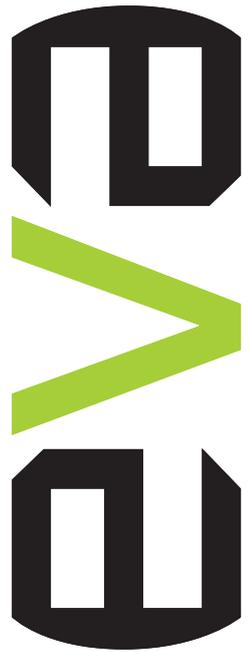


Anniina Iskanius

EVA ATTITUDE AND VALUE SURVEY 2017

Finns worry about Russia, Trump and Brexit

Summary of Key Findings



12.4.2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than half of the Finns hope that the British will revoke their decision to leave the EU. An even greater portion (65 per cent) hopes that no other member countries withdraw from the EU.

Finns' attitudes toward Finland's own EU membership and the euro have remained positive. The old divisions between supporters and opponents are still clearly visible.

Finns do not want the EU to turn into a federation and criticize unnecessary regulation. People do not, however, have a clear vision about how the EU should develop in the future.

Attitudes towards Russia have become much more critical since last year, and Russia's actions in world politics are widely condemned. There are no large changes in stances toward NATO: 25 per cent would apply for membership and 46 per cent are against it. Sweden's joining NATO would boost the number of Finns wanting to join the military alliance by 10 percentage points.

All these results stem from the latest attitude and value survey of the Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA. The survey was conducted in January 2017 and it is part of the series of EVA's attitude and value surveys, started in 1984.

Finns feel that the world and the international situation have become difficult to predict. The actions of Russia and the United State arouse suspicion in more and more people.

In a situation like this, Finns are turning towards the EU for stability. The majority of Finns want to

Finns hope that the UK would revoke its decision

leave the EU, whereas 21 per cent see Brexit as the right solution. (Figure 1.)

However, the number one cause of concern for Finns regarding the EU is not Britain’s exit, but rather other countries leaving the EU as well. The exit of other member countries, for instance France, would be seen as positive by 16 per cent of respondents and unfortunate by 65 per cent.

Finns are clearly worried of an uncontrolled domino-effect: the withdrawal of a few countries could easily lead to a situation where others also begin to question whether membership has more downsides than upsides. Concern increases among population groups as education levels increase and decrease as respondents’ ages become higher.

Despite problems, the EU is seen as an element of stability for the continent. Some 52 per cent of Finns feel that the union is the only force that can, despite its flaws, steer the development of Europe. This view is rejected by 29 per cent. (Figure 2.)

stay in the EU and do not wish for other countries to leave the union either.

Some 55 per cent of Finns hope that the UK would revoke its decision to

Finns’ view on the importance of the union has not changed within the last decade. Rather, the unstable times of global politics have increased the belief of Finns in the EU’s ability to act as a force of stability in Europe.

The Union exceeds its reputation

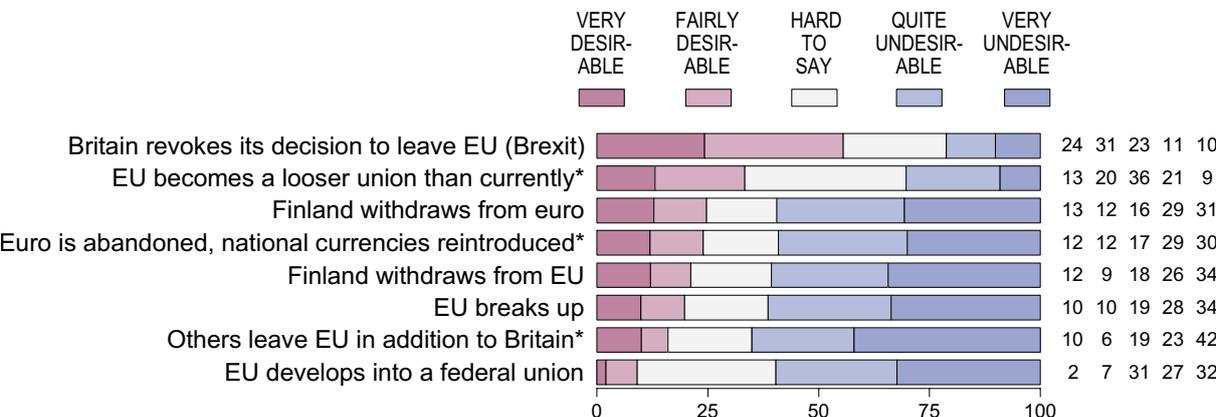
Public debate on the state of the EU and its future has been bleak in recent years. The opponents of integration have enjoyed their time in the headlines. However, they have not convinced Finns. The majority still considers cooperation with the EU useful.

Attitudes towards both EU membership and the euro have remained stable. Some 45 per cent claim to be in favour of Finland’s EU membership, while 22 per cent have a negative view on the matter. Some 32 per cent of the Finnish population has a neutral stance on EU membership. In a long-term context, the proportion of those with negative stance towards membership has been particularly low in recent years. (Figure 3.)

The opponents of integration have not convinced Finns

The old divide between EU-supporters and opponents is still clearly visible. The voters of the Greens and the National Coalition Party and those with an academic education have the most positive views towards EU membership. The majority of city

Figure 1 How desirable do you regard certain events and scenarios in the next ten years (%)



* Complete questions: “European integration comes to a halt and the EU becomes a looser union of states”; “The euro will be abandoned and national currencies will be re-introduced”; “In addition to Great Britain also other countries (e.g. France) will withdraw from the EU”.

dwellers also have a positive view towards membership, while supporters in small municipalities amount to one quarter.

If an EU referendum were held now, 50 per cent of Finns would vote in favour of membership and 31

per cent against. Some 19 per cent are uncertain of their stance.

People in leadership roles would vote heavily in favour of membership: some 78 per cent would support joining the EU. The better the socioeconomic

Figure 2 “Although the EU has its own problems, it is in any case the only force that can control and manage European development” (%)

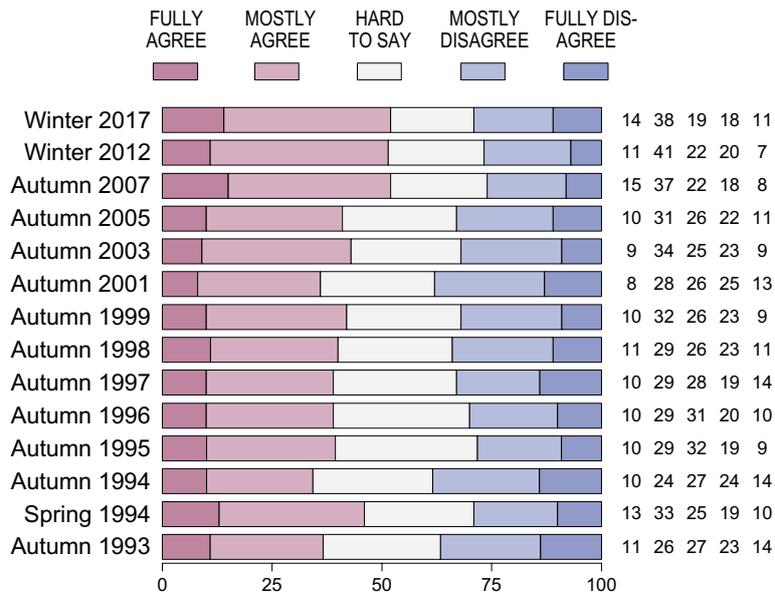
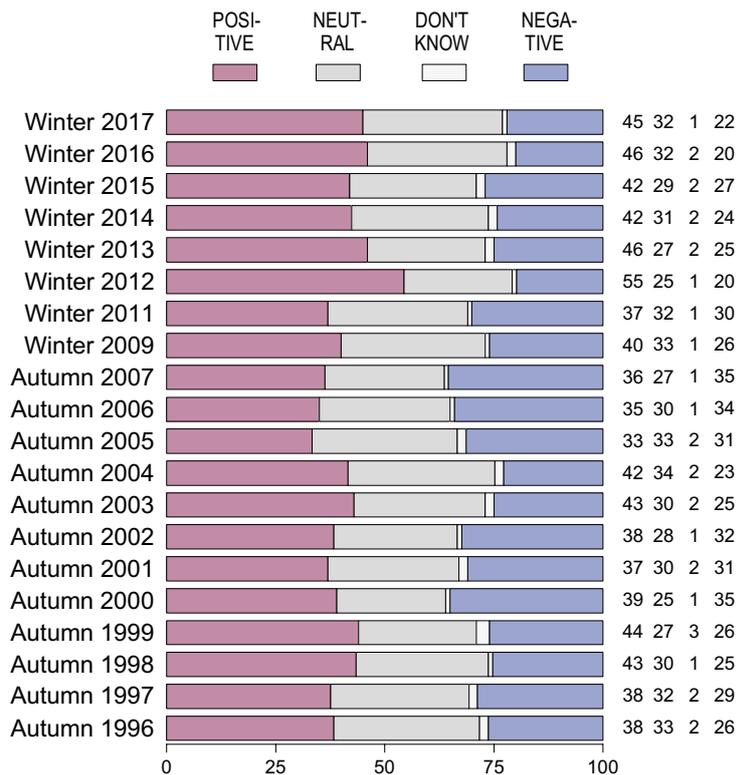


Figure 3 Attitudes toward Finland’s EU Membership (%)



status and higher the level of education, the higher the likelihood that a Finn would vote for membership.

Although Finns have rather positive views of the EU, they still want to evaluate it critically. Only 11 per cent estimate that their attitude has become

more positive towards the EU in recent years.

All regulations drawn up by Brussels are not considered good

The largest group of respondents, 45 per cent, said their position has remained unchanged.

However, 42 per cent maintain that their attitude towards the EU has become more critical. The result has remained virtually the same since 2012 when the question was first raised by the EVA Attitude and Value survey.

All regulations drawn up by Brussels are not considered good. Some 72 per cent of the respondents agree that the EU forces Finns to comply with standards and regulations that we do not need. Only 17 per cent disagree with this claim. More than half of the respondents who describe themselves as EU positive also considered the claim to be true. (Figure 4.)

Euro is less irritating than it used to be

The recent debate on the krona as one of the factors behind Sweden’s economic success has not affect-

ed Finnish positions on the euro. Some 37 per cent see the euro as beneficial for Finland in the present economic situation and 35 per cent of the people see it as harmful.

These positions have not changed significantly from the previous year either. Therefore Finns feel that a common currency cannot be considered to be responsible for national economic problems. EU-positive respondents stand out with their clearly more positive assessment: 63 per cent of them see the euro as being beneficial.

Some 51 per cent now have a positive attitude towards the euro as our currency, while in the two previous years the figure was 47 per cent. (Figure 5.)

25 per cent hope for Finland to give up the euro

Negative attitudes towards the euro have also decreased by six percentage points compared to last year. Supporters of the Greens and the National Coalition Party, those in leadership positions and those with academic educations have the most favourable attitudes.

Some 25 per cent of Finns hope for Finland to give up the euro, while 60 per cent want Finland to remain in the common currency (see Figure 1). The stances have not changed notably since last year.

The figures are similar on the issue of the fate of the common currency: 24 per cent of the Finns would like to see an end to the euro and the introduction of national currencies, 59 per cent would not.

Figure 4 “EU membership forces Finns to comply with many such norms and regulations we do not want and do not need” (%)

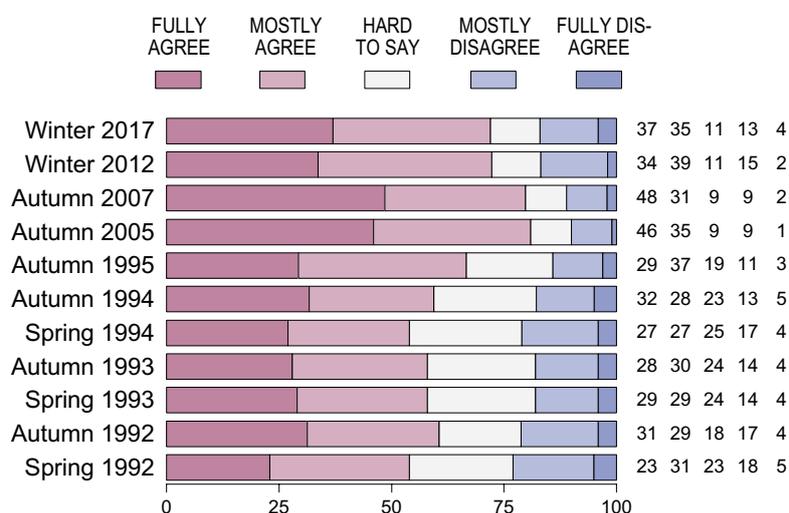
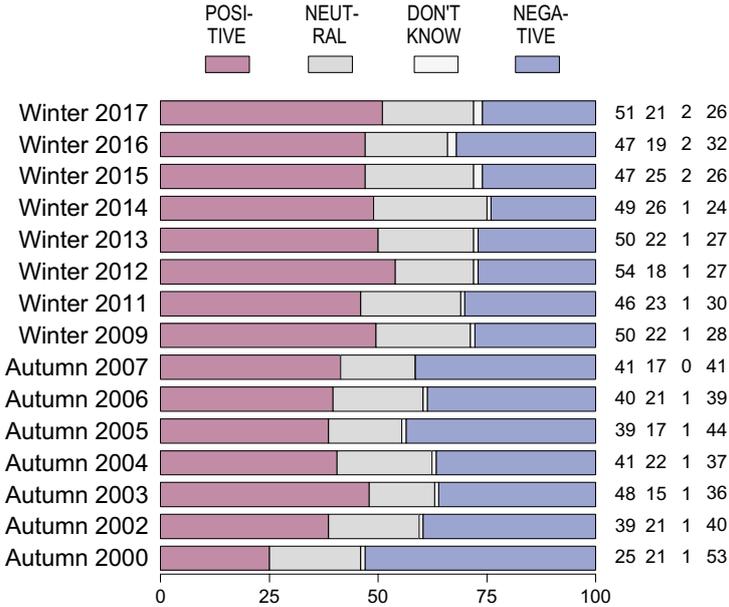


Figure 5 How do you feel about giving up our own currency, the markka, for the euro (%)



Some 76 per cent of the respondents with a negative stance toward the EU see abandoning the euro and the introduction of national currencies as a positive future scenario. The largest amount of those hoping for euro area disintegration can be found among the supporters of the Finns Party (51 per cent), members of the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions SAK (36 per cent) and employees with lower educations.

The future is a blur

Finns were asked to rate how desirable they consider possible European future developments. Some 21 per cent of the respondents are in favour of Finland leaving the EU, while 60 per cent would consider this undesirable. (Figure 6.)

The fates of Finland and the EU go hand in hand as the results are the same when asked for an opinion

Finns do not support closer integration either

percentage points from last year, although other positions have changed only slightly from the previous year.

At the opposite ends of the spectrum are the supporters of the Finns Party (49 per cent hope for

disintegration) and the National Coalition Party (83 per cent do not).

Attitudes towards the EU and the euro and Finland’s membership in them are as a rule positive. On the other hand, Finns do not support closer integration either, as only nine per cent would like the EU to develop into a federation. Some 59 per cent oppose federalisation. Of those with a positive attitude toward the EU, only 16 per cent see federal development as a good thing.

Some 33 per cent of the Finns hope for a more loosely integrated EU than at present and almost as many would view this sort of development as negative. Uncertainty about the future is well illustrated by the fact that the highest proportion is those who are unsure, 36 per cent, do not know in which direction the EU should be developed.

Cold winds blowing in the north

Finns’ perceptions of Russia have become distinctly more negative from the previous year. Only 35 per cent agree with the statement that “Although Russia has its own problems, Finns have no reason to have a negative attitude towards their large neighbour nowadays”. Some 47 per cent disagree. Attitudes towards Russia have shifted by as much as 14 percentage points in a more negative direction. (Figure 7.)

The most critical are those in leadership positions, those with academic educations and supporters of the Greens, the Swedish People's Party and the National Coalition Party. More under-

standing attitudes towards Russia, in turn, are found among rural areas and supporters of the Social Democratic Party, the Left Alliance and the Centre Party.

Figure 6 How desirable do you regard certain events and scenarios over the next 10 years, estimates from the years 2003–2017 (%)

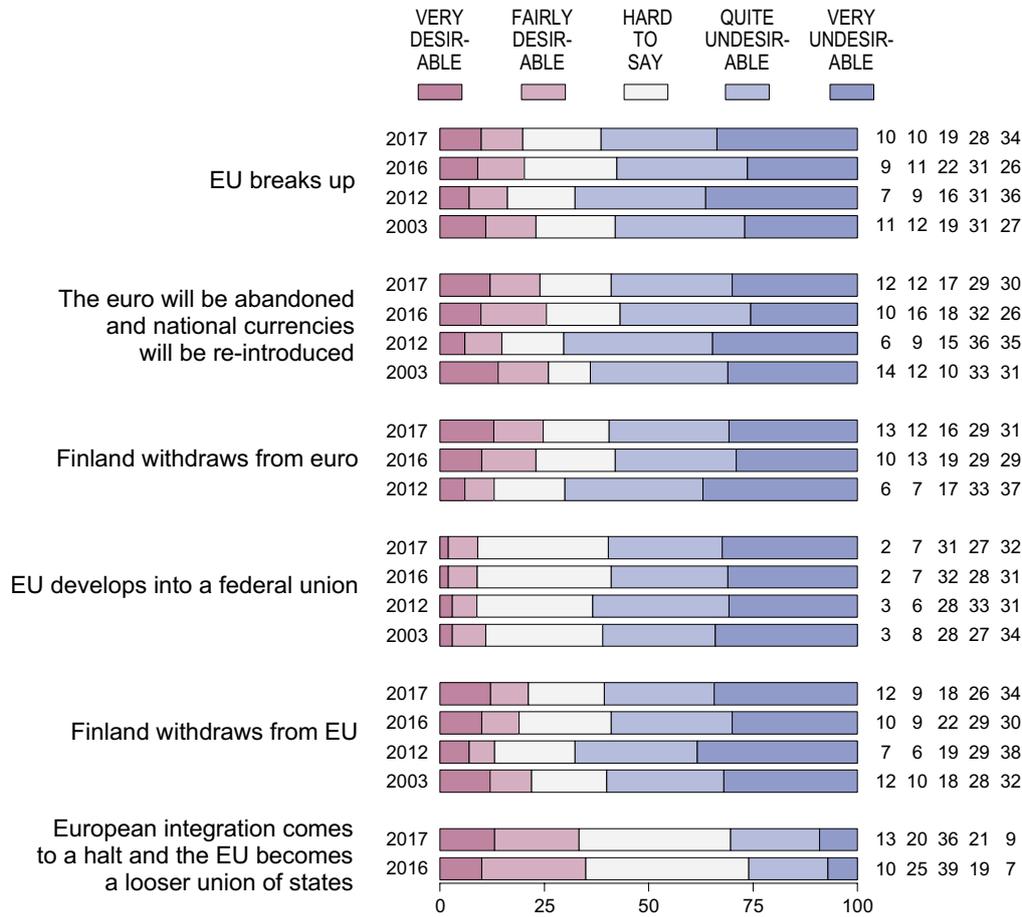
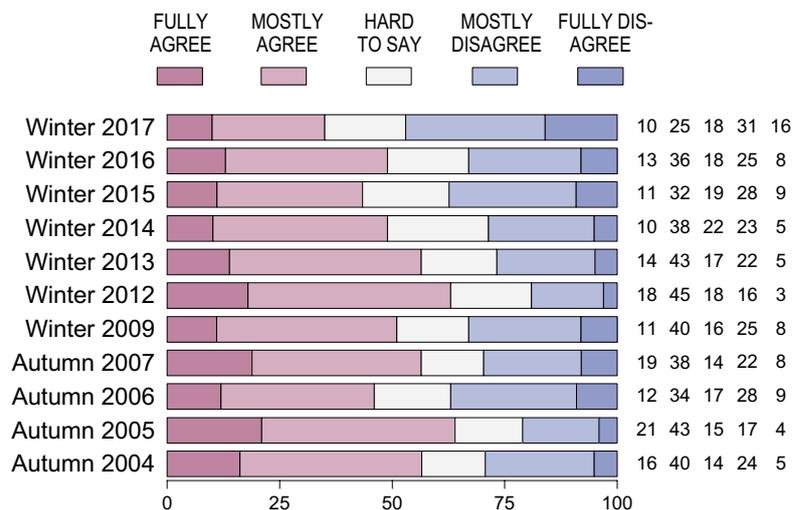


Figure 7 “Although Russia has its own problems, Finns have no reason to have a negative attitude towards their large neighbour nowadays” (%)



One reason for the colder attitudes may be found in Russia's actions in global politics. Only 6 per cent are of the opinion that Russia's actions internationally are justified and are also worthy of Finns' support. Some 70 per cent of Finns do not condone Russia's actions, and the majority of all groups of the population condemn them. (Figure 8.)

And if there is little acceptance for our neighbouring country's actions among Finns, there is indeed no support for the United States either. Finnish understanding towards the United States' actions in world politics has weakened. While one year ago 20 per cent estimated that the US actions are justified and deserve Finnish support, the amount has now dropped to 11 per cent. Finns view a bipolar distribution of global power as an undesirable direction for the future, as can be deduced from the results.

However, the clearly visible increase in uncertainty has not added to Finns' support of Finland's possible membership in the defence alliance NATO. Some 25 per cent are in favour of joining NATO while 46 per cent are opposed. Some 29 per cent are unsure of their position. Membership positions have remained virtually unchanged over the last couple of years. (Figure 9.)

Sweden's NATO membership would make attitudes toward Finland's membership more positive. In this event, 33 per cent would also be in favour of Finland's membership and 35 per cent would oppose, despite Sweden's decision. If Sweden were to join, the playing field would be practically level and the Finnish position open as a large portion are undecided on the matter.

Figure 8 "Russia acts properly in global politics and also deserves Finnish support" (%)

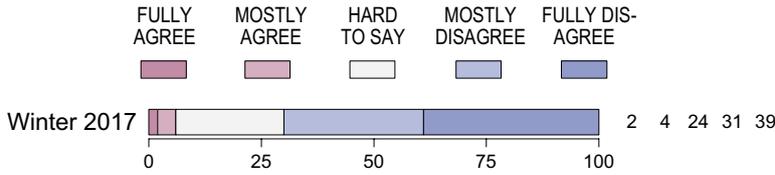
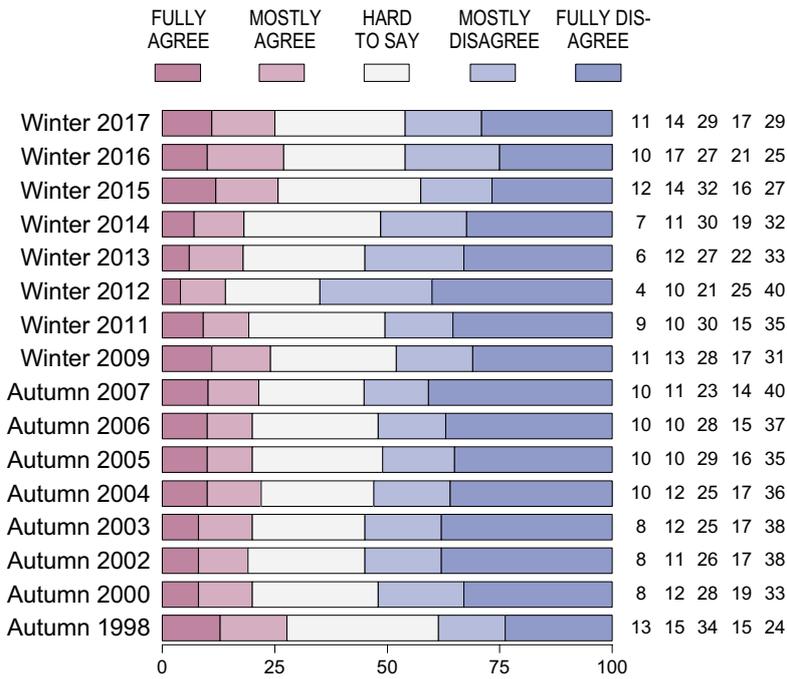


Figure 9 "Finland should join NATO" (%)



Belligerent President Trump

A clear majority of Finns, 66 per cent, believe that war and conflict in the world will increase with President Trump's administration in power.

Only 6 percent believe that war and conflicts will be reduced. (Figure 10.) In particular, the supporters of the Social Democrat Party, the Greens and the Left Alliance see President Trump as a risk for peace.

Finns believe that Trump will bring about more wars

The supporters of the Finns Party are the only group in the population where the majority does not believe that the Trump administration will bring about more wars.

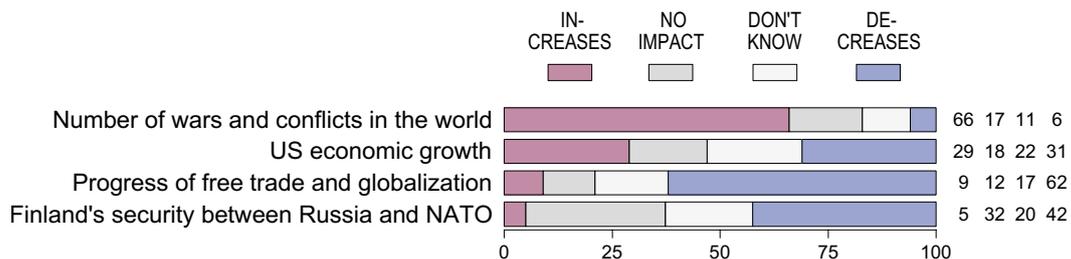
The supporters of the Finns Party are the only group in the population where the majority does not believe that the Trump administration will bring about more wars.

Only 5 per cent of Finns estimate that President Trump's actions will improve Finnish security between Russia and NATO. According to 32 per cent the new US administration will have no effect on Finland's security, while 42 per cent estimate that our country's security will weaken.

Finns predict grim times for free trade. Only 9 per cent believe in free trade and globalization accelerating during Trump's term. Only 12 per cent believe that President Trump's hard line will not lead anywhere. A clear majority, 62 per cent, believe in the weakening of free trade.

Finns have the most positive outlook on President Trump's influence on economic growth in the US: 47 per cent believe that Trump's term will bolster or at least will not slow down US growth. Some 31 per cent of Finns believe that US economic growth will slow down during his term in office.

Figure 10 How do you assess the impact of President Donald Trump and his administration on certain matters in the coming years (%)



Background information on the study

The study's findings are based on 2 040 person's answers. These data were collected during the period of January 11–23, 2017. Respondents represent the population of the entire country (excluding the Åland Islands) between 18–70 years of age.

The data were collected via Taloustieto Ltd's internet panel. The target group consisted of a panel selected at random from Finnish residents (excluding Åland) 18–70 years of age representative of the population by age, sex, province of residence, education and occupation / status.

The data is weighted to represent the population aged 18–70 according to the respondents' age, gender, residential area, education, occupation / status, industry as well as political affiliation (how they would vote in parliamentary elections).

The confidence interval, i.e. the margin of error, for the data at the aggregate level depending on the shape of the distribution (the obtained percentage share) is 2–3 percentage points in either direction.

As in EVA's previous studies, the statistical analysis of the data was performed by Yhdyskuntatutkimus Oy, which has also compiled the graphs presented in the study.

Additional information

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Finnish Business and Policy Forum

Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA a pro-market think-tank financed by the Finnish business community. It is also a forum for forward-looking discussion for Finnish business leaders.

EVA's task is to identify and evaluate trends that are important for Finnish companies and the society as a whole. EVA aims to provide current information on prevailing trends as well as bring fresh ideas to public debate. EVA publishes reports, organises debates and publishes policy proposals.

Further information: www.eva.fi

