

Finnish Village Movement Association

EU Election Programme

2024

**SUSTAINABLE AND
SUPPLY SECURE EUROPE**



**Suomen Kylät
Finlands Byar**



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INTRODUCTION - EUROPE OF THOUSANDS OF VILLAGES

This EU election programme includes solution proposals of 3 500 village associations and 53 Leader groups to develop of a common EU. Finland is a model country for EU Leader and village activities. With EU euros, we mobilise grassroots action for a vibrant and communal countryside. Sustainable transition to clean energy and industry strengthen the local economy and local communities.

In the midst of crises, a sense of community is needed. After the corona crisis and during the Russian war of aggression, even more cooperation, cooperation and stronger preparedness for emergency conditions are needed. Us European village organisations support preparedness and increase a sense of security in every corner of the EU. In Finland, village actors and volunteers have supported and employed Ukrainian asylum seekers. The EU must work for peace and recognise local actors to support preparedness.

The European Union is the most important source of funding for a rural developer and thus has a strong presence in the day-to-day environment of the resident. Our rural development is strongly co-financed by the EU. The Finnish countryside is most developed with EU funding. Petteri Orpo's government programme's 137.5 million euro cuts to the CAP plan create dark clouds over rural development. With cuts, resources for rural vitality for other member states are lost: entrepreneurship, innovation, internet connections and a sustainable transition.

The Finnish countryside needs support to stay vibrant. The decisions made by the European Union have a strong impact on the Finnish countryside. It is important to be involved in influencing decision-making so that the special conditions in Finland are better taken into account at different stages of decision-making. Without EU project and business subsidies, villages would be on their own. Project subsidies have been used to develop business activities, recreational opportunities in villages, digitalisation, sports facilities, community spaces and rural tourism. As the latest form of funding, smart villages work sustainably and for the environment.

We are part of the European Union and know how to utilise its potential. An active civil society and strong local communities are a condition of existence for the future of the countryside.

Finnish food production must be secured. Inequality between regions must be prevented and regional development disparities equalized. The EU must invest in transport and network connectivity in the countryside. Throughout the EU, it must be possible to work in a place-independent manner.

Rural development on a united front, tackling the challenges of the future is essential. Finland is an EU model country that strictly follows the rules and builds its own on top of them. There is a risk that bureaucratic regulation will make innovative civil society activities more burdensome and cumbersome. With project and business support, the EU enables villages and the local economy to be strengthened if the villages themselves are willing to take action.



1 EU SECURES LEADER FUNDING

Finland gets impressive results with EU funding through Leader groups. In Finland's 53 Leader Group boards, more than 600 rural actors act as EU decision-makers, selecting the best projects to develop in their home region. More than 2 million Finns live in the Leader groups' area of activity.

Leader funding is kept at least at the current level of 5.6% of CAP Pillar II funding, with the euro share not decreasing and increasing in the coming programme period.

Adequate funding must be guaranteed for the common tasks of the EU, both in terms of new challenges and rural and regional policy. Funding of rural development, which is particularly important for Finland, must be secured as well and funding continued through the CAP plan, as part of DG Agri's Industry. The bottom-up rural development resource, or Leader funding, is earmarked for the next cap period as well. It is necessary to identify the risk that if the earmarking is removed, EU Member States may terminate Leader funding.

The EU improves the resources of a rural developer, but on the other hand, funding steers activities strongly towards similar themes as well. There must be space to fund and identify even surprising themes arising from local needs. Innovative issues must be taken into account in EU funding as well, and multi-funding must be supported.

The Leader group is a low-threshold channel for obtaining information on EU funding. Leader group advises non-profit organisations and entrepreneurs on all EU funding issues.

2 AGILE EU CUTS RED TAPE

EU funding is very important for rural operators and has significant positive effects on rural areas in Finland. Strict regulation and project bureaucracy have negative effects on development and project application. Bureaucracy should be lightened in the preparation of the CAP programme. Development tools are made more accessible to everyone.

Multifunding is introduced. Training and support for rural developers is provided for project application and the use of the Hyrrä system.

We need less but better EU legislation. Every application form for EU funding are simplified. In addition to the guidelines and regulation of the EU's common rural policy, the Finnish Food Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry keep regulation and inspection as light as possible. EU funding promotes a culture of experimentation and lightweight pilots.





local transport experiments and transport solutions supporting village and rural tourism with EU funds as well.

EU funding is used to test flying goods and food services. Drone flights are piloted in villages as part of flying services. In Finland, small rural and village airports prepare for electric flights that carry passengers. According to Finavia's estimates, flying electric aircrafts and electric flights with 10-30 passengers can begin as early as 2028 in Finland.

3 FUNCTIONING INTERNET AND MORE ACCESSIBLE COUNTRYSIDE IN EUROPE

Telecommunication connections and a functional network connection are required throughout the EU. Effective connectivity enables flexible work, the development of digitalisation and a sustainable transition across Europe. Broadband subsidies related to rural development have had a positive impact on the Finnish countryside. Telephone and telecommunications connections must be secured in all rural areas of the EU, as these issues are within the EU's sphere of influence.

Further enabling, through the development of telecommunication connections, the moving of the population to live, study and work in rural conditions. This can improve people's health, both physically and mentally. Good human connection to nature has a wide range of health-enhancing effects.

Supporting free movement and functional fibre-optic and broadband connectivity enabling the strengthening of the local economy in rural areas of the EU. The 'Functioning Connectivity for Europe' campaign will be launched together with other EU rural organisations. Resources of transport projects are directed not only to metropolitan and urban transport, but to rural tourism and local transport as well. Supporting

4 INCLUSIVE EU AND STRONG CIVIL SOCIETY

The CAP plan appreciates and identifies the importance of voluntary work. Finland is a model country for local development, which encourages local actors to do voluntary work and develop their living environment together.

The appreciation of voluntary work must be visible in all EU funding. The Finnish model of voluntary work can also be spread to other parts of Europe. The Leader approach strengthens residents' opportunities to participate and the implementation of development ideas that are important to them. The Youth Leader model is strengthened in all EU countries according to the Finnish model. It is important to raise the voice of young people in different forums and development groups.

Support agile funding opportunities. EU funding instruments have opened up entirely different opportunities for development for the non-profit sector compared to domestic funding. The accessibility of EU funding to new project applicants needs to be further improved.

The bottom up principle of Leader should be utilised more extensively not only in municipal and regional development, but in cities as well. Thus, there would be no need to talk specifically about "inclusion", but the operating model would slip into the general operating culture. Other EU funding programmes draw inspiration from Leader funding. Cities should be offered a similar Leader operating model and funding from the Structural Funds. Cities have an acute need to involve civic actors in the prevention of youth malaise, crime and social exclusion.

The City Leader operating model has been piloted successfully in Finland.

5 EU RECOGNISES THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FINLAND - DIFFERENT REGIONS ARE BEING DEVELOPED

The geopolitical, economic and social development of rural areas on the EU's external border, such as Finland, is important for the European Union as a whole. Finland has sparsely populated countryside and areas with strong migration losses, the development of which requires EU funding. Rural development is closely linked to other regional development and security policy. The EU should target significant climate, digitalisation and cluster funding not only for large cities but also for rural areas.

For the EU, wider shoulders enable the development and vitality of financial aid maintenance. We promote the development of sparsely populated areas and housing opportunity in a versatile manner.

In the future, EU decision-makers will be better able to identify Finland's special characteristics:

- Finland is the EU's most rural and sparsely populated Member State.
- Archipelago on the coast and in Finnish Lake District. Finland is a country with the second most archipelago regions in Europe. Developing archipelago accessibility, housing and archipelago services. In the archipelago villages, flying experiments are piloted and, for example, flying food and goods shipments.
- Supporting fell and village tourism in Lapland. EU should finance and support railways, public transport and infrastructure to support accessibility in Northern Finland.

Lapland Lapland and Sápmi region must be made more accessible to tourists. Public transport solutions for local residents should be developed.

- In villages on the eastern border, preparedness and security of supply are strengthened in emergency conditions.

NATO-Finland identifies and finances village security in villages on the EU's eastern border.

- Identifying scarce development funds in rural areas near cities in Southern and Western Finland.

6 SUSTAINABLE AND SUPPLY SECURE EUROPE

Smart villages work sustainably and for the climate. Rural areas are a large part of the solution when it comes to adapting to climate change. Viable villages bring settlements all over Finland, and village activities keep Finland safe for its part. The villages and quarters support preparedness, security of supply and crisis resilience. Society's crisis resilience requires the involvement of local actors in public authorities' activities in preparedness, crisis management, as well as in crisis recovery and learning.

It is important to strengthen European food production in a balanced manner across Europe's regions. It is worth paying more attention to the quality and purity of the food as well. It is necessary to strengthen the settlement of rural areas, while at the same time creating better opportunities for the population to move from urban areas to less cramped housing conditions.

Forest policy is in the national hands of Finland. Forest is a workplace that is close to a rural resident. At the EU level, the valuable diversity nature for Finns and its balance with natural resources must be identified. In the Finnish countryside, people want to get by with their own work. It includes being able to use your own property as well.



EU TERMS IN A NUTSHELL

CAP plan = Finnish CAP plan (Common agricultural policy / Joint agricultural policy) covers agricultural direct subsidies, rural development project subsidies and, in part, agricultural market subsidies. The CAP plan describes the objectives of agricultural and rural policy and measures to achieve them. In Finland, the government decides on the content of the CAP plan, and in the EU, the Finnish plan is approved by the Commission. The implementation of the CAP plan is monitored by the National Monitoring Committee.

ELARD = or European LEADER Association for Rural Development acts as a joint umbrella organisation of the 2000 Leader Group. The objective of ELARD is to strengthen the LEADER/CLLD approach in Europe. ELARD has carried out advocacy work in various EU working groups, contributed to the preparation of the programme and promoted rural vision work. ELARD has strengthened project work at European level. The Finnish Village Movement Association is a member of ELARD.

ERCA = or European Rural Community Association (ERCA) is a European network of village movement. ERCA prepares the European Rural Parliament and participates at EU level in working groups on village and rural themes. The Finnish Village Movement Association is a member.

European Committee of the Regions = composed of regional and local authority representatives. The Committee of the Regions has a total of 329 representatives, of whom Finland's delegation consists of nine members representing municipalities and provinces. Presentation for Finland's representatives is made by the Government. Current members were elected for a five-year term of office for 2020-2025. Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities operates within the Finnish delegation of the Committee as a secretariat.

European Commission = European Union (EU) executive body. Established in 1957 The European Commission currently consists of 27 members, including its President. It acts in the general interest of the EU, is completely independent of the EU countries' national governments and is accountable to the European Parliament. The Commission has the right of initiative of legislative proposals in several policy areas. Each Member State has one Commissioner.

European Parliament = 705 members of the European Parliament are directly elected. In Finland, the European elections are held on 9.6.2024 and this programme acts as the Finnish Village Movement Association's election program.

LEADER GROUPS = There are 53 regional Leader groups in Finland that advise, network and fund local actors. The Leader group advises non-profit organisations and entrepreneurs on all EU funding issues. Decisions are made by the Leader Group's Board of Directors, where local entrepreneurs, associations, municipalities and residents are represented. Leader funding is a mandatory part of rural development funding for all Member States, earmarked at least 5% of the funding. In Finland, the funding share is 5.6%, and in neighbouring Estonia, for example, 10%. Leader funding consists of EU contribution (43%), central government transfer (37%) and municipal funding (20%). Municipal funding has already been negotiated with all municipalities for 2023-2027.

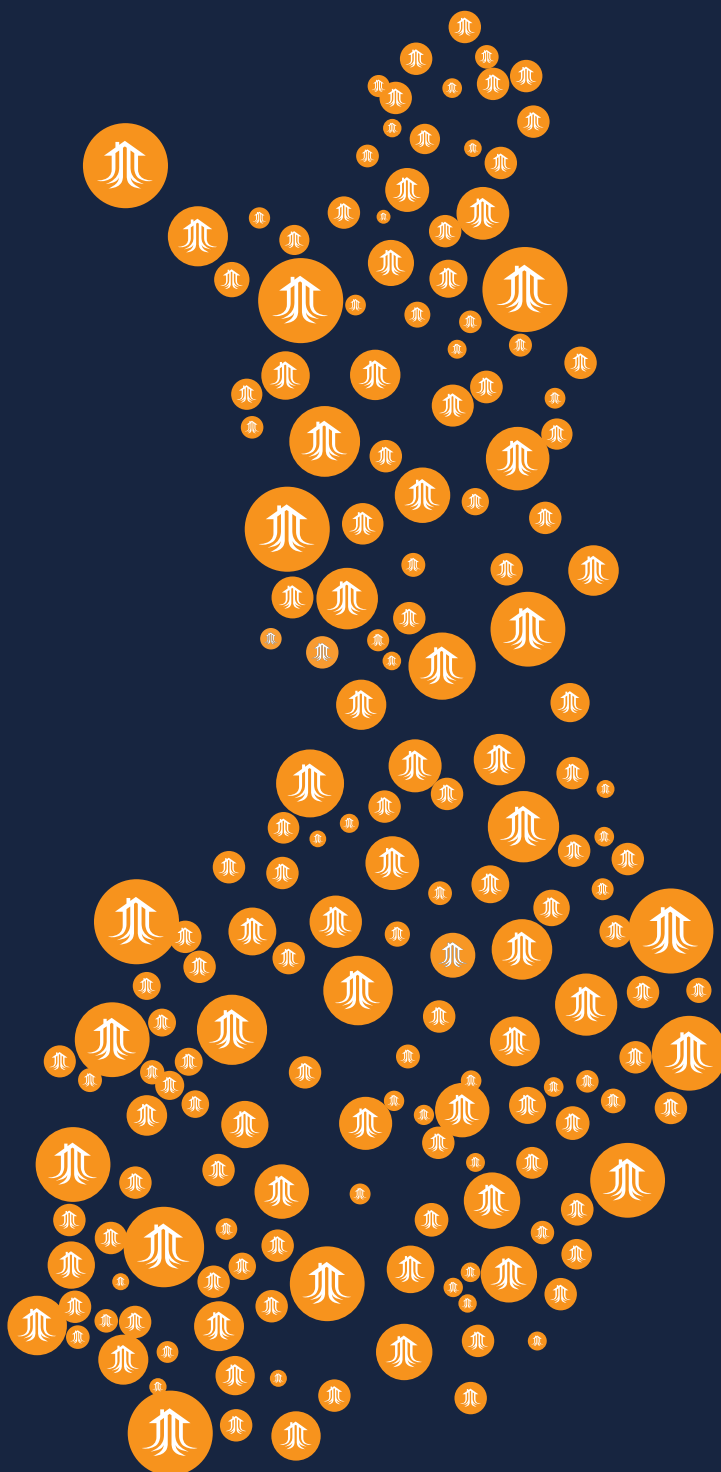
The Leader group is a low-threshold channel for obtaining information on EU funding. Network of 2 500 European Leader groups is one of the few rural internationalists and, at the same time, a Finnish rural export promoter. Leader creates resilience in local communities, alleviates polarisation of different population groups by bringing people who think differently to the same table, and increases the visibility and legitimacy of the EU at the grassroot level.

CITY LEADER = Several Leader groups have already implemented activities in urban areas such as Kotka, Kouvola, Imatra, Porvoo, Lohja, Salo, Turku and Pori. Activities in cities have been mainly financed by the European Social Fund.

PREPARE = or Partnership for Rural Europe. The PREPARE network develops civil society-based rural networks in countries applying for EU membership. PREPARE participates in EU research consortia and advisory committees, in which the countryside is researched, impact assessments are made and the vitality of the countryside is developed.



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All live in the villages

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