

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS POLICY 2009-2011****1. Principles**

- *International activities under the Ministry of the Interior are based on its sector's own policy guidelines and those of Finland covering EU and other international affairs.*
- *The European Union, together with its Member States and bodies, is the most important forum for international activities in the sector. International objectives are pursued primarily through the EU; however, account is taken of the role of the UN, its subordinate bodies and other international organisations, particularly the Council of Europe, and their impact on the sector.*
- *In EU level cooperation, the aim is always to seek an outcome which promotes the Government's goals and brings operational added value.*
- *In the drafting of EU legislation, efforts are made to ensure adherence to the principles of the rule of law and the clarity and feasibility of regulation. Finland aims to have the practices and principles it has found useful and effective adopted at EU level.*
- *Those acting under the Ministry conduct themselves in a determined, active and cooperative manner at all levels in order to achieve the international objectives set for the sector. In this way, they will establish good relations both between institutions and between people.*
- *In international cooperation, particularly that being conducted outside the EU, emphasis is placed on the development of practical and mutually beneficial cooperation between authorities.*
- *The Ministry and the sector as a whole pay constant attention to the development of bilateral cooperation with Russia and regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea region in particular.*

2. Priorities

Treaty of Lisbon and the new multi-annual programme in the area of freedom, security and justice

The reforms introduced by the new EU Reform Treaty – the Treaty of Lisbon – are to be fully utilised in enhancing and strengthening cooperation in the field of EU justice and home affairs.

Finland aims to include its key priorities in a concrete Action Plan to be drawn up on the basis of the new multi-annual programme in the area of freedom, security and justice, namely the Stockholm Programme. This will be done by lobbying particularly the Commission and forthcoming Presidencies during the preparation of the Action Plan.

Active, comprehensive and consistent migration policy

The sector's goal is for the EU to develop and implement effectively an integrated and comprehensive migration policy in accordance with the guidelines set out by the European Council.

In realising this objective, particular account is to be taken of the Government objectives for promoting labour immigration, combating illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings, further developing asylum policy and better coordinating migration policy with development, human rights and employment policies.

Attention is to be focused on respect for human and fundamental rights and compliance with international protection obligations; this will be a crosscutting objective in the comprehensive EU migration policy.

Measures are to be taken to promote the further development of regulation on legal immigration, with the aim of harmonising permit procedures.

Active measures are to be taken to implement the common European asylum system. The aim is to make this system as simple as possible and improve legal protection. What is needed is a single procedure, common grounds for providing international protection and a uniform protection status.

The functioning of the Dublin system is to be improved so as to take better account of aspects related to international protection and legal protection.

Measures are to be taken to promote closer cooperation between the EU and UNHCR in refugee and asylum issues. In further developing the common European asylum system, emphasis is to be placed on the importance of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, other important human rights treaties and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

Active measures are to be taken to develop resettlement activities within the EU. Both the number of Member States offering resettlement and the number of resettlement places in the EU should be increased in cooperation with UNHCR.

Efforts are to be made to promote the common return policy, aiming at just and effective joint action that respects human dignity in issues related to return. The importance of practical cooperation with third countries is to be stressed in return issues.

We shall participate actively in the development of integration policy within the EU, taking particular account of the interface between integration policy and promotion of labour immigration and of two-way integration. Furthermore, emphasis is to be placed on the importance of measures aimed at promoting equality and preventing racism and discrimination to the EU migration policy as a whole.

It is important to improve the consistency of migration and development policies at EU and global levels, particularly by participating actively in the work undertaken within the framework of the Global Forum on Migration and Development. The aim of this work is to share information and research methods.

Trafficking in human beings

The sector works to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings both within the EU and globally.

Particular attention is to be paid to the implementation of the Action-Oriented Paper on strengthening the EU external dimension on action against trafficking in human beings and to the measures against human trafficking outlined in the Stockholm Programme. In addition, we shall take part in the preparation of the new EU Action Plan on trafficking in human beings in 2010 and in its implementation later on.

Cooperation is to be continued within the framework of the OSCE and the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (TF-THB) of the Council of the Baltic Sea States to improve the identification of and assistance to victims and to strengthen international cooperation between authorities and NGOs in the field of human trafficking, for example.

Those acting under the Ministry shall participate actively in international cooperation related to human trafficking, with the aim of strengthening cooperation between authorities and with NGOs, sharing best practices and creating networks. In addition to cooperation with the OSCE and the Council of the Baltic Sea States, we shall engage, as necessary, in other international cooperation against human trafficking, for example within the framework of the UN and the Council of Europe.

Russia

We shall take an active part in the preparation of EU home affairs related to Russia on the basis of the road map for the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice between the EU and Russia and the action-oriented paper adopted under the Finnish EU Presidency.

Efforts are to be made to ensure that the new EU-Russia framework agreement which replaces the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement contains comprehensive provisions on justice and home affairs which enable effective cooperation between the parties.

Measures are to be taken to ensure smooth and sound bilateral and regional cooperation between all authorities dealing with home affairs and the equivalent authorities in Russia.

Schengen cooperation

The new Schengen Information System (SIS II) should be made operational as soon as possible. Finland is to make sure that it keeps to the jointly agreed timetable. We shall participate actively in finding solutions to the SIS II related problems raised by the Commission, the General Secretariat of the Council or other Member States.

The Schengen evaluation system that makes use of the expertise of Member State officials is to be maintained and further developed, for example by enabling unannounced inspections.

We shall be actively involved in different cooperation and twinning projects that aim to promote a more effective implementation of the Schengen acquis and to improve the authorities' situational awareness.

All new Member States joining the Schengen area, and those already part of it, are consistently required to implement the Schengen acquis in full. To ensure this, we shall participate actively in the work and training of the groups evaluating the implementation of the Schengen acquis.

The Schengen evaluation system helps to ensure that standardised methods based on best practices, equipment, a sufficient number of personnel, organisations and the infrastructure are maintained in the current Schengen countries and that the equivalent capacities are built in the future Schengen countries.

Improved border management

Closer cooperation with the Border Service of the Russian Federal Security Service ensures a stable and well-managed situation at our eastern border. Constant communication at all operational levels helps to provide good situational awareness and an opportunity to influence changes proactively.

EU border management system

Member States continue to have sovereign powers over and responsibility for border control on their section of the external border. This means that they can decide independently on resources, methods and command responsibility. Border control is organised in accordance with European Union legislation, the concept of integrated border management and the Schengen standards.

Personnel and equipment are to be made available to assist a Member State facing pressure from illegal immigration. This assistance is to be coordinated by Frontex and partly funded by the European Union. Member States also receive assistance from the External Borders Fund to help them further develop border control.

There is a will to create an independent operational capacity for Frontex for the purpose of carrying out long-term operations in maritime areas and also for dealing with such unexpected situations where a Member State facing pressure from illegal immigration can be provided with quick assistance if necessary. The basis for the Agency's operational capacity will be resources allocated by Member States and equipment acquired for the Agency. The assistance, personnel and equipment provided by Frontex are to be managed by the Member State concerned when they are used in its territory.

The EU cooperates closely with third countries by means of bilateral and multilateral cooperation structures and cooperation structures coordinated by Frontex. The involved cooperation partners are neighbouring states and countries of origin and transit for illegal immigration.

The transparency of action and the situational awareness of Member States will be improved by developing and maintaining a comprehensive situation picture of EU border security.

Developing EU maritime policy

In further developing the EU maritime policy, account is to be taken of the future development of the integrated border management system. All potential synergies between the border management system and the maritime policy are to be exploited at both EU and national levels. Efforts are to be made to create a joint situational awareness system for the EU maritime areas; the system, used jointly by all authorities, will be employed in the fight against illegal immigration and cross-border crime, maritime surveillance, fisheries control and environmental protection. Measures are to be taken to reduce the overlapping functions of authorities by broadening the scope of operation of coastguards in maritime areas.

Maritime search and rescue

Maritime transport continues to grow, thereby increasing the risk of maritime accidents in the Baltic Sea. International operational cooperation both between the Baltic Sea countries and within the European Union is to be enhanced and deepened, with the aim of preventing and combating serious and large-scale accidents. In this work, account is to be taken of international legislation and recommendations (IMO, ICAO). Measures are to be taken to further develop maritime search and rescue and the related training by maintaining active relations with the leading organisations in the field.

Fight against terrorism

Although the threat of terrorism is not great in Finland, we shall together with other Member States participate in counter-terrorism cooperation in the framework of the EU. This cooperation increases the effectiveness of the actions of the authorities in preventing, detecting and investigating terrorism. The powers of the authorities are to correspond to the seriousness of the threat combated, and be exercised with respect for human rights.

Preparation of national positions on combating terrorism is to be coordinated effectively, pursuing greater transparency in the preparation and processing of matters.

In preparation of matters relating to terrorism, greater attention is to be paid to the wider impact on other authorities and partners, particularly in the protection of critical infrastructure and preparation of counter-terrorism strategies and action programmes.

Enhanced operational cooperation and exchange of information between law enforcement authorities

We shall support the launching of the work of the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) and take part in its work in line with the priorities important to Finland in order to enhance operational cooperation.

Priority is to be given to monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the existing EU instruments.

The information exchange solutions developed within the European Union should be technically viable. The preference will be for databases in Member States to be searchable through an information network rather than have centralised databases created, for comprehensive and effective joint use of information systems, and for new functions to be added to the existing information systems. To strengthen cooperation between the law enforcement authorities of Member States, priority is to be given to initiatives aimed at removing technical barriers to information exchange. In the development work, account is to be taken of the requirements of both EU and national data protection legislation. The aim is to ensure data protection through field assessments.

New forms of operational cooperation which are made possible by Prüm arrangements are to be utilised together with other Member States. The Council Decision based on the Treaty of Prüm is to be effectively implemented at national level.

Steps are to be taken to ensure that consideration is given to Finland's views when carrying out an Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) and other threat assessments, and when preparing EU priorities determined on the basis of these assessments. Steps are also to be taken to ensure national implementation of the priorities, if necessary, together with neighbouring countries and regional organisations.

In all international cooperation and development of new forms of cooperation, emphasis is to be placed on the benefits brought to operational activities by cooperation between several authorities.

Civilian crisis management

We shall participate actively in the development of EU civilian crisis management and improve practical operational capability to respond to international crisis management challenges and principles and working methods of civilian crisis management cooperation.

The National Strategy for Civilian Crisis Management adopted by the Government is to be effectively implemented. An internationally credible civilian crisis management level is to be maintained by ensuring sufficient resources for the Crisis Management Centre Finland, the Ministry's civilian crisis management duties and the preparation of EU-related matters.

Finland's role as a visible and influential actor in international civilian crisis management cooperation is to be ensured on the basis of the Report on Finnish Security and Defence Policy (to be drawn up in accordance with the Government Programme) and the National Strategy for Civilian Crisis Management.

Enhanced civil protection cooperation

General capabilities for cooperation and the operational capacity for providing and receiving assistance in case of major accidents are to be further developed in the framework of the EU and key international organisations. Efforts are to be made to ensure similar effective cooperation arrangements with neighbouring countries.

We shall participate in civil protection operations coordinated primarily through the Community Civil Protection Mechanism, and ensure trained personnel and material and administrative readiness for this.

The importance of the coordination of EU and UN civil protection measures is to be emphasised in order to avoid duplication of effort. When preparing national positions, account is to be taken of viewpoints of all relevant actors.

SOLID Funds and use of EU funding

When making decisions on EU financial support, those acting under the Ministry aim to implement common EU objectives and achieve the best possible balance between transparent and verifiable implementation of common legislation and financial contributions from the EU budget, taking account of the principles of the initiative on extended European solidarity launched during the Finnish EU Presidency.

We shall make full use of the potential of the SOLID funding available under the EU Framework Programme on Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows, other EU justice and home affairs funding, the European Neighbourhood Policy funding and the Civil Protection Financial Instrument. Sufficient administrative support is to be ensured for the use of EU funding.

In decision-making on general principles for the use of the justice and home affairs funding, we strive to support projects aimed at strengthening the implementation of the Schengen acquis and Member States' capacity to implement legislation on the basis of the principle of solidarity.

Involvement of experts in international assignments

The Ministry's recommendations on the involvement of experts in international assignments are to be brought to the attention, and followed by, the whole sector. The aim is to get experts from the sector assigned to Finnish missions, EU institutions and international organisations in posts of key importance to its activities and objectives. Full use is to be made of the expertise of those returning to Finland.

3. Implementation and follow-up

Information on all major decisions and projects relating to the Ministry's international activities is to be provided as openly as possible.

In order to implement this policy, the Ministry's departments are to prepare more detailed documents in their respective fields in cooperation with the International Affairs Unit and, if necessary, with other departments.

More detailed principles are to be drafted and adopted regarding cooperation with Russia and the Baltic Sea countries.

The Ministry's management groups are to discuss and, if necessary, update this document once a year.