

# **The Awkward Question**

## **Party Approaches to European Integration in Finland and Sweden**

**Karl Magnus Johansson and Tapio Raunio**

Dr Karl Magnus Johansson  
Researcher  
Swedish Institute of International Affairs  
P.O. Box 1253  
SE-111 82 Stockholm  
Sweden  
Tel: +46 8 234060  
Fax: +46 8 201049  
km.johansson@ui.se

Dr Tapio Raunio  
Researcher  
Department of Political Science  
PL 54, 00014 University of Helsinki  
Finland  
Tel: +358 9 1918902  
Fax: +358 9 1918832  
tapio.raunio@helsinki.fi

ECSC Sixth Biennial International Conference, Pittsburgh 2.-5.6.1999  
Panel 'Party Adaptation to the European Union'

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper analyzes party responses to European integration in Finland and Sweden. We argue that the responses are shaped by seven explanatory factors: basic ideology, public opinion, factionalism, leadership influence, party competition, transnational links and the development of integration. Each factor can lead to a positive or a negative evaluation of the European Union. In the empirical analysis, the sample includes all parties represented in the respective national parliaments, and the research material consists of party documents, parliamentary votes, statements by leading party figures, public opinion surveys, direct observation and interviews. Leadership influence and ideology are the strongest factors in the Finnish case, while public opinion and factionalism are the strongest factors in Sweden. Issue avoidance combined with the secondary importance of the EU in party politics explain why parties have been relatively successful in containing internal factionalism and discord, especially in Finland.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the expanding literature on parties and European integration, relatively little has been written on Nordic parties. We seek to redress this balance with a comparative study of party responses to the European Union (EU) in Finland and Sweden. How and why do these responses vary? We also aim at contributing to related research through building a theoretical framework applicable across all EU Member States.

The subject is both of academic and practical importance. Parties are key actors and agenda-setters in integration and operate in multiple arenas, both at the domestic and European levels. The European dimension has destabilized national party systems and caused party realignments, for example in Denmark and Norway. The awkward European question has led to leader resignations, cabinet divisions, party factionalism, parliamentary rebellions and defections to other parties. Incongruities over Europe have also resulted in disputes between Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and their national parties.

The next section is theoretical, introducing the independent variables which are hypothesized to explain party behaviour on EU. The third section offers a brief comparison of Finnish and Swedish party systems and membership referendums. The empirical analysis is in sections four (Finland) and five (Sweden). The research population is parties represented in the national parliaments, the Eduskunta and the Riksdag. The research material consists of party documents published between 1990 and 1999, parliamentary behaviour, statements by leading party figures, public opinion surveys, direct observation and interviews with selected key politicians and party secretaries.

## HOW TO EXPLAIN PARTISAN RESPONSES TO EUROPE?

What factors shape or determine partisan responses to European integration? Intuition would lead us to focus on national explanations, as factors such as the socio-economic structure and party competition of the Member States are key dimensions of overall party behaviour. But are there also cross-national variables that enable us to find common patterns across the Union? This phenomenon has so far remained largely under-researched, as most works on party behaviour over Europe have been case studies of individual parties or Member States. The most comprehensive source is the volume edited by Gaffney (1996), covering nine selected parties, together with chapters on Irish, Scandinavian, communist, extreme right-wing, and green parties. The volume edited by Heidar & Svåsand (1997), in Norwegian, covers selected Scandinavian parties. However, there is hardly any effort to draw theoretical results from the individual contributions. Important exceptions to this rule are the comparative studies by Featherstone (1988) and Geyer (1997) on social democratic and Bomberg (1998) on green parties.

Previous research indicates that party ideology on Europe is shaped by a mix of national and cross-national factors, with national factors having more explanatory value. Analyzing the European policies of twelve social democratic parties from the 1950s until mid-1980s, Featherstone (1988: 302-338) placed the relevant factors into three categories: 1) internal influences within the parties: the role of ideology, the role of internal elites, the influence of trade unions, public opinion, and government and opposition roles; 2) influences from the wider political system: the impact of other political parties, perceptions of economic interest, and the historical context; and 3) the external dimension: external events and influences, and co-operation between socialist parties. The factors are inter-related and their individual impact as well as causal relationships can be very difficult to discern. Featherstone's (1988: 303, 333) conclusion underlines the dominance of domestic concerns: 'it has been the influence of individual national circumstances which has most noticeably shaped the parties' policies towards European integration ... The extent to which there have been influences independent of a particular national situation is very limited.' Comparing British and Norwegian Labour Parties, Geyer (1997: 201) concludes: 'The most obvious conclusion from this study is that the formation of a political party's EU policy is extremely complex and dependent on a large number of variables. Historical, international, European, and national factors all play a role.'

We employ here a list of seven factors which, we argue, account for party positions on European integration: basic ideology, public opinion, factionalism, leadership influence, party competition, transnational links and the development of integration. Each factor can lead to a positive or a negative evaluation of the EU. The order in which the factors are presented does not necessarily reflect their relative importance.

1) *Basic ideology*. The majority of Member State national parties pre-date the integration process and are based on the social cleavages identified in political science

literature: religion, class, ethnic divisions, and language. Parties in different states share relatively similar features – alas the term party family, by which is meant the categorization of parties into various families according to their ideologies. Party families which put more emphasis on egalitarian, communitarian, social, and environmental values may find the EU too exclusive and neo-liberal. (Taggart 1998) However, the European policies of the majority of social democratic parties have become increasingly pro-integrationist during the 1990s. Social democrats were initially opposed to or luke-warm about integration, but now support the economic and monetary union (EMU) and favour the cautious strengthening of EU's social dimension. This reflects their shift towards the political centre – particularly in economic policy – and their gradual realization that Keynesian economic policies at the national level are not sufficient to combat the excesses of capitalism. (Cafruny 1997, Geyer 1997, Johansson 1999b, Ladrech & Marlière eds. 1999, Lankowski 1997) The same applies, albeit to a lesser extent, to the green parties (Bomberg 1998), and also increasingly to the radical left. Christian democrats and Liberals are broadly in favour of a federal Europe. In central and southern Europe this is strengthened by Catholicism, which more than Protestantism is a supranational religion. Christian democrats and liberals are also broadly in favour of liberal economic policy accompanied with social rights. (Hanley ed. 1994, Jansen 1998) Conservatives have given only reserved backing for integration. While welcoming the economic benefits of the Single Market and even the EMU, they view with alarm the extension of EU's powers into other policy domains and want to safeguard national sovereignty. (Johansson 1997) The same applies more or less to the agrarians. The unifying factor of extreme right-wing parties is nationalism and xenophobia, and thus they are, overall, opposed to the further erosion of national sovereignty and to the enlargement of the Union. Regionalists have mainly been in favour of integration, as they regard the EU as a welcome counter-weight to the dominance of national governments. (Lynch 1996)

2) *Public opinion.* Parties are ill-advised to ignore public opinion. A Eurosceptical public may provide a fundamental constraint by reducing the elites' freedom of action. Parties are particularly tentative with respect to their core supporters and to various interest groups associated with them. Leftist parties usually have strong ties with trade unions, agrarian parties with farmers' unions, centre-right parties with employers' organizations etc. For example, the European policies of the Norwegian DNA and the British Labour Party have been shaped by their countries' trade unions. (Daniels 1998, Geyer 1997, 1998)

3) *Factionalism.* Parties are often internally divided over European issues, both at the elite and rank file levels. A way to cope with this dilemma is to allow intra-party rivalry on Europe. While the party may formulate a European programme, the leadership can still indicate, either willingly or because it hardly has a choice, that there is scope for 'conscientious objection' within the party. Intra-party factionalism over Europe is preferable to electoral losses and defections to other parties. (Aylott 1997, Franklin et al. 1994, Guyomarch 1995)

4) *Leadership influence*. The views of the party elite, especially the party leader, may have a strong influence on the official party line. Research has proven that the policies of the party leadership, for example on whether to join the EMU, can wield considerable influence among the rank and file, persuading them to follow the elite opinion. (Wessels 1995) Such 'top down' preference formation is arguably particularly manifest in issues such as European integration. Where the party activists and voters have little knowledge of EU matters, they tend to look for advice from party leaders. Examples of strong leadership influence abound. In France Mitterrand used his position as the President and the unchallenged leader of the centre-left to pursue his European vocation. (Guyomarch 1995, Wood 1997) In the UK successive Labour leaders Neil Kinnock, John Smith and Tony Blair have converted their party from open hostility to the Community to 'constructive engagement'. (Daniels 1998) In Spain Prime Minister Felipe González was able to use his governmental status to dictate the Spanish (and PSOE) European policy.

5) *Party competition*. The balance of power in the EU is still tipped in favour of Member States, and national parties' main priority is domestic politics. Since the majority of parties aim at government office, it is expected that ideology is sacrificed to this imperative. Important question is governmentability: parties must be seen as capable of efficient government, especially in economic matters. This largely excludes parties whose policies deviate strongly from the status quo. Alas the majority of green and former communist parties have tempered their views, at least partly in order to be recognized as responsible parties fit to govern. Parties may also adopt anti-EU postures in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors, but this usually weakens their chances of gaining government office. (Christensen 1996, 1998) The large majority of parties identified by Taggart (1998) as 'Eurosceptical' are indeed fringe or populist parties, seeking to distance themselves from the established cartel of mainstream parties.

Moreover, government parties are expected to be more pro-European than opposition parties. This applies also to one and the same party. When a party is in government, it tends to adopt a more pro-integration line than when in opposition. Government responsibility means regular participation in the Council of Ministers and the European Council. It is expected that this institutionalized intergovernmental co-operation leads government parties to adopt a more Euro-friendly position than opposition parties. This argument holds also for junior partners in coalition governments, as they must usually support government decisions.

6) *Transnational links*. We argue that transnational links and membership of Europarties may have an impact. Europarties are parties operating at the European level, and they have arguably become more influential in the 1990s. (Bell & Lord eds. 1998, Hix & Lord 1997, Johansson 1997, Ladrech 1997) Considering the range of top-level meetings taking place, it would be wrong to discount the possibility of policy diffusion through mutual exchange of information and ideas. There are currently three parties and one party federation operating at the European level: The Party of European Socialists (PES/socialists and social democrats),

European People's Party (EPP/Christian democrats and conservatives), European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR/liberals), and the European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP/greens).

7) *The development of integration.* Since party ideology is our dependent variable, we treat integration process and the changing international environment as independent variables. Obviously this is not a straightforward choice as parties themselves – particularly the major British, French, and German ones – are key actors in integration. However, no single party or even party family can alone determine EU policy, and thus it is primarily the case of parties adapting to integration. Parties can hardly ignore the Union anymore. The watershed was Maastricht, as before that European matters were only of marginal or at most minor importance in internal party debates. For example, using the neo-functional theory of political spillover, Haahr (1992) and Ladrech (1993) argue that social democratic parties changed their European policies from mid-1980s onwards mainly because of the increased relevance of the Union. Parties may re-evaluate their policy depending on whether they view the Union as an opportunity to achieve their objectives. Good examples are social democrats and greens. After initial reluctance, both party families have come into terms with the Single Market, and now seek to use the Union to achieve greater economic stability and co-ordinate or re-regulate social and environmental legislation at the European level.

Integration is also shaped by events occurring outside the Union. Certain processes may have an impact on the European policies of all Member State national parties. This category includes developments such as the dismantling of the Communist empire and the increasing economic globalization. (Garrett 1998) Naturally, parties may respond to such pressures in various ways. There are also events that affect the EU policies of national parties in one Member State. For example, in Greece this could include heightened tension between Greece and Turkey or a drastic cut on cohesion funds destined for Greek regions. Thus the historical context of each Member State should not be underestimated.

**Figure 1 here**

Figure 1 summarizes the explanatory factors providing instruments for the analysis of party responses to European integration. This analytical framework will now be applied to Finland and Sweden.

## **FINLAND AND SWEDEN: TWO MOST SIMILAR SYSTEMS?**

Political science literature often groups the five Nordic countries together, not only because of language and geography, but also as they have broadly similar political systems. Indeed, Finland and Sweden constitute almost ideal points of comparison. Both countries have fairly similar party systems (Tables 1 and 2). While electoral volatility has increased and new

parties have entered the political arenas, the changes have also been very similar in the two cases:

The Finnish party system can be characterized as polarized pluralism coupled with a relatively high degree of fragmentation. The main cleavage has been the left-right dimension, but during the 1990s the rural-urban cleavage has become more relevant as European and foreign policy issues have entered internal party debates, having previously been the almost exclusive domain of the President. The Green League is a newcomer, and in 1995 became the first European green party to gain government status. Recent governments have been broad coalitions, including two of the three main parties, SDP, the Centre and National Coalition, and uniting parties across the ideological spectrum. Such co-operation is facilitated by a convergence in party ideologies, notably so regarding economic policy. (Borg & Sänkiäho eds. 1995, Sundberg 1996) The five party rainbow government – SDP, National Coalition, Left Alliance, Swedish People’s Party, and the Green League – which took office after the 1995 elections continues also after the March 1999 elections.

**Table 1 here**

The Swedish party system used to be characterized by its stability. However, it has become increasingly fragmented since the late 1980s. Accordingly, new parties have emerged, such as the New Democracy, now practically extinct from the Swedish party landscape, and the Green Party. Even more than in Finland, the left-right or socio-economic dimension has been the most important cleavage. While relatively less important, the rural-urban cleavage has manifested itself in regard to Sweden’s membership of the EU, notably in the November 1994 referendum. Sweden has mostly been governed by one-party governments, with the social democrats in an almost hegemonic position. The social democratic minority government that took office in October 1998 is supported by the Green Party and the Left Party. In the previous parliament, 1994-1998, there was an informal coalition between the social democrats and the Centre Party. It is important to emphasize that all three supporting parties are, by and large, Eurosceptical and that the Green Party and the Left Party were opposed to Sweden’s EU membership and still, at least rhetorically, call for Sweden to leave the Union.

**Table 2 here**

The similarity covers also the membership referendums. (Jenssen et al. 1998) In Finland Community membership was hardly mentioned in public before the Soviet empire began to collapse. Political leadership remained quiet about the EC, and no party advocated membership in the late 1980s. Debate on membership intensified following Sweden’s membership application in July 1991. Finland applied for EU membership in March 1992, with the Eduskunta approving the application on 18 March 1992 with 133 votes to 60. The

Left Alliance, the Rural Party, and the Christian League were on the defeated side, with the Centre and the Greens divided. Membership debate focused mainly on security, national sovereignty, economic advantages, and Finland's place in the new geopolitically very different Europe.

The consultative referendum on membership was held on October 16, 1994. A majority of 56.9 % voted in favour, and 43.1 % against. Turnout was 74 %. As Arter (1995) has commented, the result was a 'yes' for the West, not for Maastricht. Table 3 shows the behaviour of party elites and supporters in the referendum. The discrepancy between the leaders and the electorate is clear, indicating that European issues would prove to be problematic for the Finnish parties. (Listhaug et al. 1998, Paloheimo 1995, Sänkiäho 1994)

### **Table 3 here**

Also in Sweden EC membership rose to the top of the political agenda within a very short time. Although more strongly associated with West Europe than Finland, membership had been ruled out with reference to the policy of neutrality and non-alignment in particular. However, the ruling social democrats took a sudden step towards EC membership in October 1990, in the context of the management of an acute economic crisis. (Gustavsson 1998) On December 12, 1990, the Riksdag voted in favour of applying for EC membership, by 289 votes to 28, with the reservation that it must be in a form compatible 'with the retention of neutrality'. (Miles 1997: 184) The application for membership was handed over to the Dutch EC presidency in the Hague on July 1, 1991. The most salient questions during the referendum campaign concerned foreign and security policy, democracy, environment and agriculture. Sweden entered the EU at a time of economic recession. Given the broad support for the welfare state, and relative prosperity, Union membership was widely seen as a threat rather than as an opportunity. This mainly explains why the European question has been so difficult for the social democrats.

The referendum was held on November 13, 1994, about a month after the Finnish referendum. That the Swedish referendum took place after the Finnish was hardly a coincidence since the outcome of the referendum in Sweden was more unpredictable. As was expected, the outcome was tight, with a majority of 52.3 % in favour and 46.8 % against. (Gilljam & Holmberg 1996) Turnout was 83.3 %. Even more than in Finland, the result clearly indicated that European issues would be awkward for Swedish political parties. Just like in Finland, the positive referendum outcome is largely attributable to the persuasive party leaders, notably to the then social democrat leader Ingvar Carlsson.

### **Table 4 here**



## FINLAND: STRONG LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE

The *Social Democratic Party* (SDP) demanded in September 1991 that Finland should apply for EC membership. The party leadership has ever since supported integration. The supporters have meanwhile been more sceptical, with 75 % in favour of membership in the referendum. The elite opinion was highly influential in mobilizing party supporters behind the official party line. A month before the referendum the supporters were almost evenly divided into three camps, yes, no, and those yet to decide. In the referendum the undecided ones voted 'Yes'. Thus the position of the party leadership was crucial in explaining the voting behaviour of the SDP electorate. (Sänkiaho 1994: 167-168)

The European policy of SDP reflects the views of its fellow social democrats in the PES. The policy is primarily explained by the party leadership's unequivocal support for integration, and the moderate welfare state ideology of the party. In particular the Prime Minister and party chairman Paavo Lipponen has throughout the 1990s been determined to lead Finland into the inner circle of the Union. While a section of the party elite has been much more reserved, the party leader has not met any strong resistance as the Eurosceptics have not organized themselves. SDP's goals include increasing the scope of Council majority voting, strengthening EU's competence in social and environmental issues, and reducing EU's control over agricultural policy. The near unanimous party council decided in September 1997 in favour of Finland's participation in the third stage of the EMU from the start of 1999. SDP wants to increase EU's involvement in peace-keeping operations, but argues that the Union should not develop a common defence policy.

As the leading governing party in 1991-1995, the *Centre Party* (KESK) was a key player in making the decision to apply for membership. The party was far from united, with 21 out of its 55 MPs voting against the application in March 1992. The party congress held in June 1994 decided by 1607 votes to 834 to support membership, but only after the Prime Minister and party chairman Esko Aho had threatened to resign were the Centre to oppose membership. In the referendum 36 % of the party supporters favoured membership. The party leadership, and in particular Esko Aho, had a significant impact on voters, as a much larger share than in other parties changed their opinion from opposing membership to favouring it. The public identified Prime Minister Esko Aho as the only person who widely influenced people's European opinion. (Sänkiaho 1994: 167)

Both the elite and the supporters remain internally divided over integration. Party leader Aho has faced a tough challenge in balancing the often uncompromising anti-integrationism of the party electorate and the need to maintain his party's credibility as a potential governing party. The Eurocritics have not formed their own organization, and the opposition has mainly centred around Paavo Väyrynen, an MEP and former party chairman and Foreign Minister. The main agricultural interest group closely attached to the party, the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK), has been critical of integration. This is not

surprising considering the destructive impact of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on the farming sector.

In line with other European agrarian parties, the Centre emphasizes the intergovernmental nature of the EU. Even though the party is a member of the ELDR, the Centre has very little in common with the Euroliberals' federalist vision of Europe. The party favours the maintenance of institutional status quo, and wants to balance the introduction of European-level environmental taxation by reducing EU's competence in agricultural and regional policy. An additional party congress held in September 1997 decided against Finland's EMU membership. However, the party indicated in spring 1998 that it respects the outcome of the Eduskunta vote, and will not seek exit from EMU in the future. The party is against CFSP and the incorporation of WEU into the EU, and favours the continuation of Finland's traditional foreign policy of neutrality.

The *National Coalition* (KOK) decided in June 1991 that Finland should apply for EC membership. 89 % of party supporters voted in favour of membership in the referendum. The National Coalition has been most united of the core parties on integration. No central party figure has openly criticized the party line. This internal coherence is mainly explained by the moderate right-wing ideology of the party. The overwhelming majority of the party supporters are in favour of EU membership and of developing closer links the West. The party has been in government since 1987.

In line with other EPP conservative parties, the National Coalition does not support a federal Europe. The party argues that the EU does not need any substantial new powers. In decision-making the party supports increased use of majority voting in industrial, research, and environmental policies, and in action to prevent international crime, the application of the co-decision procedure in matters which the Council decides by qualified majority, the maintenance of the unanimity rule in amending the Treaties, most CFSP issues, and taxation and budgetary matters, and for a reduction in EU's agricultural powers. The National Coalition was strongly in favour of the EMU, and approves the gradual development of a common foreign and security policy.

Integration matters have stimulated a fierce debate within the *Left Alliance* (VAS). The party did not adopt an official position prior to the referendum, and only 24 % of its supporters voted 'yes'. The contrasting opinions of the leading party figures have attracted much media attention. This rivalry has centred around the former party chairman and Minister Claes Andersson and MEP Esko Seppänen, with the latter very critical of integration. The Eurosceptics have not organized themselves. The new party leader elected in May 1998, Suvi-Anne Siimes, has continued the line of her predecessor. The party supporters and trade unions close to the party are internally divided over integration. This ambivalence is mainly explained by ideology: the market-driven logic of integration is rather distant from the world view of the average party voter. The party has been in government since the 1995 elections,

and has been forced to balance the Euroscepticism of its electorate with the responsibility of being a junior partner in a government committed to further integration.

The Left Alliance emphasizes the importance of international co-operation in the fight against market forces. Enlargements and the need to confront unemployment and social exclusion throughout the continent are prioritized. The party favours extended use of majority voting, the holding of referenda on important integration questions, cautious strengthening of the EP's powers, increasing EU's competence in social, environmental, and taxation policies and reducing it in agricultural matters, and opposes moves to develop EU's military dimension. The party did an ideological U-turn on EMU. Against EMU in the Euroelection manifesto adopted in April 1996, the party leadership took a bold step by organizing in November-December 1997 an internal party caucus on whether Finland should join EMU. The wording of the question aroused much controversy, as the executive committee linked the issue to whether the party should continue in the government. The turnout was 67.1 %, with 9253 out of 13790 enfranchised party members casting votes. 52.4 % were in favour, 41.5 % against, and 5.9 % left the decision to the party leadership.

The *Swedish People's Party* (RKP) came out in favour of membership in 1991. In the referendum 85 % of RKP voters supported membership. The leadership has been in favour of integration and despite some unease among the rural electorate has not met any real opposition. Notably the former party chairman (1990-98) Ole Norrback favoured developing closer links with the West, possible defence alliances included. The party ideology is moderately right-wing, and focuses on defending the interests of the Swedish-speaking minority. RKP has been in government throughout the 1990s, and is a member of the federalist ELDR. The party supports increased use of majority voting, especially in environmental issues, the application of co-decision procedure whenever Council decides by majority voting, and a partial transfer of agricultural powers back to the Member States. The June 1997 party congress approved Finland's EMU membership. In CFSP the party stresses the development of a credible foreign and security policy which concentrates on conflict prevention and crisis management.

The *Green League* (VIHR) did not take a decision on membership before the referendum. The elite disagreement was reflected at the voter level, with 55 % favouring membership. While the Greens have remained divided over integration, the party has avoided factionalization and open leadership disputes. Its European policy has within a short time become strongly pro-integrationist, a change which owes much to former party chairperson MEP Heidi Hautala. The Greens have been in government since 1995, and the party is a member of the EFGP.

The Greens argue that the priorities of the Union do not reflect the needs of the citizens and the environment. The cure is increasing EU's powers and democracy at the European level. Third pillar issues should be included under the first pillar, CAP needs to be reformed through transferring powers back to the Member States, and the party programme from May

1998 states that environmental and social policies should become 'central areas of EU competence' and demands common minimum environmental and energy taxes.

Democratization involves the holding of binding referenda on the most important decisions, increased use of majority voting except in Treaty revision, and strengthening EP's role. The Greens are against common defence policy. On EMU the Green League was in the same position as the Left Alliance. Supporters and the party elite were divided over the issue, but it was a junior member in a government committed to entering the third stage from the start of 1999. The party first favoured the postponement of EMU, but a joint meeting of the party council and the Green MPs held in January 1998 decided in favour of Finland's participation. The voting result was 31 in favour and 13 against, with the party chairperson Satu Hassi on the losing side.

The only Eduskunta parties that officially resisted membership were the *Christian League* (SKL) and the now defunct *Rural Party* (SMP). The Christian League has been in opposition since 1994, and it does not belong to a European-level party. SKL favours a Europe where independent nation-states practice wide-ranging co-operation. The party does not want to increase EU's powers, environmental matters excluded, and favours reducing EU's competence in agricultural matters. The June 1997 party congress decided against EMU membership despite the proposal by the party chairman Bjarne Kallis to postpone the decision. The party wants CFSP to remain as intergovernmental co-operation.

The *True Finns* (PS) is the most Eurocritical Eduskunta party. The party ideology is rather nationalistic, and the party was against EU membership in 1994, then as its predecessor, SMP. The party is in opposition and does not have links to any Europarty. True Finns wants the EU to be an association of independent nations and was against EMU. As party chairman Raimo Vistbacka has put it: 'Finland must not be driven deeper towards the dark core of Europe.'

Finnish party leaders prefer to portray the EU as an association of independent states, and downplay the overall significance of the Union. Referring to the principle of subsidiarity, parties demand that decision-making is brought closer to the citizens. However, apart from CAP, no party has put forward concrete proposals to reduce EU's powers. All Eduskunta parties support membership. On the other hand, no Finnish party can be classified as federalist. Support for integration is to a large extent instrumental, and focuses on safeguarding national economic and security interests. (Raunio 1997, 1999)

The strongest explanatory factors are party ideology and the influence of party elites, especially of party leaders. The most pro-integration parties – National Coalition, Swedish People's Party, Social Democrats and the Green League – are all internationally oriented and, with the partial exception of the Green League, are located in the centre of the left-right dimension. The parties also see the Union as a way to consolidate Finland's place in the West. The party elites have been particularly decisive in parties whose supporters have been critical or against the integration project: the Left Alliance, the Greens, SDP and the Centre. The pro-

membership views of the SDP and the Centre leaders were crucial in converting a section of their parties' supporters to the 'Yes'-camp in the 1994 referendum. Similar cue-taking occurred in the case of EMU. Cleavages within parties have not produced any organized factions, and Eurocriticism is based on prominent individual MPs. Such internal opposition is facilitated by the Finnish electoral system. Intra-party candidate selection is decentralized and voters choose between individual candidates. Party elites have taken a gamble on European issues by adopting positions which have been contradictory with the mood among the voters. For example, EMU membership was approved by the Eduskunta in April 1998 with 135 MPs for, 61 against, 1 abstaining, and two absent. At the same time public opinion surveys reported that only around 40 % of the citizens were in favour of the project. Such behaviour is mainly explained by the elites' desire not to exclude their parties from future government negotiations.

### **SWEDEN: STRONGLY EUROSCEPTICAL PUBLIC OPINION**

Public opinion provides a fundamental constraint on Swedish political parties, not least on the governing *Social Democratic Party* (SAP). As the largest Swedish political party, the SAP was instrumental in securing EU membership. Although the party leadership has remained in favour of integration, the supporters have been more sceptical. In fact, the awkward question of Europe has given rise to divisions and factionalization inside the party. (Aylott 1997) Manifestations of this are the formation of the subgroup, or faction, of Social Democratic EU critics and the fact that the social democrats fought the September 1995 Euroelection with lists containing both supporters and opponents of the EU. The party, as well as the cabinet, is also divided over EMU, but the present position of the party, and thereby of Sweden as an EU Member State, is that Sweden should 'wait and see'.

Ideologically and programmatically, the SAP tries to balance a principal support of the EU with a reluctance, not to say opposition, to further integration along a federalist path. The party is thus against the notion of a United States of Europe, instead pleading for national independence in regard to vital policy areas such as finance and defence. Various proposals for harmonization among EU member states in regard to issues such as taxes and employment are rejected, or at least met with instinctive scepticism. At the same time, the party has made an intensive effort to gain support for the active labour market policies that the party always has pleaded within Sweden. In this connection, the party has acted through the PES, which it joined already in November 1992. (Johansson 1999b) The membership of this Europarty has thus contributed to various activities of the SAP in regard to Europe and perhaps to the more active approach outlined in the Statement of Government Policy for the 1998-2002 parliament and by leading cabinet members, including Prime Minister Göran Persson himself. The Deputy Prime Minister and former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lena Hjelm-Wallén, is a Vice-President of the PES.

The *Moderate Party* (M) draws its ideological heritage from both liberalism and conservatism. Although the party, like its Finnish sister party, was very much united over EU membership the dual ideological influences have gradually expressed themselves in a growing gulf between the very pro-EU attitudes of the party leadership and free-market liberal sentiments within the party and the associated press. This gulf is especially evident over the single currency, which the party leadership strongly favours. The party also supports strengthening the CFSP and the institutions, thereby accepting an extension of majority voting and general institutional reform but opposing a federal-type two-chamber system and welfare policies at the EU level. In many ways, therefore, the party is at odds with the federal-minded and social-market oriented EPP. In combination with the leadership factor, transnational links have been important as such links have a great priority for the party elite. These factors have been mutually reinforcing since the party leader, Carl Bildt, ever since his years as a student politician in the 1970s has been very active in building personal connections through transnational party links.

Unlike its Finnish sister party and the wider European left, the *Left Party* (V) has been, and still is, nearly unanimous in its sceptical, not to say hostile, approach to European integration and to any kind of supranationalism, including the EMU. This unity is not that easy to explain on the basis of the explanatory factors suggested in this paper. Although part of an internationalist movement, the party has relatively undeveloped transnational links and, so it seems, has not absorbed any European influences through such links. Instead, its position must primarily be explained with reference to exclusively domestic factors, notably the exogenous factors of public opinion and party competition. The leftists have skillfully exploited the reservoir provided by the Eurosceptical public opinion. Having never been in government, the party and its leader has a freer position than a governing party. However, it is recalled that the Left Party is supporting the governing social democrats in the parliament elected in 1998.

The *Christian democrats* (Kd) are split between the pro-integrationist party elite and the more Eurosceptical supporters. Like the social democrats, the Christian democrats have experienced factionalization. This has contributed to the party's cautious approach in regard to supranationalism in general and the third stage of EMU in particular. As a party, however, it has favoured EU membership from the outset and has turned out to be inspired by the federalist thinking of the European Christian democratic movement, with which the party built closer transnational links from the early 1990s. In this case, such links have clearly contributed to the party approaches to European integration. Leadership influence must also be recognized. The reorientation towards continental Europe has distanced the party from the more Eurosceptical Nordic sister parties, especially the Finnish SKL.

Like its Finnish sister party, the *Centre Party* (C) has been internally divided over EU membership, but generally sceptical of supranational integration and instead advocating intergovernmentalist measures. In the end, however, the party came out in favour of a 'Yes' to

membership, provided that the policy of neutrality could be retained. Its position towards the EU, especially opposition to the single currency, provides a destabilizing factor in the event of the formation of a non-socialist government. The party's attitudes and behaviour reflect its ties with the farmers' interest groups. Arguably, the vacillating position of the party reflects a cost-benefit analysis for the agricultural sector as a whole, with many small-scale farmers suffering from the increased competition. However, the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) came out in favour of EU membership. Significantly, the party adopted the slogan 'Nja', which is a combination of 'Yes' and 'No', to Europe in the 1995 Euroelection. The party has relatively undeveloped transnational links and has seemingly not absorbed any ideas from abroad that might have changed its approach to European integration.

The *Liberal Party* (Fp) is united in its pro-integrationist approach to the EU. Its programme is closest to federal thinking in the party-political landscape. Because of the strongly Eurosceptical public opinion, the most federalist notions were dropped, however. Ideologically, the party is close to its sister parties in the ELDR over the European dimension but is more on the left on the left-right dimension as it stands for social liberalism. The party favours an extension of qualified majority voting, also in the CFSP, and a strengthening of the European Parliament.

The *Green Party* (Mp) took a firm decision against EU membership and has remained principally against the EU, with few dissenting voices. However, its role as an informal coalition partner to the governing social democrats has led to an internal discussion about European integration. Advocating Sweden's withdrawal from the EU is hard to reconcile with supporting a governing party which seeks a more active role for Sweden in the EU. Opposing supranational integration, with the exception of environmental issues, the Green Party is at odds with many of its European sister parties in the EFGP. Nevertheless, the party has taken advantage of the strongly Eurosceptical public opinion. The party did very well in the 1995 Euroelection, but badly in the 1998 general election. In the party competition for the Eurosceptical voters, the Left Party is currently more effective.

The strongest explanatory factors behind Swedish parties' European policies are public opinion and factionalism. The Eurosceptical public is a thorn on the sides of the political elites and will continue to be so given the anti-EU sentiments among the Swedes and that European integration has become a new cleavage in Swedish politics. (Oscarsson 1998) Issues related to European integration have, more or less, disrupted the cohesion within the political parties represented in the Riksdag. The pattern of party support and opposition to EU membership still reflects the positions in connection to the referendum in November 1994. There is a basic 'nation-state logic' behind party approaches to European integration in Sweden, with parties tending to advocate intergovernmental co-operation rather than supranational integration. (Johansson 1999a) Despite transnational influences and responses to the development of integration, the findings attest to the primacy of domestic arenas. It is at the domestic level that parties have their constituencies.

## CONCLUSION: EXPLAINING PARTISAN RESPONSES

Explaining party ideology on European integration is no simple task, let alone modelling it. In this paper we have identified seven inter-related factors which we argue explain party behaviour. Causal relationships are difficult to establish, but we can nevertheless isolate the differences between the two countries. The most problematic is the extent of integration, as it is obvious that no single party, party family, or Member State can alone dictate Europe's future. Thus we can primarily speak of party adaptation to exogenous developments. In Sweden public opinion and factionalism have been major obstacles, while in Finland party competition has required a lot of tactical manoeuvring from leadership to convince their followers to accept the logic of integration. In Finland the basic ideology of parties has been more conducive to pro-integrationism, whereas in Sweden it has worked in the other direction. Transnational links have had some impact in Sweden, while in Finland their effect has been modest at best.

More problematic from the point of view of democracy is the tendency of parties not to tackle potentially divisive issues. In both countries the future of the Union and the concept of federalism remain mysteries, as no debates have really started between or within parties. Federalism was hardly discussed during the 1994 referendums, with debate simply focusing on membership. However, federal Europe receives only marginal support among Finns and Swedes. (Holmberg 1998) In fact, four years into membership, the Swedes continue to debate whether they should be in or out. Thus Europe remains an abstract entity, as political rhetoric focuses on the familiar left-right dimension.

Issue avoidance combined with the secondary importance of the EU in party politics also explain why parties have been relatively successful in containing internal factionalism and discord, especially in Finland. By absorbing EU into their overall policy profile and allowing internal differences party leaders have in the large majority of national parties maintained organizational coherence. In the first Euroelections \_ held in September 1995 in Sweden, October 1996 in Finland \_ most parties allowed candidates to run their own campaigns, including those who deviated from the party line. Whether such a strategy will work in the long run is more dubious. More importantly, such ideological incoherence will no doubt increase electoral volatility and decrease party identification, two processes already well under way throughout the EU independent of integration. Ideological disunity may also cause electoral damage. Citizens find it difficult to identify party positions, even on critical and basically straightforward choices such as EMU. (Westle & Staeck 1998) By avoiding clear-cut issue positions parties slow down the Europeanization of Member States.



## REFERENCES

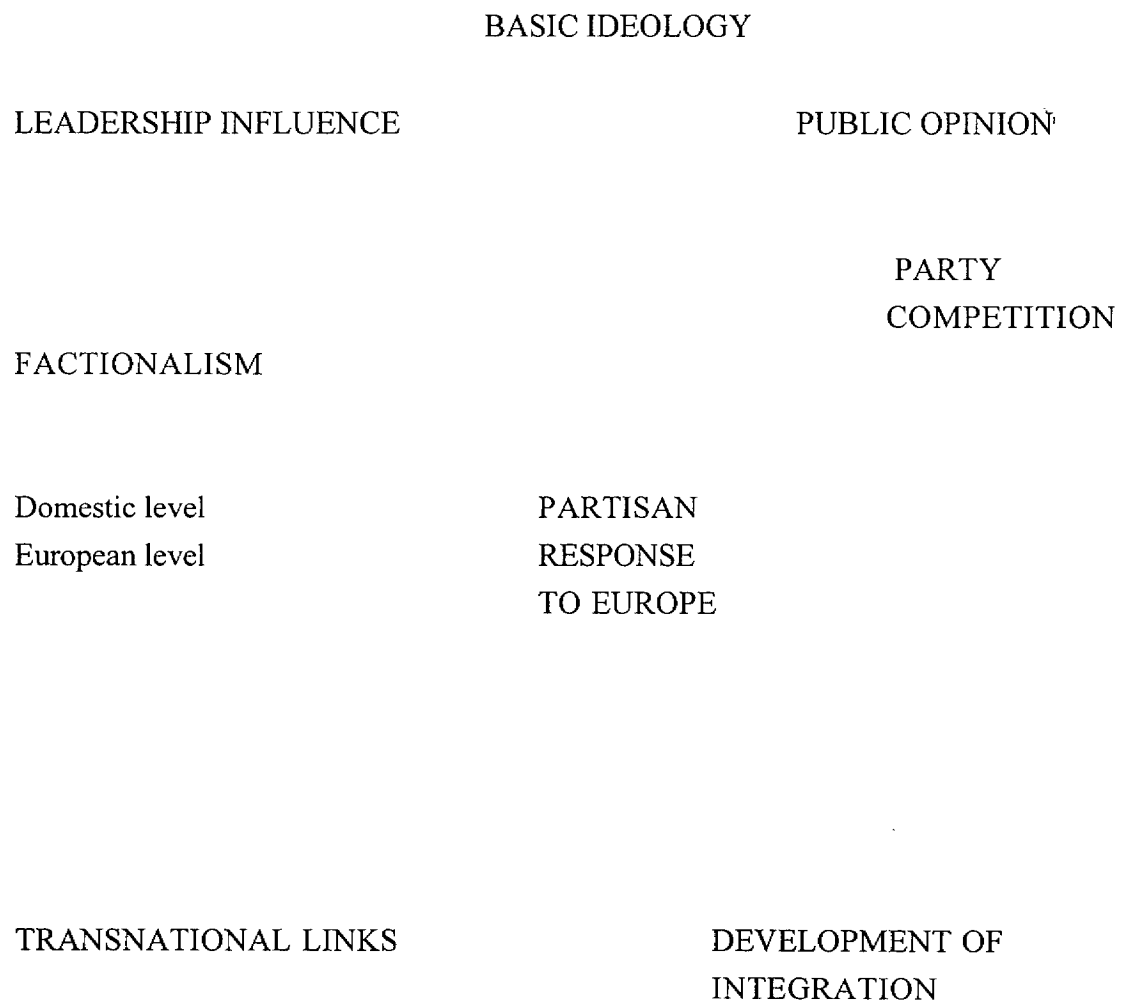
- Arter, D. (1995). The EU Referendum in Finland on 16 October 1994: A Vote for the West, not for Maastricht, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 33: 361-387.
- Aylott, N. (1997). Between Europe and Unity: The Case of the Swedish Social Democrats, *West European Politics* 20: 119-136.
- Bell, D.S. & Lord, C. eds. (1998). *Transnational Parties in the European Union*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Bomberg, E. (1998). *Green Parties and Politics in the European Union*. London: Routledge.
- Borg, S. & Sänkiäho, R. eds. (1995). *The Finnish Voter*. Tampere: The Finnish Political Science Association.
- Cafruny, A.W. (1997). Social Democracy in One Continent? Alternatives to a Neoliberal Europe, in A.W. Cafruny & C. Lankowski (eds.), *Europe's Ambiguous Unity: Conflict and Consensus in the Post-Maastricht Era*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Christensen, D.A. (1996). The Left-Wing Opposition in Denmark, Norway and Sweden: Cases of Euro-phobia?, *West European Politics* 19: 525-546.
- Christensen, D.A. (1998). Foreign Policy Objectives: Left Socialist Opposition in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, *Scandinavian Political Studies* 21: 51-70.
- Daniels, P. (1998). From Hostility to 'Constructive Engagement': The Europeanisation of the Labour Party, *West European Politics* 21: 72-96.
- Featherstone, K. (1988). *Socialist Parties and European Integration: A Comparative History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Franklin, M. & Marsh, M. & McLaren, L. (1994). Uncorking the Bottle: Popular Opposition to European Unification in the Wake of Maastricht, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 32: 455-472.
- Gaffney, J. ed. (1996). *Political Parties and the European Union*. London: Routledge.
- Garrett, G. (1998). *Partisan Politics in the Global Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Geyer, R. (1997). *The Uncertain Union: British and Norwegian Social Democrats in an Integrating Europe*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Geyer, R. (1998). Globalisation and the (Non-) Defence of the Welfare State, *West European Politics* 21: 77-102.
- Gilljam, M. & Holmberg, S. eds. (1996). *Ett knappt ja till EU: Väljarna och folkomröstningen 1994*. Stockholm: Norstedts.
- Gustavsson, J. (1998). *The Politics of Foreign Policy Change: Explaining the Swedish Reorientation on EC Membership*. Lund: Lund University Press.
- Guyomarch, A. (1995). The European Dynamics of Evolving Party Competition in France, *Parliamentary Affairs* 48: 100-123.

- Haahr, J.H. (1992). European Integration and the Left in Britain and Denmark, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 30: 77-100.
- Hanley, D. ed. (1994). *Christian Democracy in Europe: A Comparative Perspective*. London: Pinter.
- Heidar, K. & Svåsand, L. eds. (1997). *Partier uten grenser?* Otta: Tano Aschehoug.
- Hix, S. & Lord, C. (1997). *Political Parties in the European Union*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Holmberg, S. (1998). The Extent of European Integration, in A.T. Jenssen & P. Pesonen & M. Gilljam (eds.), *To Join or Not to Join: Three Nordic Referendums on Membership in the European Union*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Jansen, T. (1998). *The European People's Party: Origins and Development*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Jenssen, A.T. & Pesonen, P. & Gilljam, M. eds. (1998). *To Join or Not to Join: Three Nordic Referendums on Membership in the European Union*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Johansson, K.M. (1997). *Transnational Party Alliances: Analysing the Hard-Won Alliance Between Conservatives and Christian Democrats in the European Parliament*. Lund: Lund University Press.
- Johansson, K.M. (1999a). EU och partiväsendet, in K.M. Johansson (ed.), *Sverige i EU*. Stockholm: SNS Förlag.
- Johansson, K.M. (1999b). Tracing the employment title in the Amsterdam treaty: uncovering transnational coalitions, *Journal of European Public Policy* 6: 85-101.
- Ladrech, R. (1993). Social democratic parties and EC integration: Transnational party responses to Europe 1992, *European Journal of Political Research* 24: 195-210.
- Ladrech, R. (1997). Partisanship and Party Formation in European Union Politics, *Comparative Politics* 29: 167-185.
- Ladrech, R. and Marlière, P. eds. (1999): *Social Democratic Parties in the European Union: History, Organization, Policies*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Lankowski, C. (1997). Poetry on Palimpsest: Germany, the Greens and European Integration, in A.W. Cafruny & C. Lankowski (eds.), *Europe's Ambiguous Unity: Conflict and Consensus in the Post-Maastricht Era*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Listhaug, O. & Holmberg, S., & Sänkiäho, R. (1998). Partisanship and EU Choice, in A.T. Jenssen & P. Pesonen & M. Gilljam (eds.), *To Join or Not to Join: Three Nordic Referendums on Membership in the European Union*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Lynch, P. (1996). *Minority Nationalism and European Integration*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Miles, L. (1997). *Sweden and European Integration*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

- Oscarsson, H. (1998). *Den svenska partirymden: Väljarnas uppfattningar av konfliktstrukturen i partisystemet 1956-1996*. University of Gothenburg, Department of Political Science.
- Paloheimo, H. (1995). Pohjoismaiden EU-kansanäänestykset: puolueiden peruslinjat ja kansalaisten mielipiteet Suomessa, Ruotsissa ja Norjassa, *Politiikka* 37: 113-127.
- Raunio, T. (1997). Miten käy puolueiden yhtenäisyyden? Euroopan unioni haaste suomalaisille puolueille?, in S. Borg (ed.), *Puolueet 1990-luvulla: Näkökulmia suomalaiseen puoluet toimintaan*. Turku: Turun yliopisto, Valtio-opillisia tutkimuksia n:o 53.
- Raunio, T. (1999). Facing the European Challenge: Finnish Parties Adjust to the Integration Process, *West European Politics* 22: 138-159.
- Sundberg, J. (1996). *Partier och partisystem i Finland*. Esbo: Schildts.
- Sänkiäho, R. (1994). Puoluesidonnaisuutta vai sitoutumattomuutta, in P. Pesonen (ed.), *Suomen EU-kansanäänestys 1994: Raportti äänestäjien kannanotoista*. Helsinki: Ulkoasiainministeriö, Eurooppatiedotus ja Painatuskeskus.
- Taggart, P. (1998). A touchstone of dissent: Euroscepticism in contemporary Western European party systems, *European Journal of Political Research* 33: 363-388.
- Wessels, B. (1995). Evaluations of the EC: Élite or Mass-Driven?, in O. Niedermayer & R. Sinnott (eds.), *Public Opinion and Internationalized Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Westle, B. & Staeck, N. (1998). Nationale Parteien als Vermittlungsinstanzen europäischer Politik? Das Beispiel der Debatte um die Einführung des Euro, in T. König & E. Rieger & H. Schmitt (eds.) *Europa der Bürger? Voraussetzungen, Alternativen, Konsequenzen*. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Wood, P.C. (1997). French Political Party Opposition to European Integration, 1981-1996: Myth or Reality?, in A.W. Cafruny & C. Lankowski (eds.), *Europe's Ambiguous Unity: Conflict and Consensus in the Post-Maastricht Era*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

**Figure 1.**

**Factors shaping partisan responses to European integration.**



**Table 1.**  
**Distribution of seats in the Eduskunta, 1991-1999 (%).**

PARTY	PARTY FAMILY	1991 elections	1995 elections	1999 elections
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	Social democrat	24	31.5	25.5
Centre Party of Finland (KESK)	Agrarian / center	27.5	22	24
National Coalition (KOK)	Conservative	20	19.5	23
Left Alliance (VAS)	Radical left	9.5	11	10
Swedish People's Party (RKP)	Ethno-regionalist / Liberal	5.5	5.5	5.5
Green League of Finland (VIHR)	Green	5	4.5	5.5
Christian League (SKL)	Christian	4	3.5	5
Finnish Rural Party (SMP)	Agrarian	3.5		
Liberal People's Party (LKP)	Liberal	0.5		
Young Finns (NUORS)	Conservative		1	
True Finns (PS)	Agrarian		0.5	0.5
Group Virtanen			0.5	
Reform Group				0.5
Åland Island		0.5	0.5	0.5
TOTAL		100	100	

Source: www.stat.fi.

Note: The Eduskunta has 200 MPs elected from 14 multimember constituencies. The autonomous region of Åland Island is entitled to one seat. This person sits with the RKP group.

**Table 2.**  
**Distribution of seats in the Riksdag, 1991-1999 (%).**

PARTY	PARTY FAMILY	1991 elections	1994 elections	1998 elections
Social Democratic Party (SAP)	Social democrat	39.5	46.1	37.5
Moderate Party (M)	Conservative	22.9	22.9	23.5
Left Party (V)	Radical left	4.6	6.3	12.3
Christian democrats (Kd)	Christian	7.4	4.3	12.0
Centre Party (C)	Agrarian / Center	8.9	7.7	5.2
Liberal Party (Fp)	Liberal	9.5	7.4	4.9
Green Party (Mp)	Green		5.2	4.6
New Democracy (Nyd)	Populist	7.2		
TOTAL		100	100	100

Source: Sveriges Riksdag.

Note: The Riksdag has 349 seats. The electoral system is proportional. The threshold for representation is 4 %, or 12 % for an electoral district, of which there are 29 altogether.

**Table 3.****Party positions in Finland in the 1994 EU membership referendum.**

PARTY	PARTY LINE	SUPPORTERS VOTING 'YES' (%)
Social Democrats	Yes	75
Centre	Yes	36
National Coalition	Yes	89
Left Alliance	No decision	24
Swedish People's Party	Yes	85
Green League	No decision	55
Christian League	No	Not available

Sources: Party documents, Sänkiaho (1994).

**Table 4.****Party positions in Sweden in the 1994 EU membership referendum.**

PARTY	PARTY LINE	SUPPORTERS VOTING 'YES' (%)
Social Democratic Party	Yes	50
Moderate Party	Yes	86
Left Party	No	10
Christian democrats	Yes	41
Centre Party	Yes	45
Liberal Party	Yes	81
Green Party	No	15
New Democracy	Yes	34

Sources: Party documents, Gilljam & Holmberg (1996), Miles (1997).