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## A transition Presidency ?

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An Inside view of Finland's second Presidency of the EU, July–  
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## Executive Summary

- Finland will be in charge of the EU Presidency for the second time in 2006. The Finnish EU policy manifests a combination of elite commitment and people's indifference. The security policy reasons which originally figured strongly behind EU membership still balance the consequences of public opinion. Unlike the other Nordic EU members, Finland lacks powerful EU critical parties. All major Finnish parties are in favour of Finland's EU membership whereas the Finnish EU critical parties are in a marginal position.
- The second EU Presidency contains a demanding agenda with the constitutional treaty, EU enlargement, the future of the ASEM dialogue and EU-Russia relations among its major challenges. The Finnish government emphasises also the implementation of the Lisbon strategy and progress in the framework of the Hague programme. Also the EU's crisis management capacity, whose constitutive decisions were taken during the previous Finnish Presidency, is back on the Presidency agenda as important steps will be taken both concerning the civilian and military capabilities.

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# Introduction

Finland celebrated the tenth anniversary of its membership of the EU just ahead of its second Presidency of the Union. The forms of membership are well settled. At the EU level Finland seems to have adapted smoothly to the challenging context of European integration. Contrary to expectations, long-standing Finnish neutrality has not constrained Finland's participation in an ever -deepening political integration. Finland became a committed member of the EU and joined the euro-area from the beginning, the only Nordic Member State to do so. To date, Finland has not had any major difficulties in contributing to the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy, its policy of military non-alignment notwithstanding. When it comes to the EU's political system, Finland's policy has been close to those of the original small Member States. Finland has been in favour of strong common institutions and the Community Method.

The domestic context has this far been favourable to participation in European integration and the policy changes it implies. Opinion polls have clearly shown that the Finns are not great Euro-enthusiasts. They have, however, approached EU membership primarily in terms of security policy. This approach has ensured a solid basis for Finland's involvement in the EU. It has also reinforced the Finns' respect in the government's choices on important EU-related issues such as the EMU. Politically, the EU is one of the items where national consensus prevails. The major political parties are all in favour of Finland's EU membership while Euro-sceptic parties on both ends of the ideological spectrum have a marginal position.

This presentation starts with a brief historical introduction to Finnish EU membership. Key elements of Finnish political identity will be outlined in order to bring the main lines of the current Finnish EU policy within a solid framework. Finland's EU policy and its popular support will then be studied in detail. The policy-lines of major Finnish political parties will be analysed separately and the paper will end with a brief analysis of the agenda of the Finnish EU Presidency in the second half of 2006.

MAP OF FINLAND



Source: CIA Country Profile



## KEY FACTS

<b>History:</b>	Finland was a province and then a grand duchy under Sweden from the 12th to the 19th centuries and an autonomous grand duchy of Russia after 1809. It won its complete independence in 1917. During World War II, it was able to successfully defend its freedom and resist invasions by the Soviet Union - albeit with some loss of territory. In the subsequent half century, the Finns made a remarkable transformation from a farm/forest economy to a diversified modern industrial economy; per capita income is now on par with Western Europe. As a member of the European Union, Finland was the only Nordic state to join the euro system at its initiation in January 1999.
<b>Area:</b>	<i>total:</i> 338,145 sq km <i>land:</i> 304,473 sq km <i>water:</i> 33,672 sq km
<b>Population:</b>	5,231,372 (July 2006 est.)
<b>Age structure:</b>	<i>0-14 years:</i> 17.1% (male 455,420/female 438,719) <i>15-64 years:</i> 66.7% (male 1,766,674/female 1,724,858) <i>65 years and over:</i> 16.2% (male 337,257/female 508,444) (2006 est.)
<b>Median age:</b>	<i>total:</i> 41.3 years <i>male:</i> 39.7 years <i>female:</i> 42.8 years (2006 est.)
<b>Population growth rate:</b>	0.14% (2006 est.)
<b>Net migration rate:</b>	0.84 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2006 est.)
<b>Ethnic groups:</b>	Finn 93.4%, Swede 5.7%, Russian 0.4%, Estonian 0.2%, Roma 0.2%, Sami 0.1%
<b>Religions:</b>	Lutheran National Church 84.2%, Greek Orthodox in Finland 1.1%, other Christian 1.1%, other 0.1%, none 13.5% (2003)
<b>Languages:</b>	Finnish 92% (official), Swedish 5.6% (official), other 2.4% (small Sami- and Russian-speaking minorities) (2003)
<b>Government type:</b>	Republic
<b>Capital:</b>	Helsinki
<b>Administrative divisions:</b>	6 provinces (laanit, singular - laani); Aland, Etela-Suomen Laani, Ita-Suomen Laani, Lansi-Suomen Laani, Lappi, Oulun Laani
<b>Independence:</b>	6 December 1917 (from Russia)

<b>Constitution:</b>	1 March 2000
<b>Legal system:</b>	civil law system based on Swedish law; the president may request the Supreme Court to review laws; accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction, with reservations
<b>Executive branch:</b>	<p><i>chief of state:</i> President Tarja HALONEN (since 1 March 2000)</p> <p><i>head of government:</i> Prime Minister Matti VANHANEN (since 24 June 2003) and Deputy Prime Minister Eero HEINALUOMA (since 24 September 2005)</p> <p><i>cabinet:</i> Council of State or Valtioneuvosto appointed by the president, responsible to parliament</p> <p><i>elections:</i> president elected by popular vote for a six-year term; election last held 15 January 2006 (next to be held January 2012); the parliament elects the Prime Minister who is then nominated by the president</p> <p><i>election results:</i> percent of vote - Tarja HALONEN (SDP) 46.3%, Sauli NIINISTO (Kok) 24.1%, Matti Vanhanen (Kesk) 18.6%, Heidi HAUTALA (VIHR) 3.5%; a runoff election between HALONEN and NIINISTO was held 29 January 2006 - HALONEN 51.8%, NIINISTO 48.2%</p> <p><i>note:</i> government coalition - Kesk, SDP, and SFP</p>
<b>Legislative branch:</b>	<p>unicameral Parliament or Eduskunta (200 seats; members are elected by popular vote on a proportional basis to serve four-year terms)</p> <p><i>elections:</i> last held 16 March 2003 (next to be held March 2007)</p> <p><i>election results:</i> percent of vote by party - Kesk 24.7%, SDP 24.5%, Kok 18.5%, VAS 9.9%, VIHR 8%, KD 5.3%, SFP 4.6%; seats by party - Kesk 55, SDP 53, Kok 40, VAS 19, VIHR 14, KD 7, SFP 8, other 4</p>

Source: CIA Country Profile

# 1 – THE DOMESTIC BASIS OF FINLAND'S EU POLICY

## 1. HISTORY: FROM COLD WAR NEUTRALITY TO EU MEMBERSHIP

During the Cold War, Finland adopted a cautious and reserved position towards West-European integration. Finland's foreign policy was dominated by a policy of neutrality and a specific treaty (Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance) with the Soviet Union. Until the beginning of the 1990s, the argument that Finland's EC membership would be incompatible with the policy of neutrality, proved to be the final obstacle to a more extensive Finnish integration policy. Changes affecting Finland's immediate neighbours – Sweden's application for EC membership followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 – led to a rapid change. From this time onwards, the political elites started to perceive full EC membership as a clear possibility. Unqualified support for membership came from two of the three largest parties: the Conservative National Coalition (KOK) and the Social Democrat Party (SDP) as well as from the minor Swedish People's Party (RKP). The agrarian Centre Party (KESK) - the third of the three large Finnish parties and the leading party in the cabinet at the time – adopted a more cautious position due to the criticism of membership that prevailed in its constituencies.

Finnish EU membership – and its later EU policy – can be explained by Finland's political identity as a starting-point (Raunio & Tiilikainen 2003, 147-149). The Finnish identity is essentially a small state identity which is based upon two historical traditions, a state-centric political tradition and the idea of Finland as a borderland. The state-centric tradition finds its roots in the way Finland came into being as a political entity, and later as a nation. Finland started to appear for the first time as a political entity when parts of the present Finnish territory were a dominion of the Swedish monarchy between the twelfth century and 1809. During the Swedish era, the structures of a centralised state were imparted to Finland. These structures became the political basis of an independent Finnish state when Finland was transferred from Swedish rule and became an autonomous Grand Duchy in the Russian empire in 1809.

This was fertile ground for nationalist conceptions which arose in the mid-nineteenth century and contributed to the idea of a Finnish nation. Later on, nationalism became a political project: Finland managed to take advantage of the 1917 revolution in Russia to declare independence. The early history of Finland leads to a state-centric tradition in Finnish political culture. Nationalism and the wars with the Soviet Union in 1939-40 and 1941-44 reinforced this tradition. State-centricism traditionally means a strong emphasis on values connected with the state, such as sovereignty and territoriality.

The other tradition, clearly connected to the first, is the conception of Finland as a border zone: exacerbated during the Cold War era, it is rooted in history. During earlier centuries, Finland was wedged between two hostile empires, Sweden and Russia, which fought several times over Finnish territories. For centuries, Finland has likewise been at the crossroads of Roman Catholic and Orthodox forms of Christianity. During the Cold War era, Finland's eastern

border became the dividing line between the two antagonistic blocs, the East and the West. Finland held a strange position between the blocs with its commitment to military neutrality with a specific treaty with the Soviet Union requiring wartime military cooperation, while, at the same time, belonging to the West in relation to the political and economic bases of Finnish society. The borderland tradition has stressed the insecurity of Finland's territorial borderlines and location.

These political traditions have had a crucial impact on Finland's foreign policy, which has been characterised by small-state thinking and a realistic world-view. This largely explains Finland's rapid change of policy after the end of the Cold War, and its ability to adapt itself to the demands of European integration. The identity which has formed a basis for Finland's EU policy gives expression to earlier traditions. For decades, reasons related to state security had hindered Finland from involvement in Western European integration. Later, the very same reasons seemed to demand Finnish EU membership. A new political environment was seen to require a new policy, and Finland changed, smoothly and pragmatically, its Cold War neutrality into a policy of firm commitment to European integration. Security policy arguments played a decisive role in the in the mid 1990s membership campaigns. Opinion polls show that security concerns featured among the most important arguments in favour of EU membership. The Finnish people thus seemed to conceive EU membership as an appropriate way of enhancing Finland's security in post-Cold War Europe.

Thus, Finland's security policy – as well as its willingness to see its European identity confirmed – pointed to the need for a policy of firm commitment to European integration. A cornerstone of this policy has been the support it enjoyed from all the major parties as well as of other key actors in Finnish society. When Finland was negotiating for EU membership, the agrarian Centre Party was in a leading position in the cabinet. The party put itself as a guarantee for the most important opposition against membership coming from its own constituencies, the farmers, and being related to the threat EU membership was seen to pose to farming in Finland. EU accession was quickly followed by a change of government after the general elections held in March 1995. The new coalition led by the Social Democrats and the National Coalition Party became known as the "Rainbow Coalition" due to its broad political base. In addition to the two main parties, the centrist Swedish People's Party and the Greens as well as the Left Wing Alliance of the far left participated in the coalition. The Rainbow Coalition – led by the very European Paavo Lipponen – remained in power for two terms of office as its mandate was renewed in the general elections of the spring of 1999. The coalition was responsible for many key Finnish integration policy decisions and its composition sparked off a very pro-European policy.

During the ten years of its membership, Finland's policy of firm commitment to integration has been reflected in an open and constructive attitude vis-à-vis the deepening of integration in general and in a willingness to participate in all dimensions of the project. In the mid-1990's, Finnish public opinion did not support joining the euro-zone. Attitudes, however, changed as a broad consensus was created among key social and political actors in favour of Finland's participation. Finland's active role in the new forms of the Common Security and Defence

Policy has been supported by the people as well as by the political elites. EU membership plays a major role in Finland's security policy and CFSP and CSDP have evidently become obvious key forums for Finland's participation in international cooperation.

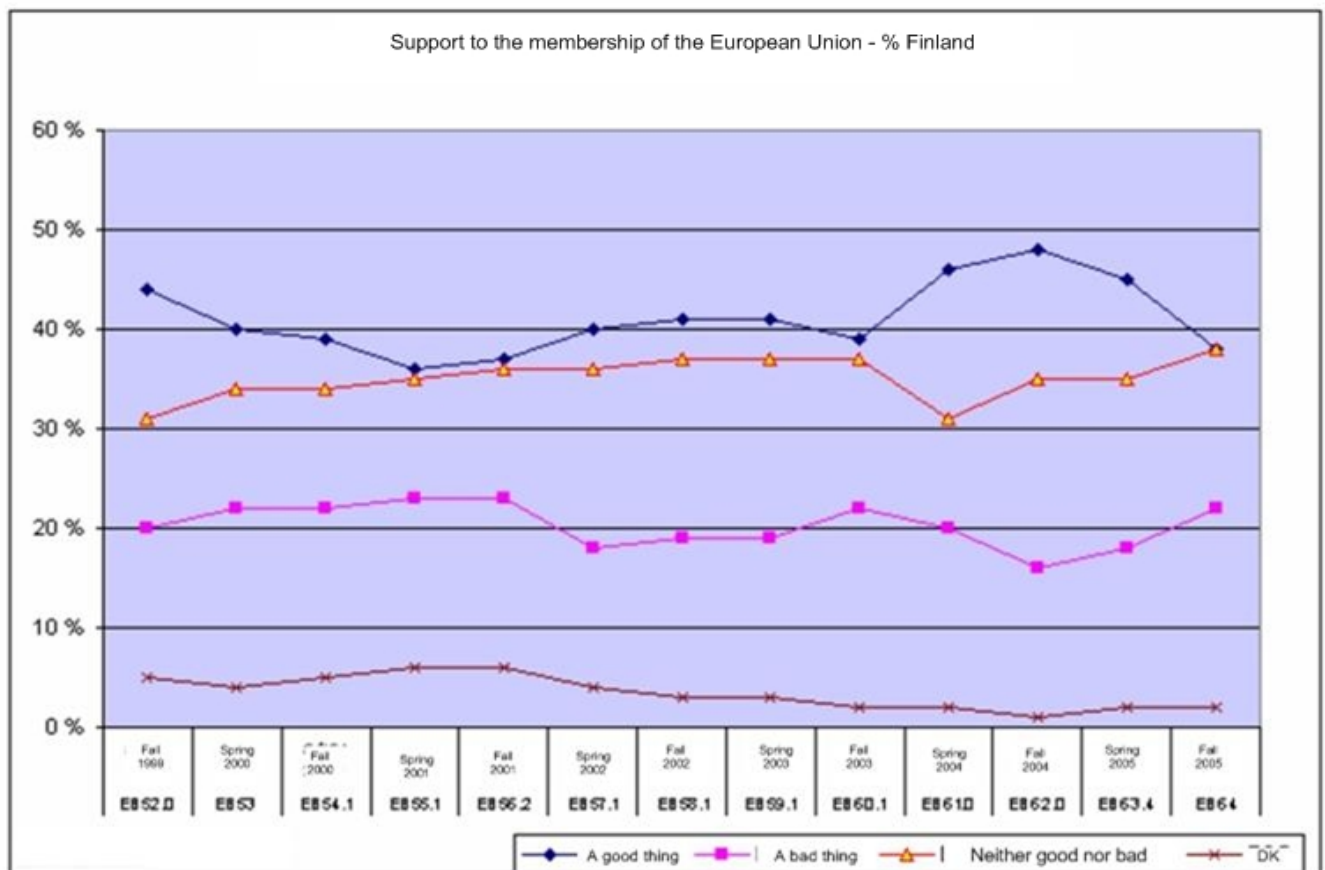
In addition to the policy of firm commitment, Finland's small state identity has translated into a community-centred approach to the development of the EU's institutional system. The Finnish government has consequently been in favour of the original community-method and the key role it gives to Community institutions like the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Court of Justice of the European Communities. This orientation has brought Finland together with the majority of other small and medium-sized Member States (Antola 2004, 42-45). During the early years of membership, the community approach remained circumscribed to limits, which would later be removed. Finland insisted on preserving the intergovernmental character of the CFSP, with unanimity for decisions in the Council. This demand originated in the belief that Finland's distinct national interests (e.g. relations with Russia) could best be safeguarded with the unanimity rule. However, this demand was swept away surprisingly quickly.

The approaching EU enlargement to Central and Eastern European countries brought the principles of political power in the EU's political system to the fore. Thus, Finland's small state identity was emphasised and the last restrictions to its community policy removed. In the preparations for the European constitutional treaty, protection of the community-method became one of the most visible Finnish goals. The community-method in this context referred to the original institutional logic of European integration, where the strong competences of community institutions were seen to balance differences among the sizes of the Member States. The value of the community method for small Member States was reinforced as institutional proposals coming from large Member States were interpreted as questioning its original logic. The then Finnish Prime Minister, Paavo Lipponen, frequently expressed his concern that a 'directoire' of large Member States was a negative alternative to the community-method.

In the general elections of 2003 the Centre Party became the largest party and formed the government with the SDP and the Swedish People's Party. The government has since summer 2003 been led by Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen (KESK) with Erkki Tuomioja (SDP) as its long-time foreign minister with experiences already from the second Lipponen government. The tone of Finland's EU policy has clearly changed – and become more passionless – but at the level of details the same policy of commitment and respect of community-method remains.

## 2. THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE FINNISH PEOPLE

Finland joined the EU with the approval of 57% of the population who had voted for membership in the second referendum in Finnish history. The country split along geographic lines: big cities and urban areas voted for membership while people in the countryside opposed it. In other respects the result corresponded to the model observed in other EU members: a positive attitude towards membership correlated with levels of income and education. Farmers formed the most unitary social group opposing Finland's EU membership, which was perceived as involving threats to Finnish farming. In addition, organised movements opposed to the EU warn against its encroachment of state sovereignty and democratic governance.



The Finnish state-centric political tradition and weak connections – in terms of political tradition and political thinking – to the idea of a unified Europe place Finland among those European countries where people remain fairly reluctant vis-à-vis European integration. Another factor explaining their indifference is the marginal role that EU issues play in the Finnish political debate. Electoral campaigns focus mainly on national and local issues. When EU related issues are discussed publicly, they are usually set in the framework of a detailed question linked to national priorities. Finnish membership has made the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy a hot favourite with political parties and the media. The EU's institutional development – and in particular the small states' position therein – has been a regular theme during the inter-governmental conferences. Another well-reported issue is the Finnish share of the Union's common budget, which creates negative feelings among the public irrespective of the relatively small share of Finnish net contribution.

Overall, public opinion concerning EU membership has proved relatively stable ever since Finland joined the EU. Eurobarometer studies have regularly placed Finland among the stragglers in all surveys measuring peoples' commitment to the EU. Some 40 per cent support Finland's EU membership while around 20 per cent oppose it. Finland is well under the average in its support of the EU. A relatively high level of 'neutral' opinions has been more characteristic of Finland than of the other 'old' EU members. This tallies with the low level of interest shown in EU issues in Finland.

Public attitudes have remained quite stable relative to the 1994 referendum. People with high education and income take a more positive attitude to EU membership. Men are more positive than women and people in cities and urban areas more positive than people in the countryside. Finnish farmers have started to see the EU in a more positive light than what they did at the time of Finland's accession.

Finnish opinion seems sharply divided over the perceived benefits of EU membership. The proportion of those who think the country has benefited and those who think it has not has fluctuated between 40 and 50 per cent. In this respect too, the Finns belong with the most negative Europeans, this time, however, in different company. With the exception of Spain, people in all large Member States share their critical view of EU membership benefits.

The fact that the Finns do not give priority to their own European identity can be explained in terms of Finnish political culture and the strength and exclusive structure of the nationalist doctrine. According to Eurobarometer studies an overwhelming majority of Finns identify only with their national community. The share of the population which acknowledges a European identity in addition to the national one remains small and the share of pure Europeanness is extremely small.

Finnish people, however, do not shun everything to do with the EU. A recent Finnish opinion poll showed that the Finns are fully conversant with their membership in the euro-zone and that the support for the common currency is even stronger in Finland than the support for EU membership (EVA 2006). Another opinion poll showed that the Finns strongly support the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (MTS 2005). The EU's constitutional

treaty was also well received, with more than 60 per cent of the people supporting it until the French and Dutch referendums. These results brought support for the Treaty down to approximately 50 per cent. The Finns have not, on the other hand, been very favourable to EU enlargement.

### 3. EU-OPINION IN THE FINNISH PARTIES

The Finnish party system is relatively fragmented. The three largest parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Finnish Centre Party (KESK) and the conservative National Coalition Party (KOK) form its stable core representing between 60-70 per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections. Next come the Left Alliance (VAS) and the Green League (VIHR) enjoying each a support close to 10 per cent. The former has its roots in the old communist party but has undergone a decisive modernisation. The Green League was established in the 1980s and took part in the broad based governmental coalition for seven years in the 1990s. The Swedish People's Party (RKP) with a support of around 5 per cent is a liberal party representing above all the interests of Finland's Swedish speaking minority. Irrespective of its size, it has traditionally been in the government. Furthermore, the Christian Democrats – a small party with a support of around 4 per cent – has experience of government.

**Table 1. The Finnish Parties: support and position towards Finland's EU membership and participation in the euro-zone**

PARTY	Support in general election 2003	Number of seats in Parliament	Party's position regarding EU-membership	Party's position regarding EMU
Finnish Centre Party KESK	24,7%	55	positive	negative
Social Democrat Party SDP	24,5%	53	positive	positive
National Coalition Party KOK	18,6%	41	positive	positive
Left Alliance VAS	9,9%	19	no position	positive
Green League VIHR	8,0%	14	no position	positive
Swedish People's Party RKP	4,6%	9	positive	positive
Christian Democrats	5,3%	6	negative	negative
True Finns	1,6%	3	negative	negative



In general terms, the main Finnish parties are favourable to Finland's participation in European integration. EU opposition is limited to a number of minor and marginal parties. The True Finns is the only one of these euro-sceptic extremist parties to be currently represented in the Finnish parliament. There are, however, clear differences in the integration policies of the main Finnish parties, which reflect divisions brought about by the impact of integration in Finnish society. The KOK is the most pro-European of all the Finnish parties. The SDP has also adopted a constructive attitude towards integration and supported Finnish EMU membership, as did also the main labour organisations. The supporters of the KESK are clearly less enthusiastic about European integration, which has driven the party to compromises in its integration policy. The KESK was the leading party in the cabinet when Finland was negotiating for EU membership and was returned to power in 2003 after eight years in opposition. The supporters of the VAS and the VIHR are divided in terms of their attitudes to integration but both parties participated in the Lipponen government with a pro-European (and pro-EMU) programme.

### **3.1. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT PARTY (SDP)**

The SDP is the larger of the two Finnish left-wing parties, with around 25 per cent support in general elections. Immediately after Finland had joined the EU, the SDP achieved its best result this far with 28.3 per cent of the vote. The SDP has been in the cabinet through the Finnish EU membership. The party was among the first parties to support Finnish EC membership in 1991 and has adopted a positive line towards integration ever since. The SDP's electorate is, however, more divided on EU issues than, for instance, that of the largest conservative party KOK, which has affected the SDP's political profile. The party has not given its unqualified support to the deepening of European integration. There were firm differences of opinion in the party elite over the advantages of the EMU for instance, but finally the party council made almost a unanimous decision in favour of Finland's participation in 1997. One important factor affecting the SDP's position was that the key Finnish labour organisations had arrived at the same positive conclusion on the EMU. Many members of the party elite have been critical of the Union's commitment to a defence policy and would like to steer the emphasis towards civilian crisis management, articulating a broad conception of security.

The internal cleavages of the SDP have underlined the roles of the leading party figures when it comes to the definition of the party line and profile. During his eight-year term of office of the Lipponen governments, the Euro-enthusiasm of the Prime Minister – and SDP party leader – affected decisively the SDP's line. In its political programmes the SDP was in harmony with its European sister parties and emphasised the Union's role in employment policy and in the field of social rights. The party has not adopted clear positions in its programmes concerning the EU's institutional development probably because of the differences of opinion existing in this respect among the party elites. But during the two Lipponen governments, the SDP gave its consent to the policy endorsing the Community Method and to an increasing share of majority decisions in the Council.

In the general elections of 2003, the Centre Party won and took over Premiership. The SDP remained as the other major cabinet party, but its chairman Paavo Lipponen decided to stay outside the cabinet. This gave more room for manoeuvre to the two other social democrats, Tarja Halonen and Erkki Tuomioja, who, since the 1990s had held key positions in Finnish EU politics but had remained in the background due to the dominant position taken by Premier Lipponen. Ms Halonen took charge of foreign affairs between 1995 and 2000 until she became Finland's president. She was then replaced by Mr Tuomioja who had been a cabinet member before becoming foreign minister, and who had taken an important position in the SDP's party elite and among its opinion builders. Neither Ms Halonen nor Mr Tuomioja shares the Euro-enthusiasm of Paavo Lipponen. Both have taken a more reserved position towards European integration and are more oriented towards global issues and, in the case of Ms Halonen, human rights questions.

### 3.2. THE CENTRE PARTY (KESK)

The KESK is the largest party representing the rural people and farmers in Finland. Irrespective of its efforts to change its profile – and to appeal to urban people – the party remains connected with traditional rural-conservative values. The support of the KESK in general elections has varied around 20 per cent.

Of the three large parties, it is the KESK, which faced the greatest challenge from Finland's EU membership. Large parts of its electorate are critical of Finland's EU membership. When Finland was negotiating for membership, the party was in charge of the Prime Minister as well as of the foreign minister's position. In this connection a couple of eminent figures of the KESK started to oppose the party leadership on its own anti-EU policy. Paavo Väyrynen, a previous foreign minister, who since 1996 has been a MEP, was one of those figures who caused a remarkable internal split in the KESK.

The decision to support Finnish EU membership was difficult to make for the KESK leadership due to the firm opposition of its voters. Prime Minister Esko Aho (1991-1995) postponed the party's official decision until negotiations for membership were concluded. The KESK lost the elections of 1995 and remained in opposition for eight years. During these years, the party adopted a reluctant position in EU matters without, however, turning into a purely anti-EU party.

The party's reluctance has, first, implied a more intergovernmental orientation with regard to the EU's system of competence, which contrasted with the pro-community stance of the two other major parties. The KESK opposed Finland's entry in the euro-zone and demanded that a referendum be arranged on the issue. It also called for such a decision to be taken along with the other Nordic EU members. The KESK has shown less willingness to extend the Union's competences to new policy-fields than the SDP and the KOK.

Back in the cabinet under the leadership of party-leader and Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen the KESK has adopted a more constructive policy-line vis-à-vis the Union's agenda in general. The Treaty establishing the European Constitution was negotiated on Finland's behalf under

the KESK leadership and the party elites did not have much difficulty in accepting the contents of the treaty, the preparation of which had started in the Convention under the leadership of the former Lipponen government.

The KESK is a member of the integrationist European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR), but it clearly does not share the federalist goals of the party and its political group in the EP. Many of the party's long serving MEPs – such as Paavo Väyrynen and Kyösti Virrankoski have taken a more critical attitude towards the EU than the KESK leadership in general, and they cut a somewhat odd figure in the ELDR group.

### **3.3. THE NATIONAL COALITION PARTY (KOK)**

The KOK is the major Finnish conservative party with its roots in the cultural nationalist Finnish Party in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For three decades, the party was in opposition for foreign policy reasons but was finally accepted in the cabinet in 1987. In the Aho cabinet (1991-94), Pertti Salolainen, then KOK party leader, held the post of minister for foreign trade and was one of the main figures in charge of accession negotiations. The KOK then participated in three subsequent cabinets until relegated to the opposition after the elections of 2003. The support of KOK has held around 20 per cent.

Its roots notwithstanding, the KOK is currently the most pro-European of all the Finnish parties. In its EU policy, the party leadership is followed by its electorate, 90 per cent of which were in favour of Finland's EU membership in the referendum. The party is the most united of the key Finnish parties in this respect. There are, however, clearly divergent orientations in the party elite as well as among its electorate when it comes to the EU's political system and its federalist development. The general policy of KOK has, consequently, remained ambiguous on these issues.

The internal divisions of the KOK were visible at the beginning of Finland's EU membership when many leading party representatives expressed their suspicions against the Union's federalist orientation, such as Sauli Niinistö, the party leader since 1995, and Ben Zyskowitz, a long-time MP and leader of the party's parliamentary group. The EMU and Finland's participation in the euro-zone unified broad party circles behind a pro-EMU policy. The rapid deepening of the CSDP has become one of the key elements in the party's integration policy. The CSDP has functioned as a substitute for NATO membership which has a clear support among the KOK's electorate. As the party leadership has not been willing to promote openly Finland's accession to NATO, participation in the EU's Security and Defence Policy came up as the second best option. The leading representatives of the KOK have demanded that Finland should stop calling its security policy a policy of non-alignment as the Constitutional Treaty creates a legal obligation for the EU members to defend each other.

The KOK belongs to the European People's Party (EPP). In general, the party and its MEPs have fitted well in the pro-integrationist party. However, at least when visiting their constituencies, most KOK MEPs are less federalist than MEPs from their sister EPP parties.

### **3.4. MIDDLE-SIZE PARTIES: VAS, VIHR AND RKP**

The Left Alliance (VAS) is a far left party whose support in elections fluctuates around 10 per cent. It focuses essentially on social equality and the Nordic welfare society. Its leadership has been balancing between an EU-critical electorate and cooperation with other Finnish parties favourable to the EU. The VAS participated in the two Lipponen governments and the party leadership succeeded in getting its membership's consent to the government's EMU policy, which large parts of the electorate opposed. The constructive EU policy of the VAS was, since 1998, personified by its dynamic party leader, Suvi-Anne Siimes who managed to keep the party unified irrespective of its serious internal divisions. Ms Siimes finally resigned during the spring of 2006 under heavy pressure, caused by conflicts on the EU within the party.

The Green League (VIHR) is the newest of the Finnish parties whose support has varied around 7 per cent. The VIHR is a centre-left party that has attracted dissidents from many parts of the political field. The party has moved from an originally critical line to an almost federalist ideology. Yet, in the case of the Finnish EMU decision, the party was split from the leadership down and arrived at a positive conclusion only after an internal vote. The change of ideology is an evident consequence of the party's international cooperation and of its European contacts. Heidi Hautala, a previous party leader was elected to the EP in 1996 and became an important intellectual source for the VIHR with a remarkable impact on the party's EU policy. In 2001 the VIHR was the first Finnish party to adopt a federalist statement. In the EP elections of 2004 the VIHR had a common programme with the other Green parties in EU countries.

The Swedish People's Party (RKP) is a centre-liberal party promoting the rights and position of the Swedish speaking minority and of Finland's bilingualism. Its support does not go much above 5 per cent but its position has been essentially reinforced through its constant participation in Finnish cabinets. The RKP has along with the KOK been one of the most pro-European Finnish parties. It has supported Finland's participation in the euro-area and been in favour of the community-method and the deepening of integration. The RKP's internal opposition is formed by its regional farmer wing in Ostrobothnia. The farmers were prejudiced against Finland's membership due to the risks they felt it implied for farming in Finland.

### **3.5. EU CRITICAL PARTIES AND MOVEMENTS**

The Finnish Euro sceptic parties are minor political movements on both fringes of the ideological spectrum. The Christian Democrat Party (KD) whose ideology expresses rural-conservative values is the most moderate of them. It is the successor of the Finnish Christian Union. Irrespective of its new name adopted in 2001, it does not share the strong European orientation of other Christian Democrat parties in Europe. The KD's support has varied around 3-4 per cent. It participated in Esko Aho's cabinet until it was forced out by its resistance to EU membership.

The True Finns is the other Finnish anti-EU party with seats in the Finnish parliament. It is the successor of the populist Rural Party and promotes nationalist-conservative values. Its support has been around two per cent, which in the 2003 general elections won it three seats in the parliament. True Finns opposes Finland's EU membership and also takes a critical attitude to the Union's enlargement and the Constitutional Treaty. With its charismatic leader Timo Soini the True Finns has gained more visibility than its electoral support would warrant.

There are three other political movements, which have fought recent elections on an anti-EU programme but without gaining seats in the Finnish or in the European Parliament. The first is the Finnish Communist Party whose support has remained under one per cent. The other two movements – The Union of Finland's Independence and Alternative to EU – were established in the early 1990s in order to resist Finland's accession to the EU. Both participated in the EP elections of 1996 with a joint support of 2.7 per cent.

### **3.6. ORGANISATIONS OF THE FINNISH CIVIL SOCIETY**

Finland's EU membership does neither form a key issue nor an important dividing line among the organisations of Finnish civil society. A majority of the most powerful organisations have come to terms with European integration. The interest organisations of Finland's business community value the internal market and their central organisation, the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK), takes a visible role in Finnish EU debate. Also the key labour organisations support Finland's EU membership as well as its participation in the euro-zone.

The Central Organisation of the Finnish Farmers (MTK) is the most significant representative of Finnish civil society opposed to EU membership. It has remained critical since Finland's accession. The MTK promotes the role of Finnish farming as a part of the CAP with a special attention paid to the demanding farming conditions in Finland.

The EU has gradually become a more normal political topic in Finnish civil society. Debate on the appropriateness of Finnish membership has been transformed into a more multifaceted debate which takes the organisations' collective interests as a starting point. Many Finnish interest organisations are currently cooperating at the European level and promoting their interests through a European setting. A multitude of actors, from Finnish towns and local communities to churches and universities have established their offices in Brussels in order to be part of EU decision-making processes.

## **4. CAMPAIGNS AND RESULT OF THE 2004 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS**

The Finnish parties' recent EU agendas and the salient points of the Finnish EU debate can be studied by analysing the 2004 EP elections. As these elections were only the third direct European elections in Finland, the parties' manifestos can be seen to be only gradually moving away from a national focus towards a more European agenda. The parties' electoral campaigns were thus very moderate and the programmes were general, trying to balance out national and European perspectives. In campaign events and debate, the national perspective often dominated. Finland's position on an enlarged EU, the most sensitive issues in the

constitutional treaty (defence and services of general interest) and the need for a referendum to be arranged on the constitutional treaty were among the key issues. Parties avoided taking a position on controversial issues of European policy like that of the Turkish EU membership or the enlargement of the EMU. A national aspect of the EU enlargement was, however, raised to the fore as parties disagreed over the need for a transition period that was established for free movement of labour. This time the media took its tasks more seriously than in the previous EP elections and urged parties and candidates to take clearer positions on current issues.

The ideological division between the European right and left formed the core issue of the campaigns of the KOK and the SDP. This theme clearly dominated the parties' campaigns during their final stage. This focus brought a clearly new *European* political dimension to Finnish campaigns as the discussion had so far been mainly over national issues. Both parties emphasised the ideological significance of EP elections. The KOK also stressed their role in the nomination of the Commission President as well as in the future size of the political groups in the EP. The political composition of the new parliament was of particular importance in Finland as the former Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen (SDP) was a candidate for the Commission Presidency. This item got a lot of attention.

Besides ideological differences, the KOK raised the Union's efficiency, the principle of subsidiarity, and Finland's active participation in all EU activities as their priorities in the campaign. The further priorities of the SDP related to social issues in Europe, workers' rights and the environment. These issues were, however, uncontroversial and their profile has remained low.

The VIHR focused on the EU's role in the management of globalisation. The theme was perceived to bear on trade, employment, and security policy as well as environmental policy. The VIHR also raised the issue of the maintenance of the welfare state. The VIHR thereby succeeded in challenging the cabinet parties as it was still unclear whether the government had succeeded in achieving its goals in negotiations on the Constitutional Treaty with regard to welfare services.

The leading cabinet party, the KESK defined the focus of its campaign in slightly more nationally oriented terms. The KESK emphasised the management of the Union's changes from the Finnish perspective but also economic growth and the reform of economic structures. It sought to underline the importance of a reasonable turnout in the elections. More than general European issues, however, a national agenda dominated in the KESK campaign. It consisted of issues like the living conditions of rural population, structural funds, and the protection of the special status of Finland's Northern regions.

**Table 2. EP elections in Finland 1996-2004**

Election	Turnout: FIN	EU average	Results support % (seats)
1996 Together with local election	60,3%	No election (Election 1994 56,8%)	Centre Party 24,4% (4) SDP 21,5% (4) Nat. Coalition Party 20,2% (4) Left Alliance 10,5% (2 ) Green League 7,6% (1 ) Swedish People's P. 5,8% (1)
1999 Between parliamentary and presidential election	31,4%	49,8%	Nat. Coalition Party 25% (4) Centre Party 21,3% (4) SDP 17,9% (3 ) Green League 13,4% (2 ) Left Alliance 9,1% (1) Swedish People's P. 6,8% (1) KD 2,4% (1 )
2004 No elections in near future	41,1%	45,7%	Nat. Coalition Party 23,7% (4) Centre Party 23,4% (4 ) SDP 21,2% (3 ) Green League 10,4%(1 ) Left Alliance 9,1% (1 ) Swedish People's P. 5,7% (1 )

The turnout in the 2004 EP elections was at 41.1 per cent. It showed a rise of 9.7 percentage points on the previous EP elections where Finland's turnout (31.4 per cent) was the third lowest in the EU. The turnout in the first direct EP elections arranged in Finland in 1996 was 60.3 per cent. However, these elections were run alongside local elections. The turnout is remarkably lower than for the national parliamentary elections (usually around 70 per cent, 69.7 per cent in the latest parliamentary elections in March 2003).

The result of the 2004 EP elections gave rise to a number of different interpretations among the parties. The result shows continuity for the three main parties if assessed in numbers of seats in the EP. If assessed in shares of votes, the KOK was the winner with a support of 23.7 per cent, which, however, meant a decrease of 1.6 percentage points from 1999 EP elections. The KESK came close to it with a support of 23.4 per cent and with an increase of 2.1 percentage points followed by the SDP with 21.2 per cent and an increase of 3.3 percentage points from previous EP elections. The VIHR was the great loser with its support falling from

13.4 per cent to 10.4 per cent. Five of the fourteen MEPs elected in 2004 were women and seven of them were new to the EP.

The Finnish results follow only in part the logic of “second order elections”. The victory of the opposition parties was less clear, which might reflect the relatively short time that has passed since the national elections (March 2003). Finnish voters were above all interested in protecting the level of social security and public welfare services, second in the promotion of Finland’s rights and opportunities and of Finland’s national interest. Questions related to the EU’s institutions or even to a Finnish Presidency of the Commission were deemed to be of less importance. The national orientation of the campaigns was, consequently, clearly rooted in public opinion.

## **5. THE FINNISH POLITICAL SYSTEM AND EU MEMBERSHIP**

The discrepancy prevailing between the positive EU attitudes of the Finnish parties and a reluctant public opinion can be explained through the role of EU membership as one of the issues where a political consensus is being striven for. In practical terms, this consensus building takes the shape of close interaction between the Cabinet and the Finnish Parliament, which also allows opposition parties to participate in the preparation of Finnish EU policy.

In the EU context, the need for internal political cohesion and functional efficiency and policy coordination is often associated with small states’ political systems. In order to maximise their international influence, small states are believed to have a greater need to guarantee the cohesion of their policy.

The Finnish system of policy preparation and coordination boasts these qualities considered typical of a small state. Finland can be counted among those Member States with a highly formalised system of EU policy coordination, the purpose of which is to bring about a coherent mode of national action. Its basic structures had been created in the context of Finland’s membership in the EEA in 1994. This system has, in fact, challenged the president-centred management of foreign policy by introducing a degree of decentralisation in the preparation of EU policy, which is firmly coordinated by the Prime Minister’s office.

By dividing the responsibility for preparation among all sectoral ministries, the Finnish system tries to make full use of all the competences available in its administration. This decentralisation has challenged the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in the Finnish case, used to have a monopoly over the administration of international affairs. The divided responsibilities are then coordinated through a very formal system integrating all levels of government, up to the Cabinet, under the guidance of a committee for EU affairs. Various sectoral perspectives are thereby wrought into a coherent policy.

At the level of political leadership too, Finland is true to type with a small state need to safeguard the coherence of its EU policy. Also at the level of political leadership Finland corresponds to the assumptions of the need of small states to safeguard their coherence in terms of EU policy. In the Finnish case, the cohesion of national policy was, however, only one of the two goals of this development: the desire to reduce presidential powers in foreign policy



and to move closer to the parliamentary systems of most other EU members being the other. The result is that Finland has currently a very streamlined national system, where the Prime Minister has become the real head of EU policy and also the government figure ultimately responsible to Parliament for this policy.

Finland sees the parliamentary dimension to her EU policy as an important asset. This is another feature more often found in the Union's small states rather than in the larger ones. From the beginning of Finland's EU membership a system of parliamentary scrutiny has existed which gives the parliament very concrete possibilities to become involved in the preparation– and control of national policy. The parliament the opposition parties with a channel to to keep up with the political preparation of EU policy. All EU legislation initiatives perceived as coming under the Parliament's legislative competence are brought to the Parliament's Grand Committee - a special committee for EU issues – or to the Foreign Affairs Committee where Cabinet members are regularly heard.

## 2 – THE FINNISH EU PRESIDENCY OF 2006

### 1. IN THE WAKE OF THE 1999 PRESIDENCY

The first Finnish EU Presidency in 1999 had a highly challenging agenda (Raunio & Tiilikainen, 2003, 116-122). Many major political projects in the EU reached a decisive stage during the Millennium's last Presidency, among which decisions on EU enlargement, including Turkey's candidacy status, the agenda of the 2000 IGC, and the decisions finalising the Union's new crisis management system. The Union's institutional turmoil posed further challenges to the Finnish Presidency. The Santer Commission had resigned a couple of months before the Finnish Presidency and it continued in the form of a caretaker Commission until the EP elections in June were held and a new Commission was nominated. The EU's political leadership limped.

The first Finnish Presidency has, however, been evaluated in highly positive terms. Irrespective of a challenging agenda and Finland's short experience of membership, everything seemed to function well. Public opinion in Finland was not much affected by its experiences of EU leadership, but Finnish political circles and administration gained in self-confidence.

As the second EU Presidency is drawing closer, both the EU's political climate and the domestic political landscape differ from those seven years ago. While the Union's institutional setting is more stable, its political agenda and leadership face new challenges. The EU's Constitutional Treaty, enlargement to Romania and Bulgaria, the Lisbon strategy and the EU's relations with Russia cast a shadow of insecurity over the Finnish Presidency.

Domestically, the challenges of the Finnish Presidency are more modest. The Vanhanen government has kept a lower EU political profile than its predecessors. The second EU Presidency is seen already as more of an every-day business than the first one, which rated as Finland's largest ever international project. The 2006 EU Presidency will no less serve as a final test of the government before the spring 2007 general elections, in particular as its ability to international cooperation has frequently been questioned by the opposition. Opinion polls show that even as officials prepare for the Presidency, the Finnish people's alienation from the EU is growing. By far the biggest domestic challenge of the Presidency will be to increase people's awareness of and involvement in EU issues in Finland before the gap becomes too wide.

The two Member States which are in charge of the Council Presidency in 2006, Austria and Finland agreed on a common working programme in December 2005. A programme more focused on Finnish priorities will be launched closer to the Presidency<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.government.fi/eu2006](http://www.government.fi/eu2006)

## 2. THE CONSTITUTIONAL TREATY AND EU ENLARGEMENT

Ever since the European Council decided to prolong the period of ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in June 2005 it has been evident that the Treaty would figure on the agendas of incoming Presidencies. The Austrian Presidency was expected to achieve a consensus among the Member States on how one should proceed with the approval of the Treaty. The Finnish Presidency is then expected to lead the enforcement of the agreed plan. The concrete possibilities of a Presidency to promote the approval of the Treaty are, however, quite limited as the conditions for ratification are subject to domestic political agendas. In this respect, the German and Portuguese Presidencies in 2007 might be much more critical as the French and Dutch elections will take place in 2007.

The role that the Finnish Presidency might come to play for the promotion of the Constitutional Treaty has, however, been raised in the domestic debate and it has had an impact on Finland's own policy towards the Treaty. The government decided to postpone its ratification after the decisions made in the European Council of June 2005. Later in the autumn, it issued a white paper on the Treaty to the Parliament in order to enhance the political debate. Pressure on the government grew to ratify the Constitutional Treaty and the government finally decided in May to submit a proposal for ratification to the Parliament. When making this decision, the government could rely upon the knowledge that the Treaty enjoyed sufficient support in Parliament. In the Parliament's vote on the white paper, the SDP, KESK, KOK and RKP parliamentary groups were almost unanimously in favour of the Treaty. The Greens were positive concerning the Treaty but did not support the white paper as they demanded a referendum on the issue. The government was looking forward to ratifying the Constitutional Treaty during the Finnish Presidency.

EU enlargement will form another constitutional issue during the Finnish Presidency. It has achieved exceptional visibility in Finland already before the Presidency due to the fact that it is the main brief of Finnish commissioner Olli Rehn. During the Finnish Presidency, the EU will decide on the date for Romania and Bulgaria's entry. The EU will continue accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia and assess – on the basis of a report from the Commission – Macedonia's capacity to start negotiations. EU enlargement has not thus far created any political controversies in Finland and the government has been able to support the decisions taken at the EU level without difficulty.

### 3. THE EU'S EXTERNAL POLICIES AND THE CFSP

The dynamism of the EU's external relations is well reflected in the Finnish Presidency agenda. The agenda involves summits or ministerial meetings with a number of the Union's major partners including Russia, the Mediterranean countries and the ASEM partners. In addition to the extension of these dialogues, the common security and defence policy has advanced and turned into concrete action in many fields from those the very initial phases where it was during the previous Finnish Presidency.

The EU's relationship with Russia traditionally retains Finland's full attention because of Russia's historical and geographical significance to her. The government has called for a greater unity in the Union's Russian policy. The legal and political base of EU-Russia relations will continue to be shaped during the second Finnish Presidency as reflection and preparatory work for replacing the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) will continue with, however, formal EU positions like a possible negotiating mandate more likely to be adopted in 2007.

One of the topics of the former Finnish Presidency will be relevant also during its second term, as a new political framework for the Northern Dimension programme should be put in place by the end of 2006 when its current programme expires. The Northern Dimension is intended to promote security and stability in the Union's northern region, as well as to build a safe, clean and accessible environment for all people there. The programme does not have the scope of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership but it has still been seen as providing the EU's northern Member States with a corresponding instrument to cope with the challenges around their borders.

The ASEM dialogue is a relatively new topic for Finland, which, as a small state, did not have a very extensive Asian policy before its EU membership. The ASEM summit has, however, gained a lot of visibility both due to its unique importance and the political problems the dialogue recently has manifested. The Helsinki ASEM summit is expected to evaluate the state of affairs of the dialogue on the basis of its first decade and assess its future perspectives. For this task, the ASEM foreign ministers commissioned an independent study from a Japanese and Finnish research institute. The partnership with Burma has been the key reason for political controversies which have undermined the functioning of the whole dialogue during the last few years and cast a shadow over the Helsinki Summit as well.

The CSDP will be a topical issue also during the second Finnish Presidency, as the Union will start its fourth military crisis management operation just before the Finnish term. This will be an operation supporting the UN mission (MONUC) in Congo during the country's parliamentary and presidential elections in late July. A review of the EU's military as well as civilian crisis management capacity will also be on the Presidency's agenda, as the Union's new Force Catalogue will be completed during the Finnish term. Its completion implies a scrutiny of those capabilities, which Member States have assigned to the EU's operations. This is all the more important as the Union's new rapid response force is supposed to achieve full operational capability from the beginning of 2007. A corresponding capability process is under way for

civilian crisis management. A conference arranged during the Finnish Presidency will assess the current state of capabilities.

#### **4. THE EU'S INTERNAL POLICIES**

Among the multitude of projects figuring on the agenda of the Finnish Presidency, the implementation of the Lisbon strategy has been raised as a clear Finnish priority. The government has stressed that although a majority of measures required for the implementation of the strategy and its new main thrusts, growth and employment, fall under the Member States' competences, the competitiveness strategy must be kept at the forefront in the Union. With regard to the reinforcement of knowledge and skills as a competitiveness factor, Finland's Presidency will emphasise broad-based innovation policy, technology, education and financing. Issues related to the Lisbon strategy will be at the core of the unofficial European Council meeting, which will be arranged in Lahti in October.

The development of the area of freedom, security and justice has been another priority among the Union's internal policies. The foundation for the current cooperation in the field was laid at the Tampere European Council during the previous Finnish Presidency. During the second Finnish Presidency, issues related to border control, harmonisation of the Union's asylum policy, combating international crime and terrorism as well as the Union's international relations in the field will come to the fore.

Energy is one of those issues which will figure on the Presidency agenda in various contexts and whose importance has increased also from the Finnish point of view. Issues related to the internal energy market, security of supply, sustainability of energy production and consumption, and nuclear issues will be dealt with. The Union will continue cooperation and dialogue on energy issues with Russia, South-East European countries and OPEC.

Achieving a decision on the REACH regulation (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals) is another national priority as the European Chemicals Agency will have its seat in Finland. A prominent position is also given to intellectual property issues as Finland will host a conference on "Content and Copyright Policy" which will take a closer look at different aspects of market development and allow for an analysis of policy-making for the audiovisual, cultural and copyright fields.

# CONCLUSIONS

Finland's ten-year experience of EU membership has made membership a matter of routine. The initial enthusiasm has waned, forms of Finnish parliamentarism adjusted to life in the EU and even earlier apprehensions over European relations with Russia have become business as usual. The Finnish policy-line remains loyal to its initial principles, i.e. a firm commitment to integration and to the community mode of decision-making. These principles however are promoted less actively than a few years ago. Finnish peoples' decreasing interest in EU issues is noticeable, but until now there is no sign that these attitudes would turn to the benefit of the Finnish anti-EU parties. EU policy simply does not determine peoples' political choices.

The timing of the Finnish 2006 EU Presidency is less critical from the point of view of the most challenging issues on the EU's agenda. Both the Constitutional Treaty and EU enlargement could throw up surprises although there is no expectation that the Finnish Presidency would have to take major steps on these two issues. In Finland it is without doubt hoped that the Finnish Presidency will end in happier conditions in EU-Russia relations than the previous one, which ended with the EU posing sanctions her neighbour.

# Annex 1: The Finnish Government

This sub-section introduces the Ministers of the Finnish Government. Photographs of the Ministers for editorial use can be found in the photo archive under Media Services.



Prime Minister  
Matti Vanhanen



Minister of Finance  
Eero Heinäluoma



Minister for Foreign  
Affairs  
Erkki Tuomioja



Minister for Foreign  
Trade and  
Development  
Paula Lehtomäki



Minister of Justice  
Leena Luhtanen



Minister of the  
Interior  
Kari Rajamäki



Minister of Regional  
and Municipal  
Affairs  
Hannes Manninen



Minister of Defence  
Seppo Kääriäinen



Coordinate Minister  
for Finance  
Ulla-Maj Wideroos



Minister of Education  
Antti Kalliomäki



Minister of Culture  
Tanja Saarela



Minister of  
Agriculture  
and Forestry  
Juha Korkeaoja



Minister of Transport  
and  
Communications  
Susanna Huovinen



Minister of Trade  
and Industry  
Mauri Pekkarinen



Minister of Social  
Affairs and Health  
Tuula Haatainen



Minister of Health  
and Social Services  
Liisa Hyssälä



Minister of Labour  
Tarja Filatov



Minister of the  
Environment  
Jan-Erik Enestam



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