

Swedes: 'handsome, hi-tech and healthy'

Written by Johan Nylander

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Swedes are being described as "handsome, hi-tech and healthy" in a global soft-power survey that ranks Sweden among the world's most influential nations.

The Monocle magazine analyzes countries so called soft power -- the ability to obtain what one wants through co-option and attraction -- based on factors like number of foreign correspondent in the country, albums on the global top 50, percentage of GDP spend on aid etcetera.

For the second year running Sweden came in at number six, ahead of countries like Japan, Canada and China.

"If soft power lies in a country's ability to attract and persuade, Swedes are well poised for continued success", the magazine said.

"With their pretty Bond-girls, Millennium novels, skinny jeans, indie rock bands and innovative technology solutions, Swedes have long stood for beauty, mystery, health and modernity".

The magazine also pointed out that Sweden's foreign minister Carl Bildt has raised the country's profile and given it a role in many international issues. However, it also said that Bildt has faced criticism for his handling of the case of two captured Swedish journalists in Ethiopia.

Sweden's new soft-power push is a plan to become Europe's leading gastronomic nation and double the nation's food export by 2020, according to the Monocle survey.

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"You've heard of Swedish meatballs - now get ready for some roasted reindeer", it said.

Although the U.S. is being described as a "hard-power player" with corporations indulging in "bullish muscle-flexing" it is still regarded as the world's top soft power, with a giant cultural export, a large number of Nobel Laureates and creative companies. "It's not the case of blue jeans versus the Red Army any longer but the power of American culture is still second to none", the magazine pointed out.

The U.K. was ranked as number two, followed by France, Germany and Australia. Norway came in at number 11, Denmark 12 and Finland 15.

London-based lifestyle magazine Monocle provides a globalist perspective on international affairs, culture and design. It was founded by Tyler Brûlé, a Canadian journalist and entrepreneur.