

# EUROBAROMETER 62

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## AUTUMN 2004

### NATIONAL REPORT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **FINLAND**

The survey was requested and coordinated by the Directorate General Press and Communication.

This report was produced for the European Commission's Representation in Finland

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission.  
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This Executive Summary presents the overall results from the Finnish National Report of the Eurobarometer Poll 62.0 conducted for the European Commission. The report is based on the analysis of results obtained from the Eurobarometer survey that was carried out in Finland and the other European Union member states in October and November 2004. The Finnish report focuses on:

1. The general knowledge of Finnish citizens on the European Union, as well as their opinions on Finnish membership in the European Union, the role of the European Union in Finland and media and the EU
2. What do Finnish people trust in?
3. The building of Europe and future EU enlargement
4. The European Union and the rest of the world



























On the basis of the results of the Eurobarometer poll in Autumn 2004, the following conclusions can be made.

#### **1. The general knowledge of Finnish citizens on the European Union, as well as their opinions on Finnish membership in the European Union, the role of the European Union in Finland and media and the EU**





- Finns consider their average level of knowledge about the EU to be about the same as a year ago. This figure is above the European average, as it has been for the past four years – even though there may have been some minor variations.
- When shown a picture of the European flag, 99 % of Finnish citizens recognised it and 95% knew its significance – Europe, the European Union, the Community, the Common Market, The Council of Europe, etc. 85% of Finns consider the European flag to be a good symbol for Europe. However, only 32% of the citizens identified with the European flag and only 28% said that the European flag should be seen on all public buildings in Finland next to the national flag.
- General knowledge about the European Union was also tested. Surprisingly, considering all the media coverage in 2004 concerning the European elections and the May 1 enlargement, 30% of respondents thought that the elections for the European Parliament were last held in June 2002 and 27% believed that there are twelve member countries in the European Union. Whereas 76% of Finns knew that Europe Day is celebrated in all member countries every year, only 41% of EU25 citizens knew this.
- 35 % of Finns consider that the European Union conjures up for them a positive image, whereas the overall average in EU25 member countries is 50%. The number of citizens considering the image of the European Union positive is only smaller in two countries: Austria and the UK.

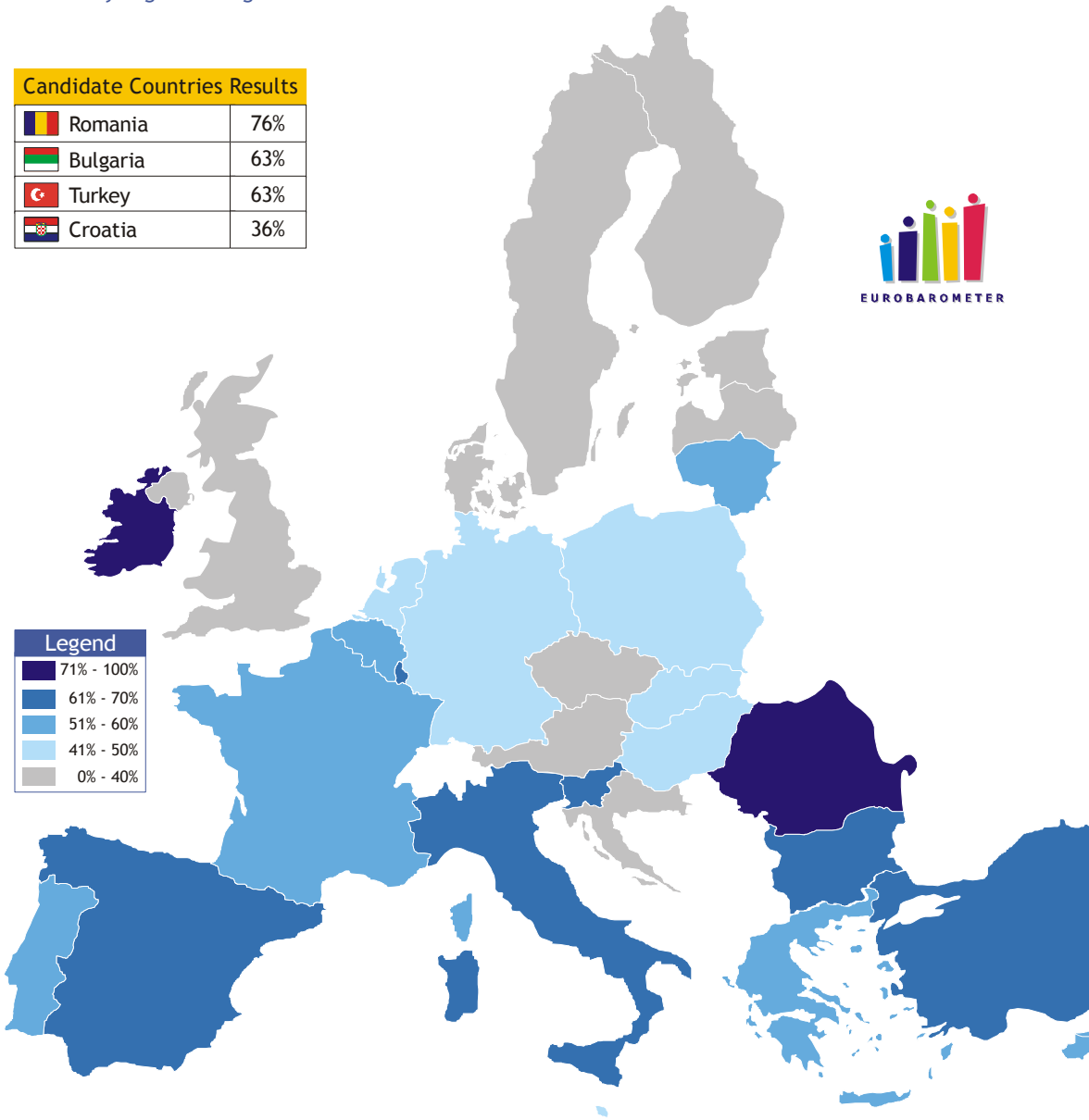
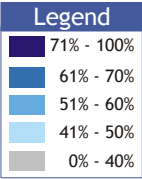
Q13 In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?

Answers: Total Positive

Country Results		
	Ireland	75%
	Italy	64%
	Spain	62%
	Slovenia	62%
	Luxembourg	61%
	Portugal	60%
	Lithuania	60%
	Belgium	59%
	Greece	58%
	France	53%
	Cyprus	51%
	EU25	50%
	Slovakia	48%
	Germany	47%
	Poland	46%
	Hungary	46%
	The Netherlands	45%
	Malta	45%
	Czech Republic	40%
	Latvia	40%
	Denmark	38%
	Sweden	38%
	Estonia	38%
	Finland	35%
	Austria	34%
	United Kingdom	32%

\*Cyprus North (57%)

Candidate Countries Results		
	Romania	76%
	Bulgaria	63%
	Turkey	63%
	Croatia	36%



- 48% of Finns think that, taking everything into account, their country's membership of the European Union is a good thing, whereas in the spring of 2004, 46% of them were of this opinion. This means there has been an increase of 2 percentage points in six months. 35% think that membership is neither a good nor a bad thing and 16% think it is a bad thing. The number of citizens considering membership a good thing has risen constantly since spring 2001, with the exception of autumn 2003. At the moment, the number of citizens considering the membership a good thing is at its highest since 1999. At the same time, the number of citizens considering membership to be a bad thing is at its lowest since 1999. Managers and students, in particular, consider membership to be a good thing, whereas the unemployed and house persons hold the opposite view.
- Almost half of the population (46%, + 3 percentage points) thinks that Finland has benefited from EU membership. However, almost as many are of the opposite opinion (45%, + 1 percentage point). This means that the number of those who did not express an opinion has gone down from 11% to 7%. Men are somewhat more positive about membership than women and believe that Finland has benefited from EU membership. Managers, those living in cities, students and more highly educated citizens, as well as supporters of the political right wing, also share this opinion. On the whole, it can be seen that Finnish citizens are slightly more negative about EU membership than the European average
- The Finns think that the role of the European Union is positive, especially when it comes to environmental protection, foreign affairs and the fight against terrorism. The role of the European Union is seen as negative by 48% of the population in regard to inflation and rising prices, as well as with respect to taxation, pensions, the economic situation and the fight against unemployment.
- 63% (+ 2 percentage points) of the Finnish poll considers that their national media report about the right amount of news regarding the European Union; 29% (+ 4 percentage points) think that coverage on the EU is too low and 5% (- 4 percentage points) think that the level of coverage is excessive.

## **2. What do the Finnish people trust in?**

- Citizens were given a list of different institutions in society and for each of these they were asked to say whether they tended or not to trust it. The most trusted institution in Finland is the army with 93% of Finns saying they trusted it. 91% of those polled trust the police. The Finnish legal system was trusted by 73% of the population, the Finnish parliament by 68% and the Finnish government by 67%.
- Only 26% of Finns trust political parties and as many as 70% say they tend not to trust them.

- The European Commission is trusted by 58% of Finnish citizens, this figure is two percentage points higher than in spring 2004.
- The European Parliament is trusted by 63%; this is two percentage points up from spring 2004 and five percentage points up from autumn 2003.

### **3. The building of Europe and future European Union enlargement**

- Over half of Finns (52%, -3 percentage points in six months) are against further enlargement of the European Union to include other countries in the future, whereas 45% (+10 percentage points in six months) are in favour of it. Greatest support for enlargement is among 15-24 years old citizens, students and, surprisingly, the unemployed. Further enlargement is opposed, in particular, by the least educated and the retired. Opposition to it is only greater in Austria, Germany and Luxembourg.
- The number of the Finnish people supporting the constitution has gone up by six percentage points since the last Eurobarometer poll. At the moment, 58% are in favour of the constitution and 35% are against it. The number of those not expressing an opinion has fallen below 10% of the population. Support for the constitution has been rising since spring 2003. If we compare support in spring 2003 and autumn 2004, we can see that in 18 months it has gone up by 14 percentage points.
- House persons, 25-39 year old citizens, the unemployed and those over 55 years of age are in favour of the European Constitution. There are no real differences to be seen among the supporters of different political parties. Students, 15-24 year old citizens and the self-employed are among those groups that most oppose the European Constitution.

### **4. The European Union and the rest of the world**

- Currently, 60% of Finns are in favour of the common Defence and Security Policy and 36% are against it. Only 4% of the Finnish population are unable to express opinion on this matter.
- The Common Defence and Security Policy finds strongest support especially among those over 55 years of age, supporters of the political right, house persons, managers and the least educated. Opposition is greatest amongst the students and the unemployed.
- 52% of Finns are of the opinion that the decisions concerning European defence policy should be taken by the European Union. On the other hand, 40% think that these decisions should be

made by the national governments (EU25 – 22%) and only 5% would be ready to give the decisions concerning European defence policy to NATO (EU25 – 15%).

- When it comes to support for a rapid military reaction force that can be sent quickly to trouble spots when an international crisis occurs, 64% of the Finnish population are of the opinion that the European Union should have this kind of force. Overall in the 25 member states, 71% are in favour of this rapid military reaction force. 32% of Finns and 20% of the EU25 poll oppose a rapid military reaction force.
- In addition, opinion concerning a common foreign policy for all EU member states towards other countries has turned more positive in Finland. Whereas 52% of Finns agreed with this concept in autumn 2003, the latest poll shows that support has risen to 61% in one year. Opposition has fallen by two percentage points and is now 34%. A common foreign policy among the member states is favoured particularly by the supporters of the political right, men, white-collar workers, those over 55 years of age, the highly educated and the unemployed. Those most opposing a common EU foreign policy are those aged between 40 and 54, supporters of the political left wing, the self-employed and women.
- The citizens were also asked if they tended to agree with the statement that the European Union should have its own Foreign Minister who can be the spokesperson for a common European Union position. 54% of Finns tended to agree with this, while 41% tended to disagree.
- 90% of Finns think that the European Union's foreign policy should be independent of that of the United States (EU25 – 82%), while 8% of the population opposed this.
- 71% of Finns are of the opinion that the role of the European Union is positive when it comes to maintaining peace in the world, whereas 67% think that the role of the United States is negative in this regard. Overall, 61% of EU citizens see the role of the European Union as positive whereas 22% see the role of the United States as positive, and 58% think that the role of the United States in this regard is negative, whereas 11% of the population see the role of the European Union as negative.
- 68 % of Finns think that the European Union tends to play a positive role when it comes to the fight against terrorism, while 43% think that the United States tend to play a positive role in this regard. In fact, almost as many Finns (42 %) think that the United States tend to play a negative role.
- When it comes to the growth of the world economy, 65% of the Finnish poll sees the role of the European Union as positive. 48% of them see the role of the United States as positive, while 29% believe the role of the United States to be negative when it comes to the growth of the world economy.

## **Conclusions**

On the whole, it may be said that the Finns seem to still be among the most negative in their opinions about the European Union when compared with citizens of other EU member states. However, a significant turn towards more positive opinions can be observed when these results are compared with the results of a couple of previous Eurobarometer polls.