

# EUROBAROMETER 66

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## AUTUMN 2006

### NATIONAL REPORT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### FINLAND

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

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

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This Executive Summary presents the overall results from the Finnish National Report of the Eurobarometer Poll 66.1 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 September and October 2006. The Finnish report focuses, among other things, on:

1. How satisfied Finnish people are with their lives and what their expectations for the future are.
2. Attitudes towards Finnish membership in the European Union.
3. The Finnish people's opinion on economy and employment, European political union and the constitution
4. How Finns feel about the future enlargement of the European Union.
5. The values of the Finnish people

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

## **1. The climate of opinion**

- On the whole, Finnish people are very satisfied with their lives at the moment. 94 percent say that they are very or rather satisfied (no change since last Eurobarometer Poll). As of all the citizens of the European Union 82 percent say that they are very or rather satisfied. It can be noted that the Finns still are clearly more satisfied with their lives than the European Union average. Those most satisfied are managers and students, the self-employed (both 98 %), students, young people and house persons (97 %).
- When asked about their expectations for the future, 37 percent of Finns believe that their personal situation will improve. 59 percent, on the other hand, believe that their personal situation will stay about the same and only 3 percent believe that their personal situation will get worse.
- 25 percent of Finnish people believe that the financial situation of their households will get better during the next year and 69 percent believe that it will stay about the same. 17 percent believe that their personal employment situation will get better and only two percent think it will get worse.

- Finns are not quite so positive about the employment situation in Finland and the economic situation. 24 percent of them believe that the employment situation will get worse and 21 percent believe that the economic situation in Finland will get worse.
- Over half of the population (52 %) believes that, in general, things are going in the right direction in Finland, while 30 percent believe that things are going in the wrong direction. Finnish citizens are somewhat more negative about the development of the European Union, with 41 percent believing that things are going in the wrong direction in the European Union and 31 percent feeling that they are going in the right direction.
- 51 percent of Finnish people trust in the European Commission. This figure has gone up by three percentage points in six months. Moreover, the share of those citizens that do not trust the European Union has gone up by one percentage point, being 37 percent at the moment. 56 percent of Finns have confidence in the European Parliament.

### **Finnish membership of the European Union**

- Finland's membership of the European Union is considered to be a good thing by 39 percent of the population (no change since the last Eurobarometer poll), a bad thing by 23 percent (- 3 percentage point in six months), while 38 percent are of the opinion that it is neither a good nor a bad thing (+4 percentage points in six months).
- 46 % of Finns think that Finland has benefited from its EU membership. The number of those not believing that Finland has benefited is currently 45 %.
- When asked about the most important issues facing Finland at the moment, Finns cite unemployment and the healthcare system. The issues that they are the least worried about are energy-related questions and defence/foreign affairs.
- A vast majority of Finnish citizens (72 %) think that the role of the European Union is positive regarding peace in the world. Over 60 percent are of the opinion that the role is positive regarding the protection of the environment, the fight against terrorism and the growth of the world economy. Slightly fewer, 49 percent, believe that the role of the European Union is positive regarding the fight against poverty in the world.

### **Employment and economy**

- 90 percent of Finns judge the situation of the Finnish economy to be very or rather good while only 8 percent believe it is rather bad. The situation of the European economy is considered to be good by 80 percent whereas 16 percent think it is rather bad.
- 56 percent of Finnish people are of the opinion that being in the European Union has a good effect on Finland's economy, whereas 39 percent think that the effect has been bad. Slightly

less than half (46 %) believe that the effect on the employment in our country has been positive, almost as many, 45 percent, think that the effect has been negative.

- When asked about the single market and its effects, 71 percent of Finns said that increased competition in transport, telecommunication services, banking and insurance services has had a positive effect in Finland while 17 percent believe that the effect has been negative.
- Over half of citizens (59 %) believe that due to the single market, the international competitiveness of Finnish companies is now better than before, 15 percent think it is worse and 19 percent believe it has stayed the same.
- 52 percent are of the opinion that globalisation has a positive effect on economic growth in Finland, whereas 36 percent believe the effect to be negative. The Finns are far more negative about the effects of globalisation on employment in Finland, with 53 percent of them believing the effect is negative and 32 percent believing it is positive.
- 45 percent of Finns believe that the European Union helps to protect them from the negative effects of globalisation, while 46 percent believe the contrary. However 61 percent agree with the statement that the European Union enables European citizens to better benefit from the positive effects of globalisation, while 29 percent do not agree.
- Improving education (72 %), investing in research and innovation (50 %), using energy more efficiently (48 %) and facilitating the creation of companies (46 %) are the means prioritised by Finns to improve the performance of the European economy.

### **European political union**

- 36 percent of Finnish people are in favour of development towards a European political union and 50 percent are against it. Political union is supported in particular by students (50 %), 15-24 years old (49 %) and supporters of the political right wing. It is mostly opposed by people living in the north of Finland (66 %) and managers (58 %).
- The Finns think that decisions regarding pensions (92 %), the education system (90 %), health and social welfare (89 %), taxation (83 %), and agriculture and fisheries (81 %) should be made by the Finnish government. Decisions on fighting terrorism (82 %) and crime (64 %), scientific and technological research (60 %), protecting the environment (54 %) and support for regions facing economic difficulties should, in their view, be made jointly within the European Union. The issues and their order is practically unchanged when compared with the results from the previous Eurobarometer poll
- The actions that the European Union should follow as a priority are, according to the Finns, fighting poverty and social exclusion, maintaining peace and security in Europe and fighting employment.

### **The constitution**

- 56 percent of citizens are in favour of the constitution, 11 percent totally in favour (+4 percentage points in six months) and 45 percent rather in favour (+4 percentage points in six months). 32 percent are opposed to the constitution.
- Over half Finnish citizens 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, 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.

## **The Enlargement**

- 53 percent of Finns are against the further enlargement of the European Union to include other countries in future years while 43 percent are for further enlargement. They are most in favour of the membership of Norway, Switzerland and Iceland and most against the membership of Turkey, Albania and Serbia.
- Turkey is considered geographically a part of Europe by 62 percent of Finns, although 35 percent do not consider Turkey to be a part of Europe in this sense. 33 percent believe that Turkey's accession to the European Union would strengthen the security in this region while 62 percent are of the opposite opinion. The cultural differences between Turkey and the European Union Member States are too significant to allow it to join the EU, according to 69 percent of Finns.
- 82 percent of Finnish people believe that Turkish membership could risk favouring immigration to more developed countries in the European Union. 90 percent are of the opinion that to join the EU in about ten years' time, Turkey will have to significantly improve the state of its economy. As many as 96 percent also say that to join to the EU, Turkey will have to respect human rights.

## **The values of the Finnish people**

- One-third of Finnish citizens believe that their voice counts in the EU, 44 percent say that they understand how the European Union works and only 9 percent say that they feel very much involved in European affairs.
- In the Eurobarometer poll, it also emerged that:
  - 54 percent of Finnish people are of the opinion that immigrants contribute a lot to Finland
  - 90 percent are against the legalisation of the personal consumption of cannabis throughout Europe
  - 80 percent believe that there is too much tolerance nowadays and that criminals should be punished more severely.

- When asked about the authorisation of child adoption by homosexual couples, 72 percent say they are against this while 24 percent are in favour of this right.
- The most important values for Finns personally are peace (59 %), respect for human life (52 %) and other human rights (40 %). The values that are believed to best represent the European Union are peace, human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Just over half of the population (51 %) believes that, in terms of shared values, the European Union Member States are fairly or very distant from each other, whereas 45 percent are of the opinion that the shared values are fairly or very close to each other. The Finns seem to consider the values to be somewhat more distant than does the average citizen of the European Union. However, looking at the result of this Eurobarometer poll, it can be seen that even though there are some differences in values held by citizens in different member states, peace and human rights remain fundamental values shared and considered equally important by all EU citizens.