

# ***Futures for Europe***

**OAJ'S OBJECTIVES FOR EUROPEAN POLITICS 2024–2029**



# ***There is no Europe without education, knowledge and research***

**AT THE** beginning of 2025, Finland will have been a member of the European Union for three decades. Membership of the Union has become commonplace and, at the same time, revolutionised our lives. Borders have fallen and given way for the movement of goods, people and ideas. Finland has adopted the euro, and our passport covers have changed to burgundy. However, the common European project is by no means complete.

OAJ wants to wake up the decision-makers representing Finland in the European Parliament, the Commission and at summits to the importance and potential of education and research for the whole continent. They are areas of society where all parties can achieve more through cooperation. Education, knowledge and research are the cornerstones on which stability, international competitiveness and the future success of the whole of Europe can be built.

What would the promotion of education in the EU look like? In practice, for example, it is about increasing the share of education and research in the EU budget and reducing the application bureaucracy of research funding. Freedom of research, art and education should become a clear part of the EU's rule of law. Europe-wide education, mobility and educational cooperation should be strengthened and the teacher shortage affecting the whole of Europe should be addressed by improving the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Fair labour markets must also be created in the EU in cooperation with workers and employee organisations. At the same time, the skills shortage of an ageing continent must also be addressed through immigration and successful integration.

In concrete terms, Finnish MEPs must have seats in the EU's committees on education, research and working life, that is, on the tables where these issues are decided.

What can you do about it? Share this content with the hashtags [#europeanelections2024](#) and [#futuresforeurope](#). Contact your candidate or party and ask how they are advancing the cause of education and knowledge. Write about it on social media channels or in opinion columns in magazines.

Europe is not just a continent or a political community. The EU is the sum of its citizens, and each of us can contribute to a brighter future for the continent.

***Katarina Murto***  
*OAJ President*



# 1

## The EU must promote *bildung* and education cooperation

**THE EUROPEAN** Union is a community of values based on democracy, the rule of law, equality, tolerance, sustainable development and peace in Europe. The EU can contribute to these by investing in education, knowledge and research.

Education is a matter for the Member States to decide upon at a national level, and this should continue to be the case in the future. This does not mean that the EU does not also play an important role.

- ▶ The share of funding for education and research must be increased in the EU budget in order for the continent to be able to succeed in the global competition for knowledge and research.
- ▶ Finland and Finnish MEPs must contribute to this goal, and MEPs must have seats on the EU's committees on education and research.



### Finnish MEPs on the EU's committees dealing with education and research

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy:

5

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs:

1

Committee on Culture and Education:

0

Including the ordinary and deputy members of the committees in spring 2024. During the 2019–2024 parliamentary term, Finland had a total of 15 MEPs..

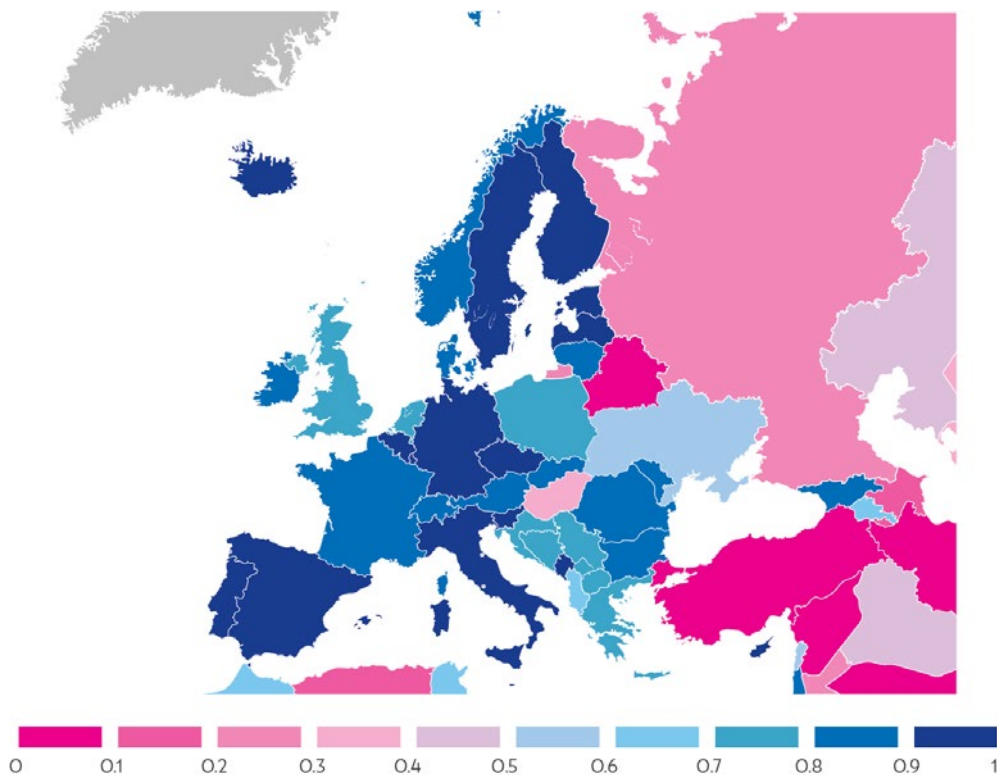
# 2

## Academic freedom and the attractiveness of academic work must be strengthened

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM** cannot be taken for granted. Academic freedom and the autonomy of higher education institutions have faced direct violations in some European countries. In Europe, there is a need to strengthen academic freedom and the autonomy of higher education institutions, freedom of science and freedom of expression. The EU's current means of safeguarding fundamental rights or academic freedom are not sufficient.

- ▶ Freedom of research, art and education must be made a clear part of the rule of law, which the EU can, for example, deny a Member State subsidies for violating.
- ▶ Ensuring that academic careers in the EU continue to attract talented teachers and researchers is key to the success and security of supply of the entire continent.

### Academic Freedom Index (2024)



The Academic Freedom Index is a measure of academic freedom in different countries of the world. Academic freedom includes, for example, freedom of research and teaching, the autonomy of universities and the freedom of academic expression.

Source: University of Erlangen-Nürnberg and Varieties of Democracy database

# 3

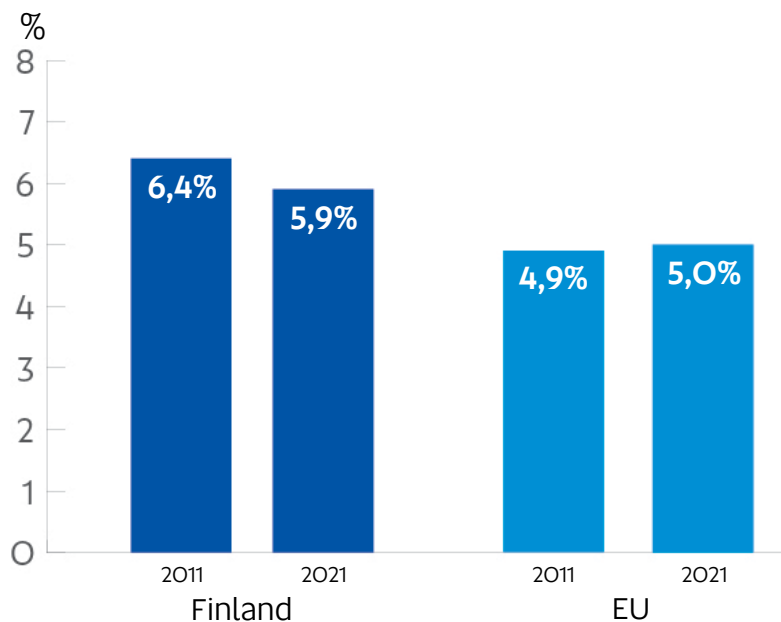
## Implementation of the European Education Area must be continued

**THE EUROPEAN** Commission aims to create a European Education Area by 2025. The Commission has promoted the green and digital transitions in education and training, but much remains to be done in other areas.

- ▶ The construction of the education area must be continued with more ambitious measures. Finland will benefit from strengthening Europe-wide education, mobility and education cooperation. That is why we need to be active in promoting the European Education Area.



### Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP



High-quality education requires adequate funding in Finland and throughout the EU.

Source: European Commission's Education and Training Monitor 2022

# 4

## The shortage of teachers needs to be solved in Europe

**ADDRESSING THE** Europe-wide shortage of teachers must be a strategic priority for the EU. The EU must support its Member States in promoting the attractiveness of teacher education and the teaching profession.

- ▶ Every new teacher should be offered mentoring by a trained mentor at the beginning of their career. Opportunities for further teacher training should be extended so that teachers can develop their competence in any European country, if necessary.
- ▶ The mobility of teachers, researchers and students should be promoted at the EU level. At the same time, however, care must be taken to ensure that teachers' qualifications and competence are not compromised in Finland. The competence of Finnish teachers can also be strengthened through student exchanges and teacher training completed in other European countries. The teaching profession has always benefited from the latest knowledge and competence moving across borders.



The shortage of teachers affects not only Finland, but the whole of Europe. A sufficient number of qualified teachers is a prerequisite for the success of the whole continent.

**Jaakko Salo**  
Education Policy Manager, OAJ



# 5

## The EU must invest in research and development

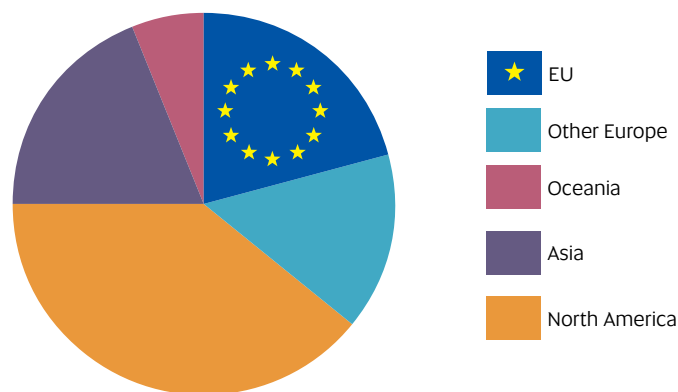
**THE EU** can only succeed in the accelerating global competition if the research and development activities in its territory are strengthened and new solutions and growth opportunities are boldly utilised. The focus of funding must be shifted to high quality research and development projects, so that Europe becomes the most attractive and strongest centre of excellence in the world. In the university sector, the EU must aim for the top in the world.

► EU grants and projects should be targeted at cooperation between universities, research institutes and companies and the strengthening of research, development and innovation activities in it, so that new markets are created at the same time. The current share of research in the EU budget must be strengthened. The EU should invest in collaborative research infrastructure projects (such as tools, equipment, data networks, databases, materials and services) that create synergies with European research and promote effective collaborative research.

► Research funding application practices need to be clarified and simplified, as it is not in the interest of any Member State that the time of researchers is wasted on application bureaucracy. The researched information must be utilised more and more in decision-making and working life.



### Top 100 Universities in the World



The world's top 100 universities are grouped by region according to the Times Higher Education University Ranking (2024). Of these top universities, 21 are located in the EU.

Source: Times Higher Education

# 6

## Successful immigration as a key solution to skills shortage

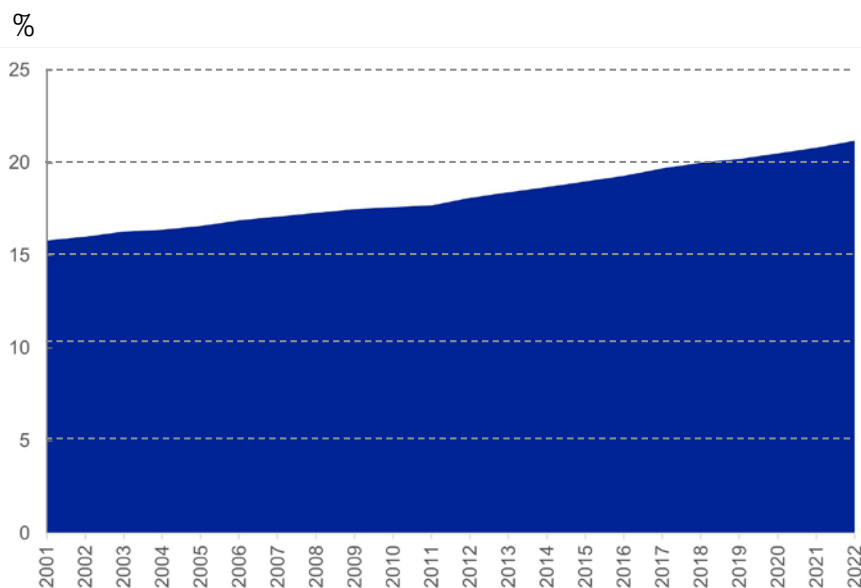
**THE SHRINKING** and ageing population threatens to wreck the dependency ratio across Europe. Europe needs skilled workers so that our societies remain functional and there are workers for all professions.

▶ Immigration and quality integration through education are one solution to the worrying demographic development and labour shortage. The EU must draw up a common immigration policy programme with a focus on successful integration through education. The common policies must also take into account the identification and recognition of the previous skills of immigrants and make more extensive use of their competence and language skills.

▶ In order to solve the skills shortage, the attractiveness of vocational education and training as well as flexibility in choosing and completing studies should be developed throughout Europe. Improving competence does not always mean a full degree. Opportunities for carrying out small competence entities throughout Europe should be increased.



### Percentage of the EU population over the age of 65



The population is ageing and the dependency ratio of states is deteriorating.

Source: Eurostat (2023)





## Fair labour market and good working conditions

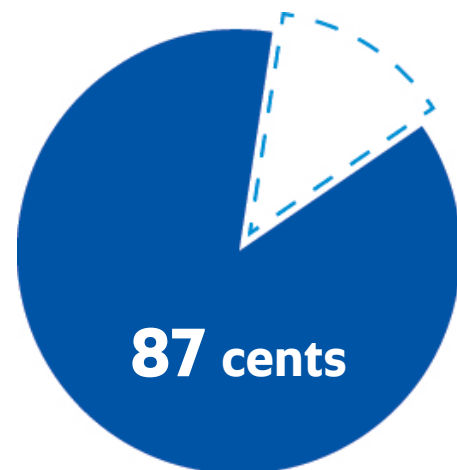
**THE OPERATING** conditions of workers and employees' organisations must be ensured in European countries, and the EU Commission must conduct a wide-ranging dialogue with them (the so-called EU-level social dialogue).

- ▶ Working life issues, such as non-competition agreements, the criminalisation of employee targeting, the consideration of physical and psychosocial risk factors at work, the challenges of platform work and teleworking, adequate consultation of employees and the implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive are cross-border issues that require more effective harmonisation at the EU level.
- ▶ Artificial intelligence can enable new innovations and create new jobs. At the same time, due to the negative side effects and threats related to AI, data protection and employees' copyrights must be strengthened in the EU. It is also necessary to prohibit the monitoring of employees and to support employees' AI skills and understanding. That is why we are calling for a directive on artificial intelligence in the work life.



- ▶ Together with the Member States, the EU should create clearer and uniform guidelines for data protection in the field of education. The EU should draw up general recommendations on how personal data should be processed in teaching and how digital learning platforms and applications can be used so that teachers can utilise modern technology in teaching safely and without compromising data protection.
- ▶ In order for Finland to have influence in the development of working life in Europe, MEPs must have a seat in Parliament's committee on employment.

### Woman's euro in the EU



For every euro men earn, women earn 87 cents in the EU.  
Source: European Commission (2022)

# **Futures for Europe**

## **FURTHER INFORMATION CAN BE OBTAINED FROM:**

Jaakko Salo

Manager, Educational policy

020 748 9651

jaakko.salo@oaj.fi

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