



vetenskap & allmänhet

Summary: Eurobarometers on Science 2005

– Do Swedes think like the average European?

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The results of the 2005 Eurobarometers "Europeans, Science and Technology", "Social Values, Science and Technology", and studies conducted by Vetenskap & Allmänhet (Public and Science) between the years 2002 and 2005, show interesting similarities and differences between Europeans in general and Swedes. On the whole, Swedes are more interested in and informed about science than Europeans. They often read about science and happily talk about it with their friends. Of all the European nations, Sweden is also the country where inhabitants most often visit both science museums and libraries. Swedes are mostly interested in medical and environmental issues, but compared with Europeans there is also a large interest in other fields. Differences between Swedes and Europeans appear clearly in the quiz that was presented in one of the Eurobarometers – Swedes had the highest level of scientific knowledge in Europe!

Swedes seem to have a more realistic attitude towards the possibilities science offers, perhaps as a result of their large interest in it. Very few believe that science can solve any problem, that science one day will be able to give a complete picture of how nature and the universe works or that, thanks to scientific and technological advances, the Earth's natural resources will be made inexhaustible. Swedes also perceive the subjects of astronomy and above all history as more scientific than Europeans, and reject astrology as non-scientific.

On the other hand, both Europeans and Swedes believe that scientific and technological developments have actually made life better – but many respondents also believe that science makes our way of life change too quickly. However, Swedes are not as optimistic as Europeans regarding the prospect of the next generation enjoying a better quality of life than we do now. About three out of four Swedes and Europeans still believe that science and technology will improve quality of life for future generations. They are convinced that research will help to cure serious diseases, but are split on the issue of experimentation on animals. Energy and the environment are other issues where Swedes and Europeans are optimistic about the possibilities of science. However, they are much more pessimistic when it comes to the potential of research to help eliminate poverty and hunger around the world.

Both Europeans and Swedes predict that developments within a wide range of areas will have a positive effect on our lifestyle within twenty years. In fact, they are particularly positive to issues regarding medicine and Information Technology. For example, Swedes were most positive of all Europeans to cloning human stem cells and also strongly agreed in principle to the storage of genetic data and the development of genetically modified crops. However, neither Europeans nor Swedes agreed with the cloning of human beings.

Both European and Swedish citizens agreed that young people's interest in science is essential for our future prosperity, and that young women should be encouraged to take up studies and careers in science. But, to a higher extent than Europeans, Swedes want to see limits imposed on what science is allowed to investigate. They express a fear that because of their knowledge, scientists have a power that makes them dangerous. Swedes also have a more critical attitude towards researchers' ways of communicating with the public – they do not think that researchers put enough effort into telling the public about their work. Europeans – and Swedes in particular – agree that it is important to support research financially even though it may not bring immediate benefits, and that basic research is essential for the development of new technologies.