

EUROBAROMETER 63.4

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2005

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SWEDEN

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1 National politics and national identity

Swedes are increasingly concerned about **unemployment**. Almost six out of ten of them see unemployment as one of the most important issues facing the country at the moment. This number has increased by 13 percentage points since autumn 2004 (Eurobarometer 62). Within the EU25, 50 percent see unemployment as the most important issue.

Sweden still shows a large number who are concerned about the **health care system** (40 percent). Only the Irish rank this issue more highly than the Swedes.

The **economic situation** is the second most important issue in the EU25, but the third in Sweden. Fighting **crime** is becoming a less prioritised issue in Sweden. Since autumn 2004, the group pointing out crime as one of the most important issues decreased by 11 points to 24 percent, the same level as in the EU25.

While 16 percent of the EU25 are concerned about inflation in their countries, only one percent of the Swedes share this view.

Three out of ten Swedes (32 percent) **trust the EU**. This is less than in EU25 (44 percent). Since the Eurobarometer 62, the number of EU citizens who trust the Union has decreased more than the Swedish average.

Swedes show more trust in their **national legal system** (64 percent) and the parliament (46 percent) compared to the EU average. Their trust in the **government** (33 percent) is close to that of the other EU countries. Since autumn 2004 the trust in the Swedish government decreased with 8 percent, and trust in the **parliament** decreased with 10 percent.

Sweden is the country where the largest group trust the **United Nations**, 74 percent compared to 52 percent in EU25.

A majority of the Swedes (71 percent) are satisfied with the way **democracy** works in Sweden. This means that national democracy gets a higher rating than the EU average in Sweden.

Swedes are comparatively less satisfied with democracy in the EU. In Sweden, 42 percent are satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU, compared to 49 percent in the EU25 overall.

While Swedish interviewees often are less enthusiastic about the European Union than the EU average, they are quite attached to Europe. In Sweden, 79 percent feel very or fairly **attached to Europe**, compared to 66 percent in the EU25. However, the Swedes are most attached to their country, to which 93 percent feel attached (91 percent in EU25).

2 Knowledge about the European Union

The **Internet** is increasing in importance as a source of information about the European Union for the Swedes. Four out of ten Swedes (41 percent) now look for information about the EU on the web. The EU average is 22 percent. In the autumn of 2003, three out of ten Swedes used the Internet to find information about the EU.

Traditional news media such as **TV, newspapers** and the **radio** are still the major sources of EU information. In Sweden, 76 percent get EU information from TV (EU25 70 percent).

The Swedes use all sources of information more frequently than the EU average.

Swedes read **daily news papers** more often compared to the EU25 average. In Sweden, 68 percent use newspapers as a source of EU information (EU25 43 percent), and 70 percent follow the news in the daily papers every day (EU25 36 percent). In the EU25, TV is a much more popular source for news than newspapers. In Sweden, citizens watch the daily news on TV about the same amount as people do in other EU countries, but, in addition, they read as much newspapers as often as they watch TV.

Swedes' satisfaction with the amount of EU coverage in the media is above average. Half of the population (55 percent) thinks that TV talks about the **right amount about the EU**. Radio listeners are a little less satisfied (42 percent, and newspaper readers a little more (59 percent). Of those who are not satisfied, more people would like to hear more about the EU, rather than less.

Roughly half the interviewees feel that Swedish media are **objective** when reporting on the EU. TV gets the highest rating; 54 percent say TV is objective. Those who are not satisfied are slightly more inclined to say the media are too positive rather than too negative.

Almost all Swedes have heard about the **European Parliament** (97 percent). The **Court of Justice** of the European Communities is the second most well known EU institution in Sweden, 93 percent have heard about it. All institutions are better known in Sweden, except the **Council**, about which only 54 percent have heard (EU25 65 percent).

Swedes also perceive the European institutions as being more important than does the average EU citizen. The exception is, again, the Council, which only 45 percent of the Swedes say plays an important role in the EU (EU25 61 percent).

The Court of Justice and the European Parliament share the top of the list of the most trusted institutions in the EU25, with 52 percent who say they trust the institutions. In Sweden however, the Court of Justice is perceived as trustworthy by 71 percent of the citizens, while only 51 percent trust the European Parliament. In Sweden, the European Central Bank is the second most trusted institution (59 percent).

The participants in the Eurobarometer survey were asked to assess their knowledge about the European Union on a scale from 1 to 10. The EU average is 4,4 and the Swedish a little higher, 4,9 percent, the same level as in Germany and Austria.

In a short test on EU knowledge, Sweden had the same amount of correct answers (41 percent) as the EU average. Sweden has previously been slightly above average in similar questions.

3 Swedish Opinions on the European Union

Fewer than half of the Swedes, 44 percent, find their country's membership of the European Union **a good thing**. In the EU25, 54 percent agree. In 2004, the Swedes moved in the direction towards a more positive view on EU membership, with 48 percent seeing membership as a good thing. This trend has now reversed.

At the same time, 28 percent of Swedes see membership as a bad thing, the second highest number after the UK. In the EU25 overall, the number is 15 percent.

Swedes are also less pleased with the **benefits** of EU membership, compared with the EU average. Only a third of them (36 percent) say their country has benefited from membership. This is the lowest figure in all EU countries, where the average is 55 percent.

Fifty percent of the Swedes say their country has not benefited from being a member of the European Union, something only 33 percent of EU citizens overall agree with.

The Swedes say the most important issue facing Sweden at the moment is unemployment. Twenty three percent of the Swedes feel that the EU plays a positive role for this issue in Sweden, one point less than the EU average. The second most important issue is the healthcare system, where 15 percent say the EU plays a positive role (EU25 22 percent).

While half of EU citizens (49 percent) would like the EU to play a more important role in their lives in five years' time, only about a third of the Swedes agree (36 percent). In Sweden, 26 percent would like the EU to play a less important role (EU25 14 percent) and 33 percent would like the same level of involvement as now.

When asked about **their image of the European Union**, the Swedes split three ways. An almost equal number have a positive, a negative or a neutral image. Again, the Swedish results show a higher degree of scepticism, as almost half of EU25 respondents have a positive image of the EU, and 19 percent a negative image. The neutral group is the same size in the EU25 as in Sweden.

The development towards a European political union is supported by 42 percent in Sweden, below the EU average of 58 percent. The number of Swedes who are against such development is 47 percent (EU25 28 percent).

The thing most people in Sweden fear about European integration is that **jobs will move** to other member countries which have lower production costs. This worries eight out of ten Swedes, 8 points above the EU average. Almost three out of four Swedes are worried about an increase in **drug trafficking** and international organised crime. This is also a more important concern in Sweden than in the rest of Europe.

Compared to the EU average, Swedes are less worried that European integration will lead to a **loss of cultural identity** or **language**, an **economic crisis** or a **loss of social benefits**.

Compared with the rest of the EU, the Swedes are less inclined to see themselves as more secure as a result of their country's EU membership. There are also fewer who say EU membership contributes to economic or political stability. Furthermore, the Swedes are more pessimistic when asked if they feel their country's interests are taken well into account into the EU, or if their country will become more influential in the future

The image of how most of the European Union's **budget** is spent is a little different in Sweden than elsewhere in the EU. In Sweden, a large group, 35 percent, says that administration and personnel is the largest expense, and an equally large number say agriculture is the biggest item in the budget. In the EU25, 31 percent say EU spends most of the budget on administration, while 17 percent, less than in Sweden, point to agriculture.

Compared with the EU average, Swedes are less supportive of an increase in the Union's budget.

4 Economic Growth, Work and the EU's Ability to Deliver

The Swedes are very satisfied with their **quality of life**. Ninety five percent say their quality of life is very or rather good. Only Luxembourg has a higher number. The Swedes are also more satisfied with their economic situation, but slightly less satisfied than the EU average with the situation for the European economy and for employment in their country.

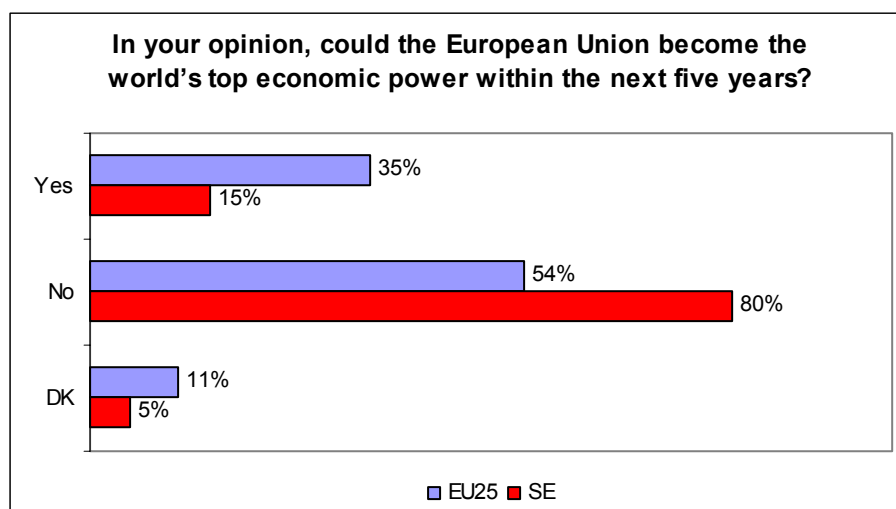
When citizens are asked to rate the situation in their country with that of the average in the EU countries, Sweden receives a considerably higher rating than do other EU countries. For instance, 91 percent of Swedes say the situation for the environment is better in their country, compared to 49 percent in the EU25 overall. And while 65 percent compare Sweden's employment situation favourably, only 28 percent of the EU25 share this view with respect to their countries.

The Swedes also have a more optimistic view on the future compared to the EU25 average. One example is that 66 percent of the Swedes think their quality of life will improve in five years, compared to 52 percent in the EU25.

Swedes have a comparatively positive view on the quality of life in Europe compared to that of the United States, Japan, China and India. Fewer than half of the EU25 say the quality of life is higher than in the US, while three out of four Swedes prefer Europe.

The Swedes also have a more favourable view on the progress in many areas of the European Union compared to that of the United States. More Swedes than other EU citizens say the EU is ahead of the US in for example protecting the environment or fighting social disparities.

While many Swedes rate the EU favourably compared to the United States and other large nations, they are less optimistic on the chance that the EU will become the **world's top economic power** within the next five years. Only 15 percent of the Swedes say this will certainly or probably happen, compared to 35 percent of citizens in the EU25 as a whole.



EU citizens have a more positive view on the role of the EU on global issues, compared to the role of the US. Sweden follows the same pattern, but compared to the EU25 the role of the EU25 is perceived slightly less positively.

5 The Future of the European Union

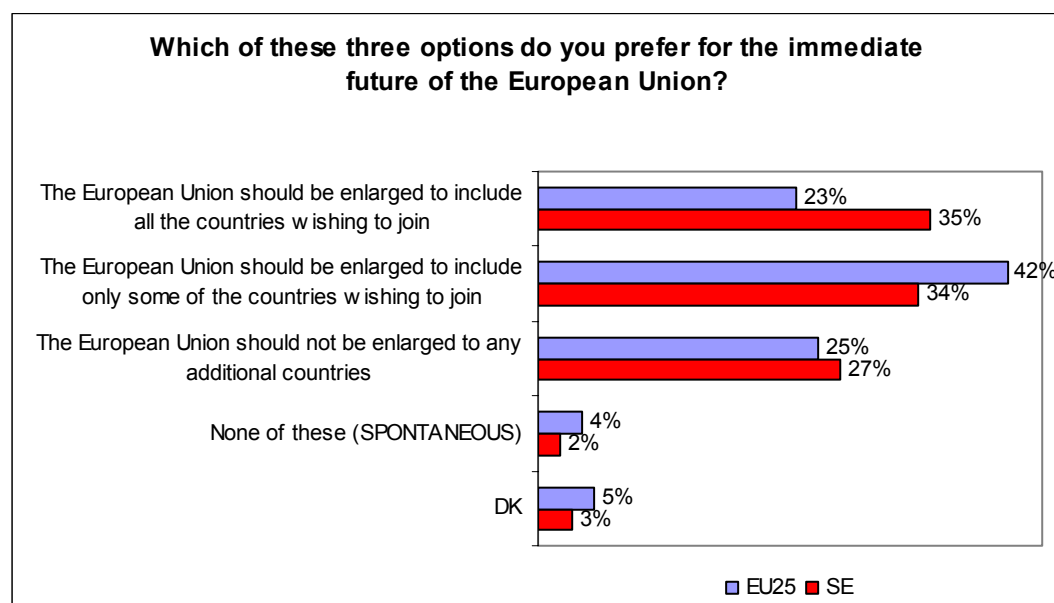
The number of Swedes who have heard about **the European Constitution** has increased, although most people still know very little about its contents. Only 14 percent in Sweden have not heard about the Constitution. In the Eurobarometer 62, autumn 2004, this number reached 40 percent.

The Swedes are less in favour of the Constitution than the EU average. While 48 percent of the EU25 poll is totally or rather in favour, 38 percent of the Swedes share this opinion. Since autumn 2004, the group "rather in favour" increased by 12 percentage points in Sweden, while the group "totally in favour" did not change.

For the Swedes in favour of the Constitution, the most common reason for this opinion is that it is essential in order to pursue European integration, an argument with which 20 percent agree. This is fewer than in the EU25, where 36 percent say this is an important reason for them.

The most common reason for those opposed to the Constitution is the loss of national sovereignty. Both those in favour and those opposed are concerned about democracy. While 17 percent of the Swedes are in favour because they feel the Constitution will strengthen democracy, 24 percent of those who are not in favour cite as their reason that the Constitution is not democratic enough.

A year after the largest **enlargement** wave of the European Union to date, 35 percent of the Swedes are in favour of enlarging the union to include all countries that would like to join. This is above the EU average of 23 percent. In Sweden, the group who would like to include only some of the countries is 34 percent (EU25 42 percent). Lastly, 27 percent are against further enlargement, two percentage points above the EU average.



The country most Swedes would like to see join the EU is neighbouring Norway, followed by Iceland and Switzerland. Nine out of ten Swedes are in favour of these countries joining the EU. Turkey is the least welcome, 50 percent would like Turkey to join, and Albania and Ukraine join Turkey at the bottom of the list. Sweden ranks the countries in almost the same order as the other European countries, but consistently shows a higher number in favour of the membership of each country covered in the question.

Turkey is one of the countries expected to open membership negotiations with the EU this year. Over nine out of ten Swedes see systematic respect for human rights as a crucial point if Turkey is to join the EU. This aspect is more important in Sweden than in the EU25 overall. However, Swedes are more inclined to see Turkey as partially belonging to Europe because of its history and geography. There is also an above average number of Swedes who see advantages in Turkish accession, as regards to strengthened security in the region, and mutual comprehension between

European and Muslim values. And while 54 percent of the EU citizens say the cultural differences are too large for Turkey to be considered, only 44 percent of the Swedes agree with this.

The actions that most Swedes would like the **EU to follow in priority** are fighting poverty and social exclusion, fighting unemployment, and fighting organised crime and drug trafficking. Compared to the EU average, Swedes are more in favour of the EU prioritising fighting crime and protecting the environment.

When it comes to the further development of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and a European Security and Defence Policy, Swedes are more hesitant than the EU average. The idea of an **EU foreign minister** is supported by 44 percent in Sweden, the second lowest number after Denmark. Sweden is also less in favour of the EU having its own seat on the UN Security Council. Swedes agree with the EU25 on a rapid reaction force for the EU, which 68 percent of both the Swedes and the EU25 support.