

EUROBAROMETER 65

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2006

NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
SWEDEN

This survey was requested and coordinated by Directorate-General Communication.

This report was produced for the European Commission's Representation in Sweden.

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1. The Climate of Opinion

The Swedes are very satisfied with their **quality of life**. Ninety-four percent say their quality of life is very or rather good, one of highest figures in the EU. The EU average is eighty-one percent. The Swedes are also more optimistic about the future than the EU average. Forty-nine percent of the Swedes think their **life in general** will be better in the next twelve months. Only citizens in Ireland and Estonia are as optimistic as the Swedes. The Swedes are also more optimistic about the economic prospects of Sweden, the employment situation in Sweden, their job situation and the expectations regarding their own financial situation than the EU average. One-third of the Swedes think the employment situation will be improved in the next twelve months.

Sixty percent of the Swedes think they are better off today than five years ago and fifty-two percent think their situation will improve in the next five years. As a rule, the Swedes are not just more optimistic than citizens in most other Member States, but they have also become (sometimes much) more optimistic since autumn 2005 (Eurobarometer 64).

Question: QA6. In the course of the next five years, do you expect your personal situation to improve, to stay about the same or to get worse?

Answers: Improve

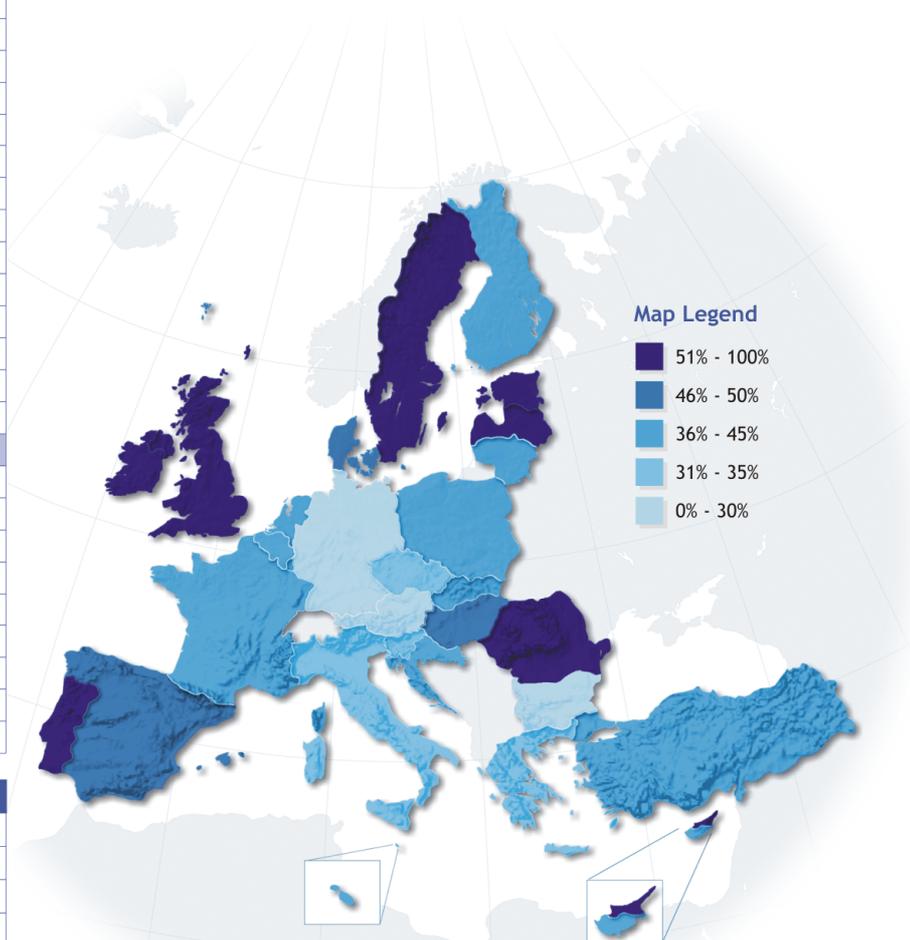
Country Results

| | |
|--|-----|
|  Ireland | 54% |
|  Estonia | 53% |
|  Sweden | 52% |
|  Portugal | 51% |
|  United Kingdom | 51% |
|  Latvia | 51% |
|  Denmark | 49% |
|  Spain | 47% |
|  Hungary | 47% |
|  Malta | 45% |
|  Lithuania | 44% |
|  France | 43% |
|  Finland | 43% |
|  The Netherlands | 41% |
|  Slovakia | 41% |
|  Belgium | 40% |
|  European Union (xx) (25) | 39% |
|  Luxembourg | 39% |
|  Cyprus* | 39% |
|  Poland | 39% |
|  Italy | 35% |
|  Czech Republic | 34% |
|  Slovenia | 34% |
|  Greece | 31% |
|  Austria | 27% |
|  Germany | 25% |

* CY(tcc) = 55%

Other Countries

| | |
|--|-----|
|  Romania | 52% |
|  Croatia | 39% |
|  Turkey | 39% |
|  Bulgaria | 28% |



2. The Swedes, EU and Sweden

While Swedish interviewees are often less enthusiastic about the European Union than the EU average, they are quite attached to Europe. In Sweden, 77 percent feel very or fairly **attached to Europe**, compared to 62 percent in the EU25. Only citizens in Poland and Hungary are more attached to Europe. Thirty-nine percent of the Swedes say they are attached to the European Union. However, the Swedes are most attached to their country, to which 95 percent feel attached.

Unemployment and the health-care system are the most important issues facing Sweden. Fifty-seven percent of the Swedes regard **unemployment** as the most important issue facing their country at the present time. Within EU25, forty-nine percent regard unemployment as the most important issue. Concerns about the **health-care system** have overtaken fighting crime and it is now regarded as the second most important issue facing Sweden. Since autumn 2005, the group citing the health-care system has increased by eight percentage points. One-third (35 percent) of the Swedes are worried about the health-care system, compared to just eighteen percent of the EU25.

The Swedes show most trust in the **United Nations** (76 percent) and **the legal system** (63 percent). A quarter (23 percent) of the Swedes place their trust in **the political parties** and one-third (36 percent) in the **government**, the least trusted institution. Four out of ten (39 percent) Swedes trust **the EU**. Compared to the EU average, Swedes show more trust in the United Nations, the legal system and the parliament and less trust in the EU. Their level of trust in the government and the political parties is close to that seen in other countries. Since autumn 2005, the trust in the EU has increased by nine percentage points and trust in the legal system has increased by twelve percentage points.

The Swedes are not just more optimistic than most other Europeans (above 1) but they are also more **satisfied**. When asked how they judge their situation in several aspects of their life, such as the environment, the Swedish economy, the European economy, the welfare situation in Sweden and their financial situation, they are more satisfied in general than the EU average. More than nine out ten Swedes (93 percent) judge their quality of life as very or fairly good. The European average (EU25) is seventy-seven percent.

3. Swedish Opinions on the European Union

The Court of Justice of the European Communities is the **most trusted** among the European institutions. Two-thirds (68 percent) of the Swedes trust the Court of Justice of the European Communities, which is far above the EU average (52 percent). Only the Danes show a greater trust in the Court of Justice of the European Communities. More Swedes trust the European Parliament (49 percent) and the European Central Bank (57 percent) than the European Commission (44 percent).

The Swedes have moved in the direction towards a more positive view on EU membership. The support has increased by ten percentage points since autumn (EB64) and half of the Swedes (49 percent) now see the membership as **a good thing**, slightly less than the European average (55 percent). At the same time, fewer Swedes find their country's membership a bad thing.

The Swedes are less pleased with the **benefits** of EU membership, compared with the EU average. Forty-three percent of them say their country has benefited from membership. This is one of the lowest figures of all the Member States, where the average is 52 percent. However, the trend is positive. Those who consider that Sweden has benefited from membership have increased by 11 percentage points and those who are of the opposite opinion have decreased by 15 percentage points since autumn.

When asked about their **image of the European Union**, one-third of Swedes either have a positive (39 percent) or a neutral (36 percent) image and a quarter have a negative (23 percent) image. Again, the Swedish results show a higher degree of scepticism, as 50 percent of EU25 respondents have a positive image of the EU, and 16 percent a negative image. However, the positive trend is confirmed once again. The positive group has increased by five percentage points and the negative group has decreased by 15 percentage points since autumn.

The most important aspect of the European Union for the Swedes is the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union. Seventy-one percent of the Swedes consider this important, compared to 50 percent of EU25.

Almost all Swedes have heard about **the European Parliament** (97 percent). Almost as well-known are the Court of Justice of the European Communities, the European Commission and the European Central Bank, which about nine out of ten Swedes have heard of. The Council of the European Union is less well-known in Sweden (48 percent) than in the EU25 (69 percent).

Swedes perceive **the European institutions** as being more important than does the average EU citizen. The exception is the Council of the European Union, which only 45 percent of the Swedes say plays an important role in the EU. There seems to be strong correlation between name recognition and perceived importance. The most well-known institutions are perceived as the most important and the European Parliament (86 percent) tops the list.

When asked if they know how the European Union works, the Swedes are split: 46 percent say yes and 46 say no. The participants in the Eurobarometer survey were also asked to assess their knowledge about the European Union on a scale from 1 to 10. The average is 4.5 and the Swedish is a little higher at 4.7.

In a short test on **EU knowledge**, Sweden had almost exactly the same amount of correct answers (46 percent) as the EU average (45 percent). One-third (36 percent) of the Swedes believe the European Union consists of 15 Member States.

4. Future: apprehensions and expectations

While half of EU citizens (46 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 (37 percent). In Sweden, 21 percent would like the EU to play a less important role and 36 percent would like the same level of involvement as now. A majority (52 percent) of the Swedes believes the European Union will play the same role in their lives in five years' time.

When asked about the impact (positive/negative) of the European Union, the Swedes are **most positive** towards the European Union when it comes to fighting terrorism, protecting the environment, fighting crime and defence and foreign affairs. Two-thirds (66 percent) of the Swedes think that the European Union plays a positive role in **fighting terrorism**. The EU average is 58 percent. Very few Swedes think the EU plays a positive role when it comes to pensions (7 percent) and public transport (7 percent).

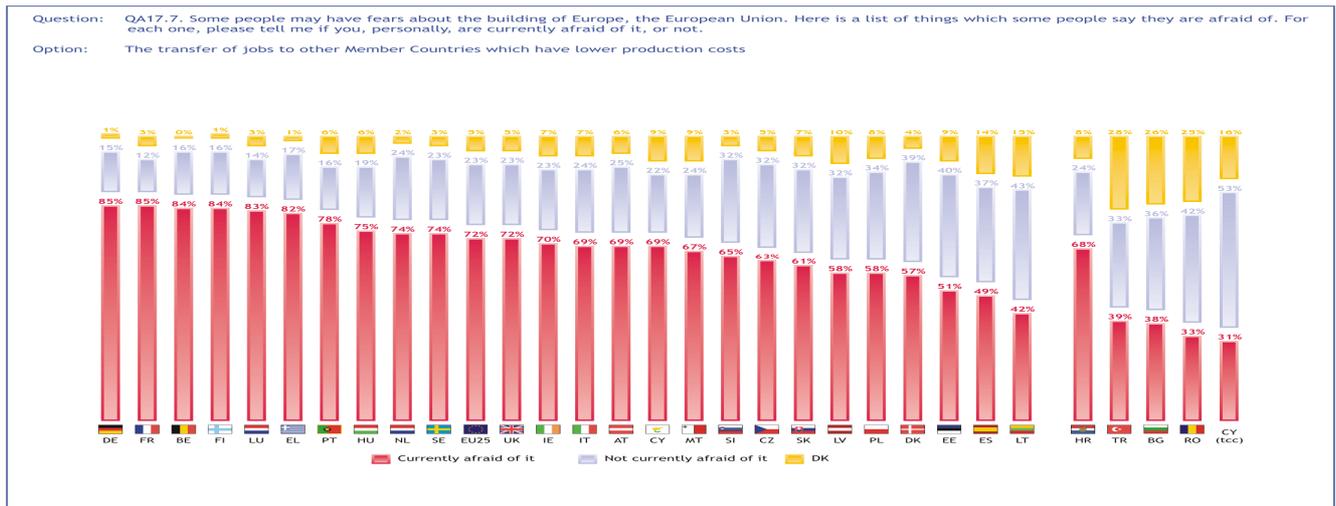
A quarter (27 percent) of the Swedes think the European Union has a positive impact in **fighting unemployment**, the most important issue facing Sweden, according to the Swedes. Seventeen percent think the European Union has a positive influence on the health care system, the second most important issue.

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 three out of four Swedes, which is about the EU average. Seventy percent of Swedes are worried about an increase in **drug trafficking and international organised crime**. This is 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 **national identity and culture**, an economic crisis or a loss of **social benefits**. The Swedes are a little more worried than the average European about the loss of power for smaller Member States, but the numbers have decreased by 11 percentage points since autumn. Generally speaking, the Swedes seem to be more confident and less worried than many other Europeans.

Almost every second Swede (48 percent) thinks **the European Union should give priority to** fighting poverty and social exclusion. Protecting the environment (41 percent) and fighting unemployment (38 percent) rank second and third respectively. Fighting poverty and social exclusion and fighting unemployment are also two top European priorities but compared to the EU25, Swedes give priority to environmental protection to a much larger extent. The EU average is 19 percent

Against the background of high **energy** prices, the Swedes would prefer that the public authorities provide more information on the efficient use of energy and tax incentives which promotes the efficient use of energy. Six out of ten (58 percent) Swedes are not prepared to pay more for energy produced from renewable sources. In general, the Swedes would rather change their consumer habits than paying more.

A small majority (53 percent) of the Swedes think that the national level is the most appropriate level to face future energy challenges. Twenty-four percent prefer the European level. Compared to the EU average, Swedes are more nationalistic and less inclined to believe in cross-border cooperation in the energy area.



. The Citizens and the media

Traditional news media such as **TV** and newspapers are the major sources of information about the European Union for Swedes. In Sweden, 68 percent get **EU information** from TV, slightly less than the EU average (70 percent). In Sweden, 63 percent use newspapers as a source of EU information, a much higher figure than the EU average (EU25 42 percent).

Swedish citizens seem to be a newspaper-loving people. Sweden and Finland are the most **newspaper-reading** countries in Europe. Seventy percent of the Swedes read the news in the daily newspapers every day, compared to one-third (35 percent) of the EU average. Two percent of the Swedes never read the news in the daily newspapers (EU25 18 percent).

Four out of ten Swedes use the **Internet** or the **radio** for gathering EU information. Except for television, the Swedes use all sources of information more frequently than the EU average.

Swedes' satisfaction with the **amount of EU coverage** in the media is close the average. More than half of the population think that TV and press talk about the right amount about the EU. Radio listeners are a little less satisfied (43 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; 57 percent say TV is objective.