

# EUROBAROMETER 67

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2007

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINLAND

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

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This Executive Summary presents the overall results from the Finnish National Report of the Eurobarometer Poll 67 conducted for the European Commission. The report is based on an analysis of results obtained from the Eurobarometer survey carried out in Finland and in the other Member States of the European Union in April and May 2007. The Finnish report focuses, among other things, on:

- How satisfied Finnish people are with their lives and what are their expectations for the future
- Attitudes towards the European Union
- Support for Finnish membership of the European Union
- Finnish people's opinion on the enlargement and the constitution
- Awareness of European political matters
- The future of the EU
- Global warming,
- Statistical information.

The following conclusions can be made on the basis of the results of the Eurobarometer poll from spring 2007:

### **The climate of opinion in Finland**

On the whole, the Finns 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 80% of all the citizens of the European Union say that they are very or rather satisfied, it should be noted that the Finns are clearly even more satisfied with their lives than the European Union average.

### **The most important issues facing Finland**

When asked about the most important issues facing Finland at the moment, the Finns cite unemployment and the healthcare system. These two issues have been considered the most important ones for quite some time but now, for the first time, the Finns cite the healthcare system as the most important issue and thus rate it more highly than unemployment. The rise of energy-related issues is noteworthy, as 2 percent of the Finns considered these issues important in the last Eurobarometer poll, while the figure in this latest survey is 18 percent.

In terms of socio-demographic factors, it can be seen that the healthcare system is considered to be the most important issue by manual workers, those of 25-39 years of age, supporters of the political left wing, people living in rural areas and in Eastern Finland, as well as women. Energy-related matters are considered important by the self-employed, managers and those of 25-39 years of age. The importance of protecting the environment is stressed by those living in cities, white-collar workers, the most educated, students, those of 25-39 years of age and citizens living in the South of Finland.

## **The situation in Finland compared with the average of the European Union countries**

The Finns consider the Finnish economy and the employment situation to be better than the average of the European Union countries. On the other hand, they believe that energy prices and the cost of living are higher in Finland than in the other Member States.

The healthcare system, provisions of pensions and the social welfare situation in their country are considered to be much better by Finns than on average in European Union countries. 91 percent of Finnish citizens believe that the educational system and the situation of the environment are better in Finland. 85 percent of the Finns believe the quality of life to be better in Finland and 74 percent consider the knowledge of foreign languages to be better. Only 53 percent of Finns believe that public transport in Finland is better than in the EU on average.

## **Opinions on the European Union**

68 percent of Finns are of the opinion that the word “modern” best describes the European Union. The second best word to describe the EU was said to be “technocratic”. Over half of the Finnish population said that the words “protective” and “inefficient” also describe the European Union.

29 percent of Finnish citizens hold a positive image of the European Union, 48 percent think that the image is neutral and 22 percent say the image is fairly or very negative. The image is considered to be positive by managers, those living in cities, white-collar workers, young citizens and students. Those over 55 years of age, the least educated and the self-employed think that the image is negative.

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

Finland’s membership of the European Union is considered to be a good thing by 42 percent of the population (+3 percentage points in six months), a bad thing by 24 percent (+1 percentage point) while 33 percent are of the opinion that it is neither a good nor a bad thing (-5 percentage points).

Finnish membership of the European Union is considered to be a good thing especially by managers (61 %), students (59 %), people living in big cities (65 %) and those of 15-24 years of age (56 %). Men consider membership to be a good thing more often than women. Half of the supporters of the political right wing consider the membership to be a good thing; 42 percent of the supporters of the political left and 38 percent of the political center share this opinion. Support for membership is also somewhat higher amongst those who have spent the longest time in education.

52 percent (+6 percentage points in six months) 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 is 41 percent (-4 percentage points) at the moment.

Most positive about Finnish membership are those 15-24 years of age, students, and persons living in big cities. The least educated, manual workers and the unemployed are among those who are least likely to believe that Finland has benefited from its membership of the European Union.

The Finns say that the European Union means to them personally the freedom to study, travel and work anywhere in the EU. The second most important meaning of the EU is the common currency, the Euro.

### **The importance of the European institutions**

86 percent of the Finns are of the opinion that the European Parliament plays an important role, 84 percent consider the role of the European Central Bank to be important, while 79 percent say that the role of the European Commission is important. Only 61 percent consider the role of the Council of the European Union to be important.

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

Trust in the European Parliament has always been slightly higher than trust in the European Commission among Finnish citizens. At the moment, 60 percent of Finns trust the European Parliament and 34 percent do not trust it. It should be noted that the Finns trust the Parliament somewhat more than the European average of 56 percent.

The European Commission is trusted by 59 percent of Finnish citizens. This number has gone up since autumn 2005. The number of those citizens saying that they do not trust the Commission is at its lowest since autumn 2004.

### **Decision-making in the European Union**

50 percent of the Finnish people are of the opinion that every European decision is subject to negotiation where the opinions of the national government of all Member States are taken into account. Almost as many, 45 percent are of the opposite opinion.

Over 90 percent of the Finns think that the Finnish government should make decisions concerning pensions as well as health and social welfare. Over 80 percent would also let the Finnish government decide about the following matters: taxation, the education system, agricultural and fishing policy and defence and foreign affair matters.

When asked on what matters decisions should be made jointly within the European Union, Finns cite fighting terrorism and organised crime, as well as scientific and technological research.

### **Awareness about European political affairs**

Only 23 percent of Finns believe that the Finnish people all in all are well-informed about European political matters, while 76 percent are of the opinion that they are not well-informed about these affairs.

When asked about their personal awareness, 33 percent think that they are well-informed about European political affairs, while 67 percent are of the opposite opinion and believe that they are not well-informed about these matters.

## **Measures taken at European Union level**

The respondents considered the Finnish people to be well-informed about the measures concerning the protection of the environment, agriculture and fishery, defence and foreign affairs issues, as well as energy. All in all, respondents considered that the Finns are not well-informed about measures taken at European Union level.

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

When asked about the impact of the May 2004 enlargement, when 10 new Member States joined the European Union, 31 percent of Finns say the impact has been positive. 27 percent think that the impact has been negative, while the majority of respondents, 37 percent, are of the opinion that the impact of this enlargement has been neither positive nor negative.

Students and those 15-24 years of age, in particular, consider the impact of the enlargement to be positive. Managers and people living in cities also think the impact of the enlargement has been positive. The unemployed and those who ended their education at the age of 16-19 years are of the opinion that the impact has been negative.

59 percent of Finns are against the further enlargement of the European Union to include other countries in future years, 41 percent are in favour of further enlargement.

## **The most positive result of European integration**

41 percent of the Finns name the free movement of people, goods and services within the European Union as the most positive result of European integration. The second most positive result is peace among the Member States and the third most positive result is the common currency, the Euro.

## **The Constitution**

At the moment, 47 percent of the Finnish people are in favour of the Constitution and 43 percent oppose it.

People living in big cities, managers, the self-employed and the most educated support the European Constitution. Somewhat surprisingly, the Constitution is supported by 56 percent of the unemployed. House persons, those aged between 25 and 39 and manual workers, however, oppose the Constitution.

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

A majority of Finns say that the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rome Treaty does not make them think of anything special. 28 percent said that the first word that comes to their mind is “hope”.

61 percent of Finnish people say that they are optimistic about the future of the European Union, while 36 percent say that they are pessimistic about it.

According to 65 percent of the Finnish poll, in 50 years from now, the EU will have, with the euro, a more powerful currency than the dollar. Over half of Finns (56 %) also believe that the European Union will have its own army, whereas 56 % of them do not believe that the EU will have its own president directly elected by European citizens.

### **The aspects that should be emphasized to strengthen the EU**

The Finnish people are of the opinion that environmental issues, energy issues, the fight against crime and social issues, in particular, should be focused on by the European institutions in the coming years, in order to strengthen the EU in the future.

### **The issues that create a feeling of community among EU citizens**

According to Finns, the issues that best create a feeling of community among EU citizens are economy, culture, common values, geography, history and welfare state.

### **Global warming**

89 percent of Finns are of the opinion that global warming is a matter that should be dealt urgently by the European Union. Also, nine out of ten think that the European Union should urgently introduce policies to reduce greenhouse gas emission by at least 20 % by 2020.

### **Collecting personal data for commercial purposes**

58 percent of Finns believe that the law protects well the use of personal data collected by companies for commercial purposes, whereas 36 percent are of the opposite opinion. When asked how well Finns are informed about the rules and the requirements for protecting the personal data of citizens in Finland, the opinion differs; half of respondents think that the citizens are well-informed, while the other half thinks that the citizens are not well-informed.

63 percent of Finns think that giving the law enforcement authorities access to personal data for the purpose of fighting crime and terrorism is only a minor inconvenience compared with the benefits. 17 percent think that it is an unwarranted intrusion into citizens' personal affairs, while 18 percent think that it is not an intrusion at all.

### **Economic figures**

72 percent of Finns agree with the statement that it is necessary to know economic figures, while 27 percent do not consider it so important. 70 percent believe that, in Finland, political decisions are made on the basis of statistical information, whereas 26 percent are of the opposite opinion. 69 percent of respondents also say that they tend to trust official statistics in Finland.