should be at the national – and not EU – level. The Netherlands says the time of an ever closer union is over. We believe that more and more countries will join the critical chorus of requiring reform – we want Finland to join that group!

The Finns Party believes there should be a referendum on Finland's EU membership in a similar way to what the UK government has proposed – first negotiations on the basic EU Constitution and membership conditions and then referendums held on whether to be a member of the reformed EU or not.

The EU must undergo reform that results in less bureaucracy. The Finns Party wants the administration in the various EU offices and organizations to institute programs with strict standards of productivity that also result in the freezing of administrative costs and even lowering them.

The information processes and channels in the EU must be objective. The EU should be based on being attractive and not simply imposing rules and regulations. Lasting relationships will be based on mutual benefits not on coercion and one-sided information.

In many cases the problems of integration are attempted to be solved by further integration. This process is turning the EU into a federal state – and such development must be averted. Help can be gotten by avoiding the unnecessary 'problem jungle' with relevant deregulation.

The coming Euroelections might be the last opportunity to build a functional union. If the EU becomes a federal state, the only sensible solution for Finland is to resign.

5 THE EUROPEAN UNION'S COMMON AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL POLICY

The Finns Party envisions Finnish rural areas to be dynamic and multifaceted in the future. The non-urban part of the Finnish landscape is both a refuge and resource for all Finland's citizens. Finns appreciate the countryside for its own value as well as the clean and wholesome food it provides. Finland's natural environment and its agricultural capacity must be ensured.

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is now using the co-decision procedure where the European Commission, the member states and the European Parliament are all involved in the decision-making process. There is now more power for the Parliament but at the expense of complicated and time-consuming procedures. Left on the sidelines, unfortunately, are Finnish farmers who live with uncertainty of their own future.

The Finns Party aim to defend the Finnish countryside as well as labor-intensive rural entrepreneurship. The professional skills of farmers must be duly recognized and respected - the continued practice of skilled workmanship must be given increased attention in political decision-making. We will carry on with working for farmers to receive the security of reasonable levels of income.

Finland, in the future, must be able to be engaged in agricultural and rural entrepreneurship extensively throughout the country. Benefits and support included in our EU accession agreement must be strictly adhered to. Finland agreed to lower support level 149 to level 141 for southern Finland. Support for Finland is, in principle, lower than that given to original EU members in central Europe. This disparity is balanced with national subsidies.

Finland's position in policy negotiations must always be exacting and bold. Finland has, during the time of our EU membership, interpreted and implemented EU directives at the expense of our own interests. We must now take care that EU decisions do not place additional burdens on our farmers. The Finns Party has consistently had policies supporting family farms with their security based on diverse agricultural production and operational functionality.

Scandals in the European food industry's raw material procurements have become quite well known to Finns – even as part of conversations over the dinner table. For this reason, food safety and supply security should be taken seriously and our farmers' proper living conditions and productive capacity ensured under all circumstances. We also, therefore, require that the origin of all foodstuffs be known to the public and the truthfulness of this information be verifiable.

6. ENERGY, INDUSTRY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The EU should use all means to remain competitive industrially. EU members need jobs in the industrial sector to climb out of the economic crisis and also to assure well-being.

Competitive industry needs competitive energy prices. The EU should work on increasing its own energy reserves. The Finns Party supports EU's scientific research projects to find new marketable energy sources. We also are in favor of working to develop any possibilities of domestic energy sources.

The minimization of harmful emissions is of high priority. Emission trading schemes and the setting of quantitative emission targets would not be meaningfully effective. The Commission's present climate and energy policies have resulted in industry slowdowns and unemployment. Outsourcing industrial processes to countries that face less regulation only results in worse pollution as well as environmental degradation in the global context. The EU's climate policy must also be concerned with social justice – it must be realized that high energy prices affect the poorest the most.

The Finns Party opposes carbon emission trading schemes as well as the delay mechanism known as 'backloading.' The Finns Party wants to renegotiate regarding the sulfur-directive - which raises the vital maritime shipping prices to an unfair level compared with other member countries.

Instead of an emissions trading scheme, the Finns Party is in favor of a payment system whereby those emitting more than agreed levels will pay set fees to a national or international fund. These funds can be used for development of production and technological means to lower emissions - and for other investments with similar goals.

7 THE EU AND IMMIGRATION

The Finns Party wants the administrative routines regarding immigration to be clarified. Processing times need to be shortened. The Party is in favor of the Dublin Regulation that prevents ‘asylum tourism’ as well as other similar practices. We are against the Regulation being relinquished when used in a broader context – not even under the pretext of economic crisis. We want to also further the development of the Frontex operations which are specialized in controlling the external boundaries of EU members with non-EU states.

The EU cannot, under any circumstances, dictate how much and what kind of immigration a member state will have. The Finns Party is opposed to any central decision-making regarding immigration and permanent movements. We also take a critical view of the Solidarity Mechanism where financial support is meant for voluntary humanitarian immigration.

The Finns Party is not at all satisfied with the present unstructured debate about immigration – the level and amount of content of this debate must be heightened and increased. The difficulty of the subject should not result in a form of social stigma. We should like to promote a national conversation on the matter of humanitarian immigration and the costs which it incurs. It’s important to clarify all related concepts and encourage rational discussion – for example, humanitarian and work-related immigration are two rather different issues.

8. BORDER CONTROL DEVELOPMENT AND PREPARATION FOR VISA-FREE TRAVEL

The Finns Party sees border control as a key part of society and the security and safety of its citizens. The EU should take responsibility for the highest level of control for the Union’s external borders. To prevent deceptive asylum seekers, the Eurodac data storage system for fingerprints should be further developed – Eurodac shows if the same person has applied in multiple countries for asylum. With the aid of Eurodac a EU nation may also see if persons staying illegally in an EU country are also trying to get asylum in another EU country.

The Finnish government and its authorities have begun preparations for the possibility of visa-free travel between Finland and Russia. The Finns Party believes it to be very important that these preparations be done very carefully. We do not think such decisions should be made during this coming election period but whenever such a decision is made, there should be ample preparation time before such visa-free travel begins.

The Ministry of Interior has estimated that if and when such visa-free travel begins, the number of border crossings will increase quickly – even to triple the amount prior to an agreement. The danger is the increase in the arrival of criminal elements to Finland. It is also thought that a visa-free system will not increase business related to tourism as people with disposable income will have funds to acquire visas anyhow.

If the case of a visa-free agreement being made for the Finnish-Russian border then the EU must participate in the costs of improving the border control facilities. Possible visa-free decisions that concern the Schengen area as a whole require that Finland be very strict as to how its interests are affected.

9. THE EU'S SOCIAL DIMENSION

The EU is expected by many to solve the many social problems of its member states. There are simply not the resources for any such achievement nor is there any mandate for it to do so. EU's budget is 150,9 billion Euros for the year 2013 and should not be increased.

Meaningful development of an inter-European social model would require complete integration of fiscal and tax policies. That is basically an impossibility. Besides many technical obstacles it is also a fact that Finland's social security policies are fundamentally different from those of most other member states. Coordination of these matters cannot work effectively.

The Finnish (and Nordic) residence-based social security system is not understood at the EU level as it is in the minority on a European scale. The EU system is centered rather on employment and causes the need for constant adjustment with regards to social policy in Finland. .

The residence-based Finnish social security system is being taken apart piece by piece and opening up benefits to those living outside Finland. The EU's Single Permit Directive changes policies concerning (among other things): cross-border health care, unemployment insurance systems and alien legislation. Most likely, this incremental approach has been chosen because a 'big bang' change would be politically impossible. The long-term goal for Euro social policy is to have an autonomous and unified budget in the name of solidarity – the meaning of which is to support those weaker countries not having sufficient public sector funds.

Social security is, in principle, within the sole jurisdiction of the individual member states and they are free to define and set their own policies. The EU, however, under the guise of internal market regulations, has extended regulatory authority in this area – partly with a significant role played by the Court of Justice of the European Union. Thus the issues of freedom of mobility and internal market competition regulations have become entangled with social security systems at the expense of a member state's authority for its own social policy.

The Finns Party believes that social justice is best served in Finland at the national decision-making level – without interference from the EU. Pension plans should be similarly decided on – now and in the future!

10 THE EU AND THE HEALTH POLICY

Health care in the opinion of the Finns Party is a concern at the national level and not to be complicated with internal market issues. Policies for health care in other European Union member states are intrinsically different and not suitable for use in Finland – a country that has a sparse and widely dispersed population. Any legislation regarding health care services and internal market competition considerations should be subject to modification via national exception provisions. The Finns Party supports the section of the Treaty of Nice of 2003 that stated that the social and health policies of member states were to be solely under national jurisdiction and authority.

The Finns Party supports the promotion of healthy living habits throughout the European Union but do not agree to sanctions and patronizing in this area at the EU level. Finland must also be active in applying for infrastructure and development funds.

11 TAX HAVENS AND THE GREY ECONOMY

The EU's main effort with respect to tax havens should be correcting tax and profit transfer policies to be in accord with acceptable business ethics and morality. The Finns Party sees this subject as one that definitely requires international cooperation – and where the EU as a super-national organization can be very beneficial.

The Finns Party wants the EU to be active in preventing the 'grey economy' and tax evasion. This area has more and more importance as European integration continues and the amount of financial transfers increases. It's morally and ethically unacceptable that taxes which are conscientiously paid in one country are transferred to countries where tax evasion is almost a way of life.

Estimates are that EU nations are losing up to 1000 billion euros a year due to the use of tax havens and evasion. The Finns Party supports wholeheartedly efforts and initiatives to eradicate these blights on society. There should be no free rides!