

EUROBAROMETER 72

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2009

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SWEDEN

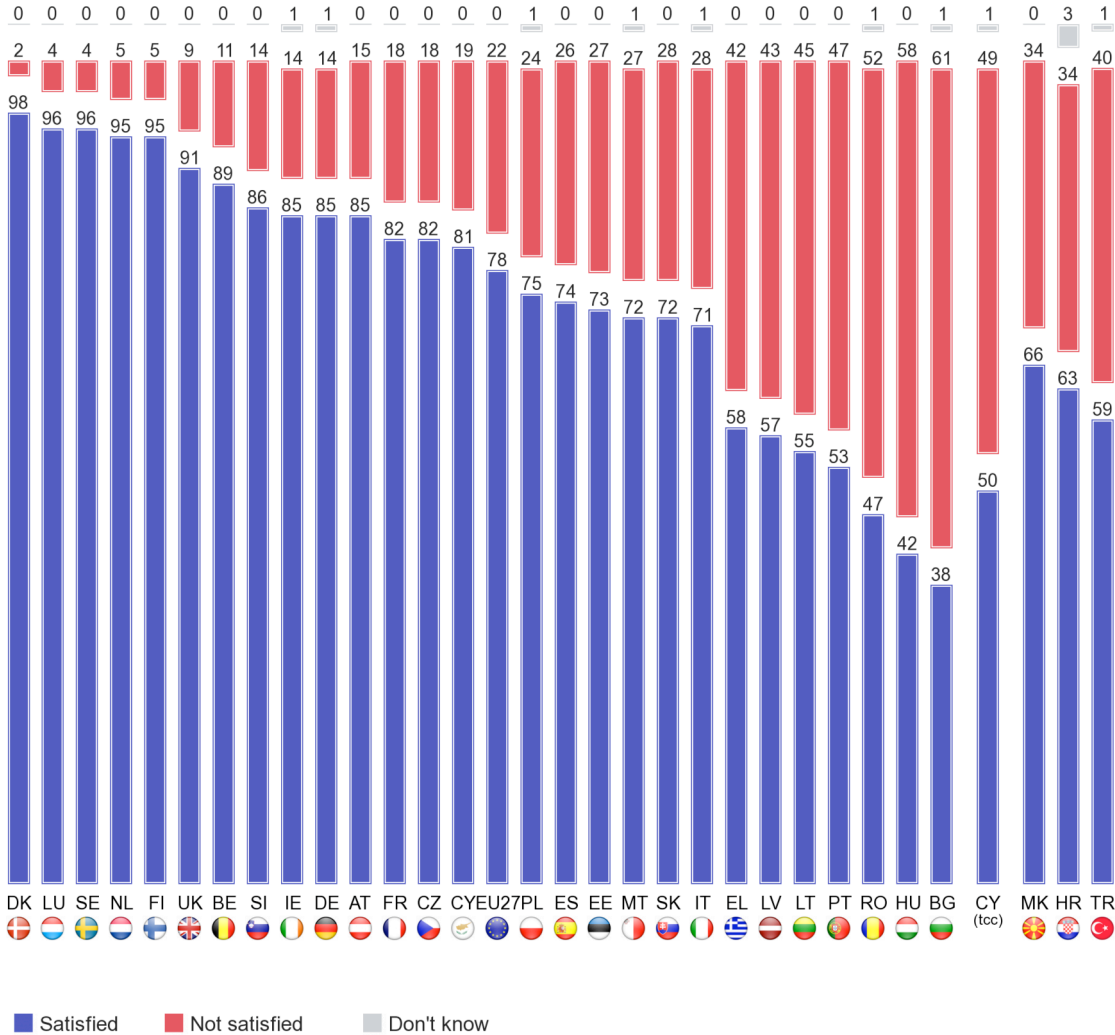
This survey was requested and coordinated by Directorate-General for Communication.

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The global crisis has made itself felt in Sweden – as in many other countries – with financial troubles, extensive problems for the car industry and increasing unemployment.

QA1. On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the life you lead?



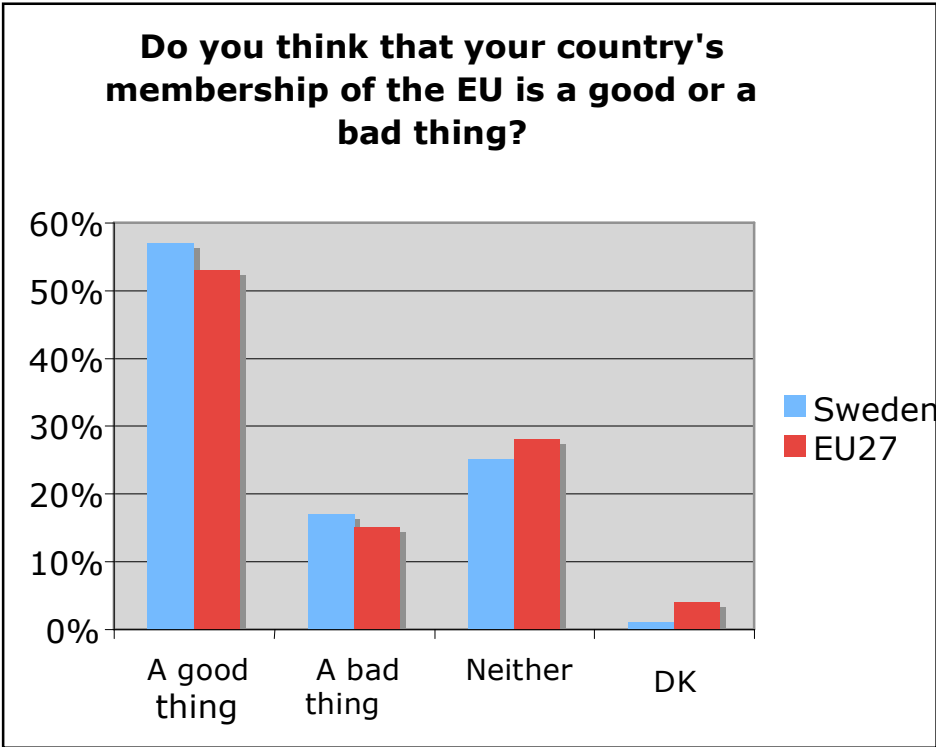
In spite of this, the Swedes are remarkably satisfied with their lives. Almost every second one is very satisfied and only one in a hundred is very dissatisfied. Sweden consistently shows these results, together with a handful of other EU countries. No crises or reports about crises seem to have an effect on this opinion.

The perception of the state of the Swedish economy has become much brighter since the last survey. Then, slightly fewer than four out of ten thought the Swedish economy was good. Now more than five out of ten share this view. Three out of four Swedes think that their own job situation is good, and nine out of ten have a positive view of their household’s financial situation.

Swedes seem to look on the bright side of life with the exception of when they consider the Swedish labour market. Almost three out of four consider it as bad.

Europeans in general have a more gloomy feeling about the situation than the Swedes. Eight out of ten Swedes think that the Swedish economy is in a better shape than the European one. Only three out of ten EU27 respondents have this view regarding their own country's economy. This difference is quite significant.

Both Swedes and Europeans as a whole point to unemployment as the most important question for their own countries to address. The economy comes in second place for both groups but Europeans in general give it more weight than the Swedes.



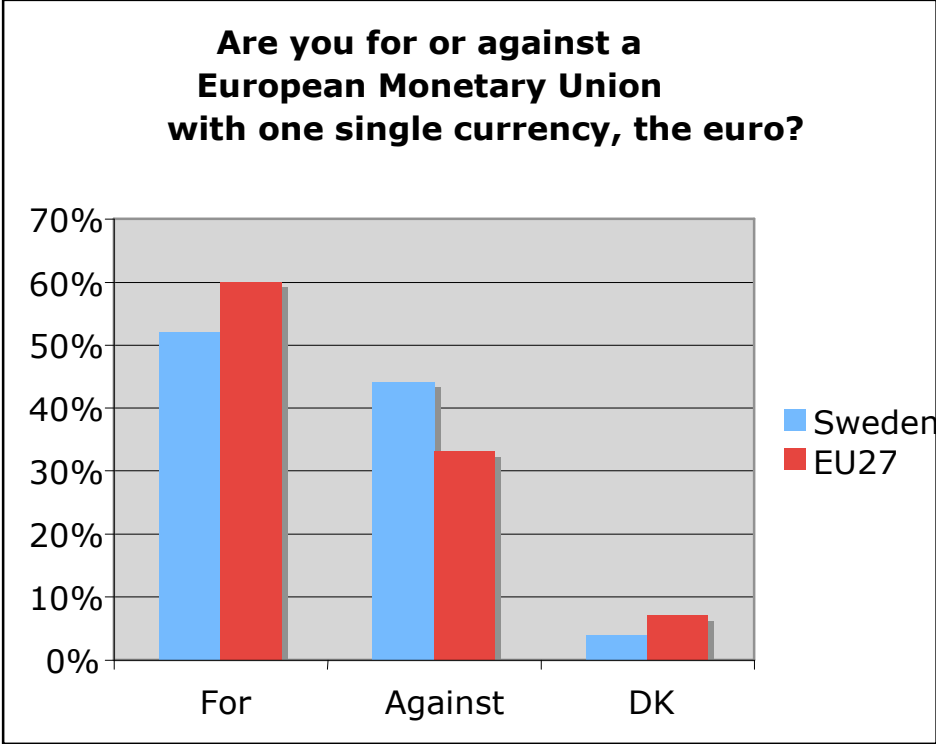
Swedes are more positive about EU membership than Europeans in general. Almost six out of ten believe it is a good thing that Sweden is a member of the European Union. Less than two out of ten think it is a bad thing. With higher education, the share of those who are positive regarding Swedish membership increases.

Swedes view membership as good business. Slightly fewer than six out of ten are of the opinion that membership has been to Sweden's advantage. This tallies with the beliefs of the Europeans as a whole. The difference in views between those with lower and higher levels of education is large in this area. The better the education, the larger the share that thinks the membership has been to the advantage of Sweden.

Twice as many Swedes have a positive image of the European Union as those who have a negative one. The share among Europeans in general with a positive image is slightly higher.

Among Swedes, men are more positive than women. This difference is much smaller among Europeans as a whole.

The EU’s significance for the Swedes is the freedom to travel, study and work everywhere within the Union. Europeans in general also appreciate this aspect but the share of the segment holding this opinion is much smaller than among the Swedes. Swedes associate the European Union with peace but also with bureaucracy and waste of money.

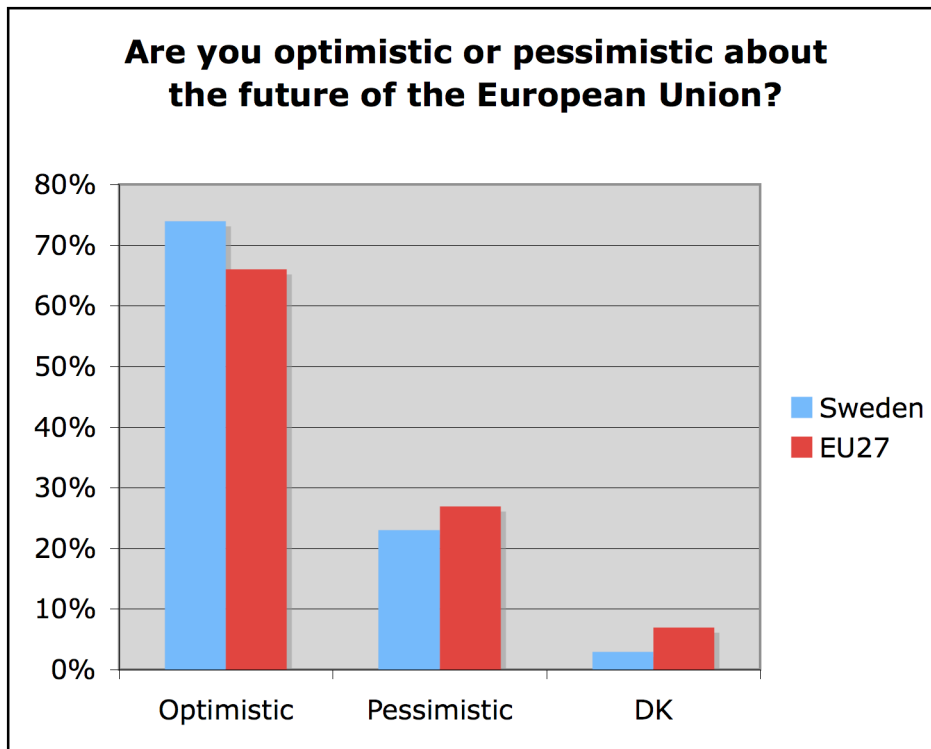


Some years ago, there was a large majority in Sweden against the euro and the monetary union. This has changed. More than five out of ten are in favour of the euro and slightly more than four out of ten against. The increase noted in the last survey has remained, so perhaps opinion is stabilising.

To strengthen the future of the European Union, focus should be placed on environmental issues, the fight against climate change and the fight against crime, according to the Swedes. Europeans in general do not share the enthusiasm of the Swedes for environmental issues. They would prefer the EU to focus on social and health issues, immigration and the fight against crime. Sometimes, it would appear that the Swedish media believe that opinions on environmental issues and climate change are much the same throughout Europe. This may create exaggerated expectations on the European Union’s ability and political will to address these questions.

Eight out of ten Swedes are satisfied with how democracy works in Sweden. Five out of ten are satisfied with how it works in the EU. Europeans are more dissatisfied with how democracy works in their own country than how it works in the EU. The largest share of dissatisfied is found among the twelve most recent members of the Union.

A large proportion of Swedes think that the EU is indispensable in meeting global challenges. The share of Europeans holding this view is even larger. This probably implies that the role of the European Union in the global context has been accepted by the Swedes. Environmental issues and climate change are probably contributing to this acceptance.



Swedes who are pessimistic about the future of the European Union are comparably few. Many more are optimistic. Europeans in general are also optimistic, but not to the same extent as Swedes.

There is a clear difference between Swedes and Europeans in general in their view of globalisation. Many more Swedes than Europeans believe that globalisation represents a good opportunity for their country's companies, thanks to the opening-up of markets. Swedes are comfortable with globalisation in a way that is not typical of Europeans as a whole.

Both Swedes and Europeans in general think that education and investments in research and innovation would make the European economy work better. Many like the idea of facilitating the creation of companies for the same reason. However, the idea of increasing the number of working hours is not popular anywhere.

Swedes do not think that decisions on the European level have any impact on their living conditions. However, they are convinced that decisions on the national, regional and local levels have an impact. It could be said that, for the Swedes, the EU has no relevance in everyday life. This might, to some extent, explain the feeling among many that the European Union is distant.

Taxation and pensions are, without doubt, a question for the national government according to the Swedes. However, a large majority of Swedes think that environmental protection and the fight against terrorism and crime should be handled by the EU. A majority of the Swedes are positive towards decision-making on the EU level in a surprisingly large number of areas. Europeans, as a whole, are even more favourable towards joint decision making within the EU; however, the difference is small.

The best thing the EU can do to in order to advance the rights of citizens is to enhance the dialogue between the European Union citizens and the European Union institutions. Both Swedes and Europeans in general agree on this. These answers express a wish for closer proximity between the EU and its citizens. Dialogue and participation would shrink this gap. In this regard, the European Union has an important and long-term task for the future.