

# EUROBAROMETER 64

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## AUTUMN 2005

### 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

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This Executive Summary presents the overall results of the Finnish National Report of the Eurobarometer Poll 64 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 Member States of the European Union in October and November 2005. The Finnish report focuses, among other things, on:

- Climate of opinion and life satisfaction in Finland
- The Finns and the European Union, their feelings about the EU? Do people feel that their voice counts in EU? Feeling of involvement in EU affairs.
- Support for EU membership. Do Finnish people trust the European Commission and the European Parliament?
- Opinions on consumption of energy and the European Union's agricultural policy
- The European Constitution and the future enlargement of the European Union

On the basis of the results of the Eurobarometer poll from autumn 2005, the following conclusions can be reached.

### **The climate of opinion and life satisfaction**

On the whole the Finnish people are very satisfied with their lives at the moment. 94 percent say that they are very or rather satisfied. Of all the citizens of the European Union, 88 percent of Finns say that they are satisfied with their lives. On the whole, it can be said that the Finns are amongst those European Union citizens who are the most satisfied with their lives. Those most satisfied with their lives are house persons (52 %) and students (48 %). The unemployed are the least satisfied with their lives.

The greater part of the Finnish people believes that the financial situation of their household, their personal job situation and their personal life in general is going to get better or stay the same during the next twelve months. 22 percent of citizens believe that the financial situation in Finland will get worse during the next twelve months. Students and young persons of 15 to 24 years of age, in particular, believe that their personal life is going to get better. Men, supporters of the political right and self-employed persons believe that the financial situation in Finland is going to get better. Among those who believe that their personal financial situation is going to get better are persons of 25-39 years of age, self-employed persons and manual workers.

30 percent of Finnish citizens believe that the job situation in their country will get worse while 44 percent believe that it will stay the same. Unemployed persons (43 %), those taking care of the household (31 %) and students (31 %), in particular, believe that their personal job situation is going to

get better. Respondents were also asked how confident they feel about their ability to keep their jobs in the coming months. 51 percent of Finns are very confident about their jobs and 35 percent are fairly confident. 13 percent are not very confident or not at all confident about their jobs. On the whole, we can conclude that the Finns see their life in the coming months fairly positively. What seems to worry them most are the job situation and the financial situation in Finland.

The Finns are of the opinion that the most important issue facing Finland at the moment is unemployment, followed, in second place by the healthcare system and, in third, crime. Those most worried about unemployment are the unemployed; the healthcare system is of most concern to the self employed (39 %), managers (37 %), those living in big cities (36 %) and women and highly educated persons (35 %). House persons (41 %) and the unemployed (37 %) are mostly worried about crime.

The Finns think that the most important goal for Finland for the next ten or fifteen years should be maintaining order in the country. 42 percent of the population cite this as the most important goal. The next most important goals were giving people more say in important government decisions and fighting rising prices. House persons (59 %), the retired (53 %) and supporters of the political right wing, in particular, think that maintaining order should be the most important goal for Finland. Other EU citizens who believe that maintaining order is important are the Danish and the British (44 %) and the Swedes (42 %).

Over 90 percent of the Finns are of the opinion that decisions concerning pensions, as well as health and social welfare, should be made by the Finnish government. Over 80 percent would also let the Finnish government decide about the following matters: the education system, immigration, defence and foreign affairs, and agricultural and fishing policy. 77 percent would also let the Finnish government decide about the fight against unemployment.

When asked what should be the three actions that the European Union should give greatest priority the Finns cite fighting poverty and social exclusion, fighting organised crime and drug trafficking, fighting unemployment and maintaining peace and security in Europe. The least important actions they consider to be welcoming new member countries, asserting the political and diplomatic importance of the European Union around the world and reforming the institutions of the European Union and the way they work.

### **The Finns and the European Union**

24 percent of Finns say that the European Union makes them feel hopeful and 13 percent say it makes them feel trust. On the other hand 18 percent mistrust the European Union. Just as many feel indifference and 15 percent anxiety. Eight percent of the Finnish population feel like rejecting the European Union. On the whole, it can be said that the European Union evokes negative feelings in 51 percent of Finnish citizens.

40 percent of Finns say that they understand how the European Union works while 59 percent say that they do not understand. 68 percent believe that their voice does not count in the European Union and only 31 percent that it does. Those who tend to trust that their voice counts are people living in big cities (40 %) and those of 15-24 years of age (39 %). House persons, the unemployed and people living in small towns are amongst those who most frequently believe that their voice does not count.

73 percent of Finns do not feel that they are involved in European affairs. Over half of the population (52 %) would like to be more involved in European affairs but do not know how to go about it. Self employed persons feel involved (42 %) and managers would like to be more involved (59 %).

Over half of the Finnish poll (56 %) would like to have some more information about the European Union and 10 percent feel they really need to know a lot more. The topics or policy areas that they are most interested in are their rights as European citizens, health and social policy and employment policy.

### **Support for EU membership**

38 percent think that, all things considered, Finnish membership of the European Union is a good thing, whereas in spring 2005, 45 % of the Finnish population was of this opinion. A similar number of citizens consider it neither a good nor a bad thing, while 22 percent consider the membership a bad thing (up four percentage points in six months).

Finnish membership of the European Union is considered a good thing especially by the supporters of the political right wing, self-employed persons, managers, people living in big cities, students and highly educated citizens. If we look at the trend over the past six years, it can be seen that the number of citizens considering Finnish membership a good thing has declined during 2005 after having experienced a steady increase since spring 2001 - with the exception of autumn 2003.

45 percent of the population (- 5 percentage points in six months) thinks that Finland has benefited from its membership in the European Union. The number of those not believing that Finland has benefited from its membership has gone up by four percentage points from 43 % to 47 %. Those who are the most positive about Finnish membership are those who are 15-24 years of age, students, supporters of the political right wing, managers and self-employed persons. Retired citizens, employees, supporters of the political left wing, manual workers and women are among those who least believe that Finland has benefited from its membership in the European Union.

The Finns consider that being in the European Union has had a positive effect especially on exports and industry, Finland's security and on services. Membership is believed to have had a negative effect on agriculture and employment in Finland.

### **Trust in the European Commission and the European Parliament**

The European Commission is trusted by 48 % of Finnish citizens. This figure has gone down by six percentage points since spring 2005. Students, young persons 15-24 years of age, managers, the self-employed and supporters of the political right wing trust the Commission most. The Commission is least trusted by supporters of the political left wing, employees, manual workers and retired citizens.

Trust in the European Parliament has always been slightly higher than trust in the European Commission among Finnish citizens. At the moment, 52 percent of Finns trust the European Parliament and 38 percent do not. If we look at the results of the past five Eurobarometer polls, it can be seen that

trust in the Parliament, having risen for some time, has gone down by 11 percentage points in one year and is, at the moment, at its lowest since autumn 2003. Students, those of 15-24 years of age, the self-employed, supporters of the political right wing and managers, in particular, trust the European Parliament. The Parliament is least trusted by supporters of the political left wing, the least educated citizens, those of 40-45 years of age, employees and retired citizens.

26 percent of Finns are of the opinion that the European Union should have greater financial means given its political objectives. However, two-thirds believe that the European Union's political objectives do not justify an increase in the Union's budget.

Finns think that the performance of the European economy could be improved by improving education and professional training, facilitating the creation of companies, investing in research and innovation and using energy more efficiently.

16 percent believe that the effect of the single market in Finland has been positive and as many as 61 percent think it has been fairly positive. These figures are above the European Union average.

## **Consumption of energy**

When it comes to taking new measures that will help people to reduce their consumption of energy, the Finns believe that the most effective means would be: to provide more information on efficient use of energy, to develop tax incentives to promote the efficient use of energy and to enforce energy efficiency standards more strictly.

Respondents were also asked to name those actions they believe that the Finnish government should mainly focus on in the coming years. The most important actions were considered to be the promotion of advanced research for new energy technologies and development of wind, solar and nuclear power in order to reduce dependency on imported energy resources.

Development of nuclear energy is favoured, in particular, by supporters of the political right wing, men and managers. Within the EU25, higher support levels for nuclear energy are only observed in Sweden. House persons support the development of solar and wind power more than other socio-demographic groups.

Almost half of Finns (47 %) are not prepared to pay more for energy produced from renewable sources, 37 percent would pay up to 5 % more, 13 percent would pay 6 to 10 % more and only one percent would pay more than 25 % more for energy produced from renewable sources.

Over half of the population (57 %) are of the opinion that the most appropriate level to take decisions concerning new energy challenges is the national level and 19 percent think that these decisions should be made at the local level. Less than a quarter of the Finnish population would let the European Union take decisions concerning the new energy challenges.

## **Agricultural policy**

The Finns agree that with the European Union's agricultural policy it is possible to ensure that the food they buy is safe to eat and of good quality. They also believe that the agricultural policy favours consumers rather than farmers. They are of the opinion that ensuring stable and adequate income for farmers should be the highest priority of the European Union in terms of agriculture policy. The second highest priority, in their view, should be the protection of small and medium sized farms. In third place, they place favouring and improving life in the countryside.

When asked in what aspects they believe that the European Union currently plays its role fairly well they name ensuring that agricultural products are healthy and safe. A small majority of them believe that the European Union is playing its role fairly well when it comes to promoting respect of the environment and promoting animal welfare. However, on the whole, Finns tend to believe that the European Union is doing fairly badly in its agricultural policy.

## **The European Constitution**

Just over half the Finns (54 %) are of the opinion that the European Constitution should be renegotiated. One-fifth believe that the Member States should continue the ratification process of the European Constitution and 16 percent believe that the European Constitution should be dropped. Young persons of 15-24 years of age and students are amongst those who most support the continuation of the ratification process. Self-employed persons, in particular, support its renegotiation, whereas employees would like the Constitution to be dropped.

Over half of the population (53 %) are against the development towards a European political union and 36 percent are for it. The European political union is supported particularly by those of 15-24 years of age, students and supporters of the political right wing. It is opposed by retired persons, those over 55 years of age and the least educated.

48 percent of citizens are in favour of the Constitution. In the Eurobarometer poll a year ago, 58 percent of Finns were in favour of the Constitution, showing that support has fallen by ten percentage points in one year. The European Constitution is supported by those of 15-24 years of age and students (58 %), supporters of the political right wing (56 %) and people living in big cities (55 %). The Constitution is opposed by house persons (42 %), employees and those of 25-39 years of age (40 %).

Over half of Finns are of the opinion that if all Member States adopt the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe it will make the running of the European Union more democratic, efficient and transparent. On the other hand, when the citizens were asked whether they believe that a Constitution is necessary to ensure that the European institutions work well, just over half of them (51 %) were of the opinion that a Constitution is not necessary in this regard. The Finns believe that if a Constitution is adopted, it will make the European Union stronger in the world and more competitive economically.

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that the opinions of the people are still somewhat contradictory, part of them are opposed to a Constitution, yet, at the same time, they believe that it would make the European Union more democratic, efficient and transparent. Thus, one can agree with the view that referenda and discussion on the Constitution can give citizens a way to show their general

mistrust, not necessarily with the Constitution, but perhaps with the economic and political situation in some Member States, as well as globalisation, enlargement and, in particular, the possible membership of Turkey.

### **The future enlargement of the European Union**

45 percent of Finns think that the European Union should be enlarged to include new Member States in the coming years. On the other hand, only one percent of the Finnish poll believes that enlargement should be one of the most important priorities of the European Union.

Respondents were given a list of countries and asked to say whether they would be in favour or against the country in question becoming part of the European Union in the future. Over 90 percent of the Finns are in favour of Norway, Switzerland and Iceland joining the European Union and 57 percent would be ready to accept Bulgaria joining the EU. The countries whose memberships they are most opposed to are Turkey (64 %), Albania (57 %), Serbia and Montenegro (55 %) and Ukraine (55 %).