

# The Statement of Government EU-policy 2021



Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on EU Policy,  
20 January 2021

Mr/Madam Speaker,

In November 2019, here in the Riksdag, the Prime Minister delivered the first ever Statement of Government EU Policy.

Since then, the European Union has been put to the test. The world, the EU and Sweden are fighting a pandemic that is causing death, fear and unemployment.

One thing is certain. Massive threats such as pandemics, the climate crisis or terrorism cannot be tackled by one country alone. We need cooperation. We need a systematic approach. We need solidarity.

Today, I would like to focus on three areas that are crucial for the EU and for Sweden.

Firstly, the path out of the pandemic.  
Secondly, respect for the EU's fundamental values.  
And thirdly, how we in the EU can better stand up for our shared interests.

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Mr/Madam Speaker,

I would like to begin with a reminder of why the European Union is so vitally important to us,

why we dedicate time and energy to EU cooperation – cooperation that is probably more important today than ever before.

It is because the EU affords Sweden strength that is significantly greater than our own.

Most importantly, together we can secure peace on our continent. We have forged, and continue to forge, such strong ties between us that war between our countries is now totally inconceivable.

We can use the strength of cooperation in the climate transition and in the fight for our democratic values. We benefit from being able to trade, without barriers, in the entire European market.

Indeed, on every single issue, Sweden is strengthened through this cooperation.

EU cooperation is extremely valuable in itself.

But the EU is also important for global peace, security and development. And Sweden must exert the considerable influence that our membership provides.

Sweden's starting point must be that we participate fully in EU cooperation and play an active role in shaping every aspect of it in a way that protects Swedish interests.

We gain a great deal while contributing to other countries' development – this is exactly what effective cooperation is about.

Sweden's established priorities for its work in the EU remain in place: creating more decent jobs, tackling the climate crisis, increasing security and implementing a humane, legally certain and sustainable migration policy.

Sweden has contributed to the formation of strong alliances in the EU. In the budget negotiations in July, we took clear and joint responsibility with three other countries, which also had a significant impact.

By taking a clear lead early in the process, we have been able to gather a growing number of countries behind both a European climate law and higher climate ambitions.

Jointly with several other countries, Sweden has presented proposals on how the single market can be developed.

And all these successes are grounded in strong positions that the Riksdag has taken.

The EU is a union in which not only the biggest decide. An active Member State – like Sweden – that wants to be fully engaged in the core of the EU, can have influence that exceeds its size.

Regardless of what we discuss, we do so with the knowledge that the European Union is a union that Sweden has everything to gain from.

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Mr/Madam Speaker,

The world is in the midst of a pandemic.

In country after country, COVID-19 cases are back at the levels we saw in spring last year.

People are dying. More and more are falling ill. Many more are losing their livelihoods.

When COVID-19 started spreading throughout Europe at the beginning of the year, several countries responded by going against the principles of cooperation.

Countries closed their borders without warning and hoarded medical equipment. We could not really count on free movement when it really mattered.

Cooperation has improved significantly since then. EU Member States have agreed on a massive recovery package. Common EU stockpiles of medical equipment are being built up, including in Sweden. And most importantly, together we have made vaccines available to all EU countries, and right after Christmas the first people were vaccinated.

The focus now is on curbing the spread of the virus and protecting lives, health and jobs. Continued vaccination will play an important part in this.

And when the pandemic is over, equally intense cooperation will be needed to build a stronger EU.

This does not mean that the way forward for the EU is more indebtedness or creating trade barriers against the world. But nor is it to carry on as though nothing has happened.

Recovery must strengthen our preparedness for future crises of various kinds. And more cooperation is needed. We must cooperate to secure access to items that are essential to our preparedness to respond to pandemics and in other strategic contexts.

Crisis response in Sweden – and the entire EU – will improve in a European Union that functions well.

And recovery must be part of strengthening our resilience here in Europe, in areas that are vital to our security. But in some areas, strategic autonomy must be protected without the EU turning inwards. Our open economy serves us well.

We need to strengthen competitiveness, accelerate digital transformation and ensure that universities in the EU are absolutely world class.

To make this possible, we must have the highest level of ambition for our businesses, research and education.

At the same time, we need to reduce the gaps – within and between EU Member States. We need a Europe of equals.

A strong Europe, with a fully functioning single market, combined with decent work and a high standard of living.

This is how we will build a strong EU that is prepared for the future.

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Mr/Madam Speaker,

Managing the COVID-19 crisis and ensuring that we emerge from it stronger requires that we also take strong action to accelerate the climate transition.

This is an existential issue for all of humanity. A transition is essential to secure our basic living conditions, our future welfare. And the EU has an extremely important role to play here.

This cannot wait – we must act now. And we must get others to join. The situation is serious but the fight against climate change also offers huge opportunities if we do what must be done.

When the countries of the world now renew their targets and commitments under the Paris Agreement, it is gratifying that the EU can maintain its leading position. This was very clear when we presented our new ambitious commitments to the United Nations a few weeks ago. Now it is a matter of following through. Sweden will work consistently to ensure that the EU takes the necessary steps to substantially reduce emissions within the timeframe.

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Mr/Madam Speaker,

EU cooperation is based on a set of fundamental values:

respect for human rights,  
freedom and democracy,  
equality, gender equality and tolerance,  
justice and pluralism,  
an independent judiciary.

Each one of these values is important – to every individual in every Member State. And upholding these values is crucial to the EU, to democracy, to us all.

In several countries, there are alarming examples of a lack of respect for these values.

Judges are removed or appointed through procedures that are not independent. Research freedom is under threat.

Conditions are deteriorating for free media, making it more difficult to scrutinise those in power.

The EU is a union of democracies. All Member States must uphold the fundamental values that they pledged to abide by on joining the EU. When our values are ignored, trust between Member States is lost, confidence in our policies is eroded and the strength of the EU is diminished.

Without mutual trust, our economy is also threatened. Investments are jeopardised, trade suffers and jobs disappear.

For a number of years, Sweden has pushed to make receipt of EU funds by a Member State dependent on its respect for the rule of law. Since the beginning of this year a mechanism has been in place that, for the first time ever, links EU funds to the EU's values.

This is a historic and completely necessary position.

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Mr/Madam Speaker,

The pandemic has hit Europe hard.

At the same time, ruthless Islamist terrorists have seized the chance to strike.

The terror attack in Vienna.

An attack in Nice that claimed three lives.

And before that, the murder of French teacher Samuel Paty.

Every attack of this nature that occurs in a Member State is an attack on the whole of Europe, on our open Europe.

Serious crime knows no borders; it spreads ruthlessly all over Europe. This is why all of the EU needs to fight crime everywhere, together. There must be no place to hide.

To tackle crime, more cooperation between police, prosecutors and other authorities in the EU Member States is essential. By requiring passenger data from more forms of transport than air traffic, we can better follow the travel routes that criminals take.

We must work to ensure that law enforcement authorities have the best possible access to information and evidence, including digital access. And the Government is now preparing Sweden's participation in the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

Again, this shows that cooperation is essential to tackle major societal challenges.

Terrorism, crime, pandemics, migration and climate change.

Another challenge is jobs. We must work to create more jobs in all Member States. Our single market offers great opportunities for businesses, and we must invest in education, research and innovation to create even better conditions. But jobs must be decent, conditions fair, and workers must not be pitted against each other. At the same time, we will not jeopardise the Swedish model under any circumstances.

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Mr/Madam Speaker,

Last year, the United Kingdom left the EU, and on 1 January it also left the customs union and the single market. We regret this, but it was very good that, at the eleventh hour, an agreement on the future relationship was reached. This should be as broad and as deep as possible and, at the same time, we will continue to develop our bilateral cooperation with the UK.

There is insecurity in our neighbourhood, in the world.

The EU has access to a range of tools to manage the challenges and threats. But the EU could be an even stronger global actor.

This is crucial when the EU gathers and speaks out with one voice against an act of violence or imposes sanctions. This is why it is unfortunate every time individual countries prevent the EU from taking a joint stance on such issues.



Sweden must take part in building a strong Europe – an EU that engages in international cooperation, that stands up for the European security order, for democracy and human rights, for the rule of law.

Through the EU, Sweden can make a stronger contribution to peace and security in our neighbourhood. Our support for the people of Belarus fighting for freedom grows stronger in unison with other countries. The protests against Russia's abuses against its own citizens, its aggression against Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea become more powerful because they come from a unified EU.

In just a few hours' time, Joe Biden will be sworn in as the 46th President of the United States. The United States is a central partner for the EU and for Sweden. With the new incoming administration, we see great potential for deepened transatlantic cooperation on the rules-based world order, climate action and security.

China's rise brings both opportunities and challenges. Deeper cooperation between the EU and China is needed in areas such as climate transition and trade, as seen for example in the investment agreement between the EU and China. This cooperation must be based on the interests and values of the EU, including human rights.

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Mr/Madam Speaker,

We are in the midst of a pandemic, which also poses new challenges for European cooperation.

But I am convinced that the EU will overcome this crisis too.  
The EU needs to overcome this crisis.

So that the unique project that the EU is can grow even stronger, and EU cooperation can continue to protect openness and solidarity.  
Cooperation that makes every individual country stronger, that makes Sweden stronger.  
A union that promotes de-escalation and dialogue in a world of harsh rhetoric.

Sweden will continue to help build cooperation in the EU.