THE STORY OF FINLAND
OUR 50-YEAR JOURNEY WITH THE OECD

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WHAT HAPPENED HERE, GRANDAD?

THE WAR.
EVERYTHING IS IN RUINS!

IT WAS TERRIBLE. MILLIONS OF LIVES WERE LOST.

THIS IS EUROPE IN 1945, RIGHT AFTER THE FIGHTING ENDED.

I HOPE THE WORLD WILL NEVER AGAIN HAVE TO EXPERIENCE A WAR LIKE THIS. I HOPE WE HAVE LEARNED BY NOW.

I DON'T LIKE THIS.

WE'LL CONTINUE THROUGH HERE.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

THIS WAS YEAR ZERO. AN END... AND A BEGINNING.
I need not tell you, gentlemen, that the world situation is very serious.

It has become obvious during recent months...

That this visible destruction was probably less serious than the dislocation of the entire fabric of the European economy.

This is Harvard University in 1947...

The remedy lies in restoring the confidence of the European people in the economic future of their own countries and of Europe as a whole.

And the man speaking is the US Secretary of State, George C. Marshall.

What is this place? Who is that man?

Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist.

Oh, I see! He’s talking about rebuilding!

Yes, he’s outlining the program that will be known as Marshall Aid. It will help Europe heal from the ravages of war.

The program should be a joint one, agreed to by a number of, if not all, European nations.

This will lead to further co-operation in the form of an organization called the OECD*.

Very cool!

But Grandad... I need to learn about my dad’s native country. Where does Finland come into all this?

A path that will lead us to modern Europe.

Come, let’s go take a look. The story of Finland is about to start.

*Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
I. THE LAND OF THE THOUSAND LAKES

OH! IT’S SO GREEN HERE!
This is Finland?
But they're still using horses!

Remember, we're in the late 1940s.

Finland was a mainly agrarian society up until the 1960s...

For centuries, the land gave us our livelihood. We grew crops, tended livestock.

Like my mom's folks did in Provence!

We lived with the seasons...

The lovely light summers, the dark cold winters.

Did you know that Finland is the most heavily forested country in Europe? Almost 80% of the total land area is covered by woods.

Wow!

This rural landscape is a defining part of our identity... our mental landscape.

This is where our story begins.
Living with the harsh northern climate and demanding environment has taught us to look for practical solutions to problems.

We don’t give up easily, I guess... we keep trying until we succeed.

We Finns even have a word for it, “sisu”.

“Ssee-su”?

Who’s the lady at the bus-stop?

Is she someone important?

She can be.
THANKS TO EDUCATION, SHE CAN. IN FINLAND, ANYONE CAN GO TO SCHOOL AND GET A GOOD EDUCATION, NO MATTER THEIR SOCIAL BACKGROUND OR GENDER.

LOOKS LIKE SHE'S GOING PLACES!

ACTUALLY, GENDER EQUALITY IS EVEN INGRAINED IN THE FINNISH LANGUAGE. WE DON'T DISTINGUISH BETWEEN 'HIM' OR 'HER', WE ONLY HAVE ONE PRONOUN FOR ALL PEOPLE... 'HÄN'.

LIKE MANY OTHERS OF HER GENERATION, SHE'S GOING TO WORK IN THE CITY.

SHE'S MOVING UP IN THE WORLD.
After the war, many Finns like her chose to leave the countryside for better work opportunities. It was a big change! But due to technological advances, traditional agricultural professions required fewer workers. One person could do the work of many.

With all the technological progress going on after the war, the cities offered endless possibilities. There she is, playing her part in the rapid postwar development of Finland.

We became builders and inventors, a nation of industry!

II. The Creation of Sampo

In addition, there was a postwar baby boom. By the early 1960s, a record number of young adults were looking for work.
I think our postwar progress was also quick because of the will to rebuild, the desire to have better lives in a world without war.

The war caused us Finns a lot of suffering, like it did for many countries.

But we survived. And after the war, we wanted to stay neutral. We even stayed outside the Marshall Aid program. The men and women just went back to work with typical stoic determination. We paid back our debts, made all our reparations, rebuilt the country...

In the Kalevala, the Finnish national epic, there’s a magical artifact called Sampo that creates wealth and prosperity.

And they did it all by themselves.

They must have had a lot of “see-su”!

In the postwar years, I think they built something very much like it!
The period from the 1950s to the 1970s changed our small country profoundly.

Our standard of living rose, and kept rising.

But we weren’t done yet!

Oh, this isn’t our timeship.

What? It isn’t?

It’s the Ball Chair designed by Eero Aarnio.

When the chair was introduced in 1963, it was sold in over 30 countries.

It’s just one of many examples of iconic Finnish products, from scissors to ships to cellphones.

Look, here’s a cargo train. Let’s see where it’s going!
Since Finland is a small country, we’ve always been a nation that thrives on trade.

Products are shipped out to the world each day from our harbours. This is Turku Harbour, but there are many others like it.

So many ships!

Even though geographically Finland is a remote country, seaways connect us with everywhere.

So many abbreviations!

It just means we were opening up our trade, making it easier for Finnish companies to sell their products to other countries, and vice versa.

In the 1960s, the time was right to develop our relationships with our trading partners in Europe. We became an associate member of EFTA in 1961 and signed a free trade agreement with the EEC in 1973.
With the increased trade and the higher living standards, the Finnish consumers had easy access to affordable new goods. Household appliances, international brands, televisions...

The world, previously so far away, was suddenly in our living rooms...

There was much to do before we got to the modern Finland we know. Our institutions and methods were still sometimes a little old-fashioned. Do you remember the OECD?

In the 1960s, despite all the rapid growth going on, we were still finding our feet a bit.

After Europe was back on its feet again, the organisation grew into an ongoing project for making Europe, and later the world, into a better place for all to live, to trade and to work.

Mr. Marshall? Of course!
THE OECD COLLECTS AND PROVIDES INFORMATION TO ITS MEMBER COUNTRIES, WHICH POLICIES WORK, WHICH HAVE NEGATIVE EFFECTS.

WE FINNS PUT A LOT OF STOCK INTO EDUCATION, AND THE OECD WAS THE BEST SCHOOL AROUND FOR OUR POLITICIANS AND OFFICIALS, WHO WERE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO CONTINUE BUILDING FINLAND INTO A MODERN, DIVERSE, HIGHLY DEVELOPED ECONOMY.

IN THE FOLLOWING DECADES, WE BECAME THE MODERN FINLAND WE KNOW TODAY.
NATURALLY, NAVIGATING THE TENSE GLOBAL POSTWAR POLITICAL SITUATION PRESENTED A CHALLENGE...

BUT FINLAND STUCK TO ITS OWN INDEPENDENT PATH, JUST LIKE WE ALWAYS HAVE.

LIKE THE OECD, WE FINNS FIRMLY BELIEVE IN FREEDOM AND EQUALITY, IN GIVING EVERYONE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO PROSPER. THESE ARE THE IDEAS THAT FOSTER WELL-BEING FOR THE WHOLE OF SOCIETY.

THEY ARE BY FAR OUR MOST VALUABLE EXPORTS.

IT'S EASY TO FORGET, BECAUSE SUCH IDEAS CAN SEEM SELF-EVIDENT.

COME, TIME IS RUNNING FASTER. IT'S ALMOST 1995. WE HAVE A GAME TO CATCH!
III. ENTERING EUROPE

When and where are we now, grandad?

We've come forward all the way to 1995. We're in Stockholm, Sweden!

This is a very important time for us Finns. Finland is about to win the World Championship in ice hockey!
In order to fully understand the Finns, one needs to understand their passions, however trivial they might seem... and ice hockey is a big one!

There must be loads of places to skate with all those thousands of lakes freezing over in the winter!

But Finland wins all the time! What's so special about this one?

This was our first championship. The whole country went nuts!

And it was our neighbour Sweden we beat in the final match. It was so sweet! Like brothers, we've always been in friendly competition with each other, especially in sports.

This time, at long last it was the little brother's turn to win!

Goal!

And it wasn't just in sports. We were becoming very successful in many other areas as well.

Come, let's get back to Finland. Something very important is about to take place!
Sweden isn't Finland's only close neighbour. We're also very close to other Nordic countries, Denmark, Norway and Iceland.

Before the trade agreements with other European countries and joining the OECD, the Nordic countries already had a common labour market and freedom of movement between our countries.

We're all small, highly advanced countries with similar values. We're like peas in a pod!

Nice!

So we'd already had a little experience of things to come...

Here we are!

Welcome to Helsinki, the capital of Finland.
SUCH A BEAUTIFUL CITY!
YOU KNOW, IN 1995, IN ADDITION TO THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, SOMETHING EVEN MORE IMPORTANT HAPPENED IN FINLAND.

IT WAS THE BIGGEST THING TO HAPPEN TO FINLAND SINCE OUR INDEPENDENCE...

OH, I KNOW! I KNOW!

FINLAND FINALLY WON THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST!

SADLY, THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN UNTIL 2006...

NO, WE JOINED THE EUROPEAN UNION.

WE WERE NOW AN INTEGRAL PART OF ONE OF THE LARGEST ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES IN HISTORY!

IT HAD BEEN A LONG ROAD FOR US - AND FOR ALL EUROPE - BUT WE MADE IT.
A small country alone doesn’t carry much weight in the world.

But a group of countries together is another matter. Co-operation is the key to success.

This and the freedom of movement of people and goods are important for us. Joining the EU was very good for Finland!

But grandad... aren’t the EU and the OECD almost the same thing?

Whereas the EU is a political organization with binding rules, the OECD is like a repository of knowledge, a meeting place. The OECD can teach, guide, suggest, set standards, but it cannot legislate.

Not at all. Since the 1960s, the OECD hasn’t been just a European organization, but an international one.

In many ways, the EU is a practical application of the ideas that were developed at the OECD to improve the economic well-being of its members!
I love this building!

This is the Finlandia House, by Alvar Aalto, our famous architect. It was built in the 1970s.

It still looks so modern and so Finnish!

Mr. Aalto was very much inspired by the Finnish landscape and traditions.

You know, even if we’re Europeans, we’ll still always be our peculiar selves.

You can take a Finn out of Finland, but she’ll always miss sauna, rye bread and salty liquorice...

Ring ring!

That’s what Dad always says.

Mom and me aren’t really sold on the liquorice!
Can I get back to you?

I'm in the 20th century with my granddaughter.

Of course it works! After all it's a classic Finnish Nokia phone.

You know, as a company, Nokia started as a manufacturer of rubber boots in the 19th century.

SHOES?

That thing still works? It's an antique!

But in 1998, they became the world's leading brand of mobile phones.

IV. Connecting People

We weren't world champions just in ice hockey...

Through education, research and innovation, Finland had transformed itself from an agrarian society into a leading high-tech country.
It wasn't always easy. There have been economic downturns as well.

In the long run, there are always hiccups. And we've come a long way, fast.

Joining the OECD was important for us, but more important was our willingness to learn, to take part, to co-operate, to improve ourselves. It was something we picked up long ago. And the OECD gave us the context in which we could grow and prosper, just like it does for many other countries.

And we're still learning, every day. And our experiences are helping other countries.

Yes, ooh! It was completed in 2013.

In Finland we believe in free access to information and learning.

With all that in mind, it's not at all surprising that our education system has been routinely ranked among the best in the world!
We like to solve problems. And we do spend a lot of the year indoors.

I know! Who'd want to go out into this weather!

If there's one negative thing about Finland, it's the northern weather!

Since Finland is a small, remote country and we have only a few valuable material resources, concentrating on immaterial and high tech goods comes naturally to us.

It's no wonder Finns took to home computers like fish to water!

They aren't just playing. At some point, they start designing and programming their own games.

First on home computers, then on gaming consoles and on mobile phones.

Even this timeship we're in has its roots in these programs!

By the early 21st century, games had become their own thing. A whole new worldwide industry!
BUT WHAT'S THAT NOISE? IS IT AN EARTHQUAKE? A POLAR BEAR?

NO, WE DON'T REALLY HAVE EITHER OF THOSE. LET'S SEE...

IT'S COMING FROM THE CELLAR!

WELL... I GUESS THIS IS ALSO ONE OF FINLAND'S EXPORTS!

LOOK AT ALL THAT HAIR!

FINLAND HAS THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF HEAVY METAL BANDS PER CAPITA. WE LIKE OUR MUSIC LOUD!
It’s quite natural, when you think about the weather and how long our dark northern nights are.

We Finns have always lived with our harsh land, our endless forests, our thousand lakes... it’s what we know and love.

Everything around us inspires our artists and designers.

It may sometimes seem desolate and dark to others...

But it’s our home.

It’s part of what inspires us, gives us strength, a sense of belonging.

What makes us Finns.
YEAR 2044!
WE'RE BACK!

V. THE GOLDEN AGE
FINNS, WHO’D GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO CLEAN NATURE AND HARSH CLIMATE CONDITIONS, WERE AT THE FOREFRONT OF DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEW CENTURY.

THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY WAS A GOOD TIME FOR FINLAND...

CLEANTECH, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, DRINKABLE WATER FOR A GLOBAL POPULATION...

FINLAND IS A COUNTRY WITH MANY TREES AND LAKES BUT FEW PEOPLE.

EVERYONE CAN ENJOY NATURE IN FINLAND, "JOKAMIEHENOIKEUS", OR EVERYMAN’S RIGHTS, GUARANTEE IT.

I’M ENJOYING THESE BLUEBERRIES!

OUR EXPERIENCE WITH HIGH TECH APPLICATIONS COMBINED WITH THE INSTINCTIVE RESPECT FOR NATURE THAT ALL FINNS HAVE FROM BIRTH HELPED US HELP THE WORLD.
FINLAND IN THE 21ST CENTURY IS A SAFE, STABLE, FREE AND SOCIALLY JUST NATION.

WE'RE VERY HAPPY WITH OUR LIVES. AMONG THE HAPPIEST IN THE WORLD, IN FACT!

BUT WE HAVE OUR OWN CHALLENGES. WE'RE GROWING OLD...

YOU'RE NOT THAT OLD!

...BUT, SINCE WE'RE STUBBORN FINNS WITH SISU, WE CAN TURN ANY CHALLENGE INTO A STRENGTH.

FOR A LONG TIME, WE'VE GATHERED DATA AND DEVELOPED NEW MEDICAL SOLUTIONS. AND OF COURSE WE HAVE EASY AND AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE.

HEY, KITTY!

LET'S FIND YOU SOME TREATS!

WAIT A SECOND - ISN'T THIS THE LADY WE SAW IN THE 1950s?
YES, SHE WAS YOUR GREAT-GRANDMOTHER.

I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE HER!

OH YEAH!

SHE WAS SO YOUNG BACK THEN. HERE ARE SOME OF YOUR COUSINS AND UNCLEs AND AUNTS TOO...

AND FOR ALL THE OTHERS, IN THE FOLLOWING DECADEs.

SCHOOL AND EDUCATION WERE THE KEY TO MY MOTHER'S CHANCE TO GO FORWARD IN THE WORLD.

FOR THE WHOLE COUNTRY.
They're still just as important now in 2044.

The story of Finland isn't just about the land, or the economy.

It's just as much about the values we live by.

And it's about the people.

Young and old, everyone who has ties to this small corner of the world.

They are all continuing the story, every day.
LOOK AT THE TIME! I NEED TO PREPARE THE DINNER. YOUR MOM AND DAD ARE GOING TO ARRIVE FROM PARIS IN AN HOUR.

SO, DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH MATERIAL FOR YOUR SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT?

I SURE DO, GRANDAD!

AND I'M GOING TO WRITE IT BY HAND, JUST LIKE GREAT-GRANDMOTHER WOULD HAVE!

NOW! STOP TALKING SO I CAN GET STARTED ON MY OWN STORY!

YOU'LL HELP ME PREPARE THE FISH?

MEOW!

The Story of FINLAND
Château de la Muette, Paris, 23 July 1968

Finland signs the Memorandum of Understanding with the OECD

Left to right:
Tankmar Horn, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Finland
Thorkil Kristensen, OECD Secretary General

Finland became a full member of the OECD on 28 January 1969
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