

From Tampere to The Hague: moving forward? Progress and shortcomings in the area of freedom, security and justice

Welcome by the Parliament of Finland

Matti Väistö, Chairman of the Committee on Internal Affairs

Mr President, Madam Deputy Speaker, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Finnish Parliament I should like to welcome you to our discussions on the development of the area of freedom, security, and justice. This is the second joint parliamentary meeting between the European Parliament and the national parliaments to be given over to justice and home affairs. The significance of these matters is reflected both in citizens' hopes and in the EU's endeavours to progress in our cooperation in order to help citizens move more freely and to guarantee security for us all.

The area of freedom, security, and justice is one of the priorities for the Finnish Presidency. Finland is aiming, through the mid-term review of the Hague Programme, to make the key issues the focus of activity in an attempt to clear up some of the main problems affecting decision-taking and the enforcement of legislation.

We have two days of hard work ahead of us. There are many things to talk about, each more interesting and topical than the one before. I hope that we will all manage to train our energies on these subjects, listen to each other's views, and hence learn from our different legal systems. I hope that, working together to good effect, we can have a frank, constructive discussion about the problems perceived to slow down or obstruct cooperation. Admitting that there are problems and then solving them is the only way to move forward. By strengthening confidence in our respective legal systems and intensifying cooperation between national and EU authorities, we can create a genuine area of freedom, security, and justice for our citizens.