

Nordic momentum

Finns want to accelerate
cooperation with their neighbours



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- An overwhelming majority (84%) believe that growing global threats call for a substantial strengthening of Nordic cooperation.
- More than half think that border control (55%), defence (54%), climate policy (52%) and tackling biodiversity loss (51%) could be decided jointly by the Nordic countries.
- A common Nordic foreign policy divides opinion: 43% think the Nordic countries could take foreign policy decisions together, while as many (43%) would retain the status quo.
- All the Nordic countries are seen as at least fairly close to Finland. A large majority (70%) think that Finland and Finns have much or very much in common with Sweden and the Swedish people.

Closer Nordic cooperation has long ranked among Finns' leading wishes for those shaping Finland's foreign policy. It became their top priority in last year's EVA Values and Attitudes Survey, in which a large majority said that Nordic cooperation should carry more weight in our foreign policy than it does today.¹

This is an interesting finding, as cooperation among the Nordic countries has generally been regarded as well developed, firmly established and, at times, even rather dull. Moreover, cooperation has intensified considerably in recent years, especially in defence.

Finns nevertheless see the world as so unstable that this is no longer enough: it is time to step on the accelerator. An overwhelming majority (84%) believe that growing global threats call for a substantial strengthening of Nordic cooperation, while a mere three per cent see no need for closer cooperation (Figure 1).

Closer cooperation could mean, for instance, tighter coordination of Nordic positions and actions, or joint representation internationally. Some may envisage more binding joint Nordic decision-making, or even a federation: a new Kalmar Union of the kind proposed by Swedish historian Gunnar Wetterberg in his 2010 pamphlet for the Nordic Council of Ministers.²

Several similar calls for the Nordic countries to close ranks have emerged recently.³ They have been prompted, among other

things, by the deterioration of the security environment caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership, the United States becoming an unpredictable ally during Donald Trump's second presidential term, and the European Union's sluggish response to the hopes invested in its renewal.

The EU itself has been one reason why deeper Nordic integration was not seen as particularly necessary in previous decades. In Finns' minds, however, European integration has not made Nordic cooperation redundant. On the contrary, almost all Finns (93%) believe that Nordic cooperation remains very important to Finland despite EU membership, and practically no one (2%) disagrees (Figure 2).

This already exceptionally widely shared view of the importance of Nordic cooperation has strengthened further. The share emphasising its importance — those who strongly agree — has risen by 10 percentage points since the previous survey in 2012.

A similar result emerges when the question is approached from the opposite direction. Only 12% think that Finland now has, in fact, rather few interests in common with the other Nordic countries, and two-thirds (65%) disagree (Figure 3).

Since the previous survey in 2007, opinion has shifted markedly, by 18 percentage points, towards recognising the Nordic countries' many shared interests. The valued

Figure 1. "Growing global threats call for a substantial strengthening of Nordic cooperation" (%)

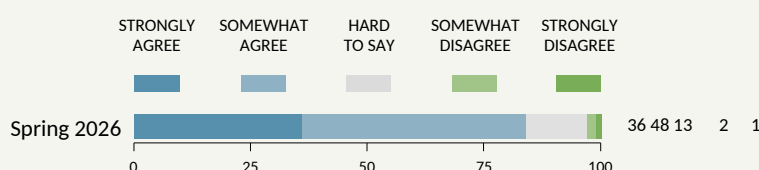


Figure 2. “Despite EU membership, Nordic cooperation remains very important to us” (%)

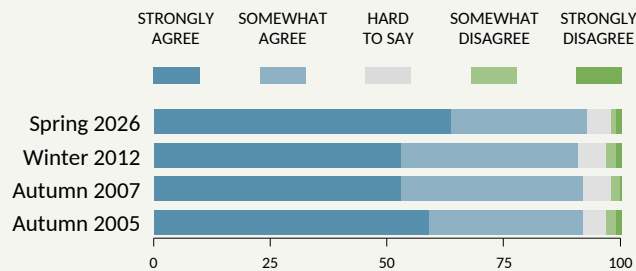
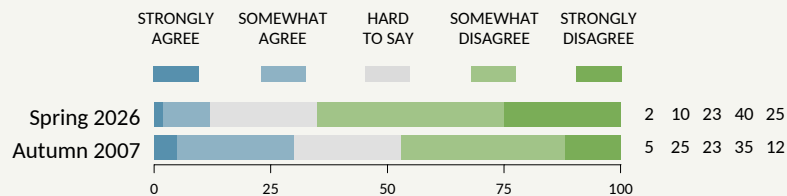


Figure 3. “Finland now has, in fact, rather few interests in common with the other Nordic countries” (%)



framework of Nordic cooperation has thus acquired new and more substantial content.

Strong trust in the Nordic countries

Defence is a natural candidate for a leading place on a renewed Nordic agenda. One indication is that, in previously published results from the Values and Attitudes Survey, Sweden, Estonia, Norway and Denmark were seen as the countries most likely to come to Finland's aid in the event of a military attack.⁴

Shared interests extend beyond security, however. Over the decades, the Nordic economies have become integrated in practice through numerous corporate mergers and acquisitions. Labour markets present few major obstacles to the free movement of people, and EU rules allow goods, services and capital to move largely freely.

Even so, substantially strengthening Nordic cooperation would entail a long to-do list. Each Nordic country has its own legislation and institutions, which put obstacles in the way of integration and limit how far Nordic cooperation can go in practice. Taking cooperation to a new level could mean, for example, more unified foreign and economic policies and social security, as well as some form of Nordic citizenship.⁵

The Values and Attitudes Survey explored Finns' readiness for deeper Nordic cooperation through two sets of questions. The first asked how much Finland and Finns have in common with each Nordic country and its citizens. Respondents were asked to consider the issue as a whole, for example in terms of values, culture, interests and goals. The second question went further, asking which matters could in future be decided jointly at the Nordic level if cooperation were intensified.

The assessments of how much we have in common suggest that the basic conditions for closer cooperation are in place (Figure 4). Since a large majority of Finns think we have at least a fair amount in common with every Nordic country, differences in atti-

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Sweden is the closest.

tudes are best examined mainly through the stronger responses: “very much” and “much”.

As expected, Sweden is the Nordic country closest to Finland and Finns. A large majority (70%) think we have much or very much in common with Sweden and the Swedish people, and more than a third (35%) say we have very much in common.

The difference in perceived closeness is clear compared with Norway and Norwegians, with whom half (49%) think we have very much or much in common, and Denmark and the Danes, where the corresponding share is somewhat lower (42%). For Iceland, the most distant Nordic country, and its citizens, the share seeing very much or much in common is considerably smaller, at 28%.

Alongside the shares seeing much in common, another important finding is the negligible proportion who see little or very little in common with any of the Nordic countries. Finns see no reason to distance themselves

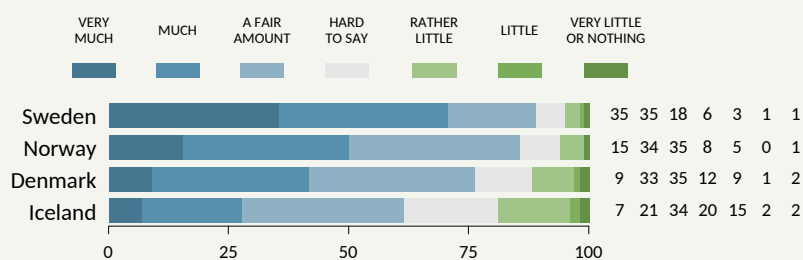
from the other Nordic countries or their people, reflecting an openly positive and trusting attitude towards them.

The result also suggests that Finns largely think of the Nordic countries as a whole. Although Sweden and the Swedish people are seen as the closest, even this special relationship has its limits (see “Sweden is special, but reunification has little appeal”). Differences between assessments of the Nordic countries are probably explained largely by the extent of practical interaction: how much Finland and Finns cooperate and engage with each country and its citizens.

Differences between population groups are small. Men nevertheless see more in common with the other Nordic countries than women do, while older respondents — those over 56 — place greater emphasis than younger people on ties with Sweden and Norway in particular (see the chart appendix).

These differences can be explained at least partly by attitudes towards collective defence within NATO. Previously published Values and Attitudes Survey results show that men are more positive than women about Finland’s NATO membership. The same applies when comparing the very favourable views of those over 56 with those of younger population groups.⁶

Figure 4. How much do Finland and Finns have in common with each Nordic country and its citizens (values, culture, interests, goals, etc.)? (%)

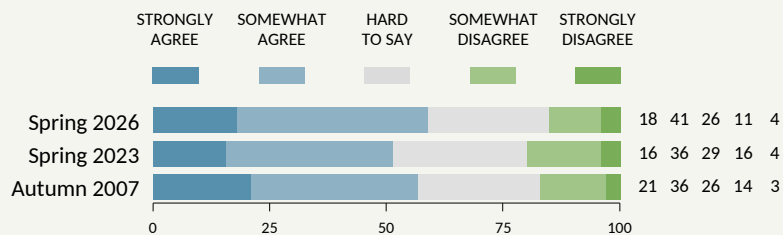


Sweden is special, but reunification has little appeal

The relationship between Finland and Sweden is particularly close, thanks in part to their long shared history, migration, extensive integration between their business sectors and close contacts between political leaders.

A majority (59%) therefore see the Swedish people as closer to us than any other people. Only a relatively small share (15%) disagree, although a substantial proportion (26%) take no position (Figure 5).

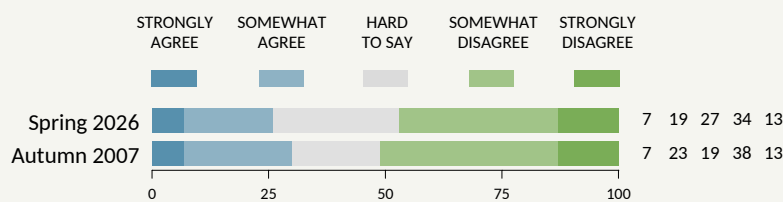
Figure 5. “The Swedish people are closer to us than any other people” (%)



Assessments of the Swedes’ special status have improved since the previous survey in 2023. On the other hand, the figures are essentially the same as they were almost two decades ago, in 2007.

The result is similar when the issue is approached through a statement that plays down Sweden’s special status. Around a quarter (26%) of Finns think that Sweden is now just another EU country to Finland, but almost half (47%) see its importance to Finland as greater than this (Figure 6). A substantial share (27%) take no position.

Figure 6. “Sweden is now just another EU country to Finland” (%)

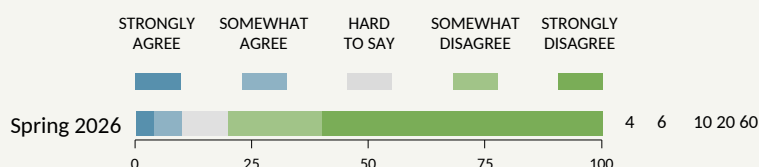


The result is broadly similar to that of almost two decades ago. The ranks of both those who regard Sweden as just another EU country and those who emphasise the special relationship have thinned slightly. Only the share taking no position has grown.

These findings suggest that Finns’ interest in Nordic cooperation now extends beyond Sweden alone to the Nordic region as a whole. In this light, it is not surprising that ideas voiced in Sweden after Finland and Sweden joined NATO about the two countries reuniting as a single state find little resonance among Finns.⁷

Only a small share (10%) think it would be a good thing if Finland and Sweden were to reunite as a single state in the future. As many (10%) take no position, while an overwhelming majority (80%) reject the idea (Figure 7).

Figure 7. “It would be a good thing if Finland and Sweden were to reunite as a single state in the future” (%)



When EVA asked in autumn 2021 which factors were important to Finns' identity, being Finnish and their mother tongue proved the most important to a large majority.⁸ Finnish national sentiment thus appears to retain a strong hold on people's minds. This probably helps explain the desire to hold on to the nation state, even in a changing world.

Defence brings the Nordics together

Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership, and the fact that all the Nordic countries now belong to the alliance, have added substantial, concrete security content to the Nordic agenda. This is also reflected in assessments of how much Finns have in common with the other Nordic countries when broken down by views on NATO. Those who support membership see much more in common than those who are neutral or opposed to it (see the chart appendix).

The Nordic countries have, of course, cooperated closely on defence for a long time. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership have nevertheless spurred this cooperation to a new level.⁹ Interestingly, it has often taken the form of so-called minilateralism: issue-focused, rapid and direct cooperation between governments, outside traditional institutional structures such as the

Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The unstable international situation repeatedly confronts decision-makers with situations requiring a rapid response, whereas most organisations for international cooperation move slowly. Multilateral cooperation, which matters greatly to small states, has also lost ground as major powers increasingly use their strength to act alone or among themselves, over the heads of smaller countries.

In contests of power, the Nordic countries are small individually, but together they are a more substantial force, economically as well. EVA's Values and Attitudes Survey therefore asked Finns to what extent various matters could be decided jointly at the Nordic level and to what extent they should remain within national decision-making. The question did not describe any decision-making structures or arrangements. It merely as-

sumed a substantial increase in cooperation among the Nordic countries.¹⁰

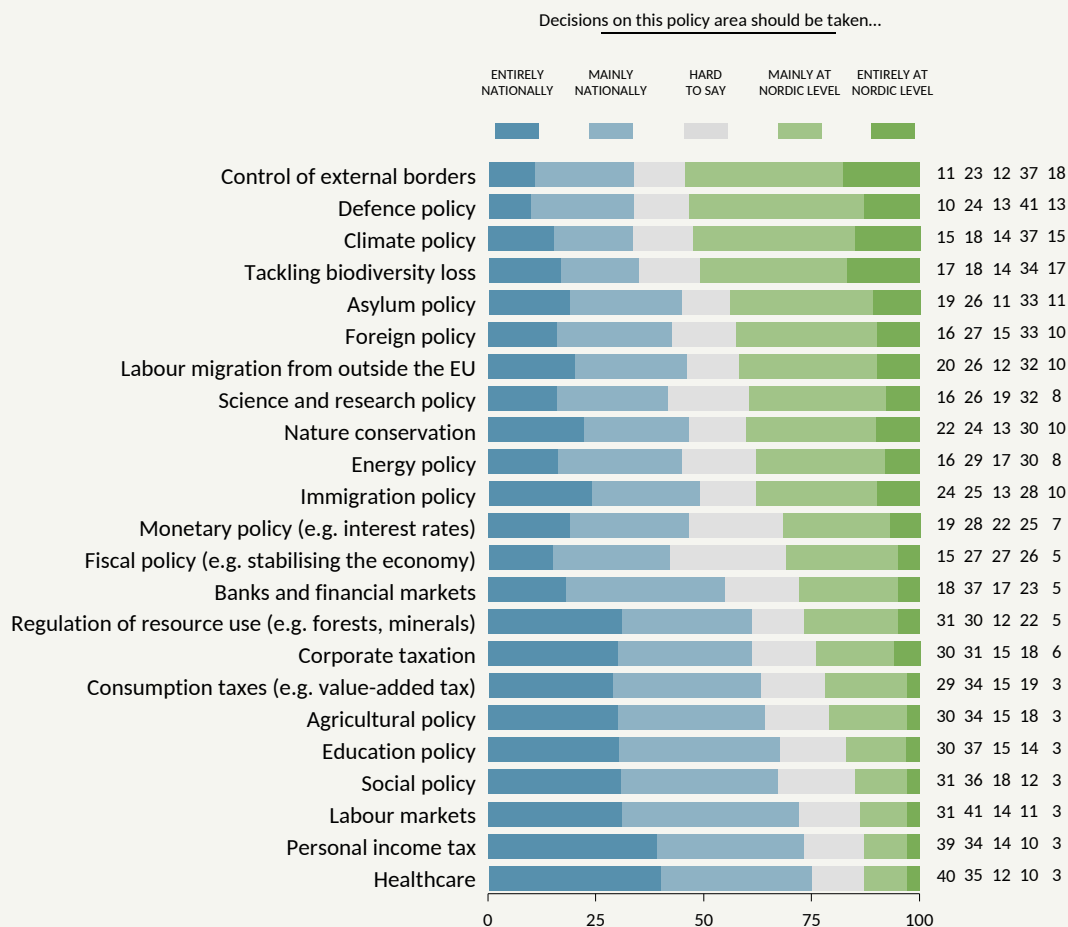
The results (Figure 8) reveal a perhaps surprisingly broad willingness, in principle, to make decisions jointly at the Nordic level, especially on issues that cross national borders. External security and environmental issues stand out.

Only a third (34%) would keep control of external borders in each country's own hands, while a majority (55%) would decide on it mainly at the joint Nordic level. The result is similar for national defence as a whole. A third (34%) would take defence policy decisions nationally, while more than

half (54%) would favour joint Nordic decision-making in future.

The results show broad acceptance of both deep defence cooperation and military alignment within NATO. It is also noteworthy that only one in ten insist on keeping border control and defence entirely under national authority. This reflects not only strong trust in the other Nordic countries, but also a view that dealing with the security threat posed by Russia would, in present circumstances, be too large a task for a single small country and is therefore possible only through joint efforts.

Figure 8. To what extent could the following policy areas be decided jointly at the Nordic level in future, and to what extent should they continue to be decided nationally? (%)



The same attitude appears to shape views on the other main strand of foreign and security policy: exerting influence internationally. Support is nevertheless more muted than for border control and defence policy. A sizeable share (43%) would keep foreign policy decisions entirely or mainly in national hands, but as many (43%) think the Nordic countries could have a largely or even wholly common foreign policy.

This seemingly surprising result can probably be explained by the way the Nordic countries, sometimes together with the Baltic states, have in recent years sought a joint seat at the major tables of world politics — tables that none of them would have had the weight to reach alone. A prime minister or president invited to a summit has often, in practice, represented all the Nordic countries as well as their own. Positions have been coordinated beforehand, either formally or more informally.¹¹ For example, Finland's President Stubb will attend the G20 summit as an invited guest for the second time at the end of this year.¹²

The environment, too, needs greater leverage

The case for pooling strength also applies to environmental threats. Finns are fairly widely prepared to relinquish some national decision-making power in order to tackle them. Again, a third (33%) would keep climate policy wholly or mainly under national authority, but more than half (52%) would be willing to decide on it jointly at the Nordic level. Attitudes towards tackling biodiversity loss are virtually identical. Just over a third (35%) would retain decision-making power in Finland, but half (51%) think that action against biodiversity loss could in future be

decided largely or entirely at the Nordic level.

The idea of a common Nordic climate and environmental policy thus enjoys fairly broad support. In previous EVA Values and Attitudes Surveys, however, a majority of Finns have thought that climate policy decisions should be taken mainly at EU level.¹³

One interpretation is that many respondents have in mind the green transition under way in all the Nordic economies. They would like more joint Nordic climate policy alongside EU climate policy, rather than in place of it.

On energy policy, which is closely linked to both climate policy and the economy, many (45%) would nevertheless favour national decision-making and a smaller share (38%) joint Nordic decisions. The figures are almost the same for science and research policy, another area important to the economy: 42% would decide nationally and almost as many (40%) jointly at the Nordic level.

For biodiversity loss, interpretation is complicated by the fact that, although a majority see tackling it as a Nordic issue, attitudes towards joint Nordic decisions on environmental policy instruments are less favourable.

Almost half (46%) would keep decisions on nature conservation in national hands, while a smaller share (40%) would move them partly or wholly to the Nordic level. A clear majority (61%) think that decisions on the use of natural resources, such as forests and mineral deposits, should remain national. Only just over a quarter (27%) would make them a joint Nordic matter.

For agriculture, which is also partly connected to environmental issues, almost two-thirds (64%) want agricultural policy to be

decided nationally. Only a fifth (21%) would place it in Nordic hands.

In this respect, the result should be read as a statement about security of supply and food security. It may also express a view on how agricultural policy should be organised if the EU were in future to dismantle its common agricultural policy, which currently places fairly tight constraints on member states.

Immigration divides opinion

Immigration has long been one of the central political issues in every Nordic country, and between them. During the migration crisis of 2014–2016, Nordic cooperation ran into difficulties as asylum seekers moved freely from one country to another. Eventually, the Nordic countries responded by reintroducing border checks one after another, temporarily suspending passport-free travel within the Nordic region.

With hindsight, it is easy to see that a common Nordic approach, or at least co-ordination between the countries, would have been needed during the refugee crisis. On the other hand, each Nordic state has also been determined to retain ultimate sovereignty over granting asylum.

Finns are divided on this issue. A substantial share (45%) think that asylum policy should be decided entirely or mainly at national level, but an equally large group (44%) take the opposite view and would prefer a common Nordic asylum policy.

Asylum seekers account for only a small part of immigration to the Nordic countries. Most arrivals are people moving for work or study and their family members. While the Nordic countries have recently tried to make themselves less attractive to asylum seekers, they have simultaneously sought to attract

labour migrants, particularly those with higher qualifications, to the region.

Although labour migration differs in nature from refugee migration, attitudes towards who should decide on it do not. Less than half (46%) think that labour migration from outside the EU should be decided nationally, and almost as many (42%) would decide on it at Nordic level. The picture changes only slightly when respondents are asked about immigration policy in general. Around half (49%) think it should be decided nationally, while four in ten (38%) would prefer joint Nordic decision-making.

Behind these divided views on authority over immigration policy lie fairly substantial differences between parties' supporters. Majorities among Finns Party and Centre Party voters emphasise retaining national control over immigration, whereas majorities among Green and Left Alliance supporters would transfer decision-making power to the Nordic level. National Coalition Party and Social Democratic Party supporters are each divided into two equally strong camps, with no clear overall preference (see the chart appendix).

On the economy, national control still prevails

Migration has been a central driving force of the Nordic economies from the outset. Since the early 1950s, Nordic citizens have been able to move freely within the region, work and, when moving, gain access to the destination country's social security system.

Free movement of labour took effect in the Nordic region earlier than in Western Europe, whose countries agreed on it in the 1957 Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community. A decade later, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the

creation of a Nordic economic community, Nordek, was already being explored. Those plans, however, fell through.

Today, the Nordic countries are closely integrated with Europe, but through somewhat different arrangements. Finland, Sweden and Denmark are EU members. Norway and Iceland, which recently rejected re-joining its accession negotiations, have opted for membership of the European Economic Area (EEA). Finland is the only Nordic country in the euro area, and EVA's Values and Attitudes Surveys show that a majority of Finns have recently been satisfied with this arrangement.¹⁴

This has not always been the case. Especially in the early 2000s, many hoped for a return to the markka and the ability to pursue more independent monetary and exchange-rate policies. Somewhat surprisingly, support for the euro nevertheless rose during the euro crisis, which peaked in 2010–2012, even as the euro area itself came close to breaking up.¹⁵

Against this background, it may seem somewhat surprising that just under half (47%) would take monetary policy decisions nationally, while a third (32%) would be prepared to consider a joint Nordic arrangement (see Figure 8 above). It should be noted, however, that the question did not offer the EU level as an option. National decision-making can therefore be interpreted as including the retention of the present arrangement, in which Finland's view on monetary policy is conveyed to the European Central Bank through the Bank of Finland.

On decisions concerning banks and financial markets, which are closely linked to monetary policy, the result is clearer. A majority (55%) would keep these in national hands, while a much smaller share (28%) would decide jointly at the Nordic level.

Finns' confidence in their own decision-makers' ability to pursue stable economic policy nevertheless appears rather limited. This can be inferred from the fact that, when presented with a choice, 42% would decide nationally on fiscal policy — a core component of economic policy — while almost a third (31%) would transfer it at least partly to joint Nordic hands. A substantial share (27%) take no position, however, which may indicate uncertainty about what the question means by fiscal policy.

The lower part of the results chart (Figure 8) shows that willingness to make economic policy decisions jointly at the Nordic level diminishes rapidly when the questions turn to taxation and the policy areas that account for most public expenditure.

On taxation, the firmest views concern personal income tax. A large majority (73%) regard this as a matter for national decision-making, and only 13% would be prepared to decide on it even partly at the joint Nordic level.

Views on the other types of taxation included in the survey are also clear, although somewhat more open to common Nordic policies. A clear majority (61%) think that corporate taxation should be decided nationally, while around a quarter (24%) would give the leading role to joint Nordic policies. Views on consumption taxes follow a similar pattern: a clear majority (63%) would retain national decision-making, and only just over a fifth (22%) would be willing to decide on matters such as value-added tax jointly at the Nordic level.

Alongside taxation, Finns think each Nordic country should decide for itself on key public services. Two-thirds (67%) would decide on education policy nationally, and only 17% would move decision-making to the joint Nordic level. Even less scope is seen for

common Nordic policies in healthcare. Although Finns are not particularly satisfied with their healthcare system,¹⁶ three-quarters (75%) would keep it in national hands, and a mere 13% would decide on healthcare jointly at the Nordic level.

Differences in labour-market practices and rules, tax systems and, for example, the way unemployment benefits operate are well-known obstacles to the free movement of labour between the Nordic countries.¹⁷ Finns nevertheless see no particular added value in making these systems more uniform across the region. Willingness to make labour-market decisions jointly at the Nordic level is therefore also limited.

A large majority (75%) think that labour-market matters should be decided nationally, and only 14% would make decision-making a joint Nordic responsibility. The same applies to social policy, which is closely linked to labour markets. Two-thirds (67%) would decide on social policy nationally, and only 15% jointly at the Nordic level.

Overall, Finns are more willing to transfer decision-making power to the joint Nordic level on major cross-border issues that are difficult or impossible for a single small country to manage. Conversely, they want to retain national control over issues close to their everyday lives or their wallets. There is nevertheless some openness to developing Nordic cooperation: on none of the issues does a majority think that decision-making power should remain entirely in national hands.

Notes

- 1 Metelinen (2026).
- 2 Wetterberg (2010).
- 3 Kauppalehti (2026), Helsingin Sanomat (2022).
- 4 Laakso (2026).
- 5 Palmgren and Wetterberg (2017).
- 6 Laakso (2026).
- 7 Iltalehti (2026).
- 8 Metelinen (2022).
- 9 Finnish Defence Forces (2026).
- 10 Exact wording in EVA's Values and Attitudes Survey: If cooperation among Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland were substantially increased, to what extent do you think the following policy areas could in future be decided jointly at the Nordic level, and to what extent should they continue to be decided nationally? Please give your own opinion, regardless of where decisions on the policy area are currently taken.
- 11 Helsingin Sanomat (2025).
- 12 Helsingin Sanomat (2026).
- 13 Haavisto (2019).
- 14 Haavisto (2025).
- 15 Haavisto (2012).
- 16 Haavisto (2025).
- 17 Nordic co-operation (2026).

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How the survey was conducted

The results are based on responses from 2,045 people. The margin of error for the population as a whole is $\pm 2\text{--}3$ percentage points.

Data were collected between 31 March and 13 April 2026. Respondents represent Finland's population aged 18–79, excluding Åland. The data were collected through Taloustutkimus Oy's online panel, from which the sample was drawn using stratified random sampling. The data were weighted to represent the population by age, gender, region of residence, education, occupation or status, industry and party preference. The statistical analysis and charts were produced by Pentti Kiljunen (Yhdyskuntatutkimus Oy).



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