



Standard Eurobarometer



EUROBAROMETER 65

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FINLAND

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This Executive Summary presents the overall results from the Finnish National Report of the Eurobarometer poll 65.2 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 March and April 2006. The Finnish report focuses among other things on:

1. How satisfied the Finnish people are with their lives and what are their expectations for the future?
2. Attitudes towards the Finnish membership of the European Union. What kind of sentiments does the European Union evoke in the Finnish people?
3. Do Finns trust in the European Commission and the European Parliament?
4. The European Constitution

On the basis of the results of the Eurobarometer poll from spring 2006 the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. The climate of opinion

- 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. As 88 percent of citizens of the European Union say that they are very or rather satisfied, it can be noted that the Finns are still clearly more satisfied with their lives than the European Union average. Those most satisfied are managers and students, while the unemployed are the least satisfied.
- When asked about their expectations for the next five years, 43 percent of the Finns believe that their personal situation will improve in the future. The European average is 39 percent, so, again, the Finns are slightly more positive. 47 percent believe that their personal situation will stay about the same and nine percent of the citizens fear that their personal situation will get worse. As 39 percent of all the European citizens believe that their situation will improve, it can again be noted that the Finnish people are more positive about the future than the average EU citizen. Only the Danish and the Dutch are more satisfied with their lives than the Finns.
- The most positive about their future are those of 15-24 years of age and students. Also, over half of those of 25-39 years of age and the unemployed believe that their personal situation will improve. Citizens living in big cities are somewhat more positive about their future than those living in small towns or in the countryside. Those cohabiting or having a family with children are slightly more satisfied with their lives than those living alone. Supporters of the political left wing are slightly more positive about their future than supporters of the political right wing.

The general knowledge of the citizens on the European Union, what sources they use when looking for information about the European Union?

- The majority of the Finns estimate that their knowledge of the EU is about average. They estimated their knowledge at 5,1 (where 1= I know nothing, 10= I know a lot) whereas the European Union average is 4,5. The mark the Finns give to themselves is well above the results of the poll carried out a year earlier when the Finns assessed their knowledge at an average of 4,5. This figure is also above the European average, as has been the case for the past five years - regardless of some minor variations.
- Managers, more highly educated citizens and supporters of the political right wing estimate their knowledge to be higher than other citizens. Those who give their knowledge on the European Union the worst mark are house persons and the least educated citizens. Men estimate their knowledge to be somewhat higher than women do.
- As their primary sources of information about the European Union, Finns consider the television (78 %) and daily newspapers (64 %) as the most important. Also popular as sources of information are the Internet (41 %) and the radio (32 %).

The image the European Union gives of itself

- 30 percent of the Finnish people say that, to them, the European Union enjoys a positive image. 42 percent are of the opinion that the European Union gives a neutral image of itself, while 26 percent say that the European Union conjures up for them a fairly or very negative image.
- In particular students, the more highly educated and those of 15 – 24 years of age say that the European Union conjures up for them a positive image. 55 percent of men see the image the European Union gives of itself as being positive whereas only 45 percent of women are of the same opinion.
- 50 percent of all the citizens of the European Union see the image the EU gives of itself as being positive whereas only 30 percent of the Finns are of this opinion (the lowest figure in the whole EU).

The role the European Union plays in Finland

- Finnish people think that the role of the European Union is positive when it comes to protecting the environment and fighting terrorism and crime. These results are similar to results from previous Eurobarometer polls. The Finnish people still believe in the positive role of the European Union when it comes to border crossing problems.
- The role of the European Union is seen as negative in regard to rising prices and inflation. The role is seen as negative also with regard to the fight against unemployment, taxation, health care system and pensions.
- Finnish citizens think that the most important action that the EU should take is fighting poverty and social exclusion. Maintaining peace and security in Europe are also seen as important by the Finnish people. The order of the actions has remained unchanged compared with the previous Eurobarometer poll.
- Particularly the unemployed, self-employed persons and those of 25 – 39 years of age are of the opinion that fighting against poverty and social exclusion should be priority areas of action for the EU. 56 percent of women and 47 percent of men share this opinion.

Finnish people and the European Parliament and the European Commission

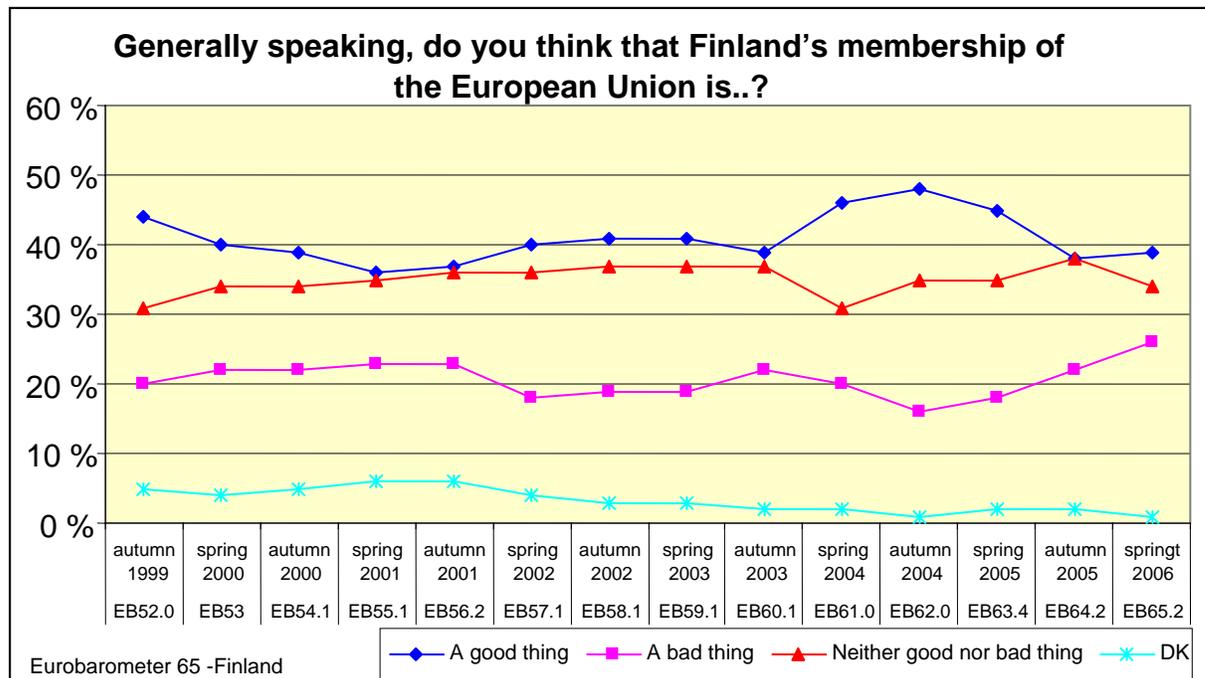
- 81 percent of the Finnish people consider the role the European Parliament plays in the EU to be an important one. Almost as many (79 %) consider the role of the European Commission to be important. 11 percent of Finnish citizens are of the opinion that the role these institutions play in the EU is not important.
- Students, those aged between 15 and 24, managers and those living in cities are of the opinion that the role of the European Parliament is an important one. The role of the Commission is considered to be important, especially by managers, self-employed persons, more highly educated citizens and students. The role these institutions play is considered least important by the unemployed and house persons.
- 53 percent of Finnish people trust the European Parliament. Respondents who most trust the Parliament are those of 15 – 24 years of age, students, managers and those living in cities. When looking at the political left – right scale, it can be observed that the supporters of the political right trust the Parliament more than the supporters of the political left.
- Trust in the European Parliament has always been a few percentage points higher than trust in the European Commission and that applies to this Eurobarometer poll as well. It should be noted, though, that the difference has never been as small as it is currently - just one percentage point. If we study the results of the past six Eurobarometer polls, it can be seen that trust in the

European Parliament, having declined for some time has changed direction and risen by one percentage point.

- Currently, 51 percent of Finns trust the European Commission - three percentage points more than in the Eurobarometer poll undertaken in autumn 2005. The number of those citizens not trusting the Commission has gone down by five percentage points in six months and is now 36 percent.
- The Commission is trusted in particular by those of 15 – 24 years of age, students and more educated citizens. The least educated citizens, the self-employed and the retired are among those who trust the Commission the least.

Finnish membership of the European Union

- Over 90 percent of the Finns believe that the biggest countries have the most power in the EU and over 70 percent are of the opinion that the interests of Finland are not well taken into account in the EU. Less than one-third of the population (29 %) believes that their voice counts in the European Union.
- 42 percent say that they understand how the European Union works and the same amount of citizens also believe that Finland is more stable politically and economically because it is a member of the European Union. 44 percent of Finns feel they are safer because Finland is a member in the EU. Finns do not believe that Finland will become more influential in the EU in the future.
- 39 % think that, on balance, Finnish membership of the European Union is a good thing, whereas a year previously, in the spring of 2005, 45 % of the Finnish population was of this opinion. 26 percent considers it to be a bad thing (+8 percentage points in one year) and 34 % say that it is neither a bad nor a good thing. Membership is considered as a good thing especially by managers. This opinion is shared by 56 % of students, 54 % of those 15 – 24 years of age and of those living in cities. Men view membership clearly more positively than do women (45 % vs. 32 %). The political groups most positive towards Finnish membership of the European Union are the supporters of the political right wing (49 %). 36% of the supporters of the political left wing are of this opinion, as are 35 % of the supporters of the political centre.
- It appears that the level of education affects opinions on this matter as it can be observed that the higher the educational level of the respondent the more positively Finnish membership of the European Union is perceived. Of those with a university education, 47 % consider Finnish membership of the EU to be a good thing, whereas only 21 % of the least educated share this opinion. Also, young people are more positive about membership than elderly citizens. Membership is considered as a bad thing by the unemployed and house persons.



- When the opinions over the period from autumn 1999 until today are reviewed, it can be seen that the number of those considering Finnish membership to be a good thing declined in 2005 after having risen since spring 2001, except for the autumn of 2003. The number of those considering membership to be a bad thing has risen since autumn 2004. Between 1999 and the present, the percentage of those citizens considering Finnish EU membership as neither a bad nor a good thing has always been over 30 % of the whole population, i.e. more than the amount of those considering the Finnish membership to be a bad thing.

Has Finland benefited from its membership of the European Union?

- 45 % of the Finns think that Finland has benefited from its membership of the European Union. The number of those not believing that Finland has benefited from its membership currently stands at 48 %.
- Respondents of 15 – 24 years of age, students and managers, in particular, believe that Finland has benefited from its membership. Those who are most negative about Finnish membership are house persons, the retired, the unemployed, manual workers and the self-employed.
- Citizens were also asked about their fears about European integration. Finns were most afraid of the transfer of jobs to other Member States which have lower production costs, Finland paying more and more to the EU and more difficulties for Finnish farmers. Over 70 % of the Finnish

population is also afraid of the loss of power of smaller states and an increase in drug trafficking and international crime. They are least afraid of a possible economic crisis and the loss of national identity and culture.

The Finnish Presidency in 2006

- 82 % of Finnish citizens had heard on the radio or the television or read in the newspaper about the Finnish presidency whereas 18 % had not heard about it. Those most likely to have heard about the presidency are citizens over 55 years of age, managers and the retired. Citizens living in cities had heard about the presidency 10 percentage points more often than those living in the countryside. Also, men were more aware of the presidency than women.
- 86 % considered the presidency very important or important, while 12 % did not consider it to be important. Those of 15 – 24 years of age, students, more educated citizens and the self-employed were more likely to consider the presidency to be an important thing. Those who considered it least important were supporters of the political left wing, the retired and men - the differences being only a few percentage points.

European Constitution

- 89 percent of the Finnish people have heard about the constitution. 6% of them say that they overall know its contents and 83 % say that they know very little about its contents. 12 % of the Finns had not heard about the European constitution. Overall, in the European Union, 82 % have heard about the constitution and 15 % know about its contents.
- The European Constitution is known by managers, those of 15-54 years of age, students and white-collar workers. Awareness of the Constitution is lowest among the least educated citizens and house persons.
- 48 percent of citizens are in favour of the constitution, seven percent totally in favour (-3 percentage points in six months) and 41 percent rather in favour (+3 percentage points in six months). 35 percent are opposed to the constitution and as many as 17 percent were unable to give an opinion.
- The Constitution is supported by those of 15 – 39 years of age, the better educated, managers and students. The Constitution is opposed, above all, by house persons (52 % of them oppose it, and the other groups do not come even close to this figure).
- 53 % of Finns are of the opinion that the Constitution should be renegotiated. One-fifth believes that that ratification process should be continued and 18 % say that the Constitution should be dropped.

- Between 52 % and 59 % of the Finnish poll believe that, with the Constitution, the running of the EU will be more democratic, more efficient and more transparent. The majority of Finns also believe that, with the Constitution, the European Union will be more competitive, more socially minded and stronger in the world.