

EUROBAROMETER 62

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2004

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SWEDEN

The survey was requested and coordinated by the Directorate General Press and Communication.

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

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission. The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

Introduction

Eurobarometer 62 is a Europe-wide opinion poll, based on interviews with almost 30,000 persons in the 25 European Union countries, and the four candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey) as well as Northern Cyprus. In Sweden, 1,000 persons were interviewed.

The survey was requested and coordinated by the European Commission's Directorate General responsible for Press and Communication. The interviews were carried out by TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium formed by TNS and EOS Gallup Europe.

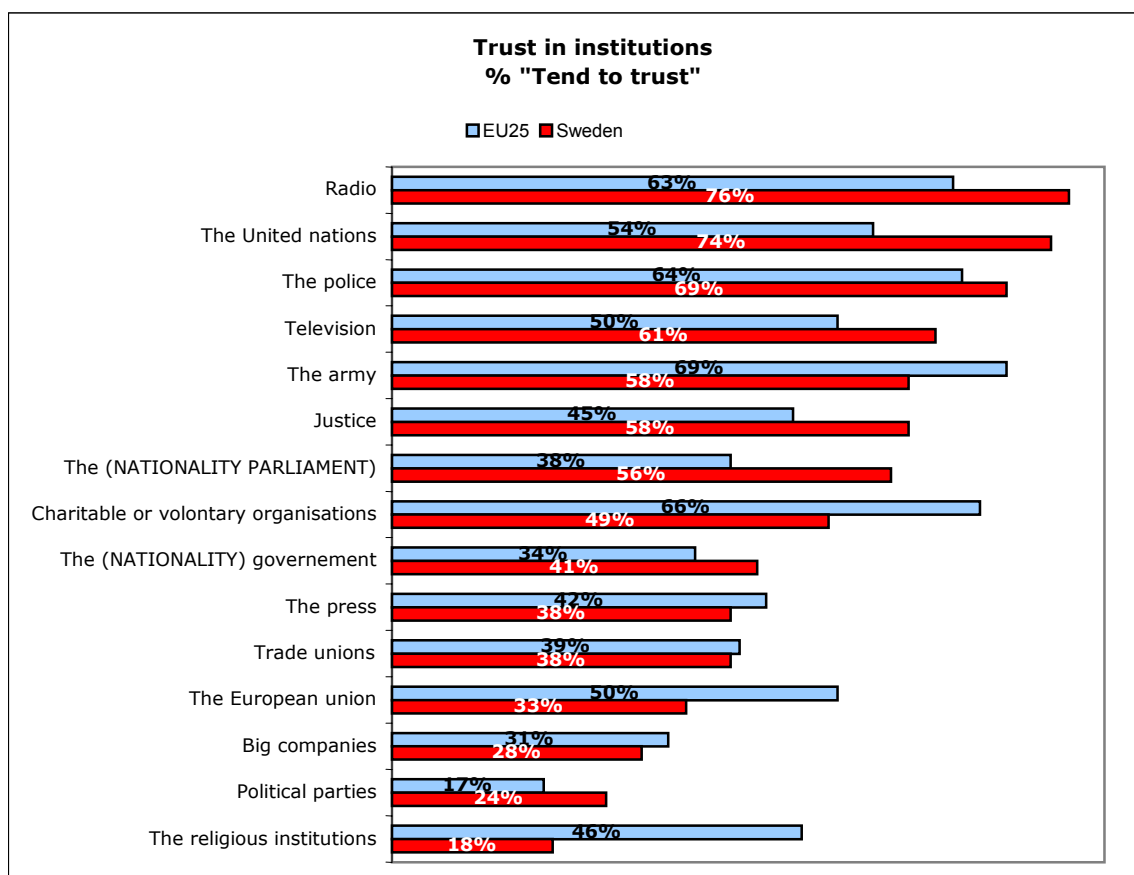
This national report for Sweden is based on the Swedish results, which are compared with the results from all EU countries (EU25). It was produced for the European Commission's Representation in Sweden.

The interviews were carried out between 2 October and 8 November 2004.

1 National Politics and National Identity

Radio, the United Nations and the police continue to be the institutions most Swedes trust. Trust in **the European Union** increased both in the EU25 (+9 percentage points, to 50%) and in Sweden (+4 points, to 33%). But the Swedes, together with the citizens of Finland and the UK, show the lowest degree of trust in the EU. The Swedish people have more trust in their own **parliament** and **government** and also in their **political parties**, compared to the EU25 average. **The army** is the most trusted institution in the EU25 (69% "tend to trust") but is in sixth place in Sweden (58% "tend to trust").

Sweden ranks **religious institutions** as the least trusted, and Sweden is the country where **voluntary** and **charitable institutions** get the lowest trust level.



Europeans state that **the fight against unemployment** is the most important issue facing their countries. The Swedes agree and rank unemployment at almost the same level as the average EU25 (EU25 46%, Sweden 44%) citizen. However, while **the economic situation** is the second most important issue for Europeans, Swedes are more concerned about **the healthcare system**

(EU25 16%, Sweden 41%), which they rank almost as highly as the fight against unemployment. The Swedish healthcare system has become a less important issue in the past year, while concerns about unemployment have increased. Compared to other Europeans, Swedes give higher priority to the **fight against crime** (EU25 24%, Sweden 35%).

The role of the European Union in the fight against unemployment in Sweden is seen as **positive** by 23% of Swedes, compared to 25% in the EU25 overall. The role of the EU in this is seen as **negative** by 37% in both Sweden and the EU25. The EU's role in the health care system is seen as **positive** by 14% in Sweden, and 24% in EU25. While 28% in both Sweden and the EU see the EU's role as **negative** for this issue, it is seen as neither positive nor negative by 47% in Sweden and 39% in the EU.

Three out of four Swedes (76%) are satisfied with the way **Swedish democracy** works, a result above the EU average (57%). Sweden is among the countries least satisfied with how **EU democracy** works (42% satisfied in Sweden, 48% in EU25). The level of satisfaction with EU democracy increased by three percentage points in Sweden and by five points in EU25, compared to EB61.

Swedes show an above-average level of **identification with their nation**, as opposed to **identification with Europe**. But in spite of this, while the Swedes take more **pride in being Swedish** than in being **European**, their level of pride is in both cases above the EU average. Their level of **attachment to Europe** is also higher than can be observed in the EU25 overall.

2 Knowledge about the European Union

Swedes rate their **knowledge about the European Union** as above the EU average. When asked to place their knowledge on a scale from 1 to 10, the Swedish average is 4.9, amongst the highest in Europe. The EU25 average is 4.3.

This self-confidence has some basis in reality - Swedes score on or above average on most questions, when asked to decide if a number of statements on the EU are true or false. However, there are still some remarkable knowledge gaps among the Swedes. A few months after the election to the European Parliament, half of Swedish respondents (51%) know that the citizens of the EU **elect the members of the European Parliament**. But four out of ten (38%) say this statement is false, and 12% do not know. Only Estonia and Latvia, two new member states, get a lower result than Sweden on this question. Many also believe the **elections were in 2002** rather than in 2004.

However, 36% of the Swedes can correctly recognise that the largest part of the European Union budget is spent on **agriculture**, compared to 16% in the EU25 overall. On the other hand, 34% of Swedes, and 30% in the EU25, believe that **administrative and personnel costs** are the largest expense, which is not correct.

Just as in the rest of the EU, the **traditional news media** (TV, newspapers and the radio) are the sources most Swedes use when they look for information about the EU. In response to this question, where multiple answers are allowed, Swedes rate all sources of information higher than the EU25, indicating that they have an above-average interest in information about the EU.

Swedish respondents tend to be relatively satisfied with how their media report on the EU. Half of Swedes (53%) say that the Swedish media talk about **the right amount** about the European Union, compared to 46% in the EU25. Of the Swedes not satisfied, more people say that the Swedish media speak **too little** (38%) than **too much** (5%). Half of Swedes (51%) think the media present the EU **objectively** (44% in the EU25). More people think the media are **too positive** than **too negative**.

Most Swedes (98%) have heard about the **European Parliament**, but the **European Commission** is less known (88%). Knowledge of the Commission shows no sign of increasing, and is actually lower now than it was five years ago. Both the **Court of Justice** and the **Council of Ministers** are better known in Sweden than the Commission is. These four institutions are more known in Sweden than in the EU25 on average.

The **European Parliament** is the institution most Swedes (88%) say plays an important role in the European Union, followed by the **Court of Justice** and the **Council of Ministers**, with the **Commission** ranked number four (79%).

The most trusted EU institution, as the Swedes see it, is the **Court of Justice** (70% "tend to trust"), followed by the **European Parliament** (55%), the **European Central Bank** (53%) and the **European Commission** (47%).

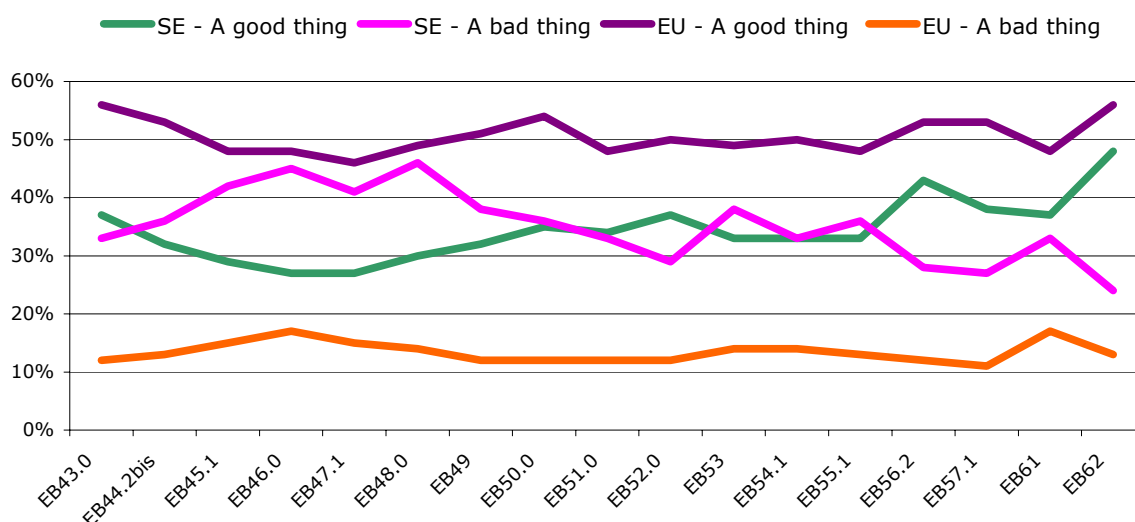
3 Swedish Opinions on the European Union

Swedish **support for membership** of the European Union is now stronger than in any Eurobarometer since Sweden joined the Union in 1995. But Sweden still has a low number of citizens who find EU membership "**a good thing**" (Sweden 48%, EU25 56%). While five countries record a lower figure, Sweden has the highest number who says EU membership is "**a bad thing**" (Sweden 24%, EU25 13%). The answer "**neither good nor bad**" is given by 27% of the Swedes, and 28% of the EU25 poll.

While over half of Europeans (53%) say their countries have **benefited** from EU-membership, only 36% of Swedes agree. This is the lowest in any EU country.

However, the number of Swedes who say membership is a benefit has increased by nine percentage points since spring 2004 (EB61) and is now higher than ever. The number who say membership is "a good thing" increased by 11 points.

**What do you think of our country's membership of the European Union?
Trend in the EU and Sweden 1995-2004**



The **image of the EU** is increasingly positive in Sweden. Since the last Eurobarometer, the number who say their image of the EU is positive has increased by 9 points to 38%. But it is still lower than in all but four EU member countries. Those who have a negative image of the EU decreased by 11 points to 31%, which is still the highest number, in the same position as the UK.

Swedish **men** are more satisfied with EU membership and have a more positive image of the EU than do Swedish **women**. People who have **higher education**, who place themselves to the **right** on a political scale, and who live in **large cities** have more positive feelings towards the EU and Swedish membership, than do those who **left school** at a young age, who place themselves to the **left** politically and those who live in **small and middle-sized towns** or in **rural areas and villages**. Those aged from **15 to 30** are the most positive towards the EU and Swedish membership, those between **40 and 54** the most negative, with those **55 and older** being somewhat more positive.

While most Swedes (99%) recognise the **European flag**, they are less inclined than other Europeans to see it as a good symbol for Europe, to identify with it, or to want it displayed on public buildings beside the Swedish flag.

In Sweden an equal number of people (26%) would be **very sorry** and **very relieved** if they were told the European Union had been scrapped, while 43% would be **indifferent**. This places Sweden among the countries that are the least enthusiastic about the EU.

The EU means **freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the union** for seven out of ten Swedes (70%), and for half of the Europeans (53%). Compared with other Europeans, Swedes are more inclined to say the EU means peace, cultural diversity and a stronger say in the world, but also a waste of money, bureaucracy and more crime.

Swedes and the average EU citizens agree on the extent to which the EU will play a **more important** role in their lives in five years' time. Almost half (47%) say its role will be more important. But while most Europeans would like the EU to play an even more important role, Swedes are more reluctant, and would like the EU to play a smaller role compared to what they believe will happen.

4 The European Union and the World

Sweden is the country where the largest number of people is against a **common foreign policy** among the EU member states, and a **common defence and security policy** for the European Union. While half of Swedes support a common foreign policy, as well as a common defence and security policy, this is less than most countries. And 39% of Swedes say they are against a common foreign policy. The same number is against a common defence and security policy.

Swedes also show low support for other aspects of a closer cooperation between the member states in matters of foreign and defence policy. For example, while 67% of EU citizens would like the EU to have its own **foreign minister**, only 44% of Swedes support this. Sweden is also less in favour of a **common immigration policy** or a **common asylum policy** for the European Union, and for the EU to have its own **seat on the UN Security Council**. Swedes are more in favour of the EU guaranteeing **human rights** both within and outside of the European Union. They are also more in favour of **member states that are neutral having a say** in European Union foreign policy, and for the **EU foreign policy to be independent of that of the US**.

The **European Union** gets a higher rating than the **United States** when Europeans are asked if the EU or US play a positive or negative role for several global issues. Swedes generally look less favourably on the role of the EU, compared to attitudes in other member states. In two cases, they rate the role of the US above the EU25 average: in the fight against terrorism and in the growth of the world economy. But Sweden sees the US role in the protection of the environment as a great deal more negative than other EU countries do.

5 The Future of Europe

The **development towards a European political union** is supported by six out of ten EU citizens (59%) but only four out of ten (40%) of Swedes. Citizens in Sweden, Finland and the UK show the lowest degree of interest in a political union. Since autumn 2003 support for a European political union has increased in Sweden by four percentage points, and in the EU25 by six points.

Respondents were asked to state how they see **the current speed of building the European Union**, and the **speed they would like** on a scale from 1 to 7. Most of them would like a higher speed than the current one, but Swedes would not like any change in speed, neither an increase nor a decrease.

Seventy-eight percent of Swedes are worried by the risk that the building of the European Union means that **jobs will be transferred** from Sweden to countries that have lower production costs. Their second largest fear is an increase in **drug trafficking and international organised crime**. The same issues top the list in the EU25, but Swedes show slightly higher numbers. Compared to

the EU average Swedes are less worried about the loss of social benefits, an economic crisis or loss of national identity, culture and language.

Half of Swedes support **a constitution for the EU**, and one in four are against, placing the country among those least interested in a constitution. In the last six months, both those in favour and those against decreased slightly in Sweden, with an increase in those undecided.

The ten new EU member states show a greater support for **further enlargement** than do the 15 older members. In Sweden, 44% are for a further enlargement, lower than the EU25 average of 53%. This support increased in Sweden by three points during 2004.

Sweden is, with the UK and Malta, among the countries least interested in **European Monetary Union**. In Sweden, 46% are for the EMU (an increase of one percentage point since the spring 2004), while the EU25 average is 63%.

Swedish **men** are more in favour than are **women** of a constitution for the EU, of further enlargement and of the development towards a political union. Just as is the case with the attitudes towards the EU in general, those who have **higher education**, vote to the **right** on a political scale, and live in **big cities** are most in favour of European integration. **Younger people** are more in favour of this development than those who are **older**. However, the group aged **55 and over** is the one most in favour of the constitution.

In most issues where decisions could be taken either by national governments or jointly within the European Union, Swedes are less in favour of the **EU making the decisions** than are other member countries. Only with regard to the top three issues is Swedish support for joint decisions equal to or above the support in the EU25 overall: when it comes to the fight against **international terrorism**, the fight against **human trafficking** and the fight against **organised crime**. Sweden shows least support for the EU as decision-maker in issues regarding **health and social welfare**, where 8% feel decisions should be made jointly, compared to 33% in the EU25.

Swedish respondents point out four actions they think should be a priority for the EU: the fight against **poverty and social exclusion**, the fight against organised **crime and drug trafficking**, protecting the **environment** and maintaining **peace and security**. Around four out of ten Swedes feel these are the most important areas. Swedes rank the environment much more highly than do the rest of the EU countries (Sweden 40%, EU25 19%). The least important issues for the Swedes are protecting consumers and guaranteeing the quality of products other than food, asserting the importance of the EU around the world, and reforming the institutions of the European Union.

Conclusions

In several questions, Swedes show that they are among the countries least supportive of increased political cooperation within the European Union. They are also among the least supportive of their country's membership of the Union. But since the last Eurobarometer (EB61, Spring 2004), Swedes have become more enthusiastic about EU membership, and the level of support is now higher than at any time since Sweden joined the EU ten years ago.

Swedes tend to trust the EU and the European institutions less than the EU average. Just as in the EU25, the Swedes trust the European Parliament more than they do the European Commission, with the European Court of Justice given unusually high levels of trust in Sweden. The Swedish government and parliament are more trusted than the average among the national equivalents in EU countries.

Swedes feel fairly confident about their knowledge of the European Union and its institutions and politics. Their use of different media to find information about the EU is higher than the EU average, and they do well when responding to several factual questions on the EU. There are, however, still some gaps in their knowledge. A few months after the election to the European Parliament, a large number of Swedes were uncertain about the time and purpose of the election. And while most Swedes have heard about the European Parliament, the European Commission is less known: this knowledge has not increased in recent times.