



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

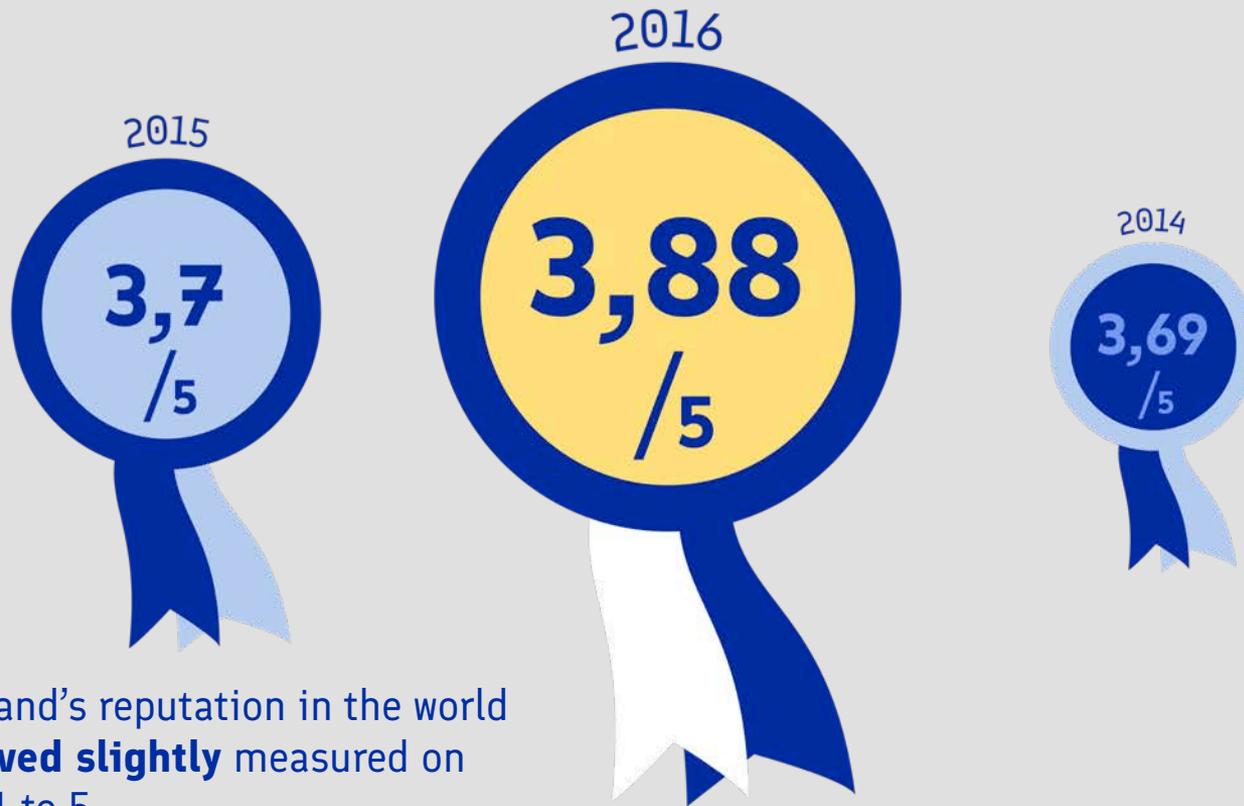
Finland in the world media

Ministry for Foreign Affairs review of 2016

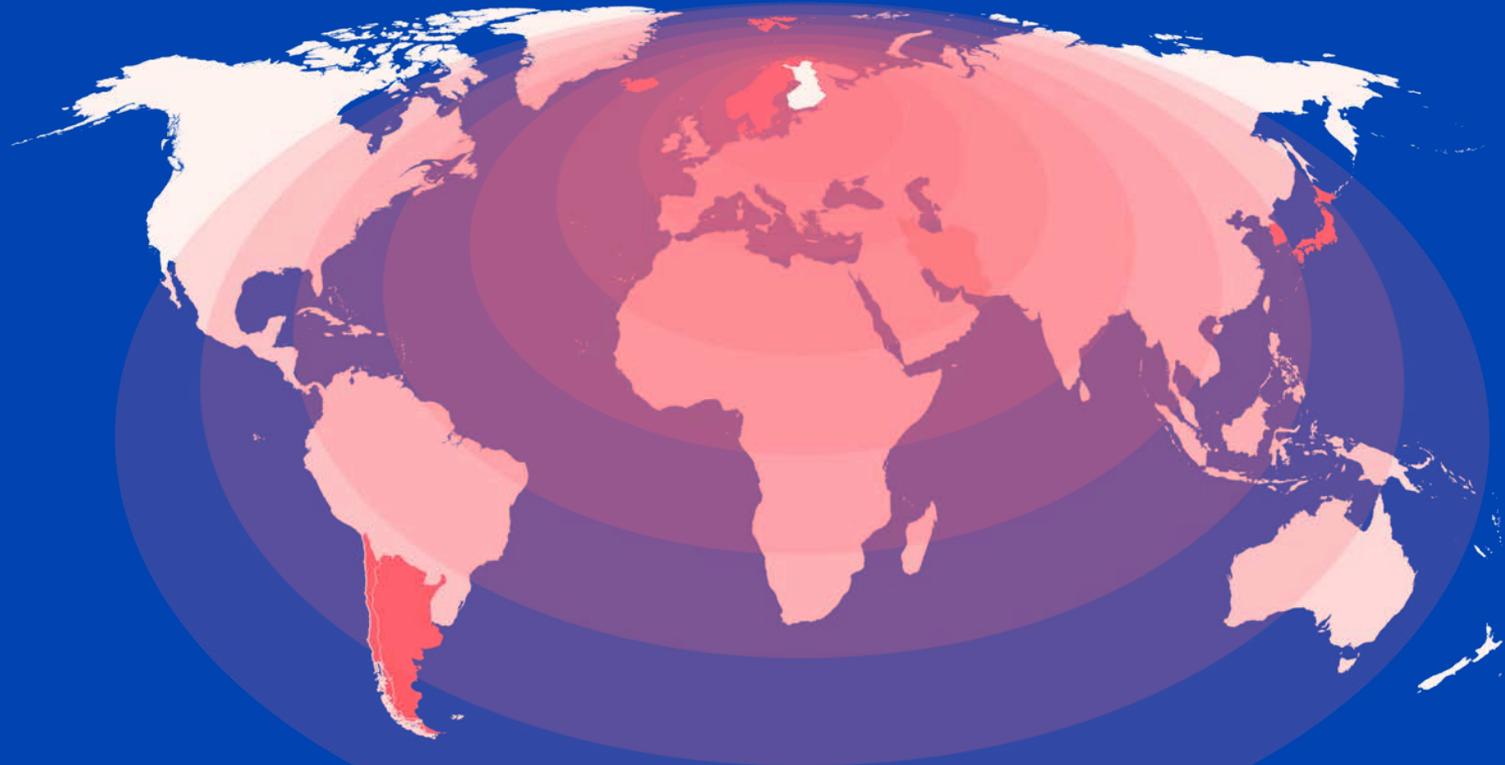


” Finland has been more visible and, consequently, so have its positive sides.

Finland's overall rating



In 2016, Finland's reputation in the world media **improved slightly** measured on a scale from 1 to 5.



” Let it be said here that Finland’s visibility in the Swedish media seems to have increased (in quantitative terms) on a more permanent basis than we expected in the previous survey.” – SWEDEN

In addition to the Nordic countries, there has been above average interest in Finland in South Korea, Japan, Chile, Argentina and Iran.

The basic income pilot and the education system were the most covered topics

2016

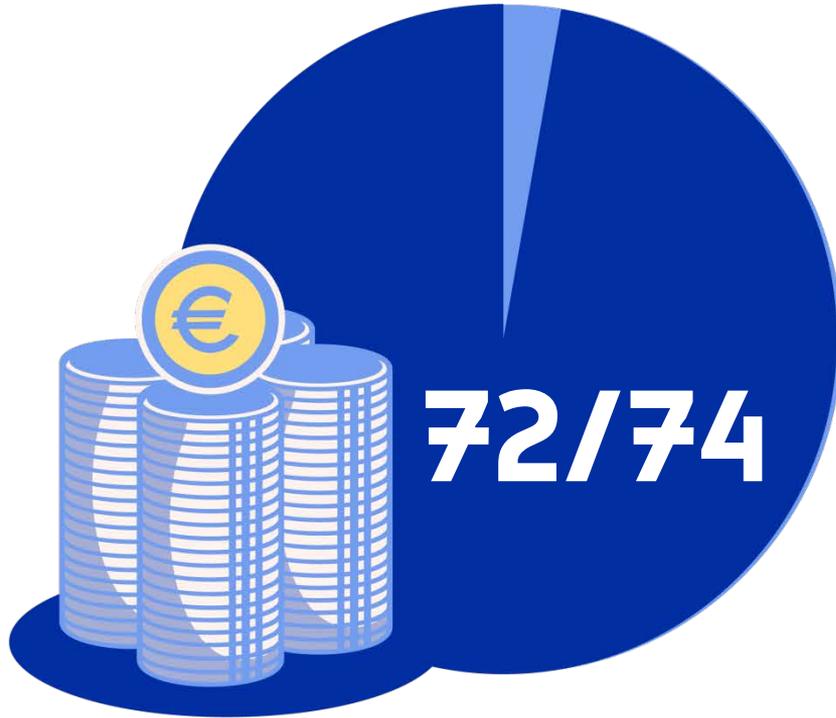


2015



2014

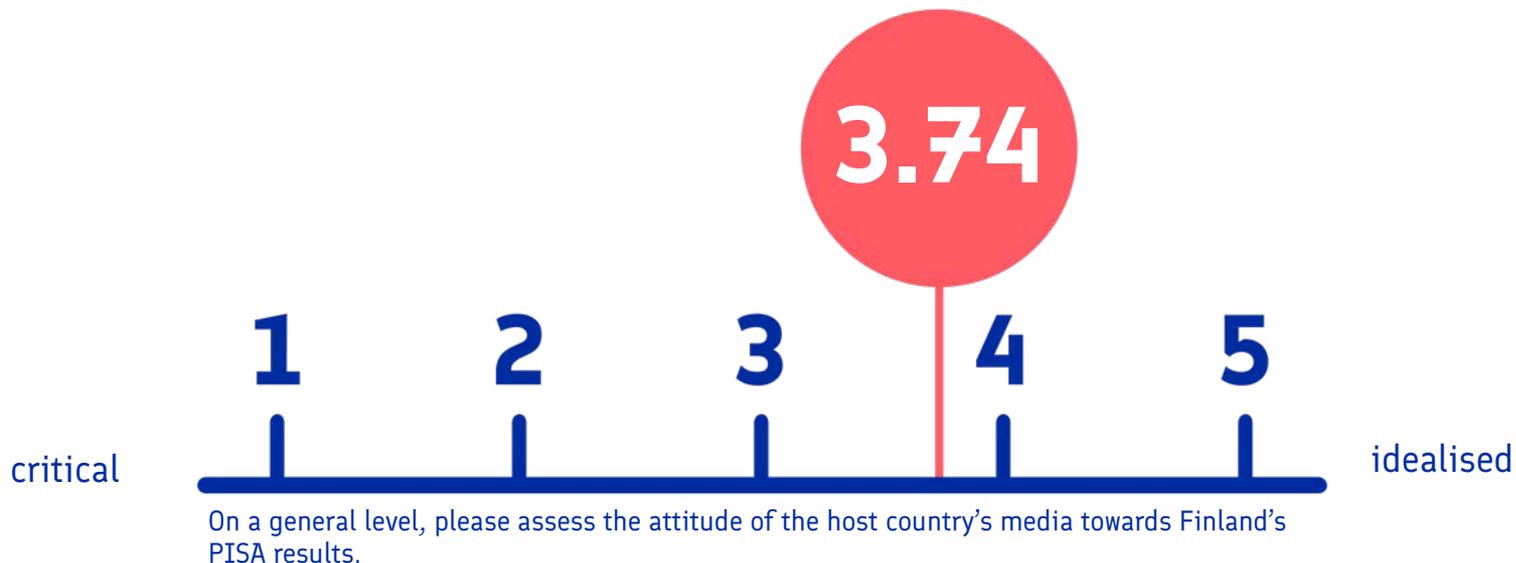




” The topic that attracted most attention in the media was **the basic income pilot**. It stimulated interest as soon as the news about the pilot was published, and ordinary people have **contacted us**, hoping to be able to move to Finland to enjoy the basic income.” – **BELGIUM**

Finnish domestic politics, including the basic income pilot, has been a topic in 72 host countries of Finnish missions (N=74).

”**There is no limit to the popularity** in Argentina **of Finland’s education system**, and topics related to it are featured remarkably often in the media. When meeting an average Argentinian, he or she will nearly always mention it as ‘one of the best education systems in the world’. This trend has continued to grow in 2016 [··]” – **ARGENTINA**



”The only article that was somewhat critical was The Washington Post’s interview with Pasi Sahlberg. The headline of The Washington Post article was ‘Finland’s schools were once the envy of the world. Now, they’re slipping.’ The article describes how the results have declined but points out that even this year, Finland has fared much better than the United States, which is not in the top ten in any of the categories. Pasi Sahlberg lists a variety of reasons why Finland’s results have declined. He emphasises that **the Finnish education system is very good** and that Finland continues to be **an interesting model to other countries**. Sahlberg also points out that Finland is not going to change its education system just to obtain better **PISA results**.” – **UNITED STATES**

”Through the pilot programmes, **the maternity package** has been discussed in more in depth from the perspective of ‘**a more equal start in life**’ and a universal and comprehensive health care system.” – **GREAT BRITAIN**

”A Korean artist and blogger visited Finland with his family and then regularly published drawings depicting **parenting in Finland** in the biggest newspaper in Korea. The topic stirred debate and raised questions in the artist’s blog, and the Embassy actively answered readers’ questions about Finnish children, parenting and family life. In early 2017, the artist will publish a book featuring all his images and texts about Finland. It has been great publicity for Finland that the artist and his family consider Finland **a paradise for families**. The Embassy was able to check the texts before they were published, and we corrected a few factual errors.”

– **SOUTH KOREA**



”The most popular topic seemed to be childcare-related matters, including child welfare clinics, the maternity package, infant liquid milk formula, gender equality and work-life balance. The Embassy has been extremely active in promoting this area by giving lectures and interviews, helping with maternity package exhibitions and even holding a Japanese only press tour last June. It is said that TV is the last media to report on the latest trends/fads and, taking this into account, having at least three local TV companies travelling to Finland to report on childcare is a solid sign that the image of Finland as a country that looks after its children is well established in Japan.” – **JAPAN**

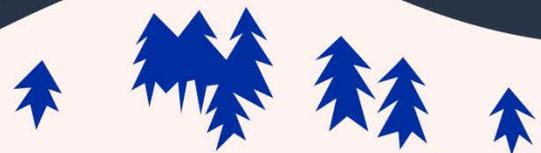


”Finland was featured in **travel articles** considerably more often this year than in the previous year.” – **UNITED STATES**

”Finland and especially **Lapland, the Northern Lights and Santa Claus** were featured in the media as an attractive and exotic destination [···]” – **SINGAPORE**

”People in Iceland advertise and rave about Finland as a great destination, although Finland could be Iceland’s biggest competitor in terms of similar selling points, such as Santa Claus and the Northern Lights. The relaxing retreats in Finnish Lapland, where you go without your smartphone, featured in the news, as did **Lonely Planet’s travel list for next year, on which Finland ranked very well.**” – **ICELAND**

”The launch of the Alibaba-owned Alitrip’s new brand in Rovaniemi and the accompanying social media and online campaign Aurora, which introduced Finland and **Lapland as tourist destinations to millions of Chinese people,** [···]” – **CHINA**



”[...] Vogue, for example, published a travel article about Helsinki titled ‘Thinking of Going to Reykjavik (Like Everyone Else)? **You Should Try Helsinki Instead**’. The New York Times published an extensive travel article on how to spend 36 hours in Helsinki, The Boston Globe wrote a rave review of the A21 restaurant [...]. The Metropolis Magazine listed Helsinki **as the third best city to live in [...]**”

– UNITED STATES

”**Helsinki raised its profile**

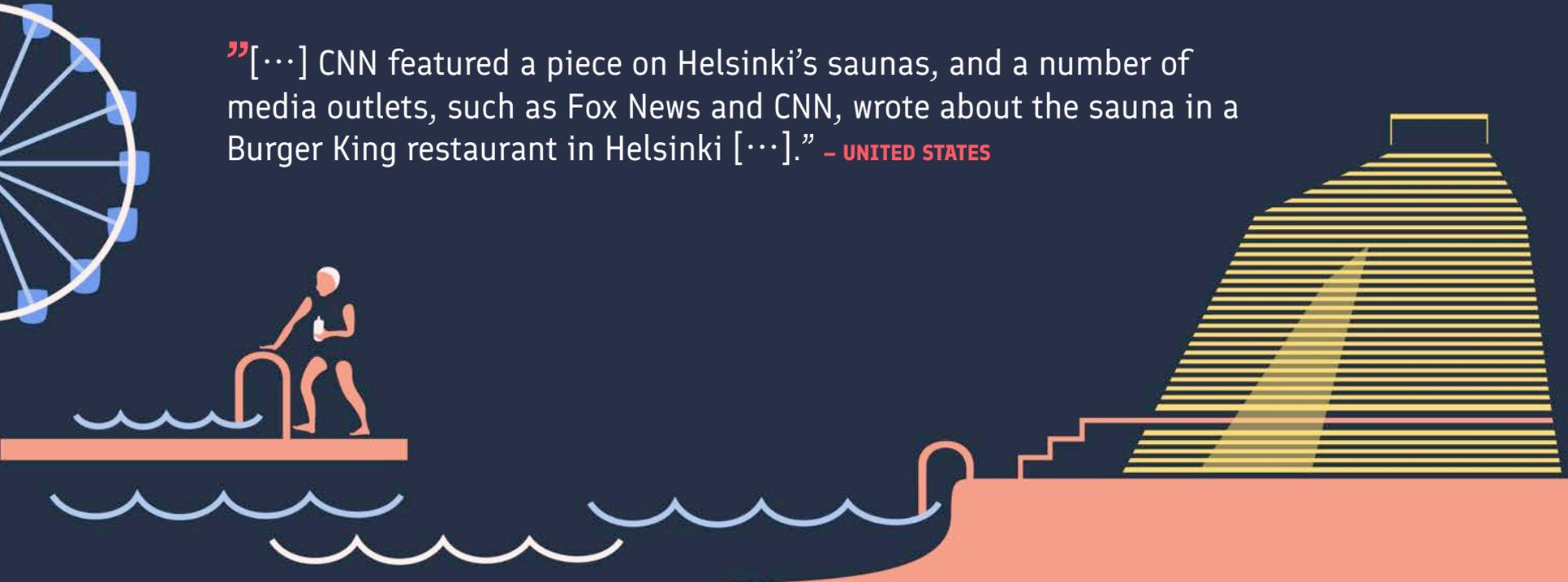
(e.g. Löyly, Allas Sea Pool, the Guggenheim debate, design, restaurants/food culture, Saara Aalto’s gig).”

– GREAT BRITAIN



”**The sauna** has featured in a variety of forms. Urban sauna bathing: Löyly, Allas, Burger King’s fast food sauna. Enjoying a sauna day and the health benefits of saunas.” – **BELGIUM**

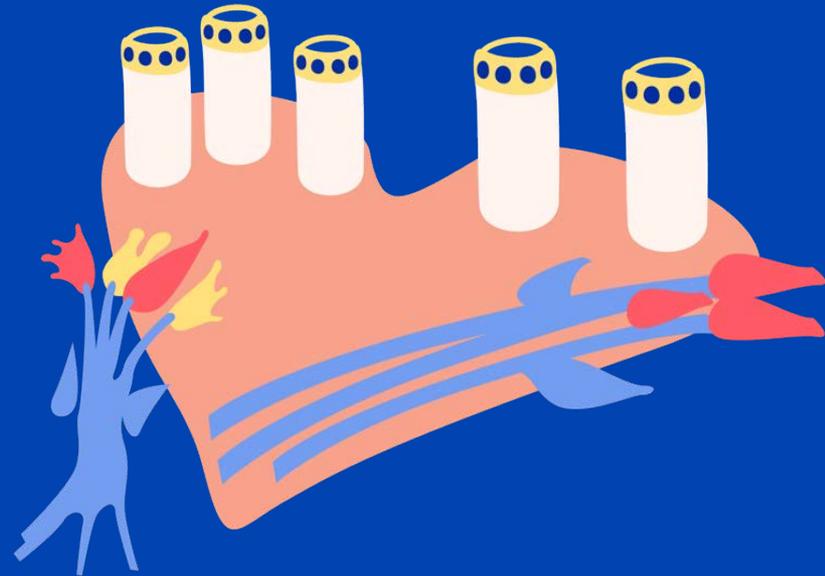
”[...] CNN featured a piece on Helsinki’s saunas, and a number of media outlets, such as Fox News and CNN, wrote about the sauna in a Burger King restaurant in Helsinki [...].” – **UNITED STATES**



”Swedish journalists became interested **in the practical implementations of Finnish immigration policy in 2016**. They contacted the Embassy and asked if a trip to Finland could be arranged for journalists. A trip was organised in autumn, and the group of journalists and specialists visited various sites such as the Finnish Immigration Services, a reception centre, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the police department in the Helsinki area. The guests praised the visit, and the trip and the topics that rose during the trip were handled in a positive tone.” – **SWEDEN**

”News stories about immigration were less flattering: ‘Thousands of immigrants leave Finland voluntarily,’ said the quality paper Der Standard, citing an Iraqi returnee: **‘Finland is a cold and hostile country. My soul dies here.’** Stories about far-right street patrols and violent demonstrations do not, of course, promote a positive image of Finland.” – **AUSTRIA**

”**In 2016, Danish media reported on topics such as the activities of Finnish neo-Nazis, the assault outside a Helsinki railway station and activities of the Soldiers of Odin organisation both in Finland and Denmark.** [···]. According to the article, the organisation in Finland aims to protect the local population from asylum seekers. [···] – **DENMARK**



Topics in politics and economy followed by the Ministry

Assess the visibility of the following content in the host country's media

Economy



Finland's domestic politics



Finland's economic relations with the country in question



Foreign and defence policies

(Not included in 2015)



Finland's EU policy

(Not included in 2016)



● 2016 ● 2015

”While in 2015, Finland was described as the poor child and the Greece of the North, **in 2016** the news featured stories of **Finland's efforts to improve the economy**. ‘Necessity is the mother of invention,’ wrote Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, noting that Finland has worries but it also has plans.” – GERMANY

”**President Sauli Niinistö** visited Uruguay for the first time in August 2016. A reporter from the country’s largest daily paper [El País] visited Finland and interviewed President Sauli Niinistö. The interview, which covered a whole page, was published during the visit but attracted more audience via radio where it was commented on.” – **URUGUAY**

”President Sauli Niinistö made a state visit to Estonia in May 2016. The visit lasted two days, while **the media coverage lasted longer**. An interview given to two Estonian media houses before the visit dealt with defence policy and was widely quoted. It was important in terms of determining Finland’s position. An interview by schoolchildren of the two presidents was broadcast live on Finland’s Yle and Estonia’s ERR. There were several other reports.”

– **ESTONIA**

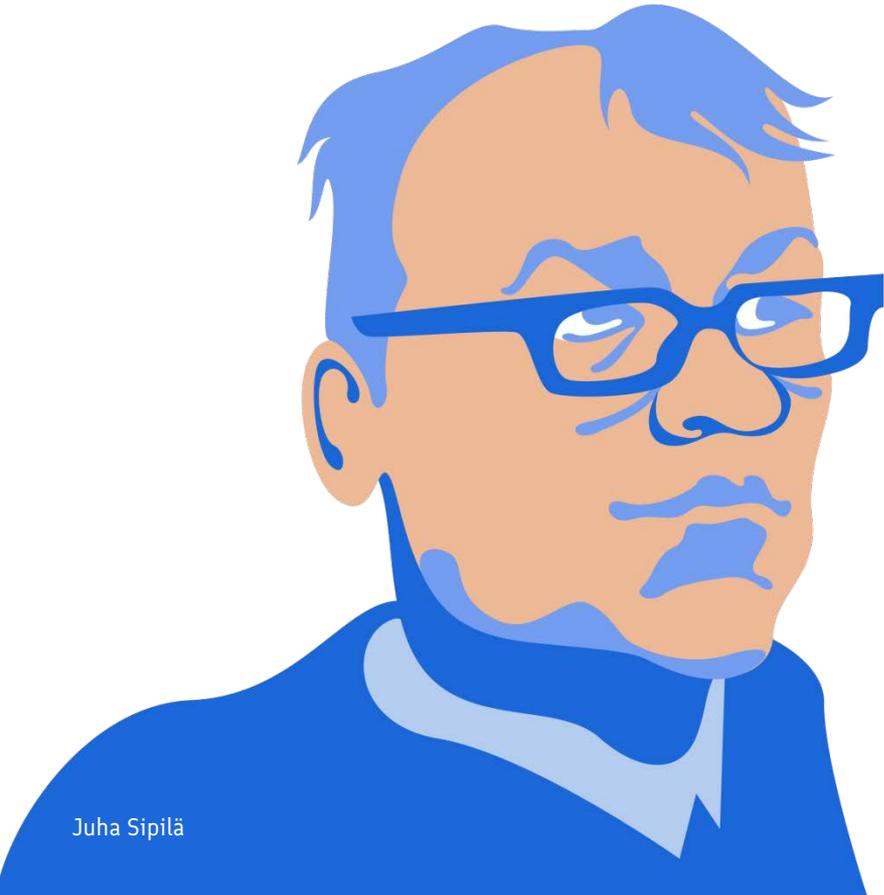


Lennu

Thanks to **Lennu the dog**, the video footage from the President’s traditional Christmas dinner was widely broadcast all over the world.



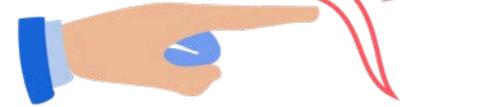
Sauli Niinistö



Juha Sipilä

**The row between
Sipilä and Yle:**

”A rare freedom of speech
row in Finland” – **FRANCE**



”Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Die Tageszeitung wrote negatively about **the disagreement between Prime Minister Sipilä and Yle**. The Prime Minister allegedly put pressure on the media, and he was likened to President Trump. Some other newspapers picked up the story in early 2017.”
– **GERMANY**

”Even though the issue of freedom of speech was covered by a number of media, **it did not, generally, erode the trust in the status of free speech in Finland**. [It could even be said that the said disagreement was proof that freedom of speech is alive and well in Finland.]”
– **GREAT BRITAIN**

”Some articles emphasized the point that the **(basic income) pilot** is not a socialist concept, but the project was mainly initiated **by Prime Minister Sipilä**, who has a background in business.” – **CZECH REPUBLIC**



”**Alexander Stubb** featured in the UK media extensively in autumn 2016. He also joined the Financial Times as a columnist. Stubb has tried to put forward **constructive views and alternative ideas for the Brexit process**. The response to these views has not been exactly enthusiastic.” – **GREAT BRITAIN**

”**Foreign Minister Soini** appeared on Sky News **immediately after the Brexit vote**. Even though **he spoke** as a party leader, he was referred to as ‘Finland’s deputy prime minister’. Foreign Minister Soini’s previous comments have since been taken out of context, and they have been used in attempts to show that Finland has a favourable view of the UK’s demands.” – **GREAT BRITAIN**

Alexander Stubb

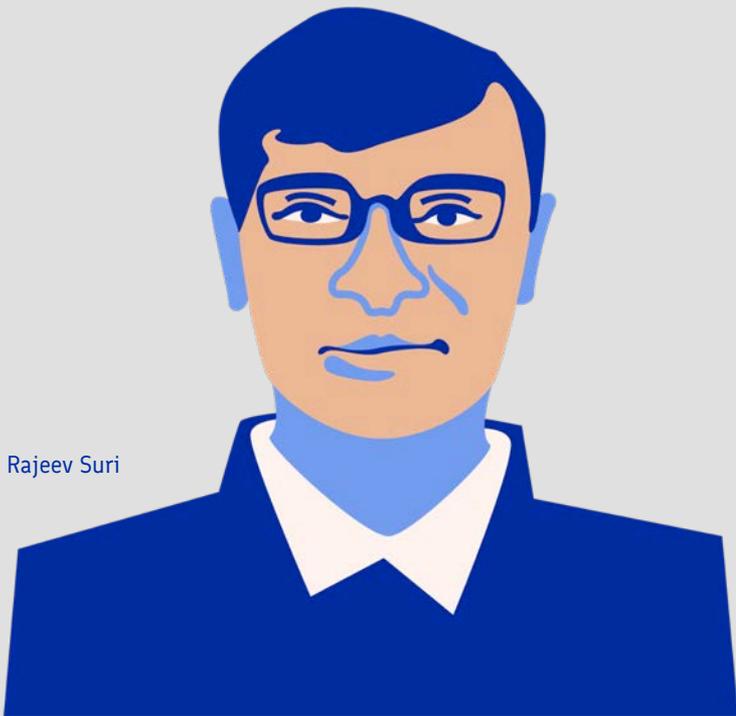
Timo Soini

” **Bengt Holmström’s Nobel Prize** [...] received media coverage the like of which Finland rarely gets, and for this reason it is necessary to highlight its importance. The Nobel Prize was widely covered in the news, in both local and national media.” – **FRANCE**

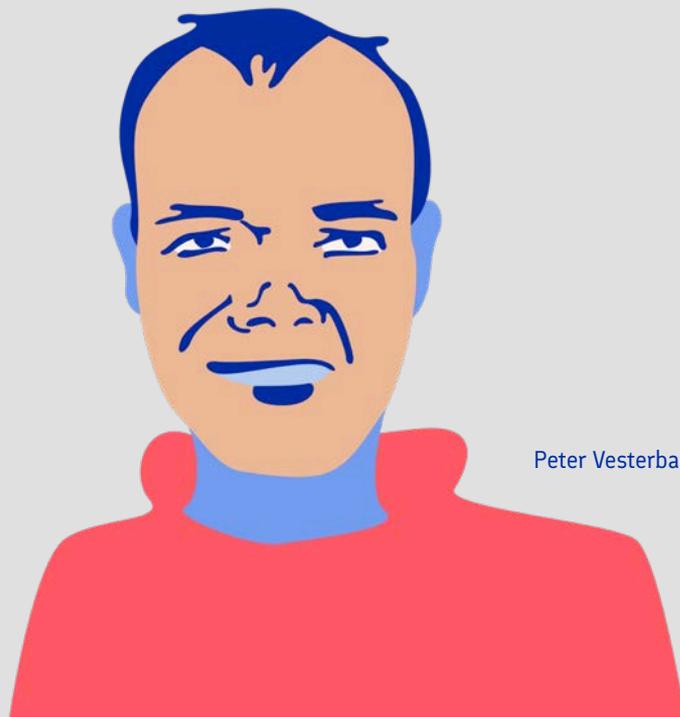


Bengt Holmström

” Nokia’s activities always interest the media. If there is anything new to cover, it is covered. It is analysed, and **Nokia’s story** is described in detail.” – CHILE



Rajeev Suri



Peter Vesterbacka

” **The game industry** is still a hot topic, **Rovio’s** Peter Vesterbacka gets a lot of publicity.” – ESTONIA

”**Ice hockey** is the main element of the positive image of Finland in Canada.”

– CANADA

Most often mentioned sportsmen:

Patrik Laine

Aleksander Barkov

Kimi Räikkönen

Valtteri Bottas



”Finnish music has been prominent in New York, and it adapted a female perspective when **Kaija Saariaho’s** opera L’amour de Loin, **conducted by Susanna Mälkki, was performed at the Metropolitan Opera**. This was the first time since 1903 that an opera composed by a woman was performed at the Met. It was also very relevant from the American society’s viewpoint as it deals with themes of immigration and nationalism.” – **UNITED STATES**



Saara Aalto

”**Saara Aalto’s success in X Factor** managed to raise awareness of Finland among a group of people that may have been difficult to reach. Saara mania did not quite manage to affect Finland’s reputation, but it did give the country greater visibility.” – **GREAT BRITAIN**

Most often mentioned artists:
Kaija Saariaho
Esa-Pekka Salonen
Susanna Mälkki
Sofi Oksanen
Einojuhani Rautavaara
Isac Elliot



Kaija Saariaho



”Juho Kuosmanen’s film **The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki** was awarded the Un Certain Regard Prize at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival. The film was extensively covered in French media and received rave reviews everywhere.” – **FRANCE**

”**Finnish classical music** was once again very visible. The artists who were particularly often in the media were Esa-Pekka Salonen, Hannu Lintu, Osmo Vänskä, Pekka Kuusisto and the Met debut of Kaija Saariaho and Susanna Mälkki.

Finnish films such as **The Fencer** and **The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki** were covered in, for example, the LA Times and The Hollywood Reporter. **In literature, Anu Partanen’s book** featured widely in the media. [...]

Marimekko and Target’s joint collection attracted great media coverage [...]. Vogue covered the opening of the **Samuji** store in New York. [...]

Angry Birds were written about a number of times, mostly in a positive light.” – **UNITED STATES**



” Huge media coverage that lasted ‘all day long’ and took the country by storm welcomed **Santa Claus from Rovaniemi** as he arrived in Zagreb in early December. The Embassy collaborated with the City of Zagreb’s tourist office, which ensured that people were aware of Santa and **the idea of the Finnish Christmas spirit**. Santa’s visit to Croatia was quite a media event, and the old man from Rovaniemi was surely the most photographed Finn in 2016.” – **CROATIA**

” **The Finland House** that was set up for Rio 2016 was given great visibility in local media outlets, such as O Globo, one of the country’s largest newspapers. **The presence of Santa Claus**, in particular, was widely covered.” – **BRAZIL**



More official Finland emojis



2016: about 200 million

MEDIA REACH

2015:
153.7 million
people



”The Wall Street Journal ran a cover story about Finland emojis and their inclusion into the official Unicode system. The paper explained that sauna and woolly socks were accepted by the Unicode Consortium.” – UNITED STATES

What is the image of Finland like in the media?

”There have not been any significant changes in the image of Finland among Croatians over the past few years. The Croatian media describe **Finns as honest, transparent and level-headed**. What is new is that Finns are no longer considered a problem-free ‘ideal nation’, but it is now seen as a good point of reference to Croatia as the two countries have a similar size of population and ‘Finland has its own problems’, especially in terms of its economy and domestic politics [immigration].” – **CROATIA**

”There are very few stories about individual Finns, but the ones published **are usually written in a positive tone**. One exception worth mentioning is the multi-page feature run by El Mundo’s weekly supplement ‘Papel’. The story, titled ‘Axes and vodka in Finland’, featured a number of images and dealt with suicides and violence – domestic violence in particular – in Finland, and the part that alcohol plays.” – **SPAIN**

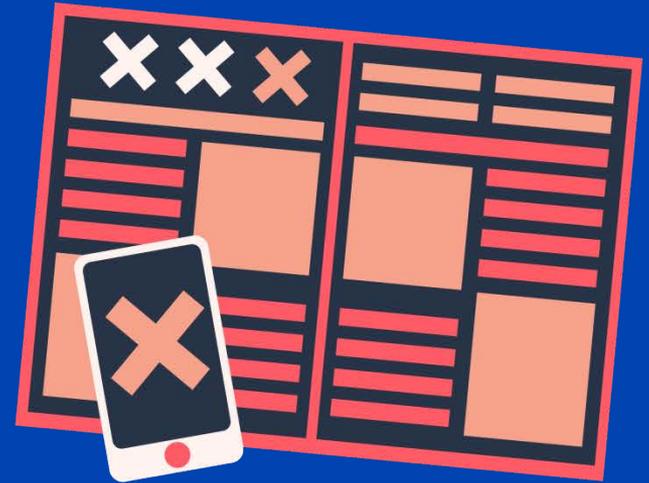
”**Anti-social behaviour, bad manners and crimes committed by Finns** [often related to breach of entry regulations], accompanied by details about the person and his or her nationality, featured exceptionally often in the media in 2016. So far, this has not affected the overall image of Finns, **but if it continues, it may harm the Finns’ good reputation.**” – **INDONESIA**



Fake news from Finland?

”[···] Discussion around Finland’s potential NATO membership mainly followed the familiar pattern which **aims to endorse the narrative of ‘Russia surrounded by the West’ presented in Russia’s internal propaganda**. A secondary aim was apparently **a desire to influence Finland’s security decisions**. [···] Finland had joined the military exercises primarily due to pressure from the United States. **The reporting on the military exercises themselves contained misinformation** that questioned the capabilities of Finland’s defence forces. [···].” – **RUSSIA**

”Reporters praise **Finnish officials** for **answering their questions**.”
– **RUSSIA**



Embassy staff and media visits to Finland

EMBASSY STAFF

”Finland’s ambassador to Tehran has given numerous interviews to the Iranian media, and his visits to provinces outside Tehran have also drawn much media attention. Due to the interviews, the image of Finland is now more diverse in Iran. The fact that the ambassador commutes by metro has also been positively noted and enhances the idea of Finland as a democratic and environmentally conscious country.” – **IRAN**

”The ambassador has often appeared in the Kenyan media, both television and papers, as one of the ambassadors promoting good governance as well as with local officials; for example, he was in the news with the Minister for Equality and made a speech at the Women’s Day event.” – **KENYA**

”Thanks to the Embassy’s proactive communications strategy, Finland has been very visible in the Nigerian media. The ambassador has highlighted the good relations between Finland and Nigeria in many interviews, emphasising trade opportunities and Finland’s strengths. One of the largest papers in the country published extensive articles about the Finnish education and library systems [...].” – **NIGERIA**

MEDIA VISITS

”Inviting journalists to our country is a useful tool for building the country’s image; it can offer a broader view of Finland and highlight new perspectives that may otherwise be forgotten. These visits also support the creation of long-term relations with journalists.”

”We think that media and influencer visits are one of the most effective tools for building the country’s image.”

”The importance of social media becomes even more obvious during visits by influencers. The guests may not write a single article but they may send dozens of tweets.”



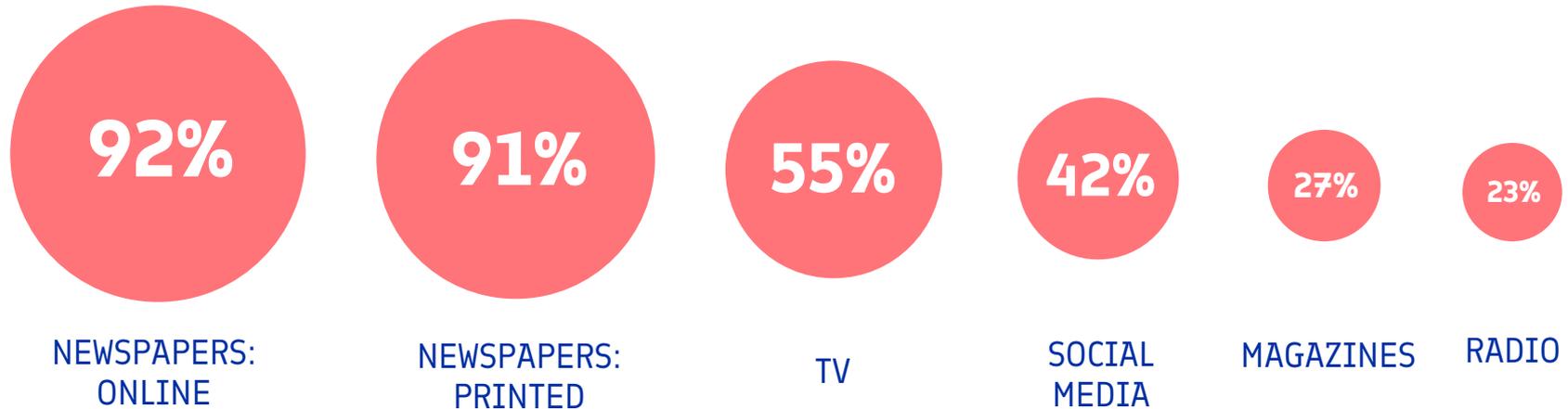
Finland in the world media

This survey was designed to examine the topics associated with Finland in international media coverage. It comprised all media, with a particular focus on newspapers.

The data are based on assessments submitted by the Finnish missions and, in the case of some countries, on externally sourced media monitoring reports. In two-thirds of the missions, media-related activities are conducted alongside other work.

The Webropol survey was conducted between December 2016 and January 2017

A total of 74 out of 89 missions submitted a response.

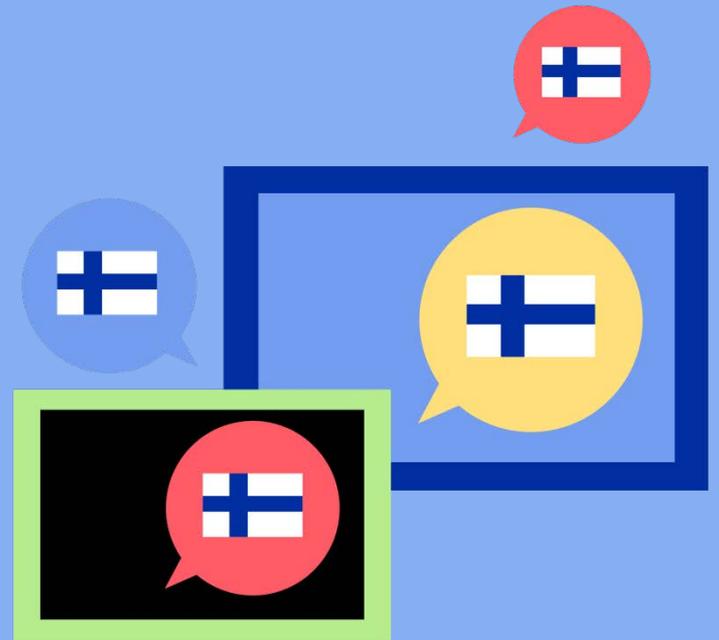


PEOPLE WITH SISU.

– SOUTH KOREA



Further information by region



Sweden

”Finnish culture has been covered in the Swedish media throughout the year. The highlights have included Tom of Finland in Helsinki, Tove Jansson at Millesgården and Ellen Thesleff at Sven-Harrys Art Museum. These exhibitions received positive reviews in the media. Other exhibitions featured in the media included Eero Aarnio at the Design Museum and Helene Schjerfbeck in Turku. Sofi Oksanen was constantly in the media, and she is considered a world-class writer. Oksanen attracted a lot of positive attention especially during the Gothenburg Book Fair. Kjell Westö, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Kenneth Kvarnström, Stina Ekblad and Birgitta Ulfsson are the most respected stars of Finnish culture in Sweden, and they frequently appear in the media – and always in a positive light. The Swedish media often consider them Swedes. The Finnish roots of the members of the Swedish rock band Kent, which has just ended its career, have drawn much attention, and the band’s video in which it proudly flies the Finnish flag has been widely noted.” – **SWEDEN**

”Finland has regularly been mentioned in the debate about Swedish defence policy. [For example, there were just under 7,000 media hits on Finnish defence policy and about 12,000 on politics. Some of these figures overlap.] The media have been especially eager to discuss the different relations that Finland and Sweden have with Russia, and the two countries’ views of the NATO membership.” – **SWEDEN**

”The most visible theme, however, has been Finland’s foreign and defence policies. Defence collaboration between Finland and Sweden, and the intensification of this process, has been discussed constantly in the media. Finland has also featured in the lively NATO debate and, very often, also in discussions about Sweden’s relationship with Russia. The image of Finland as a trustworthy and knowledgeable partner to Sweden grew stronger in 2016. The news item that caused the most negative publicity in 2016 was the uproar related to the Finnish Ambassador to Sweden, Jarmo Viinanen. The quick decision-making and handling of the situation, however, managed to send out a positive message that Finland is a modern and democratic country.” – **SWEDEN**

Topics that were given wide coverage by a number of media outlets:

”Refugees at Finland’s eastern border; negotiations between Finland and Russia and fewer refugees entering the country; thousands of asylum seekers leave Finland; Finland says no to a joint Nordic border (Stubb); Minister Toivakka suspected of tax avoidance; the Soldiers of Odin and the Loldiers of Odin; the Panama papers and the sources of Finnish journalists; compensation in narcolepsy cases; Petteri Orpo following Alexander Stubb as the National Coalition Party leader and becoming the new Minister of Finance; the Competitiveness Pact; Hyperloop and a vision of a superfast surface connection between Finland and Sweden; the Peli poikki demonstration in Helsinki; the announcement of the Nobel Prize winners; Holmström, Ahtisaari, the Vastarinta demonstration and the death of Jimi Karttunen; reactions, No to Guggenheim, Finns’ behaviour at the Speaker’s dinner in Stockholm; Prime Minister Sipilä and Terrafame; murders in Imatra; Sipilä and Yle; the basic income pilot; the uproar caused by the Finns Party Youth’s video.” – **SWEDEN**

Other Nordic countries

”Isac Elliot, who is part of Finland’s Swedish-speaking minority, is a superstar in Norway. He draws huge crowds at big public events and his concerts are sold out. The Norwegian media reported on Elliot being appointed as Finland’s Youth Ambassador, and the nomination ceremony, including interviews, was featured on the TV2 main news. Tens of thousands of young people have seen 16-year-old Elliot perform in concerts all around Norway. Isac Elliot is a positive media personality who shows his fans great consideration. Elliot has also taken part in a campaign against bullying.” – **NORWAY**

”Finland’s basic income pilot was featured in several media during 2016. The tone of these reports was very positive. The basic income pilot was considered innovative and a good idea. A few reports mentioned that the Danish Alternativet party has had similar ideas. The Finnish pilot has been described as an effort to respond to the challenges facing the Finnish national economy brought about by globalisation, structural changes in the Finnish industrial sector and EU sanctions against Russia. Comments on the Finnish economic situation have been very negative in Denmark for years now. However, reports on the basic income pilot have introduced some positive nuances into this negative image.” – **DENMARK**

”Finland’s success in the PISA study is very widely known in Norway, and this topic is discussed almost solely in very positive terms. Politicians, regardless of party affiliation, have used Finland as an example of what a school system should look like. The Norwegian Prime Minister Solberg has highlighted, in various contexts, the practice of early intervention and support for pupils and the high standards of teacher training in Finland.” – **NORWAY**

”Finland’s centenary celebrations received wonderful early coverage at the end of 2015 when the suggestion to donate a spur of the Halti fell to Finland as a 100th anniversary gift spread in the media like wildfire. The discussion around the topic continued throughout 2016 with statements being mainly in favour of the donation. In October 2016, Prime Minister Solberg stated in a letter addressed to the head of the municipality of Kåfjord that, according to the Norwegian constitution, Norway cannot hand over any of its land area but that Norway will come up with a suitable gift for Finland.” – **NORWAY**

Russia

”This year’s major Finnish theme in the media was Finland’s security policy. This topic was prevalent especially at the beginning of the year when Finland took part in several military exercises together with Sweden and the NATO member countries. The climax of this cooperative effort was American Army and Air Forces participating in a military exercise on Finnish soil. In the summer, Finnish President Niinistö’s proposal on the use of transponders by aircraft over the Baltic Sea region received some positive headlines. Later in the summer, Finland’s rejection of Russia’s invitation to take part in bilateral talks concerning the security around the Baltic Sea region was given little attention by the media. Discussion around Finland’s potential NATO membership mainly followed the familiar pattern which aims to endorse the narrative of ‘Russia surrounded by the West’ presented in Russia’s internal propaganda. A secondary aim was apparently a desire to influence Finland’s security decisions. Reports often reminded readers that Finland’s NATO membership is not supported by the Finnish political leadership nor by the Finnish people. Finland had also joined the military exercises primarily due to pressure from the United States. The reporting on the military exercises themselves contained misinformation that questioned the capabilities of Finland’s defence forces. Reports claimed that a bear appearing in the middle of a military exercise conducted in southern Finland scared Finnish soldiers out of their wits. In reality, the incident happened in Kajaani, in eastern Finland. The Russian government newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta claimed that a military exercise on Finnish soil was a breach of the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty. The newspaper has used the same misinformed interpretation of the Paris Peace Treaty in debates on the Finnish-Swedish defence collaboration and Finland’s arms procurements from Western countries.” – **RUSSIA**

”A slight negative change in tone could be detected in the Murmansk media when a route used by asylum seekers started to run through this northern region. Many news reports stated that Finland had ‘closed the border’ to asylum seekers even though this was not really the case, and there were many reasons why people were prevented from reaching the border.” – **RUSSIA**

”Refugee issues. The Russian media continued with the reporting started last year where people were led to believe that Finland is virtually collapsing under the flood of refugees from the Middle East. The media painted a picture of a wave of crime and chaos caused by refugees. There were reports concerning refugees that came from Russia to Finland, but any role played by Russia’s Federal Security Service in this was left unmentioned. The visit to Moscow by Finnish President Niinistö and the subsequent border agreement calmed down the reporting.” – **RUSSIA**

”Slush, Flow and the Finnish Film Week in St Petersburg are the most important ‘exports’ for Finland’s country brand.” – **RUSSIA**

”Finland still has more demand than supply in St Petersburg. Finland is considered as an exemplary state when it comes to well-being and designing and constructing education and health care. In St Petersburg, Finland is seen as an example of a state that ensures smooth everyday living for its citizens. We could be bolder in responding to this demand in the centenary year of 2017.” – **RUSSIA**

Europe, excluding other Nordics

”It is said that the current refugee situation has made Finns even more suspicious of immigrants and refugees. Many newspapers wrote that asylum seekers from Iraq left Finland voluntarily as, in addition to the weather, the Finns’ welcome had turned out to be very cold. Organisations that are hostile to immigrants, such as the Soldiers of Odin, frequently made headlines, but the public’s responses and demonstrations were also covered by many media outlets.” – **GERMANY**

”In spring 2016, the Nordic countries were guests of honour at the largest book fair in the Czech Republic [Svet knihy], which is organised every year in Prague. Finland’s representatives were authors Elina Hirvonen, Katja Kettu, Johanna Sinisalo and Antti Tuomainen. The four Nordic embassies in Prague, working together with the Scandinavian House, a local cultural organisation, launched the #ReadNordic campaign in autumn 2015 to enhance interest in the current trends in Nordic literature and the countries’ rich literary traditions. The campaign was divided into eight months with different themes and included reading challenges, a social media campaign, visiting authors from the Nordic countries, films and other cultural events.” “At the conference on the relations of Czech and Nordic literature, held in December 2016, it was pointed out that The Egyptian is the most widely read foreign book in the Czech Republic.” – **CZECH REPUBLIC**

”Finland’s poor economy. Losing the triple A rating, the internal devaluation facing Finland. Finland, which was previously so prosperous, is applying policies that lead to recession; trade unions and the government agree on tough measures, Ireland and Finland are the two extremes in the Eurozone. Finland is the sick man of the EU. Will Finland be the next Greece?” – **GREECE**

”In discussions on refugee policies, the attitude is between factual and slightly negative; the focus is on returning refugees and the desire to close the borders.” – **BELGIUM**

”In July, the online paper B92 wrote about the meeting between Niinistö and Putin that dealt with Finland’s possible NATO membership, the EU’s sanctions and Niinistö’s suggestion that transponders be used on flights across the Baltic Sea. / Neutral.” – **SERBIA**

Japan

”The Embassy of Finland in Japan is doing much promotion through social media, with our twitter account having more than 129,000 followers. It is interesting to see that sometimes when we send tweets and post stories on our Facebook page or website [mainly online] media outlets use them as a basis for their own stories.” – **JAPAN**

”The most popular topic seemed to be childcare-related matters, including child welfare clinics, maternity package, infant liquid milk formula, gender equality and work-life balance. The Embassy has been extremely active in promoting this area, by giving lectures and interviews, helping with maternity package exhibitions and even holding a Japanese only press tour last June. It is said that TV is the last media to report on recent trends/fads, and taking this into account, having at least three local TV companies travelling to Finland to report on childcare is a solid sign that the image of Finland as a country that looks after its children is well established in Japan.” For example, the ‘Nikkei Telecon’ service had 126 articles that included both the words ‘Finland’ and ‘child welfare clinic’ [the term ‘child welfare clinic’ alone finds 226 articles]. The Embassy also donated Finnish infant milk formula to areas affected by the Kumamoto earthquake last spring, which received much attention. The Japanese government announced last October that research to allow liquid-type formula into the domestic market will be launched, which resulted in another round of reports about the Finnish donation [on the ‘Nikkei Telecon’ service, there were around 220 articles with just the keyword ‘liquid milk’ and more than 80 articles featuring the word ‘Finland’].” – **JAPAN**

”Not so much on Finland’s economy itself, but there were articles on Slush, which is recognized as a positive event in Japan. Slush Asia was held for the second time last year, and there were more than 30 articles about the event.” – **JAPAN**

”Design and lifestyle in general were popular topics and had great coverage. The Marimekko film Armi Elää! was shown last year, and the Marimekko Exhibition from the Design Museum in Helsinki toured Japan. In newspapers, Marimekko produced 195 hits. There was also the Lifestyle Finland event. It was arranged by Finpro and showcased Finnish fashion and interior design companies in May and November and was covered in the media more than 80 times.” – **JAPAN**

China

”From China, Finland looks like a small and faraway country with a reputation of being pleasant if a little bland.” – CHINA

”The launch of the Alibaba-owned Alitrip’s new brand in Rovaniemi and the accompanying social media and online campaign Aurora, which introduced Finland and Lapland as tourist destinations to millions of Chinese people. Finland’s visibility was immediately boosted by this, and soon Baidu and other major players followed and launched their own tourism and service products in the Nordic countries.” – CHINA

”The problem seems to be the fact that many Finnish export products are not known to be Finnish, or they are industrial investment products with limited visibility and awareness that are mostly restricted to people working in the industry. Winter sports are an exception: interest in these sports is clearly increasing, and this is becoming obvious by the scale on which they are covered in media. Holidays in Finland have also turned into a small-scale trend, especially on social media.” – CHINA

”The interest in the PISA results seems to have declined, particularly because China’s ranking fell significantly from the previous study, when only Shanghai was represented. Finland’s education system has a good and unique reputation in China, you could say a brand, but as this is no longer based on the PISA results, the publication of the new results did not really affect people’s awareness of Finland nor the number of contacts to the embassy. In contrast, there have been numerous misunderstandings concerning the changes in the Finnish curriculum, such as phenomenon-based learning, and many people think that there are no subjects as such in Finnish schools. We have tried to correct this misunderstanding by posting articles on WeChat.” – CHINA

”The Moi Helsinki! events organised in May were very visible in the general media and social media as well as in industry-focused media in the Beijing area.” – CHINA

Asia, Oceania, excluding China

”You see more of the Moomins and Marimekko in the media and on the streets in Thailand. People here think that the Moomins come from Japan, and they are not entirely sure where Marimekko is from. The Northern Lights could be used to attract tourists to Finland as they now travel to Iceland to see them.” – **THAILAND**

”THE EDUCATION SYSTEM – The Australian education system has suffered a slide in rankings, which has led to a plethora of articles and analyses of the Australian education system, current deficits and options for improvement. Finland’s education system [‘the best education system in the world’] has consequently been referenced as a model to follow. There have been articles solely about the Finnish education system; the visit from leading educator Pasi Sahlberg was reflected in Australian media with an interview on the ABC current affairs programme Lateline, and he was quoted in various articles from highly reputable news sources. The emphasis has been on the value Finland places on its highly educated teachers, the relaxed methods of teaching and the late school starting age. These topics have been in discussion primarily because of Australia’s current situation: low high school results required for a teaching degree, teachers not being required to have higher education, and Tasmania proposing a starting age of 3.5 years of age.” – **AUSTRALIA**

”Big demonstration in Finland for and against immigration ‘Finland is about to introduce anti-immigration law’ – **SOUTH KOREA**

”Sauna culture covered in Nepali media.” – **NEPAL**

North Africa and the Middle East

”The most talked about Finland-related topic in Afghanistan was the tighter restrictions on Afghan asylum seekers and the joint declaration signed by Finland and Afghanistan concerning the return of Afghan asylum seekers. ”Finland was also given media coverage as a country that promotes gender equality and women's standing in society.” – **AFGHANISTAN**

”Finland’s reputation continues to be very good but the country’s visibility has significantly increased. Over the past few years, Finland has become known for Nokia as well as its top-quality education, clean environment and democratic society.” – **IRAN**

”Finland and Algeria held the first energy forum, and this was widely covered on television and in print media. There were news stories and interviews. Thanks to the event, the ambassador was asked to do an in-depth interview about Finland on television.” – **ALGERIA**

”The universal basic income pilot received substantial attention in its different phases [when it was discussed and when the pilot was launched]. The coverage was positive and created the effect of ‘out of the box’ thinking in Finland.” – **ISRAEL**

”The daily Arabic newspaper Assabah published an interview of Ambassador Jääskeläinen; it dealt with Finland’s high ranking on transparency, equality and anti-terrorism efforts as well as a Finnish delegation’s participation in an investment conference held in Tunis. A more critical question was also raised concerning Finland’s export of weapons to conflict areas in the Middle East. The Assabah newspaper is read by the general public.” – **TUNISIA**

”Finland is perceived to be friendly, user-friendly, trustworthy and easy to manage: people speak English well, places are well signposted, clean, and people are open-minded and welcome tourists. Very accommodating. Beautiful, especially the environment, the space and the silence.” – **ISRAEL**

”The Israeli design journalist and blogger Sigal Namir participated in the Helsinki Design Week. She wrote three excellent articles on the Finnish design climate, its sources and resources. She pointed out how Finnish design successfully combines a fine heritage, technological innovation and sustainability and thus supports a new generation of talented designers.” – **ISRAEL**

Sub-Saharan Africa

”Thanks to the Embassy’s proactive communications strategy, Finland has been very visible in the Nigerian media. The ambassador has highlighted the good relations between Finland and Nigeria in many interviews, emphasising trade opportunities and Finland’s strengths. One of the largest papers in the country published extensive articles about the Finnish education and library systems . The trade mission led by Under-Secretary of State Matti Anttonen at the beginning of the year received much attention in the media.” – **NIGERIA**

”A corruption case has come up in the Zambia National Farmers' Union supported by Finland. It was discovered that development aid provided by Finland and Sweden had been misused. The media coverage of the case was extensive. The misuse of development aid was condemned in almost all news and comments on the subject. The serious and critical attitude towards corruption by Finland (and Sweden) was thanked.” – **ZAMBIA**

”The Mission received positive attention in the media in April at an elephant tusk burning event. The Star newspaper reported on the Embassy handing over two old elephant tusks at its possession to the Kenyan authorities to be destroyed. The event was also covered extensively in social media where Finland was praised as a strong supporter of nature conservation. – **KENYA**

”Two energy-related pieces on Finland were published by the Daily Nation and Business Daily newspapers in October. The stories were very positive and applauded Finnish expertise in the energy and cleantech industries.” – **KENYA**

North America

”In Canada, several newspapers have written articles about the universal basic income pilot throughout the year. Jean-Yves Duclos, the Crown’s Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, for example, said that basic income is a concept worth investigating further. The Governments of Quebec and Ontario have also considered basic income as a possibility. The Government of Ontario is currently planning its own basic income pilot. Basic income has been featured in both critical and praising articles and everything in between. In this context, Finland’s basic income report and pilot have been mentioned as one of the examples in nearly every article. Finland’s basic income pilot has also been featured in news articles where it has not been linked to the politics of Canada. The general attitude towards Finland’s basic income pilot has been neutral or even cautiously positive.” – **CANADA**

”The U.S.-Nordic Leaders’ Summit gained an extraordinary amount of positive media attention in the United States. Publications ran articles about the official dinner organised in honour of Nordic Heads of State, but they also analysed the actual contents of the summit. The media paid particular attention to President Obama’s positive and even admiring attitude to the Nordic countries. The Washington Post, for example, published an Associated Press article titled ‘Obama to World: Be more like the Nordics’. The summit was covered by, among others, the Washington Post, the New York Times, NBC News, ABC News, USA Today and the Hill, as well as news agencies. In addition, Huffington Post published joint essays on the importance of the summit written by both the Foreign Ministers and Ambassadors of the Nordic countries prior to the summit.” – **UNITED STATES**

”The education system continues to be Finland’s trump card in the United States. Short and long articles are constantly written about the system, and the general tone of the articles is very positive. Many articles pose the question of what the United States could learn from Finland. Finland’s two most visible ‘education ambassadors’ in the United States were American teacher Timothy Walker, who lives in Finland, and Fulbright Scholar William Doyle. Walker wrote a series of articles for the Atlantic in which he describes how the Finnish education system differs from the American one. For example: the Washington Post, the LA Times and USA Today released William Doyle’s pieces in which he praises Finland’s education system. This year, Americans were also inspired by long recesses in Finnish schools [mentioned in, e.g., the Washington Post, USA Today, NBC News], and learned that Finns use educational research and statistical information to their advantage better than Americans do. In addition, the Washington Post published a very positive article on a meeting between Finnish and American school children in which the children learned that both sides have something of which the other is jealous.” – **UNITED STATES**

South America

”Kalevi Ekman’s education award and visit to Mexico. Ekman received the World Cultural Council’s World Award of Education named after the Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos (1882-1959). Ekman was invited to give a speech at an event covering educational topics, and during his visit he showcased his Design Factory concept in several different locations. The media’s interest in an event increases significantly if the event has a clear connection to Mexico. In this case, a prestigious education award was named after a Mexican. In addition, everything related to Finland’s education system is considered especially interesting in Mexico.” – **MEXICO**

”Compared with last year, Finland enjoyed greater visibility in particular on television.” – **CHILE**

”President Halonen gave a speech on the status of women and gender equality at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) headquartered in Santiago de Chile. The visit also included a trip to the European Southern Observatory (ESO), which Finland joined during Halonen’s first term. The programme also included a tour of the ESO-operated Paranal Observatory, which is considered one of the world’s most important astronomic observatories. President Halonen’s visit piqued the media interest in particular due to her strong contribution to women’s rights and her knowledge of the topic. Journalists were also interested in the close relationship between Halonen and Chile’s President Michelle Bachelet and the friendship they formed several years ago. President Halonen was interviewed by the public service broadcaster of Chile [TVN] and the prestigious business magazine Capital. A short article on Halonen’s visit was also published in advance in Qué Pasa, a weekly quality publication with large circulation.” – **CHILE**

”An article by the New York University’s Professor Nouriel Roubini published in El Comercio [the country’s main newspaper] on 6 January discusses ‘the distance between what Europe needs and what Europeans want...’, and mentions the growing presence of ‘Aggressively xenophobic and anti-Muslim political parties (...) in the core of Europe, including the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden’.” – **PERU**



ULKOASIAINMINISTERIÖ
UTRIKESMINISTERIET

2017

Unit for Public Diplomacy, e-mail: VIE-50@formin.fi