

EUROBAROMETER 70

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2008

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPAIN

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Eurobarometer EB70- Spain

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INTRODUCTION EB70- SPAIN

Between the 9th of October and the 6th of November of 2008, TNS - Demoscopia carried out wave EB70 of the Standard Eurobarometer in the 27 Member States of the European Union.

During that period, European Member States have witnessed a serious economic crisis, with most countries having to adopt urgent measures in order to establish some stability and security for their citizens. These facts are particularly reflected in the changing attitudes of the European public opinion in the current edition. As the main specificities of EB70-Spain, in respect to earlier editions, we can refer to the changing public opinion in respect of the current economic situation in Spain, as well as the perception of the public in respect to the future of the EU. As in earlier editions, the most important results in respect to the fears of the public and their trust in various national institutions are shown looking at four separate themes. Also, some interest is again placed upon issues and activities for which, according to the public, decisions taken should be a task of either the national government and/or the EU. Lastly, in the current edition, the Spanish public was asked about its trust in the main EU institutions, as well as the image that they perceive of the European Union.

The website of the Eurobarometer can be consulted at:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm

Issue 1: The general climate and level of satisfaction of the Spanish public

More than a quarter of the Spanish interviewees (26%) thought that their life in the next year will be “better”, compared with 53% that felt their life will be the “same”. 18% of the group thinks it will be “worse”.

	Better	Worse	Same
Your life in general	26	18	53
The economic situation in Spain	18	51	26
The economic situation in your household	22	24	51
The employment situation in Spain	14	58	24
Your personal employment situation	20	14	61

- ✓ The national economy was perceived by the Spanish public as being “rather bad”, according to more than half of the group (52%), compared with an EU average for this response of 46%.
- ✓ The cost of living was also thought to be as “rather bad” according to 54% of the Spanish public (EU27 average for the same response was 49%).
- ✓ The “housing” situation was thought to be as “rather bad” by almost half of the group (47%).
- ✓ 45% of the Spanish group thought that unemployment was the most important issue facing Spain at the moment. This was followed by the economic situation (44% chose this option).
- ✓ Immigration has lost its first place in the current edition, falling from 18% in EB69 to 13% of those thinking this was an important issue for Spain.

Issue 2: Public opinion on the Spanish membership to the EU

The Spanish public values positively their country's EU membership

- ✓ 62% of the interviewees said that being an EU member state is "something good" for Spain.
- ✓ Almost two-thirds of the Spanish poll (63%) considered that the EU membership had benefited Spain.
- ✓ Spanish public opinion has pointed to the fact that it is the Euro that they mostly value about the EU, with 34% giving that answer.
- ✓ However, the majority of the poll (44%) opted for the response "the freedom to travel, study and work in any place of Europe".
- ✓ One of the responses chosen by Europeans was "peace" (27%), however, only 9% of the Spanish public cited this option as being important for them when thinking about the EU.
- ✓ When comparing the purchasing power in Spain with that of five years earlier, 43% of the Spanish public thought that it was "worse", (EU27 average was 51% for the same response).
- ✓ Spanish perception on the future perspective of the "future generations" was quite pessimistic.

Issue 3: Feelings of the Spanish public towards the EU

The Spanish public is rather pessimistic about the future of Europe, when compared to other Europeans

- ✓ 46% of the Spanish poll said that the national economy was “somewhat less good” than that of the European Union, while only a quarter of the interviewees (24%) said it was somewhat better.
- ✓ About the employment situation in Spain, almost half said that this was “somewhat less good” than that of the EU (49% of the respondents).
- ✓ 31% of the self-employed, 26% of those in white-collar occupations and 23% of manual workers thought that the economic situation is “somewhat better” than in the rest of the European member states.
- ✓ The Spanish public has an image of the EU that is “fairly positive”.
- ✓ More than half of the group (55%) said they “tend to trust” the EU
- ✓ However, 37% of the interviewees thought that things in the European Union are going in the wrong direction, while another 29% thought things were going in the right direction
- ✓ 48% of the unemployed expressed the opinion that things in the EU were going in the wrong direction and 23% of them in the right direction.

Issue 4: The Spanish public and the European institutions

The European Parliament is the institution the Spanish public trusts most

- ✓ Spanish trust levels towards the EU institutions have remained at very good levels. At least half of the interviewees said they “tend to trust” the principal EU institutions.
- ✓ Once again, it is the EU Parliament that enjoys the highest levels of trust among the Spanish public. 57% said they tend to trust this institution, while another 22% said that they tend not to trust the EU Parliament.
- ✓ 52% of the Spanish interviewees said they “tend to trust” the European Commission and half of them tend to trust the European Central Bank.
- ✓ More than two-thirds of the poll thinks that the role of the European institutions is important for them.

However, Spanish public opinion was slightly more critical when asked if they agreed their voice was heard in Europe. More than half of the group (58%) said they tended to disagree with that statement.

When asked about the decision-making process in the EU, the Spanish public is in line with the public in most of the European Member States in choosing some issues as being the responsibility of their national government (like education and health), while others (immigration, environment) were decisions that should be taken jointly between the EU and the Spanish government.

Conclusions EB70- SPAIN

The current edition of EB70 reveals that, on average, the Spanish public has a more negative evaluation than in earlier editions in regard to issues like their personal, economic, as well as employment situation, and tend to show lower levels of optimism towards the actual situation of Spain and the EU.

According to the interviewees, unemployment and the economic situation are the main issues that Spain is facing right now, while immigration has lowered its position in comparison to earlier editions. In relation to that latter issue, Spanish public opinion is that decisions should be taken jointly within the EU. Other issues, like health and education, are considered to be mostly the responsibility of the national government.

Additionally, both the Spanish Parliament and Government have enjoyed good levels of trust in the current edition, and opinion regarding the image of the EU is “very good”. Still, the Spanish public has the feeling that their voice is not being heard in the EU, although Spain’s EU membership is considered to be a good thing.

Lastly, Spanish respondents trust the work of the EU but they think that the EU is going in the wrong direction. They feel that the future of those who are children today is going to be more difficult than that of their own generation.
