



Standard Eurobarometer



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PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This Executive Summary presents the overall results from the Finnish National Report of the Eurobarometer Poll 70 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 2008.

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

FINNISH OPINION ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

- 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 of all the citizens of the European Union, 76 percent say that they are very or rather satisfied and 23 percent say that they are not satisfied with their lives, it can be stated that Finns are still clearly more satisfied with their lives than the European Union average. The most satisfied citizens can be found in the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark. The Bulgarians, the Portuguese, the Hungarians and the Romanians are the least satisfied with their lives.
- Citizens were asked to consider whether things in Finland are going in the right or wrong direction. 49 percent of the Finnish people think that, in general, things are going in the right direction in Finland, while 36 % believe that things are going in the wrong direction.
- Only 28 percent of the citizens of the European Union believe that things are going in the right direction in their country and 49 percent believe that things are going in the wrong direction. It should be noted that, in none of the member states, does the majority believe that things are going in the right direction in their country at the moment.

The financial situation of households in Finland

- 89 percent of the Finns say that the financial situation of their household is good and only 11 percent consider it to be bad. Relating to the current economic situation in the world, the Finnish figure for the people rating their financial situation to be good can be considered rather high, especially if it is compared with the European average of 64 percent.

Development of the purchasing power

- Almost one-third of Finnish people say that their purchasing power has improved when they compare their present situation with five years ago and 39 percent consider that their purchasing power has declined. Among EU citizens, as a whole, 51 percent say that their purchasing power has got worse, 29 percent say that it has stayed unchanged and 18 percent say that it has improved.

Difficulties paying bills

- When asked, 26 percent of the Finnish people say that they have difficulties paying all their bills at the end of the month and 72 percent say that they do not have these difficulties. The amount of those experiencing difficulties has gone up by seven percentage points in six months. Almost half of all the EU citizens say that they have difficulties paying all their bills at the end of the month.

The economic situation in Finland at the moment

- The situation of the Finnish economy is considered to be very or rather good by 76 percent of Finns, whereas 21 percent say it is bad. Only 29 percent of all EU citizens consider the situation of their national economy to be good, while as many as 69 percent say it is bad. The Finnish people are the most optimistic of all the EU citizens in their views on their national economy.

The situation of the Finnish economy compared with the average of the European countries

- 86 percent of the Finns believe that the situation of the Finnish economy is better than the average of the European countries. More than half (55 %) of all EU citizens polled are of the opinion that the economic situation in their own country is worse than the average of the European countries, while 36 percent say it is better.

The current situation of health care provisions in Finland

- Health care provisions in Finland are considered to be very or rather good by 80 percent of the citizens. Among the citizens of the European Union, as a whole, 55 percent are of the opinion that the current situation of health care provisions in their country is good, whereas 43 percent say the situation is bad.

The current situation regarding the provision of pensions in Finland

- Over half (52 %) of Finnish people say that the current situation regarding the provision of the pensions is good, while 41 percent say it is bad. The European average of citizens stating that the current situation of pensions in their country is good is 34 percent.

The current situation regarding unemployment benefits in Finland

- The current situation in regard to unemployment benefits in Finland is considered to be very or rather good by 52 percent of the citizens, while 37 percent are of the opposite opinion. Just over half (51 %) of all the EU citizens say that the situation is bad.

The current situation of the cost of living in Finland

- 70 percent of the Finns are of the opinion that the situation of the cost of living is rather or very bad in Finland, whereas 29 percent say that the situation is good. The European average of citizens saying the situation of the cost of living is bad is 78 percent.

The situation of the cost of living in Finland compared with the European average

- 76 percent of the Finnish people say that the situation of the cost of living in Finland is better than the European average. 22 percent of the citizens are of the opposite opinion and believe that the situation is better elsewhere in Europe.
- Among EU citizens as a whole, 67 percent are of the opinion that the situation of the cost of living in their country is worse than the European average, while 22 percent believe it to be better.

The situation of the European economy

- The situation of the European economy is considered to be good by 56 percent of the Finns. The European average of people considering the European economy to be good is only 33 percent, while 58 percent of EU27 respondents say that the situation is bad.

The situation of the economy of the world

- Three-quarters of the Finnish people are of the opinion that the economic situation in the world is rather or very bad. Among EU27 citizens, as a whole, 71 percent say that the economic situation in the world is bad at the moment.

THE FINNS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

The image the European Union gives of itself

- 28 percent of the Finnish people say that, to them, the European Union enjoys a positive image. 52 percent are of the opinion that the European Union gives a neutral image of itself and 19 percent of the Finns say that the European Union conjures up for them a fairly or very negative image.
- 45 percent of all the citizens of the European Union see the image that the EU gives of itself positively, whereas only 30 percent of the Finns are of this opinion (the lowest figure in the whole of the EU).

What does the EU mean to Finnish people personally?

- The Finns say that the EU to them personally means the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU. The second most important thing cited is the common currency, the Euro. In third place, they mention bureaucracy, in fourth place, a waste of money, and in fifth place, peace.

Finnish opinion on certain statements

- 69 percent believe that Finland's voice counts in the EU,
- 69 percent say that the European Union imposes its views on Finland,
- 72 percent are of the opinion that the EU is sensitive to issues that concern Finnish citizens,
- 71 percent say that the interests of Finland are not well taken into account in the EU.

The fall of the Iron Curtain

- 77 percent of the Finnish people believe that the European Union has benefited from the fall of the Iron Curtain while somewhat fewer, 51 percent, believe that Finland has benefited. 26 percent say that they have benefited personally of the fall of the Iron Curtain.

The enlargement during the past years

- 47 percent of the Finns believe that the enlargement since 2004 has strengthened the European Union, whereas 44 percent say that it has weakened it.

FINNISH MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Support for Finnish membership of the European Union

- Finland's membership of the European Union is considered to be a good thing by 48 percent of the Finnish population (+4 percentage points in six months), a bad thing by 18 percent (-2 percentage points in six months), while 33 percent are of the opinion that it is neither a good nor a bad thing.
- EU membership is considered to be a good thing especially by managers, students, the better educated and supporters of the political right wing.

Has Finland benefited from its membership of the European Union?

- 57 % of Finns (+6 percentage points 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 this membership is, at the moment, 37 % (-4 percentage points in six months). In particular, students, managers, those of 15-24 years of age and better educated citizens believe that Finland has benefited from its membership of the European Union.

Trust in the European Parliament and the European Commission

- 59 percent (+5 percentage points in six months) of the Finnish people trust in the European Parliament and 57 percent (+4 percentage points in six months) say that they have confidence in the European Commission.

DECISION MAKING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Where decisions on certain issues should be made?

- Finns say that decisions on pensions, the educational system, taxation, immigration, defence and foreign affairs, as well as fighting unemployment, should be made by the national government. They also say that the Finnish government should make decisions on social welfare and health, agriculture and fishery, transport and consumer protection.
- A majority of Finns think that decisions on *fighting terrorism* and *crime* are issues that should be made jointly within the EU. This applies also to issues concerning *scientific and technological research* and *support for regions facing economic difficulties*.
- On the whole, it can be seen that the Finns are not in favour of decisions made jointly within the EU and they would prefer the national government to have as much power as possible.
- Just over half (56 %) of the Finns are of the opinion that there are too many areas where the EU can take decisions, whereas 22 percent say that the number of areas is about right. 19 percent of the Finns say that there are not enough areas where the EU can take decisions. Among EU citizens, as a whole, 39 percent say that there are too many areas where the EU can take decisions.

THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- Citizens were asked whether the things in the European Union are going in a right or wrong direction. Just over half of Finnish people (54 %) think that, in general, things are going in the wrong direction in the EU. This number of the people has gone up by 17 percentage points in six months.

The current speed of building Europe

- The Finns see the current speed of building Europe on a scale from 1 to seven (where N° 1 is standing still and N° 7 is running), to be 4,1 and they would like it to be 4.

- Citizens of the European Union, as a whole, consider the speed at the moment to be 3,9 and wish it could be 4,8. Romanians, Bulgarians and Greeks, in particular, are of the opinion that the speed of building Europe should be considerably faster than it is at the moment.

Which aspects should be emphasized in the EU?

- The majority of Finns say that environmental issues, energy issues, the fight against crime and social issues should have more emphasis in order to strengthen the European Union in the future. The Finns put markedly more emphasis on environmental and energy issues than the European average.