



Government Offices of Sweden

Statement of Government EU Policy

The Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren, the Riksdag, 26 January 2022. Check against delivery.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

In the beginning, the European Union was a peace project, created in response to the horrors and abuses of the Second World War. Weaving strong bonds between citizens on our continent was supposed to prevent any further wars.

And the EU has been an incredible success in this regard. A unique example of peaceful cooperation between independent states. Today, we regard war between Member States of the EU as inconceivable.

Right now, the EU's importance as a security policy foothold is clearer than it has been for some time. Our own security policy choices are decided at national level and as a sovereign state. But to achieve the goals we set – freedom, independence, democracy – solidarity within the EU is indispensable. The EU is Sweden's most important foreign and security policy arena.

Russia's recent unacceptable demands and ultimatums have met with European and transatlantic unity and steadfastness. This includes preparedness to impose extensive and severe sanctions if Russia further aggravates the situation. Such sanctions are most effective if they are implemented jointly, at EU level.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

EU cooperation gives Sweden so much. A market in which businesses and all of us can freely buy and sell goods and services, creating jobs and prosperity.

A democratic tool with which to influence our neighbourhood. And a platform to amplify Sweden's voice in the world.

There are those who claim that the EU limits more than it enriches us. Many nationalists profess that it would somehow be possible to "take back control", as they say, by leaving the EU.

The reality is quite the opposite. Active participation in the EU gives a country such as Sweden the best opportunities to decide our own fate and exercise control over our lives.

It is the best way to safeguard the principles of democracy, human rights and openness to the rest of the world that have served Europe and Sweden so well.

When Sweden takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2023, these principles will also shape our work. It is an important undertaking that involves moving the Council's agenda forward and helping ensure that the EU can take decisions that benefit Europe's citizens.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The Government has three priorities for its work:

Breaking down segregation and combating crime.

Accelerating the climate transition.

And taking back democratic control over the welfare system.

This does not only apply to national policy – we are also working on these issues at EU level. Because the aim of all social democratic policy, including at EU level, is to bring about concrete improvements in people's everyday lives. And through active EU policy, there are good prospects of achieving results in all three of these areas.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The first priority concerns segregation and crime.

Shootings and explosions are occurring on Sweden's streets. This is absolutely appalling. The full force of all of society is now being mobilised to crack down on gangs.

Organised crime is, by its very nature, transnational. For this reason, transnational solutions are also needed.

Through the EU, Sweden has the opportunity to combat criminal gangs with considerably greater force.

Over the past year, cooperation between police authorities across Europe has time and time again delivered concrete results in the fight against crime. Important steps have been taken to deepen existing police cooperation, to facilitate work across national borders.

More must be done. This includes increased cooperation between prosecutors and police, but also legislation to ensure that law enforcement authorities have the tools they need.

Migration is also an important security issue.

This means having control over our borders and knowing who is in our countries. Effective tools for returns and readmission are needed. We must not forget that migration is about human beings. About human security. For this reason, the conditions for long-term sustainable, humane and legally certain migration policy in the EU must be improved.

One important aspect is addressing the fact that just a few countries take responsibility for people arriving in the EU. This is not reasonable. Negotiations are under way on a common regulatory framework, which must lead to orderly migration management in the EU.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The second priority concerns climate change.

We are in the midst of a climate transition, which must be accelerated.

The climate crisis is the existential issue of our time. In the long term, it is a

matter of ensuring survival on this planet.

We have to end the climate crisis. And the EU must lead the way with an ambitious climate policy.

The EU Member States have set a goal of reducing emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030. The Government will strive for the EU to achieve climate neutrality no later than 2050, in accordance with the European Climate Law.

Goals are one thing – now they must be implemented in concrete policy. In the summer the European Commission presented its extensive ‘Fit for 55’ package of legislative proposals. The ambitions are good, but the Government does not share the Commission’s direction in every respect. We are also clear about this in the negotiations.

The emission reduction requirements must be the top priority – not laying down exhaustive rules for forestry or paying massive subsidies. At the same time, we must bear in mind that considerable willingness to compromise will be needed on all sides if we are to achieve results.

Joint EU solutions are crucial. Emissions trading, not least, has contributed in recent years to an increasingly rapid phasing out of coal burning. Sweden is now pushing for the emissions trading system to be further expanded and sharpened.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Climate change is the defining issue of our time – but also an opportunity. All around Europe, attention is being directed to what is happening in Sweden. Green reindustrialisation, with carbon dioxide-free steel production and large-scale battery production, is showing the way towards a sustainable society. And it also leads to new jobs.

The green industrial revolution places demands on policy. The updated EU industrial strategy presented in 2021 makes a number of proposals in this direction. We do not believe that it is for politicians to identify the technologies and solutions of tomorrow. But European cooperation in particularly important sectors may sometimes be necessary to boost the transition.

Forests play a central role in climate action. The Government recognises the climate benefits of forests, both as a carbon sink and as a source of sustainably produced raw materials to replace fossil-based products. Forestry

must not be subject to exhaustive rules from Brussels.

As Europe's economies restart after the pandemic, economic growth and climate transition must go hand in hand. This requires new green investments throughout the EU. But these investments must not be financed through additional joint borrowing at EU level. Sound public finances are crucial throughout Europe. They will strengthen European resilience to future crises.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The third priority is welfare.

The pandemic is the greatest threat our welfare has faced for a very long time. The dramatic rise in infection rates has once again put pressure on care systems throughout Europe.

But in the midst of this health crisis, there is reason to highlight the success of the EU countries' joint procurement of vaccines against COVID-19. It has contributed to the unprecedentedly rapid development of safe and effective vaccines, which has saved many lives.

Crises are best tackled collectively. When borders have been closed and prevented the delivery of medical equipment, everyone has been affected. This is why the fundamental principles of free movement must be protected.

The EU's crisis management capability in the field of civil protection also needs to be strengthened and further developed.

There are several good examples of how the operational capabilities of the civil protection mechanism have recently been strengthened. These include the fire-extinguishing aircraft stationed in Sweden that last summer helped to fight fires in Greece, and the common European reserves of medical equipment – one of them in Kristinehamn.

The foundation of an effective welfare system is a strong and viable economy. This, in turn, requires a strong and viable EU.

The strength of the EU economy is its openness – openness between Member States, but also to the world. Being able to exchange goods, services and ideas beyond the EU too. This is a strong engine for growth and new jobs, and helps to reduce the vulnerability of the European economy.

There are now tendencies in the EU pointing in a somewhat different direction. Towards more isolationism and protectionism.

This is the wrong path to take. The Government is resolute in its determination to defend the EU's openness to the world. This involves safeguarding the model that has made Swedish export companies successful and created many jobs in Sweden.

We protect jobs and welfare, but it is also a matter of safeguarding openness as the basis of cooperation for common security, across the Atlantic and with other partners.

Few links are as clear as the link between the welfare of citizens and access to decent work. More needs to be done to strengthen the position of workers in the EU.

No one should be worried about being injured or becoming ill at work. No one should risk their life for their job. By tightening the rules on hazardous substances in the workplace, better working environments will be achievable throughout the EU.

At the same time, national competence in this area – not least with regard to wage formation – will continue to be protected.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

I have spoken about how the Government's three priorities can be channelled into EU policy. But I would also like to address one other very important area.

Cooperation in the EU builds on the Member States' pledge to respect our fundamental values. Freedom and democracy. Respect for human rights. Equality, gender equality and tolerance. Justice and pluralism. An independent judiciary.

These are not exclusively European values. But they are the values of the European Union, and they are the values that all the members of the European Union have pledged to uphold.

This is why it is a matter of very serious concern when, in several Member States, respect for these values is lacking. When LGBTIQ people are

harassed. When women's right to abortion is curtailed. When journalists are intimidated into silence. And especially when respect for the rule of law is challenged by removing judges and questioning whether rulings of the European Court of Justice need to be complied with at all.

Addressing this situation is a matter that concerns all Member States. The Government will push for the European Commission to continue to take action to reverse this trend. The new conditionality mechanism, which makes receipt of EU funds by a Member State dependent on its respect for the rule of law, must become an effective tool.

Values are the very foundation of the European Union. But they also add weight to the EU's voice in the global arena.

The EU's foreign policy voice needs to be stronger. To create common security, in collaboration with others. And to firmly stand up against anti-democratic forces beyond the borders of the EU.

At the same time, the EU remains a union of independent nations; it is not a federal state.

There are some matters that we can best decide for ourselves, here in Sweden. For example, our military defence. Our wage formation system. Our forestry. This is how it will remain. But ultimately, the EU gives us more influence and greater power over our own future.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Rarely have the arguments for Sweden's EU membership been stronger. Rarely has the need for strong European cooperation been so great. Rarely has there been such a great need for an active Swedish voice in the EU.

This is why the Government will continue to work tirelessly for an EU that will help us crack down on gangs, that will drive the climate transition and that will strengthen welfare. And for an EU that will defend our values.

Because that is precisely what Sweden needs.

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Sweden supports efforts for greater transparency in the EU

In response to the ongoing Conference on the Future of Europe, Sweden and others have signed a pledge for greater openness and transparency in the EU. All Member States, 37 MEPs, the European Commission and the European Ombudsman have signed the pledge, committing to work for greater transparency in the EU institutions.

“For the Government, it goes without saying that we must continue to work for an open and transparent EU. An EU with dialogue and participation for all of its citizens,” says Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren.

[Read full pledge here.](#)

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