



EUROBAROMETER 70

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2008

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SWEDEN

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There is a general shift, from optimism to pessimism, taking place in Sweden and in Europe as a whole. The changes in some areas are obvious, but people are more concerned about the big picture than with their personal situation.

The formerly bright picture of the economy darkens in Sweden and even more so in Europe. In the survey undertaken a year ago (EB68.1), 86% of Swedes thought that the economy in their country was good compared to 54% in this survey. But it is not a question of overall pessimism.

Fig.1 The employment situation in (our country)

	Sweden	EU27
Very good	2 %	2 %
Rather good	46 %	26 %
Rather bad	44 %	48 %
Very bad	6 %	21 %
Don't know	2 %	3 %
Good	48 %	28 %
Bad	50 %	69 %

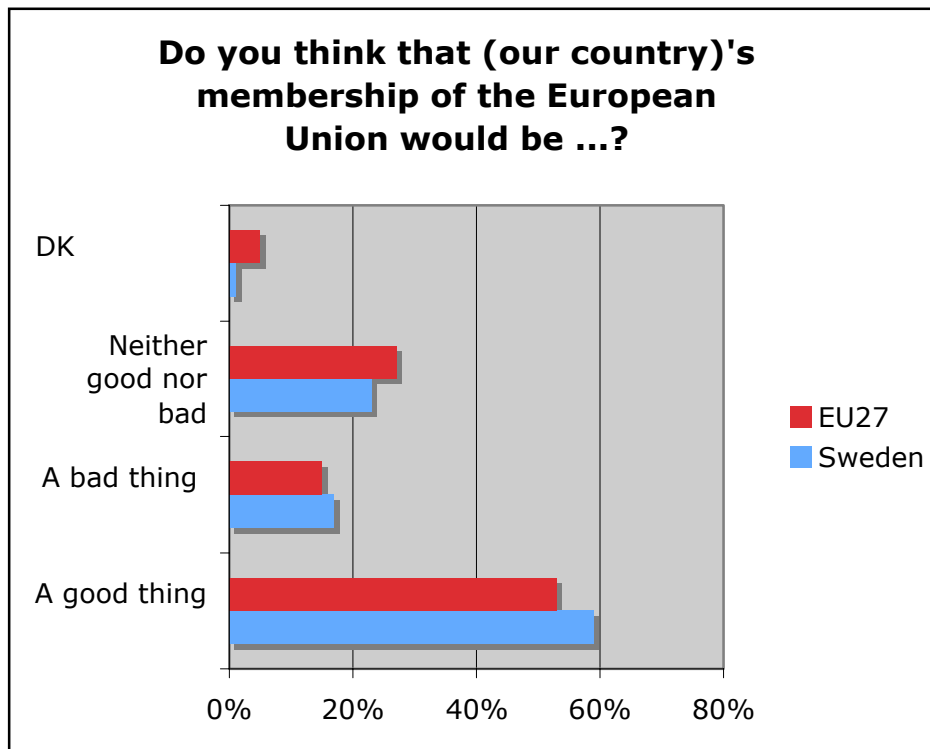
Fig.2 The financial situation in your household

	Sweden	EU27
Very good	31 %	7 %
Rather good	60 %	57 %
Rather bad	7 %	26 %
Very bad	1 %	8 %
Don't know	1 %	2 %
Good	91 %	64 %
Bad	8 %	34 %

On the one hand, more Swedes judge the labour market to be bad (50%) than good (48 %), but, on the other hand, nine out of ten are satisfied with the financial situation in their household. According to four out of five Swedes, the state of the world economy is bad but more than half (54 %) perceive the Swedish economy as good. The new rules for unemployment benefits have been criticised in Swedish media in recent years. Trades unions, the political opposition and others have questioned the reforms implemented by the government in this area. In spite of this, more Swedes think the unemployment benefits are good (45 %) rather than bad (41 %). The difference is small and it remains to be seen whether growing unemployment will change opinion in Sweden.

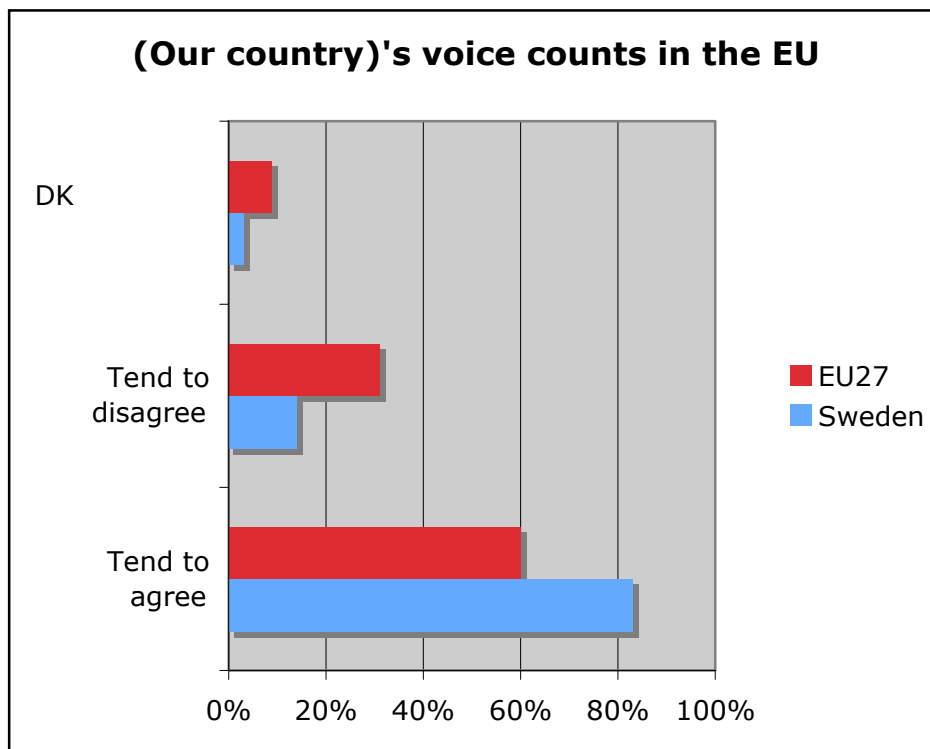
An economic crisis spreading around the world will, of course, influence the expectations people have about the future. Half of the Swedes expect the economy to deteriorate, and a quarter that it will remain unchanged. Almost seven out of ten (66%) expect the labour market to deteriorate in the coming twelve months.

Fig.3



A majority of Swedes consider Sweden's membership of the European Union to be a good thing. There is also a predominance of Swedes who believe that the membership has been beneficial to Sweden. More Swedes trust than mistrust the European Union. And those with a positive image of the Union are more than twice as many as those with a negative image.

Fig.4



Eight out of ten Swedes are of the opinion that the voice of Sweden counts in the Union compared to six out of ten Europeans. And a large majority (62 %) feel that the EU takes the interests of Sweden into account. Only four out of ten Europeans agree. There is no support to be found in the survey to describe Swedes as more critical of the European Union than other nationalities.

The speed One is: Standstill and Seven is: Runs as fast as possible.

Fig.5 In your opinion what is the current speed of building Europe?

	Sweden	EU27
One	4 %	5 %
Two	10 %	10 %
Three	25 %	20 %
Four	29 %	26 %
Five	19 %	17 %
Six	4 %	7 %
Seven	3 %	5 %
Don't know	6 %	10 %

Fig.6 And which corresponds best to the speed you would like?

	Sweden	EU27
One	3 %	4 %
Two	5 %	4 %
Three	16 %	10 %
Four	23 %	18 %
Five	23 %	22 %
Six	11 %	16 %
Seven	11 %	15 %
Don't know	8 %	11 %

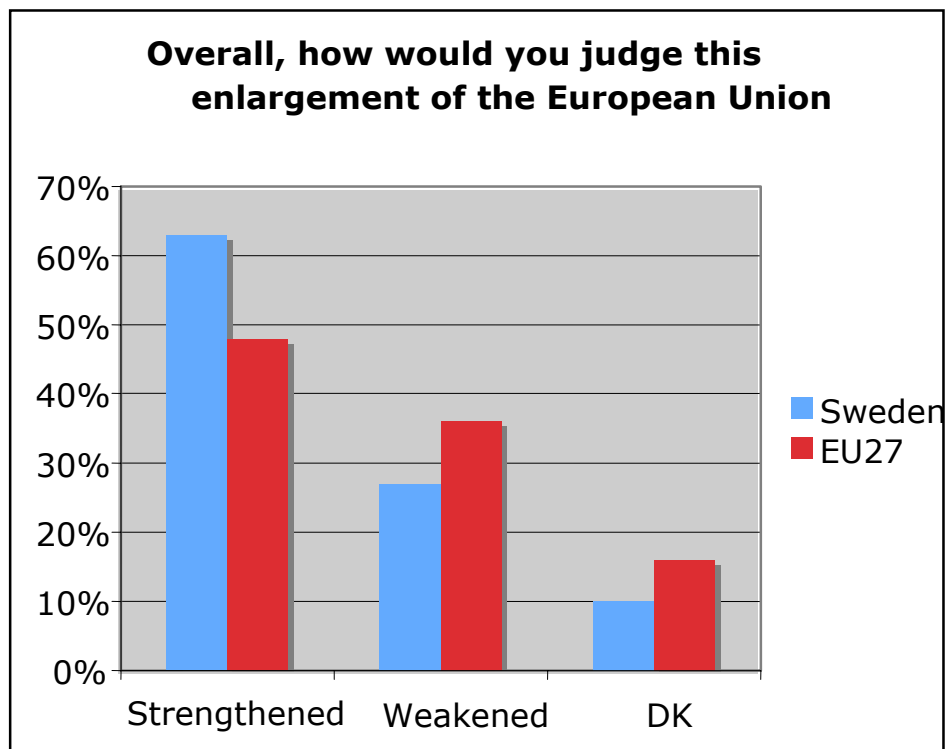
When Swedes and Europeans judge how fast the EU is developing (on a seven-degree scale) and how fast the Union should develop, there is a significant difference. The tendency is quite clear – Swedes, as well as Europeans in general, want a Union which develops more quickly.

Fighting crime, protecting the environment, agriculture and fishery, scientific and technological research, support for regions facing economic difficulties, energy, competition and transport are areas where Swedes think that decisions should be taken jointly within the European Union. In other areas – defence and foreign affairs, immigration, fighting unemployment, consumer protection and fighting inflation – large minorities share this view. The difference between the preferences of the Swedes and Europeans in general is small.

In Sweden, there is a small predominance of those who want to see the common currency (48%) introduced compared to those who are against it (47 %). A large majority think that a common foreign policy in the Union is a good thing, and the same goes for a common defence and security policy. The Swedes are, compared to Europeans in general, strong advocates of a further enlargement of the Union.

The Swedes have a far more positive attitude to the phenomenon of globalisation than Europeans in general. Most Swedes see this process as an opportunity rather than a threat. And Swedes are more optimistic than the Europeans about the Union's ability to protect us from the negative effects of globalisation and make it easier for its citizens to benefit from the process.

Fig.7 Since 2004, the European Union has grown from 15 to 27 countries.



Six out of ten Swedes think the Union has benefited from enlargement. Europeans in general are more sceptical, but there are large variations from one country to the next.

Many Swedes believe that the European Union uses the greater part of its budget on bureaucracy and regional investment. A much larger share of Swedes than Europeans believe this to account for most of the EU budget. The image of an extensive bureaucracy in Brussels is stronger in Sweden than in other European countries.

If the Swedes could decide, the budget of the Union would primarily be used for environmental protection and the climate. Health, the labour market and social issues also rank high. This is to be expected as these are traditional “Swedish” questions. But scientific research and energy are ranked just as high. This might signal that the list of questions considered important by Swedes has grown.