

MEP Sari Essayah (EPP, Christian Democrats)

Sari Essayah is a Finnish Christian Democrat MEP from Paimio, Finland. She is married to Robert Knapp and they have two daughters born in 1998 and 2001. In her 20s, Sari Essayah was a world-class athlete with both European and world championship titles in race walking to her name. Ms Essayah gained a Master of Science degree in business administration from the University of Vaasa in 1995.

After ending her athletic career, Ms Essayah joined Finland's Christian Democratic party in 1996 and was elected to the municipal council of Lapinlahti where she served until her family moved to Southwest Finland.

She was elected to the Finnish Parliament in 2003, serving as the chairman of the parliamentary group from 2004 to 2007. Sari Essayah was not re-elected in the 2007 parliamentary elections, but was appointed as the Christian Democratic Party's secretary general later that year.

In June 2009 Sari Essayah was elected to the European parliament where she joined the group of the European People's Party. She is a member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and a substitute member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs.

Ms Essayah is also a full member of the European Parliament's delegation for relations with Israel and the delegation to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly as well as a substitute member of the delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries and the Arab Maghreb Union.

Outside politics, Sari Essayah has worked as a controller in the telecommunications sector and as an auditor. Sari Essayah also holds various positions of trust in different organisations. She is a member of the Finnish Athletics Association's economics and marketing committee and race walking committee. She is also Finland's delegate on the race walking committee of IAAF. Ms Essayah is an active defender of the rights of persons with disabilities and is a member of the ethics committee of the Finnish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities.