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PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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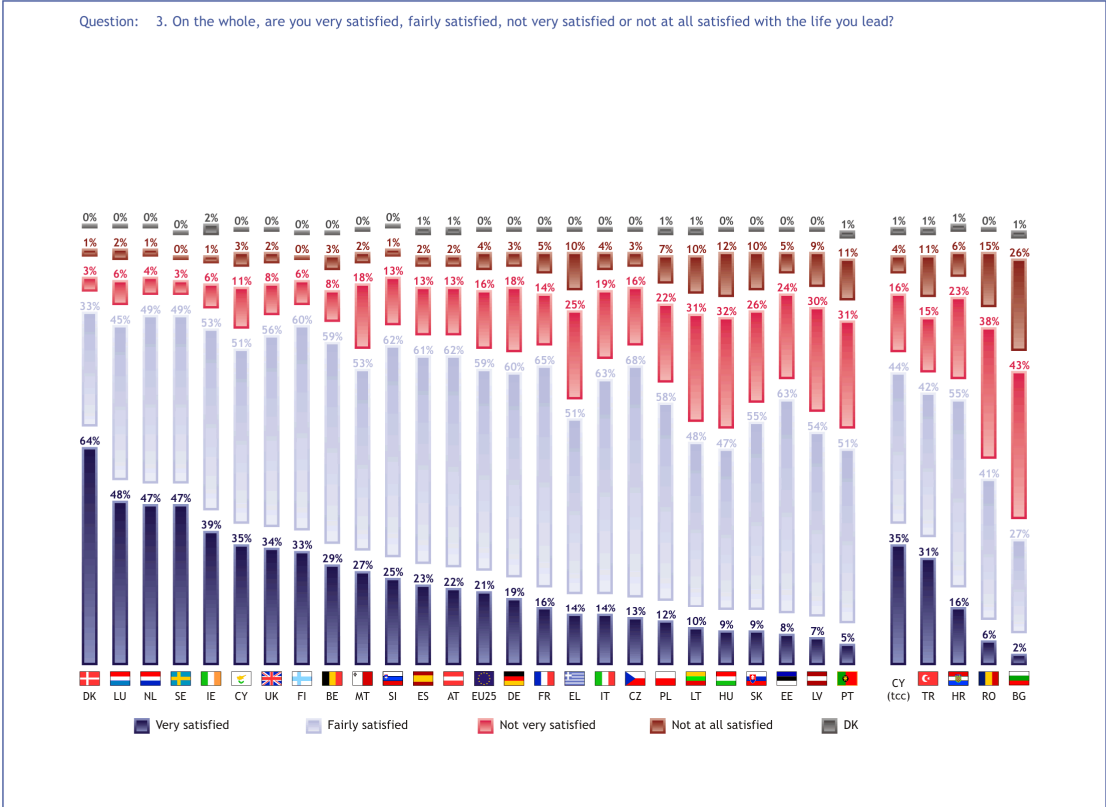
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1 The Climate of Opinion

The Swedes are very satisfied with their **quality of life**. Ninety-six percent say their quality of life is very or rather good, the highest number in the EU. The EU average is eighty 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 are more optimistic. The Swedes are about as optimistic about the economic prospects of Sweden and their job situation as other members of the European Union, but more optimistic about the expectations regarding their own financial situation than the EU average. One-third of Swedes think they will be better off in the next twelve months.



The radio (78 percent), the police (72 percent) and television (66 percent) are most trusted among the national institutions, but only one-fifth of Swedes place their trust in the **political parties**. Swedes show more trust in the **parliament** (50 percent) compared to the EU average. Their level of trust in the **government** (33 percent) is close to that seen in other EU countries. Since spring 2005, trust in the **legal system** has decreased by 13 percent — half of the Swedes (51 percent) trust their legal system.

Unemployment and crime are the most important issues facing Sweden. Fifty-five percent of Swedes regard **unemployment** as the most important issue facing their country at the present time. Within the EU25, forty-four percent regard unemployment as the most important issue. Fighting **crime** has overtaken concerns about the health-care system and is now regarded as the second most important issue facing Sweden. Since spring 2005, the group pointing out

crime has increased by seven percent. One third (31 percent) of the Swedes are worried about the crime situation, compared to one fourth (24 percent) of EU25.

Maintaining order in the country, followed by protecting **freedom of speech**, are the two most important long-term (ten to fifteen years) goals for the Swedes.

The Swedes are, in general, reluctant to transfer **decision-making** to the EU level and prefer that the national government makes decisions in most areas. Fighting terrorism is a notable exception. Almost nine out of ten Swedes (87 percent) think that the European Union is better at **fighting terrorism**, nine percentage points above the EU average (78 percent). Compared to citizens of other member states, Swedes are most reluctant to transfer power when it comes to defence, foreign policy and immigration.

Almost every second Swede (48 percent) thinks the EU should **give priority to** fighting poverty and social exclusion. Protecting the environment (42 percent) and fighting unemployment (37 percent) rank second and third respectively.

2 The individual and the European Union

The Swedes feel about as “European” as the average European. About half of them (53 percent) think of themselves as both **Europeans** and Swedes and about half of them (46 percent) never think of themselves as Europeans. The Swedes are **proud** citizens. Nine out of ten Swedes are proud to be Swedes. The Swedes are also proud of belonging to Europe. Seven out of ten Swedes are proud of being European, while just 63 percent of the EU25 poll are proud of their European identity.

The European Union evokes different emotions. The EU gives four out of ten Swedes the feeling of **hope**, which is the same as the EU average (42 percent). The EU gives about one-third the feeling of **anxiety** (30 percent) and **mistrust** (35 percent). The EU averages are 21 percent and 20 percent respectively.

One-third of Swedes (35 percent) are of the opinion that **their voice counts** in the EU - the same number as in the EU25. The Swedes have a fairly good knowledge about the EU, in their own view and compared to other member states. But a majority of the Swedes (51 percent) say they do not know **how the EU works** while forty-five percent state that they know how the EU works. 41 percent of the EU25 poll state that they know how the EU works.

The Swedes take an active interest in **European affairs**. Forty-four percent of Swedes feel very much involved in European affairs in general. Only Hungary has a higher number. The European average is twenty-six percent. Half of the Swedes (47 percent) would like to get more involved and nine out of ten (88 percent) think the European institutions should make more efforts to further involve EU citizens in European affairs. There is also a strong demand for internal political action. Three-quarters of Swedes think that the government should make more efforts to further involve them in European affairs.

3 Swedish Opinions on the European Union

Fewer than four out of ten Swedes, 39 percent, find their country's membership of the European Union a **good thing**. In the EU25, 50 percent share this view about their respective countries. The downward trend continues. The number of Swedes with a positive view of the membership has decreased by 5 percentage points since spring 2005. At the same time, 32 percent of Swedes see membership as a bad thing, the highest number among the 25 member states. In the EU25 overall, the figure is 16 percent.

Swedes are also less pleased with the **benefits** of EU membership, compared with the EU average. Only one-third of them (32 percent) say their country has benefited from membership. This is the lowest figure in all EU countries, where the average is 52 percent. Fifty-six percent of the Swedes say their country has not benefited from being a member of the European Union, something only 36 percent of EU citizens overall agree with.

When asked about **advantages/disadvantages** of belonging to the European Union Swedes have a more optimistic view than the citizens of other member states on exports, industry and employment and a more pessimistic view than the EU25 average on security, services and agriculture. Seven out of ten Swedes think that **exports** have benefited from membership.

When asked about their image of the European Union, the Swedes are more or less split in three ways. A fairly equal number have a positive, a negative or a neutral image. Again, the Swedish results show a higher degree of scepticism, as 44 percent of EU25 respondents have a positive image of the EU, and 20 percent a negative image. The negative group has increased by six percentage points since spring.

4 Confidence in EU institutions

More Swedes trust the European Parliament than the European Commission. Four out of ten Swedes (42 percent) trust the **European Commission**. This is slightly less than in EU (46 percent). Half of the population (48 percent) trust the **European Parliament**. In the EU25 overall, 51 percent of the poll trust the European Parliament. Since spring 2005, trust in the European Commission has decreased by 1 percentage point and trust in the European Parliament has decreased by 3 percentage points.

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 4,2 and the Swedish one a little higher at 4,7.

In a short test on EU knowledge, Sweden was slightly above the EU average. 43 percent of the Swedes gave the correct answers, compared to 38 percent in the EU25 as a whole.

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, 38 percent, says that administration and personnel is the largest expense, and an equally large number says (correctly) that agriculture is the biggest item in the budget. In the EU25, 31 percent say the EU spends most of the budget on administration, while 17 percent, less than in Sweden, point to agriculture.

5 The Future of the European Union

The Swedes are less in favour of the development towards a **European political union** than the EU average. While 55 percent of the EU25 poll is in favour, only 38 percent of Swedes share this opinion. A majority of the Swedish population (54 percent) is against the development towards a European political union, the highest figure recorded in any of the member states.

The Swedes are less convinced of the benefits of the Constitution than other Europeans. A majority of the Swedes thinks **the Constitution** will make the running of the European Union more democratic (54 percent) and more efficient (59 percent). 45 percent think it will make the EU more transparent. In the EU 25 as a whole, two-thirds think the Constitution will make the EU more democratic and more efficient and a majority thinks the EU will become more transparent.

Compared to other member states of the European Union, the Swedes are more inclined towards believing that the Constitution will strengthen the European Union's global position and less inclined towards believing that the Constitution will make the EU more economically competitive or more socially-minded. Three out of four Swedes (73 percent) think the Constitution will make the European Union stronger in the world.

As a consequence of the referenda in France and the Netherlands, a majority of the Swedes (51 percent) thinks the European Constitution should be **renegotiated**. One-fifth thinks the member states should continue the ratification process (18 percent) and one-fifth thinks it should be dropped (19 percent).

49 percent of Swedes believe a European Constitution is necessary to ensure that the European institutions work well, one of the lowest figures in the EU. Six out of ten Europeans (60 percent) and seven out of ten Frenchmen (68 percent) believe a European Constitution is necessary to ensure that the European institutions work well.

A year and a half after the largest enlargement wave of the European Union to date, the Swedes are split two ways. Half of the population (48 percent) favours **further enlargement** of the EU to include other countries in the future, while the other half of the population (46 percent) is against further enlargement.

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, 48 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. The figures and support for respective countries are more or less the same as in the spring (EB64).

Question: 44.12. For each of the following countries, would you be in favour or against it becoming part of the European Union in the future?

Option: Turkey

