Motion nr. 1

Name of the person introducing the motion: Anders Eriksson or Pia Eriksson

On behalf of the party: Ålands Framtid.

Title: Defense of the Ålandish and Catalan autonomous governments.

After Sweden lost the war against Russia in 1809 Finland and Åland became a part of the Russian empire. In the political chaos created by the Russian revolution Finland saw the opportunity to declare independence in 1917.

This also became the start for "The Åland movement" (Ålandsrörelsen), a group of Ålanders with one goal in mind: To reunite the Åland Islands with (The Motherland) Sweden.

In 1918 a mass address with more than 7,000 names (95% of the Åland population at the time) was personally brought to the Swedish King by a Ålandic delegation with a wish for a reunion of the Åland Islands with Sweden.

The newly independent Finland disagreed and the question of Åland's state affiliation became an infected topic between the two countries. When an agreement couldn't be reached it had to be decided by The League of Nations, the equivalent of today's UN after the first world war.

The Ålanders didn't stand back from their claim for a reunion with Sweden. The alternative was independence for the Islands. The Finnish government responded by imprisoning two of the Ålandish leaders.

To please the decision makers Finland offered Åland autonomy within the Finnish state. By the law of self-determination of Åland the Åland people would be guaranteed their Swedish language, culture and customs. Furthermore – this is important – Åland Islands was promised maximum self-government without being an independent state.

In 1921 The League of Nations decided, against the will of the people of Åland, that Åland Island shall end up under Finnish sovereignty.

During the almost 100 years that has passed since the decision of Åland's state affiliation the Finnish attitude for a development of the Åland's self-government has become cooler. Attempts from Åland to take over tax rights have constantly been stopped. Likewise, despite declarations from the Finnish government, Finland still denies the people of Åland a seat in the EU Parliament.

Many years of discussions between Åland and Finland about a revision of the self-government act has recently broken down due to Finland's total unwillingness to increased self-government for Åland. Instead growing Finnish nationalism with parties like True Finns will see the autonomy decreased in areas such as tax pay back to Åland and the position of Swedish as a national language within Finland state.

The dissatisfaction over the situation has now gone so far that even the old and traditional parties on the Islands have started questioning Åland's position within Finland. The speaker of the Åland Parliament has officially declared the necessity to raise the Åland issue on an international level.

Issues like the Åland example above are common among European minorities. In fact, EU as a supranational cooperation body has strengthened the nation state's unwillingness to negotiate about expanded self-determination for ethnic's groups.

In Catalonia politicians elected by the Catalans have been imprisoned by the Spanish government. Although this is an obvious breach of international law the EU does nothing to intervene and stop this undemocratic action. This shows the EU's inability to handle human rights issues within its geographical area of responsibility.

The EU is the Europe of its Member States, not the Europe of its people and regions. This creates political tensions that could be avoided if the Unions stateless people and their regions gained increased visibility in the EU institutions.

Therefore, Åland's future (Ålands Framtid) proposes that:
- the MEP’s representing EFA in the EP propose that the Parliament hosts a conference on future options for the autonomous European regions and stateless peoples to gain increased influence in the EU’s decision-making bodies,

- that Åland Islands stands as an example of the national state’s unwillingness to give an autonomous minority own representation in the EU Parliament, and

- that the conference primarily to be held in Åland to highlight Finland’s presidency of the EU Council 2019.