

# EVA RAPORTTI

## EVA's ATTITUDE AND VALUE SURVEY 2008:

### 'WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?'

#### English Summary

Finns think that protecting the Baltic Sea should get more emphasis in our foreign policy than is currently the case. Over three fourths of Finns are of this opinion. A more active foreign policy is desired, even though people are fairly satisfied with the way it is being handled.

Finland's influence in the European Union is deemed to be dwindling. At the same time the attitudes toward EU membership have become more pronounced: some 36 % have a positive attitude toward membership while 35 % take a negative stance. The government is hoped to follow a stricter policy line in EU affairs. Finns also have positive expectations toward the Union. For example, the EU's climate policy and common foreign policy are seen in a positive light.

The question of foreign policy power relations is on people's minds. A third would shift the leadership of foreign policy to the prime minister while 40 % want the president to lead.

The nature of security threats and views how they should be reduced divide people's opinions. Finns are suspicious about NATO membership. All issues of mutual concern with Russia are deemed important. People are also concerned about globalization, even though it is not necessarily seen as a threat to their own jobs. All of these conclusions are found in EVA's fresh attitude and value survey 'Whose Side are You on?'

The report now being published is the fifteenth in a series of EVA's attitude surveys on international questions regarding Finland, the EU and the world carried out since 1992. It has been prepared by **Iikka Haavisto** from EVA and **Pentti Kiljunen** from Yhdyskuntatutkimus Oy, which has also been responsible for the technical implementation of the study. The following summary includes a few of the main results selected from the wide-ranging study. The report (in Finnish) can be read in its entirety on EVA's website [www.eva.fi](http://www.eva.fi).

#### **Opinions about EU membership have sharpened slightly**

Finns rather lukewarm attitude toward EU membership has not changed appreciably. Some slight sharpening of attitudes can nevertheless be discerned. Slightly over a third (36%) of Finns have a positive attitude toward EU membership and almost as many (35%) take a negative stance. The share of people with a neutral attitude toward EU membership – neither negative nor positive – has decreased. At the same time the share of people who want to pull out of the EU (29%) has increased. No single reason for the sharpening of attitudes can be singled out; instead, the trend probably stems from numerous developments in the Union and the challenges they pose for Finland.

## **The big trample over the small...**

Finns believe that EU developments in recent years have been marked by growth in the influence of large member countries and an increased tendency of member countries to "protect their own turf" in decision making. Moreover, belief in the successfulness of EU policy, our country's influence and Finns' confidence in the EU and its activities are deemed to have decreased.

### **...but we should stay on for the ride**

Critical attitudes toward the actions of our government in EU affairs have grown. Finns want to see more activism and steadfastness in the way that Finland manages its EU policy. Nine out of ten believe that Finland should drive its own national interests in a much more determined fashion in the EU. This equation is made all the more challenging by the fact that despite all this criticism the majority see the new EU-level approaches incorporated in the EU's common foreign policy or climate policy in a positive light. On the other hand, Finns are not enthusiastic about the enlargement of the EU, and a majority would see, for example, Turkey's membership in the EU as a bad thing.

## **Our country's foreign policy has been handled fairly well...**

In the survey Finns were asked to assess how well public officials have handled foreign policy. The vast majority of Finns believe that our foreign policy is handled fairly well. By far the highest marks were given to the President of Finland Tarja Halonen, who three out of four gave good scores for handling foreign policy. Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva got high marks from two thirds while Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen got high marks from six out of ten. The most critical feedback was received by Defence Minister Kari Häkämies, who got poor marks from half of the respondents. The current government as a whole got considerably lower marks for the way it has handled foreign policy than individual ministers for the most part. The comparison was extended to the two previous governments, who received slightly better marks than the current government.

### **...but more active foreign policy is desired**

Despite the high marks, Finns want our country's foreign policy to be more active. The majority are of the opinion that Finland's current foreign policy is too tame. Seven out of ten hope that Finland would take a courageous stand on international affairs. At the same time many are also of the opinion that domestic problems would require more attention from decision makers. The hope about a more active foreign policy divides Finns into several camps. Some stress our country's responsibility as a member of the international community and Finland's ability to solve international problems, while other favour a more restrained and traditional approach.

## **Baltic sea first!**

Finns think that more emphasis should be placed in our current foreign policy on solving the environmental problems of the Baltic Sea and climate change. People are very united in their stand on the Baltic Sea. At the same time, however, more emphasis should be placed on safeguarding national interests. In addition to the environment, Finns would like our foreign policy to concentrate more on human rights and promotion of fair globalization.

Thus Finns' aspirations toward foreign policy are divided into numerous lines of action emphasizing different factors. Where some would emphasize the "moral dimension" of foreign policy, others would adhere closely to a policy of "national interest". The goals of "obtaining security guarantees" and "maintaining our non-alliance status" are almost equally as popular. Finns would not call for any greater participation in military crisis management than current levels.

### **Who should lead foreign policy?**

Finns views on the power relations in Finnish foreign policy are marked by caution. A third would shift the reins of foreign policy leadership to the prime minister while slightly more (40%) would favour the president. The thought of widening the president's jurisdiction regarding foreign policy is not rejected, but there is wide uncertainty regarding this question. At the same time it was found that Finns form their opinions on foreign policy leadership based on the current president and the composition of the present coalition government and opposition.

### **All issues of mutual concern with Russia are deemed important**

Even though Finns have high hopes regarding foreign policy, the majority are of the opinion that it is of prime importance to retain good relations with the United States and Russia. This is true even though Finns are very critical of the actions of the United States in world politics and people are sceptical about Russian democratic developments. People are also clearly divided about whether Finland should avoid taking a stand on questions that would harm our relations with Russia. When asked to rank the importance of issues regarding Russia, it appears that Finns think all matters of mutual concern with Russia are important, be it the state of the Baltic Sea, truck traffic congestion at border crossings, timber duties or safeguarding of energy supplies. Although the EU and Russia divide opinions and make Finns apprehensive, we see our Western neighbour Sweden and Nordic cooperation in a positive light.

### **What kind of security threats does Finland face?**

As regards security policy, Finnish thoughts go down many paths. The old principle that Finland must be able to safeguard its own security is still strong. At the same time our security challenges are deemed to have changed their nature significantly. Half of the Finns see no real military threat to our country. Seventy per cent believe that epidemics, pollution and natural disasters are greater threats to our country than military force. There is nevertheless a significant minority that sees military action as being the prime threat and believes that joining a military alliance would be the best course of action.

### **Unenthusiastic about NATO membership**

If Finnish attitudes toward the EU have remained largely unchanged, the same holds also for possible NATO membership, which is supported by a fifth (21%) while over half (52%) are against. Almost a fourth of Finns still have no opinion on this matter. The various sides are so sure about their opinions that a possible recommendation in favour of membership by political leaders would not turn peoples' heads for or against. On the other hand, Sweden's joining would boost the number of Finns in favour of NATO membership somewhat (10 percentage points).

### **...but Finns have firm beliefs about the impact of membership**

Finns have clear and relatively consistent views on the impact of possible NATO membership. Membership would increase, for example, the share of defence spending in the state budget, participation by our soldiers in dangerous crisis management assignments and the threat that Finland would be the target of a terrorist attack, but it would also enhance Finland's possibilities to receive information about security threats. Membership is seen as a double edged sword in terms of our country's security. Even though Finns see NATO membership as increasing Finland's ability to counteract the threat of military force, membership as such is deemed to increase the threat of this use of force. Thus opinions about whether membership would increase the feeling of Finnish security are divided between those who are strongly in favour and those who are steadfastly opposed. Finns unanimously believe, however, that this would do little to warm up relations with Russia.

### **Globalization makes people worried – even though it does not affect everyone**

The majority of Finns see globalization as meaning above all that cheap-labour countries will take more and more jobs from Finland. When asked on a personal level, two thirds of employed Finns nevertheless believe that their jobs could not be easily moved away from Finland. Those who see their jobs as exposed to globalization work primarily in industry, where about a half believe their jobs could be shifted abroad in principle.

Globalization is not seen only as a negative phenomenon with respect to employment. Those that see globalization as strengthening employment in their own occupational field are ten percentage points more than those that fear the loss of their jobs abroad (8%). Some 8 % of employed Finns respond that they have sometime previously worked in jobs that have subsequently been moved abroad.

### **Background information of the study**

The results of the study are based on a poll of 1,187 respondents. The data was compiled via a written questionnaire sent by mail between November 28, 2007 and January 23, 2008. The survey was based on a population of 3000 persons aged 18-70 randomly picked from Central Population Register. The study was carried out in a bilingual fashion, i.e. the respondents received either Finnish or Swedish language forms depending on their mother tongue. The sample covers 39.6 per cent of the total sample. The research data is representative in terms of its structure.

The confidence interval, i.e. the margin of error, for the results is one to three percentage points at the level of the total sample. The questionnaire and the distribution of the responses are presented in an appendix of the study. Like the previous ones, the survey was carried out by Yhdyskuntatutkimus Oy. The data for the whole series of surveys are held at the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD), a unit of the University of Tampere. Data can be obtained from FSD for research and teaching purposes.

### **Additional information**

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