

# FINLAND

## Alanders

Activity: 1990-2020

### General notes

- The name of the island as written in Swedish is Åland. We often use Åland in this document.

### Movement start and end dates

- Ålander nationalism, which had been dormant for many decades, was revitalized in the late 1980s, stimulated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and Finland's application to join the European Union. News reports indicate that Ålander political parties have campaigned for greater autonomy since at least 1992, but possibly even before that. Somehow arbitrarily, we peg the start date of the movement to 1990. Already inhabiting an autonomous province, Ålanders gained greater economic and legislative freedom in 1993 and some are seeking full independence within the context of the European Union. Åland separatism remains ongoing, although there is little yearly information on it. In 2006, Ålanders have demanded to leave the EU in response to new laws abolishing duck hunting and impending laws on chewing tobacco. In 2012, International Policy Digest included the Åland Islands as one of the places that are seeking autonomy or independence (Anderson 2006; MAR; MRGI; Minahan 1996, 2002; Rennie 2006; Wagner & Giannoulis 2012). Since 2012 Ålanders have continued their demands for greater legislative and fiscal autonomy (Jansson 2021; Hepburn 2014; Targeted News Service 2022). There was also a renewed call for an independence referendum in October 2017 (Teivainen 2017). [start date: 1990; end date: ongoing]

### Dominant claim

- When Finland declared independence in 1917, the Ålanders demanded reunification with Sweden. This claim was bolstered through a petition in 1919, where over 95% of Ålanders voted in favor of this irredentist proposal (Minority Rights Group International).
- This irredentist claim, however, diminished and eventually died out in the 1940s. The Åland Center and the Liberals for Åland have been the two dominant parties in the Parliament of Åland since the foundation of the modern party system in the 1970s. The Åland Center is, according to Hepburn (2014) the most pro-autonomy party and, starting in the 1990s, repeatedly advocated for enhanced fiscal autonomy. In its claim it is supported by most other parties, which is why we code autonomy as the dominant claim.
- A similar point of view is represented in Stepan et al. (2011: 217), who state that “no significant political movement has emerged in Åland since the federacy was created in 1922 that might have led Åland to break its federacy commitments, join Sweden or become independent”.
- While the claim for autonomy is dominant, the statement that there is no politically significant secession movement is questionable. A party called Future of Åland (founded in 2001), which has made claims for outright secession, attracted 6.5% of the vote the first election it stood in in 2003. In 2011, the party got 9.9% in the 2011 election. However, there is no evidence that support for independence increased further after that (News Now 2017). This can also be evidenced by the decreased electoral performance of Future of Åland in the 2015 elections (7.4%) as well as members of the group itself admitting that independence is a very unlikely prospect and that increased autonomy should be the political priority (News Now 2017).
- More recently, nationalist action mostly centered around the relationship with the European Union. In response to the EU's outlawing of Snus, a form of chewing tobacco, and the abolishing

of duck hunting, Alanders demanded to leave the EU (Brussels Journal). However, this claim is not primarily related to the islands relationship with Finland and thus does not affect our coding.

- Although the Future of Åland called for an independence referendum in 2017, the autonomy claim remained dominant as the secessionist Future of Åland party failed to challenge the dominance of the pro-autonomy Åland Center and Liberals for Åland (Arter 2022). [1990-2020: autonomy claim]

### **Independence claims**

- A party called the 'Future of Åland' seeks to establish an independent state in Åland (News Now 2017). The group called for an independence referendum in 2017. The party was formed in 2001 and participated in its first elections in 2003. The party received achieved its highest election results in 2015 when it received 7.4% of votes, but dropped to 4.6% in the most recent elections in 2019 (Parties and Elections in Europe 2019). This is the earliest evidence for an independence claim in the post-1945 period we could find. [start date: 2001; end date: ongoing]

### **Irredentist claims**

- There is information on historical irredentist claims only (in the period of 1917-1922). When Finland declared independence in 1917, the Alanders demanded reunification with Sweden. This claim was bolstered through a petition in 1919, where over 95% of Alanders voted in favor of this irredentist proposal (Minority Rights Group International). The creation of the federacy in 1922 largely ended any significant irredentist claims (Stepan et al. 2011: 217). Further concessions in the 1950s and in the 1990s (see below) also further contributed to the lack of irredentism support. [no irredentist claims]

### **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the Alanders is Åland Island. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database (GADM 2019).

### **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

### **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no reports of violence, hence a NviolSD coding. [NviolSD]

### **Historical context**

- The Åland Islands were colonized by Sweden in the twelfth century and remained part of the Swedish Empire for over 600 years until the Napoleonic Wars, when the Russians, who had already seized the islands in 1714 but returned them to Sweden only seven years later, again occupied the islands and included them in the Russian Empire in 1809 under the Treaty of Fredrikshamn. Along with all other parts of Finland, the Åland Islands became part of the semi-autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland (Minahan 2002).
- Russia fortified the Åland Islands but after the Crimean War and the Treaty of Paris of 1856, the whole archipelago had to be demilitarized. Oppressive Russian rule increased nationalism and

resentment, eventually leading to a revolt in 1905, which was however quickly crushed by Russian forces.

- With refortification of the territory during the First World War, nationalism revitalized and when Finland became independent from Russia in 1917, it claimed the island as part of its territory. Swedish military briefly occupied the islands during the Finnish Civil War of 1918 but were withdrawn from their own government. In a 1919 petition, over 95% of Alanders voted in favor of reunification with Sweden and Aland leaders declared autonomy (Minahan 2002).
- Since the Soviet Union also claimed the territory, the dispute was referred to the League of Nations. The latter decided that Finland should retain sovereignty over the islands but in return had to agree to provide for an autonomous status of the Aland Islands and the protection of the Alander's political, cultural and linguistic rights. These requirements were met with the Act on the Autonomy of Aland of 1920 and the Language Act of 1922.
  - o The autonomy arrangement gave the Alanders self-governance over internal affairs such as education, culture, healthcare, postal services and police matters (Minahan 2002; Minority Rights Group International). The first election to the Aland Legislative Assembly was held in 1922 (Jääskinen 2005). The Autonomy Act has been revised in 1951 and again in 1991 (see below).
  - o The Language Act granted the Swedish language the status of a national language. The Language Act has been revised in 1931, 1935, 1975, and in 1982. The 1982 revision appears not to have involved a significant improvement of the Alanders' language rights.

### **Concessions and restrictions**

- We code an autonomy concession in 1991 due to the revision of the Autonomy Act. According to Minahan (2002: 72), the new version granted the Alanders "greater economic and legislative freedom." Hannum (1993) also reports that the new act included the transfer of additional competencies, the knowledge of Swedish as a requirement for Aland citizenship and the expansion of Aland's autonomy in economic issues. In addition, the new act also included changes to the right of domicile in that regional citizenship is required in order to acquire real estate or vote in provincial elections. According to Naucclér (2009), the new arrangement is outstanding as it cannot be altered without the consent of the Aland Parliament. The new arrangement entered into force on January 1, 1993. However, we code the concession in 1991, when the autonomy statute was adopted (Hannum 1993: 116). [1991: autonomy concession]
- Following Finland's accession to the EU in 1995, Åland gave up a "great deal of its legislative power" to the EU and Helsinki. In what was described as an 'autonomy leakage', part of Aland's law-making competencies in areas such as agriculture, fisheries and the environment were transferred to the EU, which negotiates its policies with Finland's national government. Finland sought to compensate for Åland's autonomy leakage by increasing Åland's influence in the national preparation of EU policy by amending the Autonomy Act in 2004 and 2009. In practice, Aland's participation in the national preparation of EU policy does not work as Ålanders are legally obligated to communicate with the Finnish authorities in their own language, which inhibits the joint work between the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking officials (Hepburn 2014). [1995: autonomy restriction]
- The Language Act of 2003 is identical with the act of 1922 in its general outlines. It again guarantees the constitutional right of any citizen to use his or her own language, be it Swedish or Finnish, when dealing with the authorities. The country is therefore divided into monolingual Finnish, monolingual Swedish and bilingual communities (Saari 2012; Salo 2012). The Minority Rights Group International states that the revised act "addresses previous dissatisfaction with Swedish-language services provided by courts of law and other governmental authorities" but also makes clear that the new act "does not create any new language rights". Based on this, we do not code this act.
- In 2017, a joint Finland-Åland parliamentary joint committee called the Åland committee presented a government proposal for reforming the autonomy of Åland. The joint committee's proposals took into account the findings of two similar reports that were published by Åland (provincial committee report in 2010) and Finnish (state committee report in 2013) parliaments.

The committee proposed to update Åland's legislative competencies and modify the calculations of money transferred from the state to Åland. We do not code a concession because the proposal was not implemented (Simolin 2017).

## Regional autonomy

- The Ålanders can be considered regionally autonomous from Finland as of the 1920s. With the Åland Legislative Assembly (Lagting) they possess their own regional organ. The assembly has 30 members, elected every four years and has the right to pass laws in areas such as education, health and medical services, the environment, radio and television, the police, local administration and the promotion of industry (Minority Rights Group International). The parliament furthermore appoints the regional Åland Government (Landskapsregering) an executive council of between five and seven members. Regarding financial autonomy, the parliament collects own revenues and is given a lump sum from the Finnish Government in order to finance autonomy provisions (Embassy of Finland). Åland's extensive autonomy was reinforced in 1951 and again in 1991 (Law No. 1144/1991 – implemented in 1993; Schakel 2021). [1990-2020: regional autonomy]

## De facto independence

NA

## Major territorial changes

NA

## EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Ålanders
<i>Scenario</i>	Swedes
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	n:1
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	37502000

## Power access

- The Ålanders are part of the EPR group of the Swedes, which EPR codes as junior partners throughout. This is due to the Svenska folkpartiet (SFP), which represents the interests of Swedish speaking Finns and has frequently served in Finnish coalition governments (Minority Rights Group International). According to Statistics Finland, the number of people speaking Swedish as their native language in Finland amounts to 290,760. With a population of 40,000, Ålanders however only make up a small share of Swedish-speakers. As a consequence, we cannot just adopt the EPR status of the Swedes for the Ålanders.
- In fact, apart from a very small guaranteed representation in the Finnish parliament (1 seat), the Ålanders with their own parliament and party system are mostly cut off from national politics. Hepburn (2014: 92) also states that the “Swedish-speaking Åland parties have no impact on the Finnish national scene”. Financial and taxation matters, as well as some sensitive issues (such as shipping around the islands), are subject to binding negotiation in the Åland Delegation, a joint organ with equal representation from the Åland parliament and the Finnish government (Schakel 2021). However, the delegation is not part of Finland's executive. With regard to the national

executive, the Alanders are thus coded powerless (EPR 2021; Schakel 2021; Simolin 2017; Targeted News Service 2022) [1990-2020: powerless]

### Group size

- According to Minahan (2002: 69), there were 40,000 Alanders in Finland in 2002. Finland's total population was 5.2 million in 2002 according to the World Bank. [0.0077]
  - o Minahan's estimate broadly matches with census data: as of 31 December 2021, Finland's total population was 5.6 million people, out of which 30,344 people were Alanders (Statistics Finland 2022). This would suggest a group size of 0.55%.

### Regional concentration

- According to Minahan (2002: 69), the Alanders make up a majority on their islands (roughly 96%). This amounts to almost 25,000 people (in 2002), which is more than 50 per cent of the around 40,000 Alanders in the whole country in that same year. [regionally concentrated]

### Kin

- The Alanders speak Swedish (Minahan 2002: 70); Swedes in Sweden can thus be considered close ethnic kindred. [kin in neighboring country]

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## **Sami (Lapps)**

Activity: 1973-2020

### **General notes**

- The name of the group is written Sàmi formally. We use Sami in this document.

### **Movement start and end dates**

- Sami activists formed the Nordic Saami Institute in 1973 to press for political and land rights. We therefore peg the start date of the movement at 1973. In 1983 Sami leaders declared the sovereignty of the divided nation (the Sami are also found in Norway and Sweden). In 1986 the Chernobyl disaster spread radiation across Lapland and made necessary the destruction of reindeer herds, the Sami's livelihood. Two years later Sami leaders demanded the creation of a Sami parliament that would have influence over planning and development of the region. In response to this demand, since 1991 the Sami have been heard in the Finnish Parliament on matters especially concerning them. The Sami are the only indigenous people in Finland to have such a right.
- Since Finland's entry into the European Union in 1995, some Sami nationalists began a campaign to join the EU as a separate European people. Non-zero MAR protest scores for 1970-1999 indicate that the movement has been consistently active since 1973. In 2000, the Sami Parliamentary Council was formed to represent the Sami parliaments in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. A 2011 UN document also indicates that the Sami movement remains ongoing in all three countries, and the Sami Parliamentary Council remains active today. Issues include cultural and language autonomy as well as the freedom to cross borders between the countries.
- In April 2016 Finland's parliament passed a new Forestry Act, which circumvents the need for prior consultation and gives the Finnish state-run enterprise the ability to remove the boreal forest that is vital to Sámi livelihoods. The legislation sparked opposition from members of the Sami Parliament and the international Sámi Council. Members of Sami Parliament also filed complaints with the UN against the Finland's decision to include 97 new electors for Sami Parliament elections and demanded the right to determine the Sami parliament electors themselves. In response to the complaints, in 2019 and 2022, the UN Human Rights Committee and UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination ruled that the Finnish authorities violated Sami's rights and requested Finland to review the Sami Parliament Act (Anaya 2011; Hewitt & Cheetham 200; Minahan 1996, 2002; MAR; Mac Dougall 2022; MRGI; Rhoades and Mustonen 2016; Synak 1995; United Nations Human Rights 2019; Varsi 2011). [start date: 1973; end date: ongoing]

### **Dominant claim**

- The dominant claim is autonomy throughout the period researched. The movement onset is coded in 1973 with the formation of the Nordic Saami Institute. According to Minahan (2002), the organization pressed for political and land rights. Despite the crosscutting Sami territory, there is hardly any evidence of an claim for reunification of the Sami territory as most of their goals are related to the protection of their traditional way of life, their culture and language. We thus code autonomy as the dominant claim of the Sami. This is confirmed by statements of the Sami Parliamentary Council, which was formed in 2000 to represent the Sami parliaments in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. The council demands cultural and linguistic autonomy and the freedom to cross borders between the countries. Its representatives have always made clear that "their goal of securing relations among their people across borders [...] is not based on a desire to form a separate Sami State" (United Nations Report 2011: 10). They stressed that their claims are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which wants



self-determination for indigenous peoples to be exercised “within the framework of the unity and territorial integrity of the State” (United Nations Report 2011: 10). There is no evidence of substantial change in Sami claims since 2012. The Sami Parliament mainly demands the autonomy to preserve their reindeer herding and the ability to identify the electors for the Sami Parliament without Helsinki’s interference (Mac Dougall 2022; Rhoades and Mustonen 2016; United Nations Human Rights 2019) [1973-2020: autonomy claim]

### **Independence claims**

NA

### **Irredentist claims**

NA

### **Claimed territory**

- Sami claims concern their traditional territory, which is called Sápmi. The vast territory stretches over northern parts of Finland, Sweden, and Norway, but also includes some areas in Russia (Roth 2015: 24). However, we code only the territories within the borders of Finland, Sweden, and Norway since the self-determination movement has made specific demands within these countries. We code this claim within Finland’s borders based on the map by Roth (2015: 22).

### **Sovereignty declarations**

- According to Minahan (2002: 1640) the Sami leaders from the Nordic countries “declared the collective sovereignty of the divided Sami nation” in 1983. However, there is no other source confirming this declaration and hence we do not code it.

### **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no evidence of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD coding. [NVIOLSD]

### **Historical context**

- A semi-nomadic tribe of early Mongol origin, the Sami gradually came under the control of the Nordic kingdoms in the early Middle Ages. Their traditional lifestyle built around reindeer herding was, however, only little affected, as they were granted the right to travel freely across international frontiers (Hewitt and Cheetham 2000; Minahan 2002).
- The Sami territory was subjected to constantly changing geopolitical situations for centuries and was occupied by Denmark, Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. Today’s state borders were established between the middle of the eighteenth century, when the frontier between Sweden and Norway was agreed, to the middle of the nineteenth century, when the frontier between Norway and Russia was delimited (1826). These demarcations crosscut the Sami territory and divided the various Sami tribes between Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden (Minahan 2002; Somby 2011; United Nations Report 2011).
- From the nineteenth century until around the time of the Second World War, the respective governments primarily followed policies of assimilation. Finnish settlement in the Sami territory was encouraged with incentives, including land and water rights (United Nations Report 2011).

## Concessions and restrictions

- On November 9, 1973, the Finnish Parliament passed an act to establish the Sámi Párlameanta or the “Delegation for Sami Affairs” as an advisory body to the government consisting of 21 publicly elected members. The new body was intended to monitor the Sami people's rights and their economic, social and cultural conditions. Operating from 1973-1995, it was the predecessor to the Sami Parliament (Sapmi 2006). There are no sources that indicate an increase in cultural rights or the level of self-determination associated with the new body, which is why we do not code this act. The establishment of the Finnish Sami Parliament as a successor of the Sami Delegation, however, is coded.
- The Sami Language Act was passed in 1991 and granted the Sami people the right to use the Sami languages for all government services (Cunningham 2014: 209). The act came into effect in 1992. [1991: cultural rights concession]
- On 17 July 1995 the Finnish Parliament passed the Act on the Sami Parliament. The act states that “the Saami as an indigenous people shall [...] be ensured cultural autonomy within their homeland in matters concerning their language and culture”. The act established the Finnish Sami Parliament that replaced the “Delegation for Sami Affairs” that had operated from 1972-1995 (Josefsen 2010; United Nations Report 2011). The new body consists of 21 members that are publicly elected every four years. The task of the Sami Parliament includes matters related to the Sami language, culture and indigenous status. However, also within these areas, the influence of the Sami Parliament remains restricted, leaving the body only limited decision-making power. Nevertheless, Josefsen (2010) describes the Finnish Sami Parliament as the Sami parliament with “the strongest statutory rights” when compared with its counterparts in Norway or Sweden (despite having a much lower annual budget), particularly since the Finnish authorities are obliged to negotiate with the Sami Parliament regarding all important matters which may affect the Sami's status as an indigenous people. [1995: autonomy concession]
- In addition to the establishment of the Sami Parliament, there was also a constitutional amendment in 1995. The constitution now includes stronger guarantees for the rights of the Sami, recognizes the status of the Sami as an indigenous people and guarantees the Sami cultural and linguistic autonomy within the Sami Homeland (Minority Rights Group International; Somby 2011). [1995: cultural rights concession]
- In 2000, the Sami Parliamentary Council was established in order to represent the Sami parliaments in Norway, Sweden, and Finland (Somby 2011; United Nations Report 2011). This transnational body is not a concession by the government but unilaterally established and furthermore does not increase the Sami level of self-determination. This event is hence not coded.
- The 1991 language act was followed up by various other laws on the Sami's linguistic rights (particularly in schooling and education) such as the Act on the Financing of Education and Culture or the Basic Education Act of 1998 (Keskitalo et al. 2013). The changes implied by these acts appear minimal.
- A somewhat more significant change came in 2003. In 2003, the old language law was renewed, based on a proposal by the Sami Assembly. The new law entered into force on 1 January 2004. Though not vastly different to the 1991 law. For example, similarly to the earlier law, the act grants the Sami “the right to use the Sami language before certain State authorities and in relation to certain administrative and legal procedures”, particularly in the municipalities of the Sami core area (United Nations Report 2011: 18). Moreover, unlike Finnish and Swedish, which are both recognized as national languages, the Sami language remains a regional minority language. Nevertheless, the 2003 law improved the status of the Sami language (Cunningham 2014: 209). In particular, the government initiated different language revitalization efforts (e.g. “nest” programs in Inari) to tackle the problem that most state personnel lacks knowledge in Sami (Minority Rights Group International). [2003: cultural rights concession]
- In April 2016, Finland's parliament passed a new Forestry Act, which circumvents the need for prior consultation and gives the Finnish state-run enterprise the ability to remove the boreal forest that is vital to Sámi livelihoods (MRGI). The Act transferred the power over this region further into the hands of state authorities, opening up the Sámi Home Area and sub-Arctic ecosystems to railway construction, and with that, potential expansion of mining, forestry and other infrastructure projects (Rhoades and Mustonen 2016). [2016: autonomy restriction]

- In October 2021, the Finnish government established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address the historical treatment of the indigenous Sami population and promote the attainment of the Sami people's rights. The commission should report deliver its final report in November 2023, which could lead to further enhancement of Sami rights (Impact News Service 2021). However, the set-up of a commission is insufficient for us to code a concession.

### **Regional autonomy**

- The Sami Parliament has only very limited decision-making power, thus we do not code regional autonomy (Nordicpolicycentre 2021; Watson and Quince 2018).

### **De facto independence**

NA

### **Major territorial changes**

NA

### **EPR2SDM**

<i>Movement</i>	Sami (Lapps)
<i>Scenario</i>	No match
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

### **Power access**

- For a long time the Saami population in Finland has not even been represented in the Finnish parliament, let alone the national executive (Josefsen 2010: 11). This only changed in 2007 with the election of Janne Seurujärvi to the Finnish Parliament. However, there is no evidence of a Sami being elected to executive power at the center. [1973-2020: powerless]

### **Group size**

- The population numbers differ only marginally between the different sources. According to Minahan (2002), there are about 8,000 Sami in Finland. Josefsen (2010) estimates 5,000-6,500 and the Minority Rights Group 7,500. According to the Sámi Parliament (n.d.), there are about 10 000 Sámi in Finland. We draw on the number provided by Minahan. Finland's total population was 5.2 million in 2002 according to the World Bank. [0.0015]

### **Regional concentration**

- We code 8,000 Sami in Finland (see above). They live in Finland's northernmost region of Lapland, which has a population of around 180,000. We only found evidence of one municipality (Utsjoki with a population of 1,263) where the Sami are a majority (70%). Everywhere else, they are in the minority, implying that the threshold for territorial concentration is not met. According to the Sami Parliament (n.d.), more than 60 per cent of Finland's Sami live outside the Sámi

Homeland [not concentrated]

- Note: We deviate from Minahan (2002). According to Minahan (2002: 1636), the Sami make up 51% of Lapland (he refers to the entire territory of Lapland including parts of Finland, Norway, and Sweden). Yet our own research suggests that Minahan's estimate of the number of Samis is inflated.

## Kin

- According to Minahan (2002: 1636), there are Sami communities in Norway (70,000), Sweden (22,000) and Russia (3,000). Minahan's estimates of the number of Samis are likely inflated (see above), but this does not matter since even according to Minahan the numeric threshold is not met. [no kin]
  - Note: According to Minahan (2002: 1637) the Samis in Norway are commonly called Finns, which raises the question whether the Finns should be coded as ethnic kin. The main reason why the Samis are sometimes seen as related to the Finns is that the Finnish and the Sami language have a common ancestor (Proto-Finno-Saamic). However, the two languages split 3000 years ago, and we could not find additional evidence of strong ethnic ties between the two groups. Thus we do not code the Finns as ethnic kin of the Sami.

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