



*International Society for Ethnology and Folklore
Soci t  Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore
Internationale Gesellschaft f r Ethnologie und Folklore*



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P.O. Box 10855
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To the Leadership of the University of Turku

Re. Proposed Merger of the Professorship in European Ethnology, University of Turku

Honorable Colleagues,

On behalf of the Soci t  Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF), we would like to express our deepest concern about the University of Turku's proposed merger of the Professorship in European Ethnology with that of Folklore Studies, after the retirement of Prof. Helena Ruotsala.

European Ethnology is a major international academic discipline within the humanities spanning research institutions in most European universities and globally. The professorship, established in 1960, immeasurably enhances the status, visibility, and impact of the field.

We wholeheartedly support the scholarly discipline of European Ethnology in Finland and therefore urgently encourage the University to reconsider this merger.

SIEF is the international flagship organization tasked with stimulating and facilitating cooperation among scholars working within European Ethnology, Folklore Studies, Cultural Anthropology, and adjacent fields for more than half of a century. We are also an accredited UNESCO NGO, offering expert consultation on the UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The association has a membership base of more than 900 international scholars, hosts a biannual congress and 12 working groups, and fosters cooperation within university teaching.

In 2021, Turku's Ethnology department was a crucial partner in organising the highly successful congress, which has been hosted online by the University of Helsinki due to the then ongoing pandemic.

Since there are currently only four professorships in European Ethnology at national level in Finland (with one currently vacant) having the Professorship in European Ethnology merged with that of Folklore Studies at Turku will negatively affect the teaching of Ethnology at undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate level. Thus, the training of future experts on cultural heritage, cultural memory, material culture, migration and mobility, climate and sustainability, will be severely impacted. Moreover, the education of authoritative voices on the cultures of everyday life and cultural analysis that are employed throughout the public and private sectors, will be seriously compromised.

We are impressed by the fact that the current department hosts 22 active postgraduate students in European Ethnology, which testifies a vibrant milieu for educating new researchers and experts in the field, under the leadership of a dynamic and inspiring figurehead.

We sincerely hope that you will safeguard the future of our discipline in Finland by continuing the independent Professorship in European Ethnology at University of Turku.


Yours sincerely,



Dr. Marie Sandberg
President of SIEF
Saxo Institute,
University of Copenhagen
Copenhagen, Denmark



Dr. Thomas McKean
Vice-President of SIEF
Director, Elphinstone Institute
Executive Board, Kommission für Volksdichtung
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