

# Strategic priority areas in the Foreign Service

Finland's foreign and security policy aims at strengthening the country's international position, safeguarding Finland's independence and territorial integrity, improving the security and wellbeing of people in Finland, and ensuring that Finnish society functions efficiently. An economy that operates on a sustainable foundation, an effective rules-based system of international trade and a sufficient level of international competitiveness are all factors that support the achievement of these objectives.

Finland pursues an active bilateral and multilateral foreign and security policy. In a world of mutual interdependencies, this fosters sustainable development and promotes international stability, peace, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and equality.

Finland is result-oriented in its actions to influence its operating environment as part of the Nordic, European and international community. The operational priorities, that is, questions relating to the Arctic region, Baltic security, strengthening of cooperation between Finland and Sweden, transatlantic cooperation, and mediation, are addressed systematically.

## Operating environment

Major changes occurring in the international operating environment not only offer Finland new opportunities but also present serious concerns. States and other actors are more closely and more diversely intertwined and interdependent than before. Their relative power relations are in constant flux. Respect for the rules of international cooperation is faltering. From the European perspective, the international security situation has deteriorated in recent years. The altered operating environment is characterised by rapid and unpredictable changes.

Awareness of problems affecting the entire planet is increasing. Among the global community new commitments have been reached in sustainable development and climate policy matters. The ability of international institutions to act is limited in relation to expectations, and respect for agreed rules has come under pressure.

Demographic trends, migration and the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution – including technological development (especially digitalisation), the globalising economy and international value chains – all have repercussions for Finland both directly and indirectly. Knowledge of the impacts of artificial intelligence and, in a wider sense, of automation and robotics, on security, economic life and the activities of the Foreign Service is becoming both deeper and broader. At the same time, measures restricting world trade are on the increase, accompanied by growth in inward-looking tendencies and protectionism. Even trade wars are possible.

Climate change, the sufficiency of natural resources, food security and poverty as well as changes in energy production affect the global operating environment. The lives of millions of people in different parts of the world have improved but the development has been une-



ven. Many governments restrict the operation of democratic institutions, encroach on human rights and seek to restrict international monitoring.

Polarisations developing between and within societies increase the risks of conflict. Difficult and often protracted conflicts and the activities of extremist organisations exacerbate the security situation and hamper development in many countries.

Terrorism is a serious international problem. Conflicts, poverty and the consequences of climate change increase the number of refugees, and the need for humanitarian aid is now greater than ever. All of this also makes Western democracies more vulnerable. The arms race is accelerating again. Nuclear capabilities are being modernised and the risk of nuclear proliferation has increased. The need for more effective international cooperation and joint direction-setting has further increased. Rapid growth in the use of ICT and rising levels of education create more opportunities for civic participation.

The security situation has weakened in Europe and in the Baltic Sea region. Russia's actions in Ukraine have changed the security policy environment. Russia has increased its military presence and activity in Finland's neighbouring areas, too. Russia is challenging the entire Western community, and this requires both a determined response, including from the EU, and maintenance of regular dialogue to alleviate tensions.

The European Union is Finland's primary foreign and security policy context and an important security community. The activities of the EU are being shaped by the United Kingdom's EU withdrawal process and the Union's efforts to enhance its own efficiency and effectiveness. Some Member States' attitudes towards the EU's values, such as the rule of law, have caused concern and forced the Union to react. Migration and the threat of terrorism and radicalisation increase expectations about the EU's ability to act. At the same time, there is a desire in the EU to take the Union forward and intensify cooperation for instance in the area of security and defence policy.

Changes in the operating environment are prompting more contact and cooperation among the Nordic countries, especially between Finland and Sweden, and enhancing transatlantic cooperation. For NATO, the strengthening of deterrence and collective defence has become a key focus. This also impacts the evolution of the NATO partnerships of Finland and Sweden. NATO's presence and activities in the Baltic Sea region have a stabilising effect on the security situation.

The policies and role of the United States are still evolving and they include a number of open questions. China and Russia are trying to expand their respective influence. Political developments in the Western Balkans are arousing uncertainty. The situation in Turkey has also become more unstable. The future development of the Eastern European Neighbourhood is unclear in many ways, and the situation in the countries in the EU's Southern Neighbourhood remains unstable. The political and economic significance of Africa for Europe and Finland is growing.

## **Strategic priority areas of the Finnish Foreign Service in 2018–2022**

**1. The Foreign Service will enhance the security and wellbeing of Finland and its inhabitants by working to improve the security and stability of the country and its neighbouring areas and by contributing to international security and stability.**



The aim of the Foreign Service is a unified, strong and operationally capable EU that focuses especially on growth and security. The remaining 27 EU Member States have started a process of development that will require Finland to actively present its views together with like-minded countries, and to engage in long-term commitment, for example to the EU as a security community. Concrete results must be reached particularly in efforts to deepen the single market, promote free trade, strengthen the EU's external action and defence cooperation and manage migration.

The Foreign Service will make full use of the opportunities offered by Finland's forthcoming EU Presidency in 2019 to strengthen the EU's ability to act and to reinforce its global role.

The Foreign Service will promote the stability, security and prosperity of the Baltic Sea region. It will intensify practical cooperation especially with Sweden. It will also draw on Nordic cooperation in dealing with both regional and international challenges.

The Foreign Service will promote political and economic cooperation with the United States and will focus especially on getting its own views heard. NATO will play a key role in the promotion of transatlantic security. The Foreign Service will develop broad-based cooperation between Finland and NATO.

Stability and the economic potential of the Arctic region will be promoted in cooperation with the other Arctic States. During its Chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2017–2019), Finland is seeking to consolidate the Council's position and to advance the national interests of Finland.

The Foreign Service will develop its contacts with Russia based on the two-track policy pursued by the EU. The jointly imposed restrictive measures against Russia will be observed and dialogue with Russia will be continued on selected matters of interest to Finland and the EU. Normalising cooperation between the EU and Russia is conditional upon finding a resolution to the Ukraine crisis and upon Russia's compliance with international law and its other international commitments. The Foreign Service will continue to actively influence the shaping of the European Union's common policy on Russia.

The Foreign Service will participate in conflict resolution and in the rebuilding of societies through crisis management, peacebuilding and development cooperation. The Foreign Service will emphasise the role of mediation and dialogue in foreign and security policy. Building of democracy, good governance and crisis resilience in fragile states, especially in the zone extending from Afghanistan to the Sahel, will be an important part of this work. By supporting democratic and sustainable development and assisting developing economies in climate change mitigation and adaptation, we can help to prevent crises and forced migration. The Foreign Service is prepared for unexpected events, such as natural disasters and other humanitarian crises, and will participate in alleviating their effects.

The increased importance of the link between external and internal security is evident in efforts to counter terrorism and cyber and hybrid threats. The Foreign Service will participate in international cooperation aimed at combatting terrorism and weakening the breeding ground for extremist movements. The fight against terrorism requires seamless cooperation between different actors, including closer cooperation with partner countries in the EU. The Foreign Service will engage in international cooperation to prevent hybrid threats and to strengthen national crisis resilience. It will participate in the fight against cyber threats and promote stability, security and freedom of interaction in the digital environment.



The Foreign Service supports arms control as a means to promote global security. The Foreign Service will work to prevent illicit arms trafficking and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The aim is to promote greater responsibility in the international trade of defence materiel and in the development of weapons technology.

## **2. The Foreign Service will promote a rules-based international system.**

Finland benefits from international relations that are based on jointly agreed goals and principles such as those in the UN Charter. The Foreign Service will work to strengthen an international system grounded in international law and to deepen rules-based cooperation. As a global organisation, the UN plays a central role in this cooperation, but regional organisations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe are also important along with the norms they establish.

In its work, the Foreign Service will give priority to strengthening the EU's unity and ability to act, based on the Union's common legal basis and values. Fostering the EU as a security community and further developing the Union's external capabilities will strengthen Finland's own position as well. A unified EU will contribute most effectively to the promotion of universal values, sustainable development and the security and stability of Europe.

The EU must take the initiative in actively supporting the World Trade Organisation (WTO). A well-functioning WTO capable of managing globalisation and advancing the rules-based system of international trade is important for Finland. Additionally, it is essential to foster a high level of ambition in the work of the EU as it responds to global challenges, such as the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda and the climate actions required by the Paris Agreement.

The Foreign Service will continue to promote an international system that is based on agreements, as this underpins the security and wellbeing of Finnish society and helps Finnish companies operating internationally. The Foreign Service will also promote the development of international regulation in the field of artificial intelligence, in particular from the viewpoint of security policy, democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Finland will defend and foster the development of international law and human rights standards. One of the priority areas that Finland will focus on is the work to counter impunity, an essential element of which is the development of the EU's sanctions mechanism.

## **3. The Foreign Service will promote open economic relations that foster Finland's growth and will support the involvement of Finnish companies in international trade and value chains.**

The Foreign Service will promote open economic interaction and solutions that support trade liberalisation, and will support measures that boost the EU's ability to act in trade policy. The Foreign Service will also support EU trade agreements. These form a part of globalisation management and will also be important for Finland's expanding international trade relations and for the country's wellbeing in the changing international operating environment. The Foreign Service will promote Finland's exports by encouraging favourable business environments and seeking the removal of trade barriers. The Foreign Service will play a part in improving companies' awareness and use of existing free trade agreements.



The Foreign Service will support the participation of Finnish companies in international value chains and foster partnerships based on innovative expertise. Additionally, the Foreign Service will support the participation of Finnish entities in international procurements and development cooperation projects. The Foreign Service will actively engage in cooperation on digitalisation, ensuring that the opportunities offered by artificial intelligence, for example, are utilised. Attention will also be focused on attracting foreign investment to Finland. The Foreign Service will promote the effective utilisation of Finnish expertise in the bioeconomy and clean solutions sectors, including in energy-efficient renewable energy solutions and the opportunities provided by the circular economy.

Through all of these commercial and economic activities, the Foreign Service will seek to promote sustainable development in Finland and globally. The Foreign Service will work to strengthen sustainable development in developing countries also by focusing on the economic foundations, job creation, business and livelihoods, and taxation capacity.

#### **4. The Foreign Service will work to strengthen human rights, equality and democracy.**

The Foreign Service will promote human rights, equality, equity and support for participation as part of global responsibility.

The Foreign Service will intensify efforts to strengthen the position and rights of girls and women, for instance by supporting the work of international actors and through advocacy and resources. Equality is also supported through observance of the regulations on open international trade.

The Foreign Service will work to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and societal resilience globally.

The Foreign Service will offer its cooperation partners information and experience based on Finnish models and practices. This includes offering expertise and know-how in education and training as well as related capacity building.

Freedom, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms serve as the basis of the EU's values and standards. The Foreign Service will work to promote these and to make sure all EU Member States are committed to them.

#### **5. The Foreign Service will promote implementation of the 2030 Agenda and will work to mitigate climate change.**

Finland has pledged to bear its share of the global responsibility for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All of the Foreign Service's priorities promote the attainment of the goals set in the 2030 Agenda. The Foreign Service also promotes sustainable development through its operating practices in the Ministry and the missions abroad. The Foreign Service plays a part in ensuring that sustainable development and consistent and coherent action are integral to Finland's foreign policy overall and that there is improved coordination between all administrative branches. Through development policy and development cooperation, Africa will remain Finland's central partner in the promotion of sustainable development.



In its international cooperation, the Foreign Service will emphasise Finland's experiences and practices. These include the priorities set out in the Government Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, namely a carbon-neutral and resource-wise Finland and a non-discriminating, equal and competent Finland.

The Foreign Service will promote implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change and take part in international cooperation to mitigate climate change and to promote adaptation, including through the energy and climate diplomacy of the EU. In addition, the Foreign Service will focus more strongly on environmentally sustainable development in developing countries by supporting sector-specific programmes in these countries, participating in international climate and environmental financing and by taking part in normative work.

The Foreign Service will support sustainable development by promoting exports, innovations and investment in Finnish cleantech expertise, as well as striving to strengthen research and innovation activities. The Foreign Service will promote clean energy and circular economy solutions and reduction of the adverse effects of black carbon.

The aim of Arctic cooperation will be to strengthen wellbeing both in the Arctic region and globally by promoting viewpoints that cover security, the environment and climate issues, as well as commercial and economic considerations.

## **6. The Foreign Service will provide a range of services.**

The Foreign Service serves the entire state administration, citizens, companies, organisations, the media and other stakeholders. The functioning of the Foreign Service is dependent on a comprehensive and agile network of diplomatic and consular missions abroad, which offers channels and tools that should be utilised to the maximum.

The rapidly changing environment requires that the Foreign Service is capable of effective anticipation, monitoring, analysis, information distribution and flexible use of resources. With its diverse range of expertise, it is possible for Finland to promote its objectives and to improve risk management as part of comprehensive security even in rapidly changing conditions. Strengthening Finland's crisis resilience and that of the Foreign Service is of key importance.

Effective bilateral and multilateral diplomacy at various levels, based on solid expertise and compact networks, is an indispensable tool of the Foreign Service for getting its views heard. The Foreign Service will focus increasing attention on digitalisation, and this will include social media as an operating environment.

The Foreign Service will also serve the needs of companies. The roles and responsibilities of Heads of Mission as leaders of Team Finland activities will grow. This will be based on close cooperation and coordinated goal-setting in cooperation with the Business Finland organisation. The Foreign Service will also systematically develop its know-how in export promotion.

A growing number of Finns and foreigners use the consular and entry permit services provided by the Foreign Service. The services provided on a daily basis can include travel safety, assistance for Finns in distress abroad, crises requiring consular assistance and contingency planning, issuing passports and visas, handling cases of death abroad, and entry permit and family reunification matters. It is important to ensure that the services provided by the Foreign Service give a positive signal to international experts considering living in Finland.



Rapid processing of visa applications will facilitate foreign visitors' smooth arrival in Finland, ensuring that the Finnish economy can benefit from the euros spent by them. The consular services offered by the Foreign Service will be further developed with due regard to the upcoming amendments to the Consular Services Act and the needs of Finnish missions abroad.

Finland's interests will be promoted through effective communications and country branding work. The public diplomacy and country branding work of the Foreign Service are based on Finland's position as a state governed by the rule of law, a dynamic Nordic welfare state rooted in equality and Western values, and a state that holds the European Union as its most important political reference group. External economic relations will be supported by presenting and promoting Finnish know-how, key experts, culture, curiosities and phenomena, and the strengths of Finnish society.

The Foreign Service will make the strategic priorities laid down in this policy paper widely known through various channels of communication and will also support the implementation of these priorities. Special attention will be paid to improving the communications skills of Foreign Service personnel. The changes brought about by the increasingly rapid progress of artificial intelligence and the algorithm economy require effective updating of information technology skills in the Foreign Service.

Safeguarding the ability of the Foreign Service to operate effectively will be of greater significance in a rapidly changing international operating environment.