



EUROBAROMETER 60.1

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2003

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SWEDEN

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EUROBAROMETER 60.1 NATIONAL REPORT SWEDEN

Executive Summary

Background

Eurobarometer 60.1 is a Europe-wide opinion poll, based on interviews with 16,000 persons in the 15 European Union countries. This national report for Sweden is based on the Swedish part of the poll, comparing the results from Sweden with those of all EU countries (EU15).

In Sweden, 1,000 persons were interviewed, between 6 October and 3 November 2003. Some of the major political news events of the Autumn happened shortly before the interviews started: the Swedish referendum on the euro, the murder of Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs Anna Lindh, and the start of the intergovernmental conference on the Draft Constitution for the European Union.

National Politics and National Identity

When the Swedes highlight the most important issues currently facing Sweden, the list is topped by the health care system, followed by the economic situation. Since Spring 2003, concerns about crime have risen from fourth to third place, while unemployment, the most important issue in the European poll, was pushed down to fourth place by the Swedes.

The institutions the Swedes tend to trust the most are the radio, the United Nations and the police. The Swedes trust their national parliament more than the average EU citizen trusts theirs. Compared to other countries, the Swedes place less trust in the army, charitable or voluntary organisations, the press, the EU and religious institutions.

The Swedes have a high opinion of the way democracy works in Sweden. Three out of four Swedes are fairly or very satisfied with their democratic system, while only half of the EU citizens say the same about their countries. Swedes show below-average satisfaction with the way democracy works in the European Union.

Half of the Swedes interviewed see themselves as Swedes only, and not as Europeans. Their national identity is somewhat stronger than the EU average. The trend from 1999 is that more people see themselves as both Swedes and Europeans. In 2003, the numbers who see themselves as only Swedish has fallen from 55 to 48 percent.

The Swedes are more proud of their national identity than of being Europeans. But they show more pride in being European than does the average EU citizen. Furthermore, Sweden has an above-average number who say they are attached to Europe.

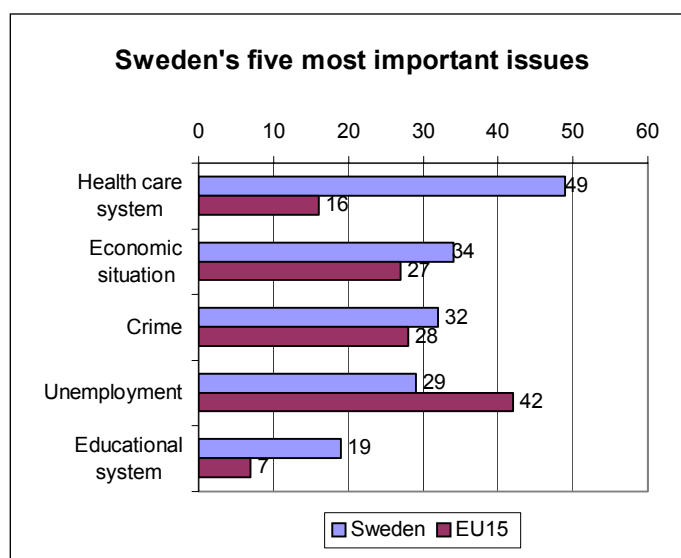


Figure 1. What do you think are the most important issues facing our country at the moment? (Numbers are percentage of those answering the question.)

Knowledge about the European Union

The interviewees were asked to assess their knowledge about the EU, its institutions and policies. In Sweden, this grade has risen since Spring 2003: Sweden is now ranked second in the list. The period running up to the referendum on the euro and European Monetary Union, in September 2003, has been a time of education for the Swedes.

The Swedes show a great interest in information about the European Union. Sweden has the lowest number of people who say they never look for such information, or are not interested. In Sweden, all sources of EU information are used more than the EU average. The most popular sources in Sweden, as in other EU countries, are radio, the press and television. And Swedes say they prefer to receive their information from traditional news media.

Swedish media receive a higher rating than those of media in other countries. Over half of the Swedes interviewed think that the media give the right amount of coverage of the EU, and almost the same number say that the media present the EU objectively. Of those who are not satisfied, more think that the media talk too little rather than too much about the EU, and that the EU is presented too positively rather than too negatively.

In Sweden, the best-known EU institution is the European Parliament, which nine out of ten Swedes have heard of. In terms of Swedish citizens' awareness, the European Parliament is followed by the Court of Justice, the Council of Ministers, the European Central Bank and the European Commission. These five institutions are slightly better known in Sweden than in other countries. The best known institutions are also the ones most people think play an important role in the life of the European Union, and that a higher number tend to trust.

Since Spring 2003, knowledge of the European Central Bank has increased in Sweden, most likely because of the debate before the euro referendum.

Swedish Opinions on the European Union

Compared to the European Union average, the Swedes are generally less satisfied with their country's EU membership, and have a more negative image of the EU.

Four out of ten Swedes think that their country's membership is a good thing, compared to five out of ten Europeans overall. Three out of ten Swedes think that the country has benefited from membership, and half that the country has not benefited.

Support for EU membership has decreased in the member states since Spring 2003. This trend is weaker in Sweden than in the rest of EU.

A socio-demographic analysis of the Swedes' answers shows that men support EU membership more than women, and those under 40 more than those over 40.

Students and managers are the most supportive, while workers and the unemployed are the least supportive. People who place themselves to the right on a political scale are more satisfied with membership, as are those who live in large towns. The Norrland region, the most northern and least-populated part of the country, is traditionally Eurosceptic, and proved

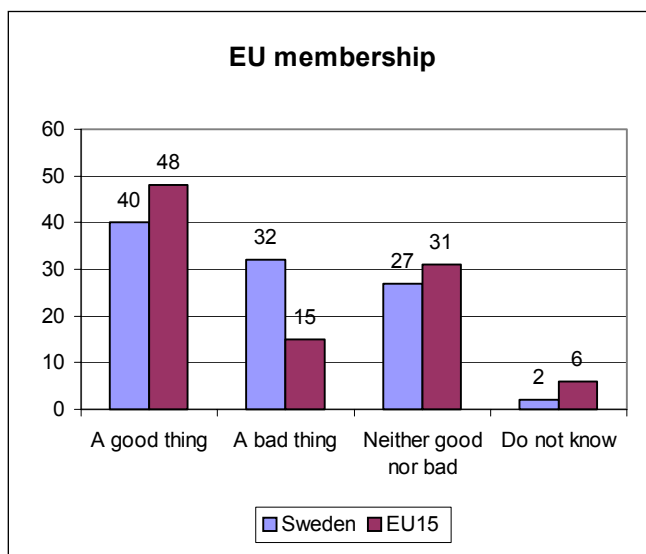


Figure 2. Generally speaking, do you think that our country's membership of the European Community is...?

it once more in this poll: one out of four in Norrland thinks that EU membership is a good thing, compared to half of those living in Stockholm.

A comparison between support for EU membership and opinions on two other current issues show that, of those who are for the euro, eight out of ten believe that EU membership is a good thing for Sweden, as do six out of ten of those who support the enlargement of the EU.

The Swedes have a more negative image of the EU than the EU average. Three out of ten have a fairly or very positive image of the EU, compared to four out of ten in the 15 member states overall.

Freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union, is what the EU means personally to six out of ten Swedes. To a higher degree than the EU average, the Swedes associate the EU with wasting money, bureaucracy, inadequate controls at external borders and more crime – but they also associate it with peace and a stronger say in the world.

Every third Swede says that EU gives them a feeling of mistrust, a considerably larger number than the EU average. The same number have a feeling of hope, but this is lower than the EU average.

Building the European Union

The Swedes have almost the same view as other Europeans of the current speed of building Europe. But when asked what speed they would like, a majority of the EU citizens want to increase the speed, while the Swedes want to see a steadier speed.

In Sweden, one in three interviewees is in favour of the development towards a European political union, and half are against. In EU countries overall, half are in favour, and one in four against.

The actions Swedes most want to see, as a priority in the European Union, are the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking, maintaining peace and security in Europe, protecting the environment and fighting terrorism. Over nine out of ten want these issues to be a priority, and the Swedes' opinions are fairly close to the EU average.

The Swedes are less committed than EU citizens in general to further developing the Common Security and Foreign Policy and the European Security and Defence Policy.

Swedes give lower support than the EU15 to a rapid military reaction force for deployment to trouble spots, to a foreign minister for the EU, and to the suggestion that the EU should have its own seat in the United Nations Security Council. On the other hand, the Swedes strongly support the EU working for human rights, both in Europe and around the

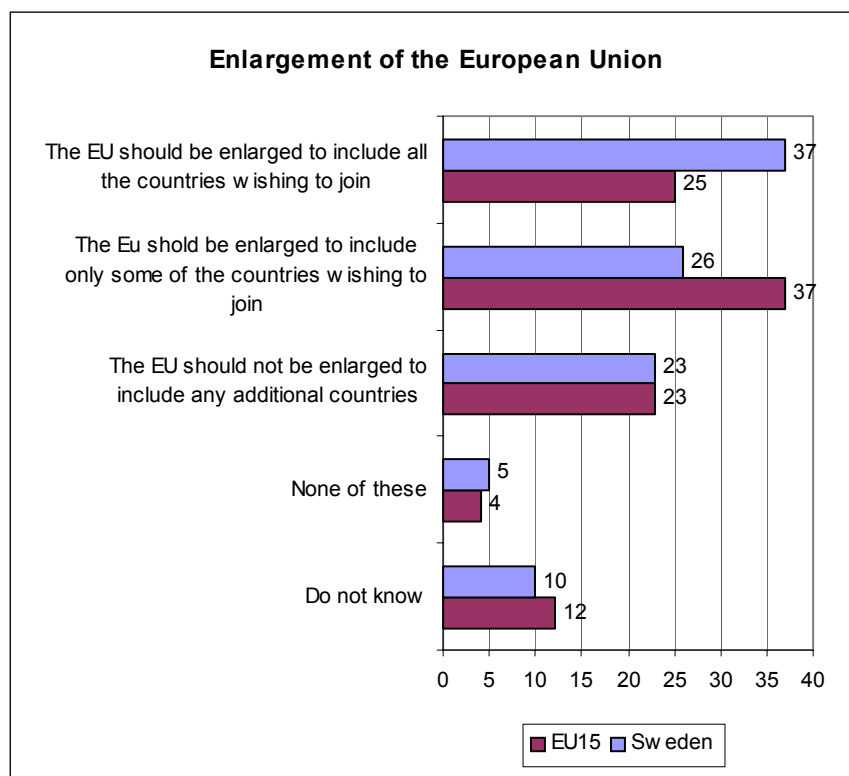


Figure 3. Which of these three options do you prefer for the immediate future of the European Union?

world, and the foreign policy of the European Union being independent of the United States' foreign policy.

Since the Spring 2003 poll, support in Sweden has decreased for a common defence and security policy among European Union member states.

In most issues, where decisions can be made by national governments or jointly within the European Union, the Swedes are less supportive of a common policy than the EU average. Exceptions are the fight against terrorism and the fight against organised crime. The Swedes are most in favour of the Swedish government making decisions in issues concerning health and social welfare, as well as police and justice.

Swedes show above-average support for the European Commission being composed of Commissioners coming from each of the member states, the resignation of the President of the European Commission and the Commissioners if they do not have the support of the European Parliament, and the enlargement of the European Union.

The Swedes are more supportive of the EU's enlargement than the EU15 average. And Sweden is one of the countries that voices the strongest support for the option that the EU should be enlarged to include all countries wishing to join. A quarter of both Swedes and other EU-members say the EU should not be enlarged to include any additional countries. Since Autumn 2002, support has increased in Sweden both for the option that all countries wishing to join should be welcomed, and for the option that the EU should not be enlarged. A decreasing number support the option where the EU is enlarged to include only some of the countries wishing to join.

Reforming the European Union

In June 2003, the Convention on the Future of Europe presented its Draft Constitution for the European Union. In Eurobarometer 60.1, six out of ten Swedes think that the EU should have a constitution. Opinions in Sweden are close to the EU average, but differ from its Nordic neighbours, Denmark and Finland, where few are in favour of a constitution.

Support for the Constitution has decreased in Sweden since Autumn 2002, and is now two percentage points lower than in May 2001, before the Convention started its work.

When discussing who should elect the President of the European Commission, three out of ten Swedes support the present system, where the European Parliament, as well as the Heads of State and Government choose the President. One in four wants the President to be elected directly by EU citizens, which is the most popular option in the 15 EU states overall.

Half of EU citizens, including the Swedes, want to extend the term of the Presidency of the Council. One in three Swedes wants to retain the present six-month period. This is a larger number than the EU average.

Another current issue is the member states' right of veto. Close to half of the Swedes want to retain the right of veto. Slightly less than a quarter want to limit the veto to a few essential areas, which is what the Convention proposes. Only 15 percent want to give up the right of veto. The Swedes remain fairly close to the EU average on this question.

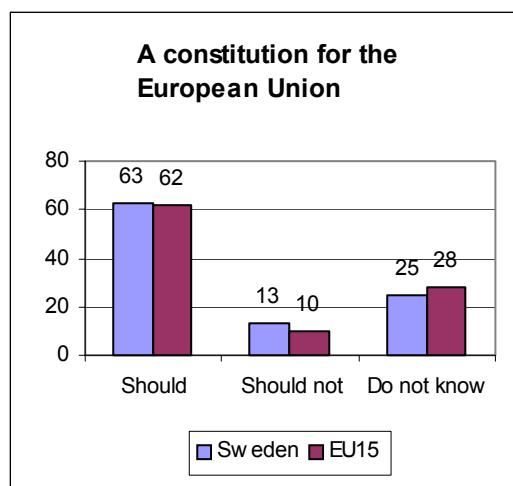


Figure 4. Do you think the European Union should or should not have a constitution?