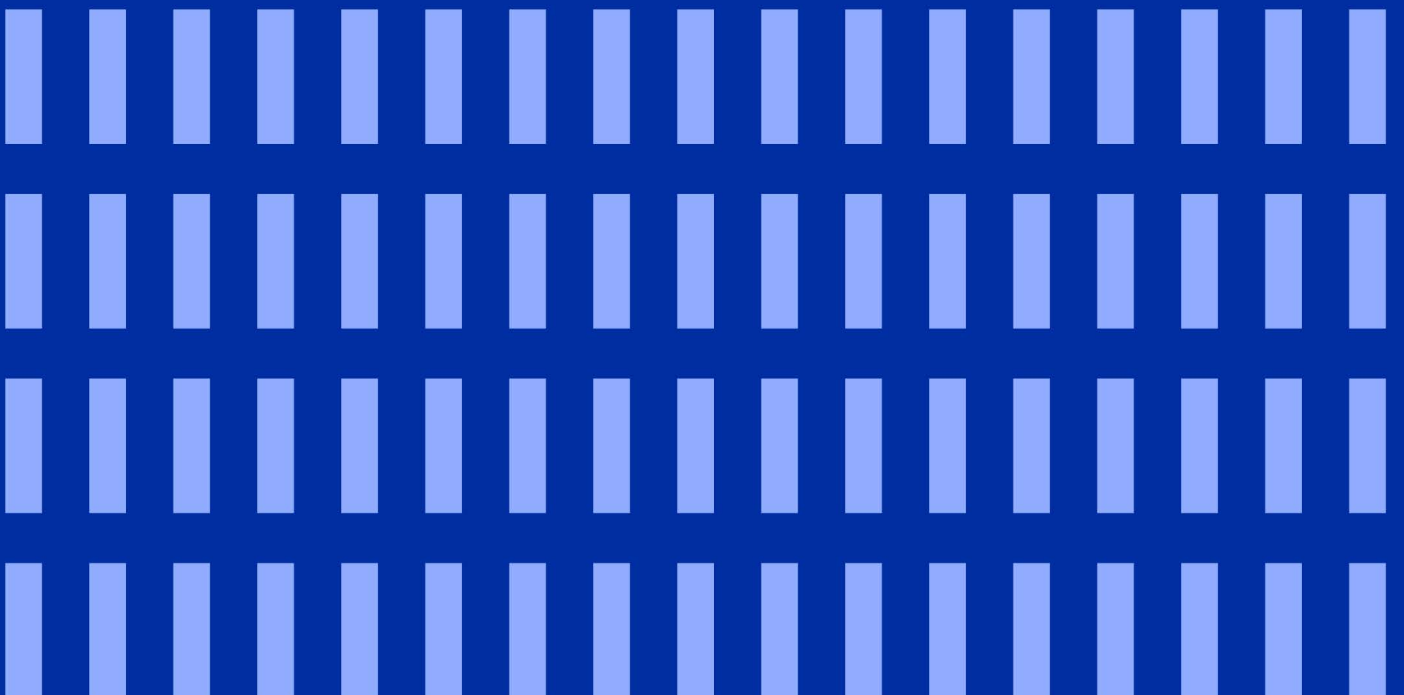


Finland's Programme for OSCE Chairpersonship 2025



Foreword

In 1975, the Helsinki Principles were adopted at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). These principles aimed to end wars in Europe, solidify the borders of European states and promote respect for human rights. The Helsinki Final Act was revolutionary at a time when the Cold War and the Iron Curtain divided Europe in two, and ideological confrontation was at its peak.

Consensus was reached as the Helsinki Principles represent the essence of humanity: the longing for freedom, co-operation, and peace. According to Minister Jaakko Iloniemi, the goal had merely been to slightly open the Iron Curtain; no one seriously thought about tearing it down. Yet, that is exactly what happened, and the spark of hope ignited in people by the CSCE contributed to this achievement.

In November 2021, participating States decided that Finland will Chair the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2025. Just three months later, Europe's security faced an

irreversible transformation when Russia launched its war of aggression against Ukraine, in violation of international law and the Helsinki Principles.

Some might think that Russia's actions rendered the Helsinki Final Act meaningless. However, the opposite has happened. People in Europe now understand the importance of freedom even more clearly than before. As the OSCE Chair, we must hold the torch of hope high, despite efforts by Russia and others to extinguish its flame.

Our task as Chair is to ensure that our shared principles are not merely memories of the past but continue to live and guide us through these difficult times. The people of the participating States deserve to live in freedom, peace and safety, working together to build Europe's future.

If the Helsinki Principles did not already exist, they would need to be written now.

Elina Valtonen

Minister for Foreign Affairs





US President Gerald Ford signing the CSCE document at the Finlandia House in Helsinki in August 1975.

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The Helsinki Final Act was a turning point for European security. As a result, 35 states – including those on the opposing sides of the Cold War – committed to following shared principles that laid the foundation for the European security architecture. These principles gave rise to the idea of the spirit of Helsinki: a belief that European states can resolve their differences through diplomacy, not through wars.

In 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine undermined the European security order. Russia violated the Helsinki Principles: inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes, and other key values.

When a state challenges the foundations of our common security, we must rise to defend them even more vigorously.

Right now, the Helsinki Principles are more important than ever. They are a reminder of what we can achieve through cooperation and trust – and what is at stake if we fail to defend them. Now, more than ever, these principles need their defenders.

Helsinki Principles

1. Sovereign equality
2. Refraining from the threat or use of force
3. Inviolability of frontiers
4. Territorial integrity of States
5. Peaceful settlement of disputes
6. Non-intervention in internal affairs
7. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
8. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples
9. Cooperation among States
10. Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law

Resilient Together

The principles and commitments of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) promote people's opportunities to live in freedom in democratic states governed by the rule of law. A stable and resilient society recognises plurality and extensive rights of participation.

As OSCE Chair, Finland will focus on ways for the participating States to strengthen their resilience. The security situation in Europe has not been this unpredictable or unstable since WWII. Supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence is at the heart of the OSCE's work.

Finland will also prioritise gender equality and the functioning of a free civil society, and work towards improving opportunities of young people and persons with disabilities to participate in the OSCE's work.

Cooperation is at heart of states' ability to respond to crises and recover from them. In today's world, where threats and risks usually have cross-border implications, the public authorities need to both work together and forge partnerships with local stakeholders, the private sector, and other actors to build safe and secure societies.

Finland has built the programme for its Chairpersonship on three guiding principles: (1) Respect the OSCE principles and commitments, (2) Respond to today's challenges, and (3) Prepare the OSCE for the future.

Respect the Principles

The global security order is based on international law, the UN Charter and multilateralism. The OSCE's commitments, such as the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and the Paris Charter (1990), support and strengthen this order in the OSCE region.

The Helsinki Final Act laid down the ground rules

for cooperation between states in the OSCE region. Based on a comprehensive approach to security, it created a process for addressing questions within the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions. Fifteen years later, the Paris Charter institutionalised the OSCE's work to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and to prevent conflicts. Since then, the participating States have jointly and by consensus agreed on further commitments to strengthen European security.

Europe is now faced with an unprecedented need to defend this jointly agreed security order. As the Helsinki Final Act turns 50, Finland continues to systematically underline the Act's principles, which have been in place since 1975. Russia's blatant violation of them has only served to emphasise how important the principles are to the participating States and to the global security order.

In the Helsinki Final Act, the participating States made commitments relating to not only their behaviour towards each other, but also towards their citizens. In many countries, the Final Act encouraged interest in civic activism and began to open up opportunities for it. By facilitating the realisation of human rights, the Final Act played an important part in Europe's democratisation.

Civil society actors, including human rights defenders, work tirelessly to advance human rights, democracy and the rule of law. During its Chairpersonship, Finland will promote their opportunities to take action.

Finland calls attention to the importance of the work that the OSCE's autonomous institutions – OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) – carry out to implement the OSCE principles and commitments. Finland strongly supports the independent role of these institutions.



Photo: Adobe Stock

Respond Today

Ukraine is fighting to defend not only its independence and peaceful future, but also the jointly agreed security order based on international law. Finland will keep support for Ukraine at the heart of the OSCE's work, as have the previous Chairpersonships.

The OSCE participating States have widely condemned Russia's actions, which violate both international law and the OSCE principles. The OSCE plays an important role in ensuring Russia's accountability. For example, the Moscow Mechanism is employed to investigate human rights violations committed by Russia, and OSCE projects collect information on the environmental damage caused by

the war. The OSCE's Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU) is important for meeting Ukraine's needs.

Finland will strengthen the Organization's work throughout the OSCE region on the basis of jointly agreed principles, especially in areas where the OSCE can generate added value. The OSCE's Field Operations provide invaluable support to the participating States in Central Asia, Moldova and the Western Balkans. The OSCE also works to support peaceful relations in the South Caucasus. The Special Representatives appointed by the Chairperson-in-Office will offer their contribution in areas such as conflict resolution.

To respond to the changed security situation in Europe, Finland will underline all aspects of comprehensive security, including preparedness for and response to malign activities. Finland promotes the OSCE's work in cybersecurity and emphasises citizens' media literacy and freedom of the media in the fight against disinformation.

Climate change is testing the resilience of the participating States. Drawing on the decision of the 2021 Ministerial Council in Stockholm, Finland will intensify the efforts to respond to the security threats caused by climate change. Finland aims to strengthen the resilience of the participating States and respond to their climate security needs in areas where the OSCE's work brings added value.

For the last trimester of 2025, Finland will chair the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), which deals with questions of military security. The focus on promoting resilience and the comprehensive approach to security will also guide Finland's term as the FSC chair. Other priorities on Finland's FSC agenda include Women, Peace and Security, commitments under the Helsinki Final Act, and the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security.

Prepare for the Future

The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, participating States, the Secretariat and autonomous institutions have at their disposal a broad range of tools, shaped over several decades, to build trust and to prevent and resolve crises. In addition to the Chairperson-in-Office's Special Representatives, the tools include for instance human rights reports, missions tasked with fact-finding or ceasefire monitoring, dialogue and cooperation mechanisms for conflict prevention, and arms control measures. The OSCE's tools aim to reduce tensions that may lead to conflicts, and increase trust between the parties.

Finland intends to increase awareness of the OSCE's tools and their usability. Finland emphasises the importance of dialogue and mediation in comprehensive conflict management, from conflict prevention to post-conflict reconstruction, and seeks to improve cooperation with other stakeholders in this area.

The OSCE's work related to arms control, including military confidence and security building measures, plays a key role in the European security order. Maintaining existing arrangements and competences will enable future work in this field.

Finland's objective is to strengthen the Organization's operational capacity. However, Finland is taking over the Chairpersonship at a time when the prospects for negotiating new political commitments are limited. The Organization's budget was last adopted in 2021.

The logo for Helsinki +50, featuring a row of 15 vertical bars of varying heights above the text "HELSINKI +50" in white on a blue background.

HELSINKI +50

Despite the current state of affairs, Finland finds it crucial that the OSCE's operational capacity and role as a forum for political dialogue is safeguarded. The OSCE's extensive geographical coverage and comprehensive concept of security make it a unique security organisation. Ensuring a well-functioning OSCE is the joint responsibility of all participating States.

To support the OSCE's work, the Chairpersonship intends to establish a Helsinki+50 fund together with interested participating States and the Secretariat. The purpose of Helsinki+50 is to improve the channelling and use of voluntary funding for the work carried out in accordance with OSCE principles and commitments, and to improve interaction between donors and beneficiaries. The fund's objective is also to strengthen civil society. It will not replace the Organization's budget, but supplements it.

To bolster the OSCE's operational capacity, it is also important to look into existing practices and enhance the Organization's administrative processes. Finland has initiated action to achieve this as the chair of the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance (ACMF).

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law lay the foundations for stable societies. In this, the OSCE autonomous institutions play a key role. As OSCE Chair, Finland will call attention to these principles and underline the OSCE's work to develop electoral processes and observe elections in the participating States.



Photo: OSCE/Thomas Rymer

Summary

Finland's programme for the Chairpersonship sets out the framework and objectives for the OSCE's work in 2025. The main theme of Finland's Chairpersonship will be resilience. The programme will be based on three guiding principles: (1) Respect the OSCE principles and commitments, (2) Respond to today's challenges, and (3) Prepare the OSCE for the future.

Finland will serve as a constructive Chair, striving to engage in an open dialogue with all participating States and Partners for Co-operation. Finland will work with all countries that respect the OSCE principles.

Developing partnerships

The OSCE carries out well-established and active collaboration with the **Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation**. The Partners for Co-operation have a great deal of expertise to share and an interest in the OSCE, cooperative security and the Organization's comprehensive concept of security.

The **OSCE Parliamentary Assembly** is an important part of the OSCE community. It supports and complements intergovernmental cooperation by monitoring compliance with and implementation of the OSCE principles and commitments and by discussing topical subjects in the OSCE's area.

The OSCE is a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Finland will create links between the recently adopted **UN Pact for the Future** and the OSCE's activities, and promote the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security.

In addition to the UN, key partners include the EU, NATO and the Council of Europe, and other international and regional organisations on a case-by-case basis.

Chairpersonship events 2025

Conference on
Addressing Anti-Semitism
10–11 February

Gender Equality Conference
6–7 May

Climate Conference
11 June

Youth Forum
29–30 July

Helsinki+50 Event
31 July – 1 August

Cybersecurity Conference
1–2 October

