

EUROBAROMETER 66

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2006

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SWEDEN

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

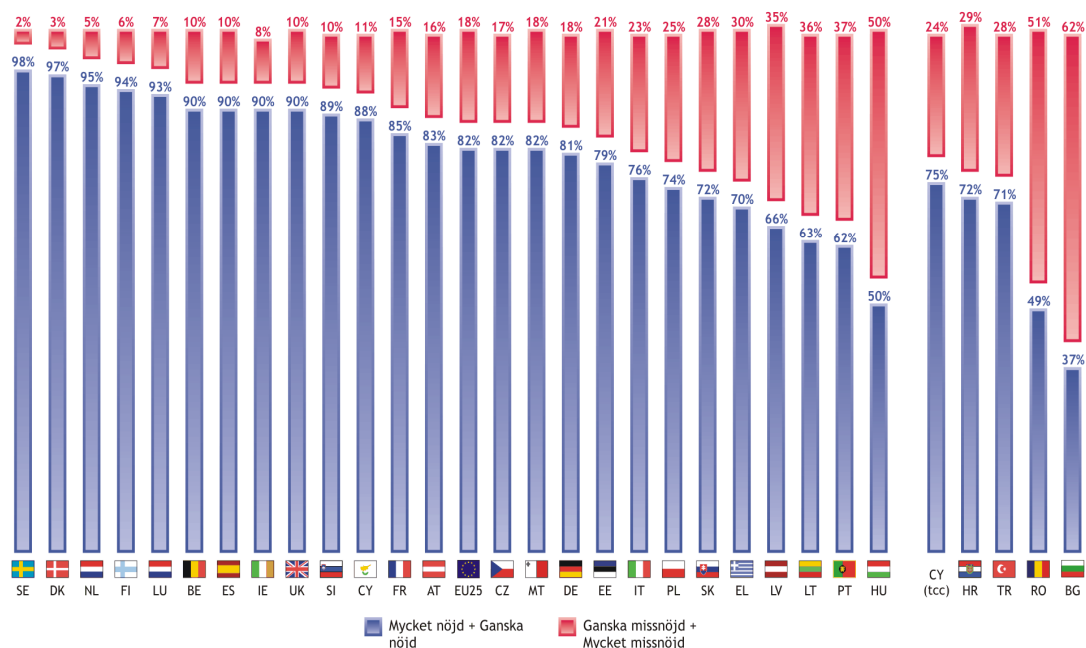
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1 The Climate of Opinion

The Swedes are very satisfied with their **quality of life**. Ninety-eight percent say their quality of life is very or rather good, the highest figure in the EU. The EU average is eighty-two percent. The Swedes are also more optimistic about the future than the EU average. Forty-seven percent of the Swedes think their **life in general** will be better in the next twelve months. Only citizens in the United Kingdom and Estonia are more optimistic than the Swedes.

fråga: QA3. På det stora hela, är du mycket nöjd, ganska nöjd, ganska missnöjd eller mycket missnöjd med det liv du lever? Skulle du säga att du är...?



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. The upward trend continues. Since spring 2006 (EB65), the number of Swedes who think the **employment situation** will be improved in the next twelve months has increased by 14 percentage points. Now, almost every second Swede (46 percent) thinks the employment situation will be improved.

The Swedes show most trust in the parliament (“riksdagen”, 61 percent) and least trust in political parties (27 percent). Almost half of the Swedes (46 percent) place their trust in the **government**. Since spring 2006, trust in the government has increased by ten percentage points and this is most likely a reflection of the transfer of power/the general election. Four out of ten (38 percent) Swedes trust **the European Union**. Compared with the EU average, Swedes show more trust in national institutions – government, parliament, political parties, trades unions – and less trust in the European Union. Only citizens of the United Kingdom are more Euro-sceptic than the Swedes.

Support for the EU membership is unaltered. Half of the Swedes (49 percent) see EU membership as a **good thing**, slightly less than the European average (53 percent). At the same time, more Swedes find their country’s membership to be a bad thing. The number of Swedes with a negative view about membership has increased by 7 percentage points since spring 2006. A quarter of the Swedes (26 percent) see it as a bad thing.

The Swedes are less pleased with the **benefits** of EU membership, compared with the EU average. Forty-one 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 54 percent.

Unemployment and the health-care system are still the most important issues facing Sweden. Fifty-six percent of Swedes regard **unemployment** as the most important issue facing their country at the present time. Within the EU25, forty percent regard unemployment as the most important issue. One-third (32 percent) of the Swedes are worried about the **health-care system**, compared to just sixteen percent of the EU25.

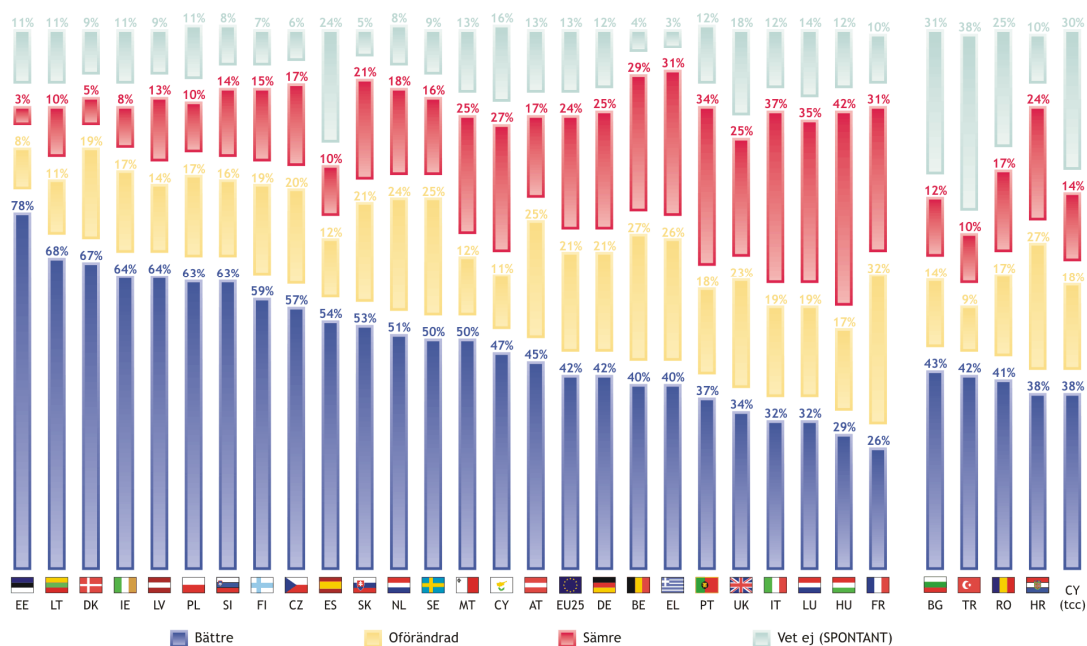
Two-thirds of the Swedes think the European Union plays a positive role regarding creating **peace in the world** (64 percent) and protecting the environment (60 percent). Every second Swede thinks the European Union plays a positive role in the fight against terrorism (55 percent), the growth of the world economy (45 percent) and the fight against poverty in the world (47 percent). Compared with the EU25, the Swedes are more positive regarding the European Union's ability to create peace and less positive in most other areas.

2 Economy and employment

When asked about **advantages/disadvantages** of belonging to the European Union, a majority of Swedes think the Swedish economy has benefited from membership and one-third takes the opposite view. When asked about employment, the Swedes are split: 42 percent think membership has had a good effect and 46 percent it has had a bad effect.

The Swedes have a positive view of the **single market**. Three out of four Swedes (72 percent) think the increased competition in transport, banking, telecommunication and insurance has had a positive effect and every other Swede thinks that, due to the single market, the international competitiveness of Swedish companies is better.

fråga: QA41. Jämfört med för 10 år sedan, tror du att den gemensamma marknaden medfört att (VÅRT LANDS) företags internationella konkurrenskraft blivit bättre, sämre eller är oförändrad?



The Swedes also have a positive view of **globalisation**. 59 percent of the Swedes think globalisation represents a good opportunity for Swedish companies thanks to the opening-up of markets. The Swedes have become more positive about globalisation since the last survey (EB65.1) and are, next to the Danes, most positive about globalisation among the Member States.

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 Swedish economy, the European economy and the employment situation in Sweden, they are more satisfied in general than the EU average, and sometimes they are even far more satisfied. Almost nine out of ten Swedes (85 percent) judge the situation for the Swedish economy as very or fairly good. The European average (EU25) is forty-six percent. There is also an upward trend, the Swedes have become more satisfied in all the above mentioned areas since spring 2006 (EB65).

3 A European Political Union

The Swedes are less in favour of the development towards a **European political union** than the EU average. While 54 percent of the EU25 poll is in favour, only 42 percent of the Swedes share this opinion. 47 percent of Swedes are against the development towards a European political union. Only in Finland, Austria and the United Kingdom is support for a European political union weaker.

The Swedes are, in general, and compared with other Member States, reluctant to **transfer decision-making** to the EU level and prefer that the national government makes decisions in most areas. **Fighting terrorism** is still a notable exception. Almost nine out of ten Swedes (88 percent) think that the European Union is better at fighting terrorism, nine percentage points above the EU average (79 percent). The Swedes are most positive to sharing sovereignty when it comes to “transnational” issues such as protecting the environment, energy, regional subsidies and scientific and technological research. The Swedes are most reluctant to transfer power regarding areas which are associated to the Swedish welfare state, such as pensions, health-care and social welfare.

When asked if they are for or against statements concerning **the future of the European Union**, support is, in general, weaker in Sweden compared with the EU average, further enlargement being the exception. However, a majority of the Swedes supports the euro (sic!), a common foreign policy, a common defence and security policy. More Swedes are for the constitution for the European Union than against (42 percent vs. 32 percent). Since spring 2006, support for the constitution has increased by five percentage points.

Every second Swede (50 percent) thinks **the European Union should give priority to** protecting the environment. Fighting poverty and social exclusion (43 percent) and fighting unemployment (32 percent) rank second and third respectively. Since spring 2006 (EB65), protecting the environment has replaced fighting poverty and social exclusion as the top priority. Compared with the EU25, Swedes give priority to environmental protection to a much larger extent. The EU average is 22 percent.

The Swedes have become much more convinced of the **benefits of the Constitution**. Since spring 2006, support has increased significantly, sometimes up to ten percentage points or even more. The Swedes are now much more inclined to believe that the Constitution will make the running of the European Union more democratic, more efficient, more transparent, more socially-minded and stronger in the world and the Swedes think more or less as the rest of Europe. Two out of three (66 percent) Swedes think the constitution will make the running of Europe more democratic, up from 52 percent in the spring. 70 percent of the Swedes think the Constitution will make the European Union stronger in the world and 65 percent think the Constitution will make the European Union more efficient.

However, the Swedes are less inclined than other Europeans to believe that the Constitution is necessary to ensure that the European Institutions work well. Every second (49 percent) Swede believes that the Constitution is necessary to ensure that the European institutions work well, compared to six out of ten (61 percent) among the EU25.

4 The Enlargement

The Swedish population used to be split two ways: half the population in favour of further enlargement, while the other half was against further enlargement. Now a majority – 53 percent – of the Swedes favour further

enlargement of the European Union to include other countries in future years, while one-third (37 percent) is against. Since autumn 2005 (EB64), support for the **further enlargement** of the European Union has increased by 5 percentage points, while opposition to further enlargement has decreased by 9 percentage points. The support for further enlargement is slightly stronger in Sweden than among the EU average (46 percent).

The Swedes favour new members to a much larger extent than the EU average. The countries most Swedes would like to see **joining the EU** are **Norway**, Iceland and Switzerland. Nine out of ten Swedes favour these countries joining the EU. Turkey is least welcome. Turkey is also the only country whose membership a majority of Swedes do not support. Only 46 percent of Swedes would like Turkey to join the EU. 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 membership of each country (including Turkey) covered in the question. The support for Turkish membership is stronger in Sweden than elsewhere in the European Union. The future member states, Romania and Bulgaria, are supported by seven out of ten Swedes. The figures and support for respective countries are more or less the same as one year ago (EB64).

The general support for **Turkey** is stronger in Sweden than among most other member states. An overwhelming majority of the Swedes believe that Turkey partly belongs to Europe by geography and a majority of the Swedes believe that Turkey belongs to Europe by history and that Turkish membership would strengthen security in the region. But the Swedes also require the Turks to adapt to European norms and standards. 96 percent of the Swedes demand that Turkey respect human rights and 83 percent that they significantly improve the state of their economy if they want to join the European Union.

5 Values

Four out of ten (40 percent) Swedes are of the opinion that **their voice counts** in the EU. This is slightly above the European average, 34 percent. The trend is upward. The number of Swedes who are of the opinion that their voice counts has increased by five percentage points since autumn 2005 (EB64). The Swedes have a fairly good knowledge about the EU, in their own view and compared with other Member States. 47 percent say they know **how the EU works** while 48 percent state that they do not know how the EU works.

On the other hand, the number of Swedes that are of the opinion that they feel very much **involved in European affairs** has shrunk significantly. Since autumn 2005, the number has decreased by 27 percentage points and only 17 percent of Swedes state that they feel very much involved in European affairs.

The participants in the Eurobarometer survey were asked if they agree/disagree with number of different propositions. Compared with other Europeans, the Swedes are very positive/tolerant towards **immigrants** and homosexuals. Eight out of ten (79 percent) believe the immigrants contribute a lot to Sweden, the highest number among the Member States. The Swedes are also much more than other Europeans (with the notable exception of the Dutch) tolerant towards “gay right issues”, such as homosexual marriages and adoption by same-sex couples. Seven out of ten (71 percent) Swedes think the **state intervenes too much** in their lives, compared with 63 percent among EU25. 81 percent of the Swedes think that criminals should be punished more severely, which is what most other Europeans also think. The survey shows very strong support for the Swedish anti-drugs policy. Nine out of ten Swedes oppose the legalisation of the personal consumption of cannabis throughout Europe.

Peace, human rights and **democracy**, in that order, are the most important values for the Swedes. The European Union represents peace, democracy and human rights, according to the Swedes. When it comes to shared values among the Member States the Swedes are split two ways: half of them think that European Union Member States are close to each other while the other half thinks they are distant.