



**Akava**

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# *Akava's objectives for the European Parliament elections*

## **Introduction**

Akava supports a strong European Union. Our objective is to create a competent and educated Europe backed by solid economic growth as well as a functional internal market and mobility. Europe must invest heavily in science, research and sustainable development. We emphasise means of European co-operation that will create significant added value for citizens.

Along with its EU membership, the collaboration with the UN and NATO are important for Finland. There is value in continuing and furthering this collaboration. The benefits provided by the European Union include shared values, peace and a global channel for advocacy. The Akava Works survey (2019) assessing the macroeconomic impact of EU membership for Finland, as drawn up by Oxford Economics, showed indisputable economic benefits.

It is Akava's view that we need a strong and functional EU. Such an EU will create future opportunities, fuel growth and support democracy, citizens' rights and a green future. The EU can reinforce security, including food security. Strong support for Ukraine must continue.

In terms of EU matters, a more proactive approach and more discussion is needed in Finland concerning our own visions and initiatives. If we want to reject something, we must be able to offer viable alternative solutions. Finland should adopt a proactive and constructive approach that links our own interests to the general interests of the entire EU.

In this statement, Akava presents several practical proposals that the EU should put into practice in the next five-year term of the European Parliament and Commission.

## The EU must actively contribute to working life

Free movement within a common labour market requires unified ground rules. The area of artificial intelligence, for example, calls for heightened focus on innovations and job creation, as well as data protection, employee supervision and copyright issues. **Non-competition clauses and targeted harassment are cross-border issues, and no initiative has yet been introduced by the Commission to deal with psychosocial risk factors.** Current projects concern platform work, remote working, a framework for informing and consulting employees, and the implementation of the Equal Pay Directive.

Further facilitation of mobility is needed; for those seeking employment in other Member States, the right to receive unemployment security should be extended from 3 to 6 months. When providing remote healthcare or psychological services from one Member State to another, the responsibilities are unclear and, for example, the EU patient directive needs to be further specified.

## The EU is a community of values

The EU is a community of values and a peace project that is built on democracy and shared principles and ethics. The situation concerning rule of law has deteriorated in certain Member States, despite the strengthening of EU instruments intended to advance rule of law. Ultimately, any country that has committed violations in these matters must lose EU funding, the position of presidency and the right to vote, and eventually, must withdraw from the Union. Furthermore, it has become more apparent that **the freedom of research, education, science and art must be explicitly recorded as a rule of law criterion.**

## Research and education as EU focal points

Jobs and education in the EU of the future will be directly linked to competence. This has become a cross-cutting theme in many of the Union's competition projects. The Erasmus+ programme is considered a significant success story, and the Horizon research programme as well as the new Digital Europe project have added considerable value. Additionally, European research and education areas are being established. The importance of competence and expertise has risen in recent years within the EU and this trend needs to continue.

There is still a long way to go before reaching the point at which RDI investments will be 4 per cent of the GDP. Erasmus+ studies must be fully recognised as part of higher education studies, the shrinking of the language palette must be halted and the international mobility of Finns for study purposes should be increased. Not a single EU university is near the top of the current TOP20 list of the world's universities. So there are definitely challenges to overcome.

In order to meet these challenges, **the share of the EU budget allocated to research and education must be significantly augmented.**

## The EU as a driving force of strong economy: further trade and a single internal market

The European Union plays a vital role as a creator of jobs and growth through various instruments, such as new trade agreements and its internal market.

**More trade agreements** (for example, with the United States, India and South America) **are needed as well as a more intense internal market** as regards, for example, the circular economy and services. We don't need further inflated state aids.

On the other hand, the reform of the EU's economic rules must lead to healthier public finances, higher productivity, a high level of employment and sustainable growth. It is not possible to support growth through permanent stimulus, so there must be clear limits on the public debt and budget deficits of public economies.

EU funding and market solutions can also have a positive impact on investments and infrastructure in Finland. This is true, in particular, in the areas of energy and digitalisation.

## Finland as a motivator for the EU's green transition

The EU's Green Deal, signifying green transition through clean energy, reduces our overall dependence on dictatorships and creates great growth and job potential in the Finnish economy. The EU's climate policy must contribute to creating markets that solve environmental crises, and effective existing market solutions must not be broken. Special national characteristics must be taken into account, for example in forestry matters, without jeopardising the objectives of combating climate change and biodiversity loss.

**Finland's policy regarding EU's green transition must be to halt biodiversity loss and achieve carbon neutrality by 2035. With these objectives,** we could accelerate and boost the Union's future decisions.

Equally important is the so-called just transition. For a successful transition, investments in education and continuous learning are a necessary prerequisite that must be met and from which Finland would derive benefit.

## In addition

- The strengthening of the EU Health Union must be continued, particularly for the purpose of preventing cross-border health threats. The EU needs a mental health programme.
- Finland should adopt a positive attitude towards the development of the Union by, for example, increasing qualified majority voting and the EU's own resources.
- EU institutions are about to experience a massive outflow of Finnish staff due to the wave of retirement, and there have been very few new Finnish employees to replace them. This development must be reversed.