



The Åland Islands Peace Institute

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# Thinking and acting for peace

*Peace, conflict and conflict resolution are the three main areas of activity for the Åland Islands Peace Institute (ÅIPI). These wide areas are mainly considered through the special status and competencies of Åland: autonomy within Finland, minority rights, demilitarisation and neutralisation. The ÅIPI is an independent foundation, established in 1992, and specialises in research, education and information. A Board of Directors and a Research Council are responsible for the activities of the Institute.*

## The Åland Islands Peace Institute ...

- conducts research into autonomy, minorities and security, often in collaboration with international networks of scholars.
- disseminates research results through publications, seminars and conferences.
- presents what is called the "Åland Example" and discusses its character and content with a large number of international visitors every year.
- offers web-based education on territorial autonomy and the Åland Example.
- arranges regular high-level meetings, for instance the Kastelholm Talks on Peace, held with the former Finnish President Tarja Halonen as a patron, and with leading researchers, diplomats and international experts on the panel.
- promotes and participates in local and international networks in order to further democratisation, gender equality and non-violence.
- offers mediation services through the local mediation office in accordance with Finnish legislation, in certain types of crimes and disputes.

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## Åland – meeting point and source of inspiration

Åland is often described as a successful example of an international resolution of a territorial conflict. This resolution has three components, namely:

- autonomy
- demilitarisation and neutralisation, and
- protection of the Swedish language and culture of Åland

The Åland islands is today the only autonomous region, on a global level, which is also demilitarised and neutralised. Visitors from all over the world come to Åland to study the Åland Example in order to be informed and inspired to contribute to peace processes in their own regions. For these audiences, and on the basis of continuous critical research about the Åland Example and its components, the Institute contributes with updated knowledge, analysis, and advice.



## **Autonomy – power can be divided**

Territorial autonomy is a possible tool for regulating the balance between self-government and the territorial sovereignty of the state. The history of self-government on Åland, as well as its institutions, has been thoroughly researched. The Åland Islands Peace Institute is also analysing the ideas and principles that underpin the system as a whole, and follows how the self-government practice develops in a continuous process involving many different actors. Åland is also compared to other self-governing territories, such as South Tyrol/Trentino Alto Adige, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands. These studies often concern the viability, sustainability and democratic capacity of such arrangements.

## **Minorities – protection of language and culture**

Autonomy is not in itself a complete and final arrangement for protecting the rights of minorities to their own identity. It is therefore often complemented with specific forms of minority protection. The Åland Islands Peace Institute analyses national and international law and its implementation in relation to minority protection. This is made not only in relation to Åland and Finland, but also internally, within the local community on Åland, and in comparison with other regions.

## **Security – demilitarisation and neutralisation**

The Åland Islands Peace Institute regards demilitarisation and neutralisation as examples of constructive and peace-oriented political arrangements. Demilitarisation can be understood as a confidence-building mechanism in peace-time, while neutralisation regulates the status of Åland in war-time. The Institute monitors and analyses how these arrangements are regarded and respected by surrounding states and regions. In this context it is also natural to compare with other areas sharing one or both of these features, such as Svalbard and the Antarctic.

# Research about autonomy, minorities, and security

The research of the Åland Islands Peace Institute focuses on autonomy, minority issues, and security. The Åland Example and its components are analysed as a whole as well as independently. Finally, the Åland Islands Peace Institute puts the Åland Example into perspective through comparisons and studies of other regions and international situations.

## Publications

See [www.peace.ax](http://www.peace.ax)

*Towards Openly Multilingual Policies and Practices: Assessing Minority Language Maintenance Across Europe*

Ed. Johanna Laakso, Anneli Sarhimaa, Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark and Reetta Toivanen, 2016

*The Åland Example and Its Components – Relevance for International Conflict Resolution*  
Ed. Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, 2011

*The Right of Domicile on Åland*  
Ed. Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, 2007

*Islands of Peace - Åland's Autonomy, Demilitarisation and Neutralisation*  
Susanne Eriksson, Lars Ingmar Johansson, Barbro Sundback, 2006



## Report series

Download at [www.peace.ax](http://www.peace.ax)

*Conflict Regulation through Self-Rule – Success Factors of Territorial Autonomy Systems*  
Felix Schulte, 2015

*Minorities and Immigration - Frameworks of Exclusion and Inclusion in the Åland Islands and South Tyrol Compared*  
Heidi Öst and Verena Wisthaler, 2014

*Successful Examples of Minority Governance – The Cases of the Åland Islands and South Tyrol*  
Maria Ackrén, 2011

*Regional Voices in the European Union – Regions with Legislative Power and Multi-level Governance. Perspectives for the Åland Islands*  
Sarah Stephan, 2010



## **Demilitarisation**

Åland must not be fortified, or otherwise used for military activity. Military presence in times of peace is strictly regulated.

## **Neutralisation**

Neutralisation means that Åland shall remain outside of any military activity in times of war.

## **Minority protection**

Finland is bi-national and bilingual. In addition, Åland has special protection for its Swedish language and culture.

## **Self-government**

Åland has the power to legislate in a number of areas, and for this reason has its own Parliament and Government.

*The special status of Åland has evolved since 1856, and it is today strongly entrenched in national legislation as well as in international law, e.g. through international agreements and conventions.*

Åland consists of about 6,500 islands, and has approximately 29,000 inhabitants. Åland is an autonomous region within Finland. The strategically located Åland islands, which at the time were Russian, were demilitarised in 1856 through an international convention. After Finland became an independent state (1917) the League of Nations decided in 1921 that Åland should continue under Finnish sovereignty, but have enhanced autonomy with guarantees for its language and culture. At the same time, Åland's demilitarisation was strengthened through neutralisation of the islands in times of war.