

# EUROBAROMETER 72

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## Autumn 2009

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINLAND

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## **PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION EUROBAROMETER 72**

### **SUMMARY**

This summary provides an overview of the main findings of a Eurobarometer opinion poll conducted at the request of the European Commission. The survey was carried out in 27 member states, three candidate countries and Northern Cyprus between 23<sup>rd</sup> October and 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

The Eurobarometer addresses European citizens' attitudes to the European Union, globalization and related issues. A total of 30 238 Europeans aged 15 or more participated in the survey, 26 731 of whom were citizens of EU member states. The Finnish national report is based on a survey for which 1018 Finns were interviewed.

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES**

#### **The employment situation in Finland is a big concern, but individuals are still coping**

The great majority of Finns are rather satisfied with their own household's economic situation (88%), the environment (86%) and their personal employment situation (73%). Instead, the employment situation in Finland is regarded to be fairly or very poor by a clear majority of Finns (75%). The same applies to perceptions of the economic situation of the whole world (73%), Europe (50%) and Finland (49%) in general.

Finns' opinions have not changed fundamentally since summer 2009. There is a slight tendency towards more optimistic views regarding the state of the Finnish and European economies. Irrespective of their standpoint, Finns see the economic and employment situation in a clearly more positive way than the average EU citizen.

#### **Unemployment has become a top concern**

There are three issues that Finns worry about more than most other Europeans. Their primary concern is unemployment, and the state of Finnish healthcare system coming a close second on the list of major worries. The third-ranking concern is the economic situation of Finland.

In comparison with general European opinion, the Finns place special emphasis on health care.

No major changes have occurred since summer 2009 in Finns' thinking. However, unemployment in Finland is now regarded as a more serious problem. On the other hand, rising prices, pensions, crime and environmental protection are issues causing little less concern than before.

## **FINNISH EU MEMBERSHIP**

### **A majority of people support Finland's EU membership**

A majority of Finns (51%) considers Finland's membership in EU to be a positive matter. Only a fifth (20%) reacts negatively to it. Support for EU membership has been growing since the autumn of 2006.

A clear majority (60%) thinks that Finland has benefited from membership. A third of interviewees expresses doubts on this matter. Nowadays, the Finns are quite close to the EU average in this respect. Previously, they were among the group of sceptical Europeans.

Although a majority of Finns thinks that Finland has benefited from membership, they are inclined to say that the interests of Finland are not well taken into account in the EU. Finland has benefited from the EU, but not enough.

### **Finns regard joint decision-making with suspicion**

A majority of Finns think that decisions should be made jointly within the European Union in only eight of twenty areas mentioned in the survey.

These are:

Fighting terrorism	85%
Fighting inflation	67%
Fighting crime	65%
Scientific and technological research	63%
Support for regions facing economic difficulties	62%
Protecting the environment	56%
Competition	51%
Energy	51%

According to the interviewees, pensions, taxation, education, healthcare, defense/foreign affairs and agriculture are areas where decisions should be made by the Finnish government. There are not many people in Finland who think that decisions on pensions should be taken jointly within the European Union

However, there have been changes in Finns' opinions since autumn 2008. Confidence in decisions made jointly in the European level has increased in Finland.

### **Half of the Finns believe that democracy works well in the European Union**

Nearly half (46%) of the Finns are very or fairly satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union. An equal amount of people are more or less dissatisfied (49 %).

Finns are now more satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union than two years ago when they were previously asked about the matter. Finns are less satisfied than EU citizens in general.

### **Finns are content with the euro but feel reserved about the enlargement of the EU**

A clear majority of Finns (81%) are in favour of the single currency, the euro. Fewer than 20% are against the euro. Finns' views have not changed during the last year. The Finnish attitude towards the common currency is more favourable than that of the citizens of EU countries on average.

The majority (55%) of the Finns are against enlargement of the EU during the coming years. Nevertheless, two out of five (40%) are in favour of the enlargement. In this respect, the Finns' are somewhat more reserved than EU citizens on average.

The cautiousness of the Finns and other nationalities is explained by the fact that a great majority feels that the EU has grown to its current state too fast. Two-thirds of the Finnish population criticize the EU for this.

## **GLOBALIZATION AND ECONOMIC CRISIS**

### **Finns would curb globalization**

A great majority (73%) of Finns believes that globalization makes economic growth possible. However, two out of three (60%) consider that globalization increases social inequality. Partly for this reason, 73% of Finns think that some common worldwide rules are necessary to deal with globalization. Finns would like to see globalization regulated.

The Finns differ from the European average because they have found it easier to take a stand. Their views stay more or less unchanged since last June.

A majority of Finns (55%) believe that the EU helps its citizens to defend themselves against the negative effects of globalization. This view is more common in Finland than in EU countries in general. In many countries, people have had difficulties to form an opinion about this matter. This has been the case especially in many new member countries.

A majority (60%) of the Finnish population also thinks that the EU has enough power and the means to protect its economic interests in the global economy. The Finns' perceptions do not differ much from the EU citizens' average on this matter. However, Finns were more convinced of this matter last June than they are now.

### **Majority believes that the worst consequences of the economic crisis have not been seen yet**

A majority (54%) of Finns are afraid that they have not yet seen the worst effects of the economic crisis on the labour market. More than two out of five (44 %) of them believe that the crisis has reached its peak in this sense. The Finns' opinion is close to the EU average in this regard.

The Finns, together with the citizens of other member countries, believe strongly that the EU has the effective means in the fight against the economic crisis. According to EU citizens general, these means include the EU's role in regulating financial services, tighter control of financial institutions and stronger coordination of the economic policy of the member countries in general.

The Finns believe that the single currency, the euro, has reduced the effects of the economic and financial crisis. They do not believe (57%) that Finland's position would be safer if it had kept its national currency instead of switching to the euro. Finns' trust in the positive effects of the single currency is stronger than that observed in the EU countries in general.