

EUROBAROMETER 68

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2007

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINLAND

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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 68 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 2007.

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

The climate of opinion

- On the whole, the Finnish people are very satisfied with their lives at the moment. 95 percent say that they are very or rather satisfied. As 80 percent of EU27 citizens say that they are very or rather satisfied, it can be noted that Finns are still clearly more satisfied with their lives than the European Union average.
- 94 percent of Finns believe that the financial situation in Finland is good. 79 percent of them are of the opinion that the financial situation in Europe is good. Thus, the financial situation in Finland is considered to be somewhat better than the financial situation in the EU on the whole.
- 76 percent of Finns believe that the employment situation in Finland is good. The environmental situation in Finland is considered to be good by 84 percent of the respondents and 82 percent are of the opinion that the social security situation is good.

The most important issues to be solved in Finland

- When asked about the most important issues facing Finland at the moment, that should be solved, in first place, Finns cite the healthcare system (49 %), rising prices/inflation (22 %) and unemployment (19 %). The national health care system has been in first place since Eurobarometer Poll 66 undertaken in autumn 2006. Even though unemployment is still considered an important issue, its importance has gone down by a quarter in one year, which is obviously a sign of a fairly good employment situation in Finland at the moment.
- The situation of the health care system is perhaps, surprisingly, of greatest concern to those working in managerial positions. Rising prices and inflation are of most worry to house persons and people living in the north of Finland.
- The majority of European Union citizens consider unemployment to be the biggest issue. In second place, they cite rising prices/inflation and crime.

What direction are things going?

- Citizens were asked to estimate whether the things in Finland and in the European Union are

going in a right or wrong direction. Over half the Finnish people (51 %) thinks that, in general, things are going in the right direction in Finland, while one-third (33 %) believes that things are going in the wrong direction. Finns are somewhat more negative about developments in the European Union, as 37 percent believe that things are going in the wrong direction in the European Union, while 40 % are of the opposite opinion and believe that things are going in the right direction.

- Students, supporters of the political right wing, those living in households comprising at least four members and those of 15-24 years of age, in particular, think that things are going in the right direction in Finland.

Trust in certain institutions

- When asked whether they trust in certain national institutions 65 percent of the Finns say that they trust the national parliament and 58 percent say that they trust the Finnish government. The government is trusted by supporters of the political right, students, those living in households comprising at least four members and people living in the north of Finland.
- Slightly over half (51 %) of the Finnish people say that they do not trust the European Union.

The citizens and the European Union

- 55 percent of Finns say that they do not understand how the European Union works and 69 percent do not believe that their voice counts in the European Union. As many as 89 percent say that they do not feel very much involved in European affairs.
- Students, highly educated citizens and managers are among those who mostly believe that their voice counts in the EU. On the other hand, house persons, the self-employed and the least educated Finns believe that their voices do not count.
- In the EU as a whole, 61 percent believe that their voices do not count, three out of four do not feel involved in European matters, 51 percent say that they do not understand how the EU works – it can be noted that the EU remains remote to its citizens.

Distribution of power between the Member States

- As many as 95 percent of Finns believe that the biggest countries have the most power in the EU. 63 percent of them are, however, of the opinion that Finland's voice counts in the EU whereas only 28 percent believe that Finland will become more influential in the EU in the future. Three out of four Finns do not believe that the interests of Finland are well taken into account in the EU.
- 74 percent of EU27 citizens believe that the biggest countries have the most power within the

EU and 61 percent are of the opinion that their country's voice counts in the EU. Less than half (43 percent) of all citizens think that their country will become more influential in the EU in the future and 46 percent do not believe that the interests of their country are well taken into account in the EU.

European political affairs

- 27 percent of Finnish people consider that Finns, overall, are well informed about European political affairs, but as many as 73 percent are of the opposite opinion and say that Finns are not well informed. 78 percent of EU27 citizens do not believe that their countrymen are well informed about European political affairs.

Where decisions on certain issues should be made?

- 90 percent of Finns say that decisions on *pensions* should be made by the national government and only one in ten say that these decisions should be made jointly within the EU. People living in the eastern and northern parts of Finland, as well as the least educated citizens are amongst those who, more than others, would like decisions on pensions to be made nationally.
- A majority of Finns, 69 percent, thinks that decisions on *protecting the environment* should be made jointly within the EU (+ 16 percentage points in six months). 73 percent of EU27 citizens hold the opinion that issues concerning the protection of the environment should be made jointly within the EU and 24 percent would prefer these decisions to be made nationally.
- 70 percent of Finns say that the Finnish government should make decisions on the *economy* nationally; only 29 percent are of the opinion that decisions on the economy should be made jointly within the EU.
- Even though 70 percent of the Finns say that decisions on the economy should be made nationally, as many as 60 percent of them think that decisions on *fighting inflation* should be made jointly within the EU.

The role of the EU in Finland

- Over half (64 %) of the Finnish people consider the role of the EU to be positive in protecting the environment and only 12 percent say it is negative.
- When it comes to the economic situation, 42 percent of Finns say that the role of the EU in Finland is positive. 35 percent think that the EU's role concerning rising prices and inflation is negative.

The future of the European Union

- When asked about the future of the EU, 60 percent of Finns say that they are optimistic about it, whereas 37 percent are pessimistic. People living in cities, students, managers and those of 25-39 years of age are among those who are most optimistic about the future of the EU.
- 66 percent of EU27 respondents are optimistic about the future of the European Union and 26 percent are pessimistic.

Which aspects should be emphasized in the EU?

- A majority of Finns, 54 %, say that environmental issues should have more emphasis to strengthen the European Union in the future. 45 percent say that energy issues should be emphasized and 33 percent would emphasize the fight against crime. The growing importance of environmental and energy issues to the Finnish people could already be seen in the previous Eurobarometer Poll.
- Women, the self-employed and the unemployed, in particular, say that environmental issues should be emphasized

Foreign policy and immigration policy

- 87 percent of Finns say that EU foreign policy should be independent of the United States' foreign policy. 78 percent of EU27 respondents are of the same opinion.
- 64 percent of the Finnish people think that the EU should have a common immigration policy for people outside the EU, whereas 74 percent of EU27 citizens are of the same opinion.

Finnish membership of the European Union

- Finland's membership of the European Union is considered to be a good thing by 45 percent of the Finnish population (+3 percentage points in six months), a bad thing by 21 percent (- 3 percentage points in six months), while 33 percent are of the opinion that it is neither a good nor a bad thing.
- Finland's membership is considered to be a good thing especially by managers, students and people living in cities.
- 51 % of the Finns (- 1 percentage point in six months) 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, at the moment, 43 % (+ 2 percentage points in six months). Students, managers, those of 15-24 years of age, people living in cities, highly educated and supporters of political right, in particular, believe that Finland has benefited from its membership of the European Union.

- 53 percent of Finns trust in the European Commission and as many say that they have confidence in the European Parliament.

European Union and the media

- The Finnish people are of the opinion that the national media does not talk too much about the European Union; only 2-4 percent of the Finns, depending on the media, say that European Union is talked too much about. The vast majority (71 %) thinks that the EU is talked about the right amount in the press, 62 percent share this opinion when it comes to the television and 55 percent when it comes to the radio.
- The unemployed, in particular, say that the European Union is not discussed enough on the television, the radio and in the press. Students, people living in cities and in the eastern part of Finland say the EU is not well enough presented on the television. Those 15-24 years of age, students, people living in the northern and eastern parts of Finland are of the opinion that the European Union is not discussed enough on the radio. When it comes to the internet, 22 percent of students and 18 percent of people living in the north of Finland say that the European Union is not enough talked about in this medium.
- A majority of the Finnish people think that the media presents the European Union objectively. However, 23 percent say that the EU is presented too positively on television, 21 percent say this about the press and 15 percent of the radio. 7 percent of Finns think that the European Union is presented too negatively in the press and 6 percent say it is presented too negatively on television.