

EUROBAROMETER 71

THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION

Summer 2009

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPAIN

This study was commissioned by the General Directorate of Communication.

The report was prepared for the European Commission's Representation in Spain

The conclusions and opinions set forth in this document do not represent the viewpoints of the European Commission but are those of its authors: Eva Aranda and Vicente Castellanos.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- ✓ Spaniards are the most optimistic Europeans with regard to their expectations for the Union's economic situation over the next twelve months (36% of them think that the economic situation in the EU will be better).
- ✓ The European Union is the most trusted institution for Spaniards (51%).
- ✓ Most Spaniards believe that the European Union has power and influence in the world (71%).
- ✓ Spanish citizens see the European Union as the institution that is most capable of effectively dealing with the repercussions of the financial and economic crisis (24% of them consider that the EU is the most capable in this regard).
- ✓ Spaniards increasingly identify themselves with Europe (46% of them feel European to a large extent).
- ✓ Two out of every three Spaniards are optimistic about the future of the European Union (67%).
- ✓ Citizens residing in Spain consider the benefits that immigration can offer Spain and/or Europe more favourably than the rest of Europeans do, as a whole.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The general climate of Spain's public opinion.

- Three out of every four Spaniards are satisfied with the life they live; however, the level of satisfaction for Spaniards is lower than the average for European citizens as a whole.
- For the medium term, the expectations that Spaniards hold **regarding the economic situation in their country** are more optimistic than those held by respondents elsewhere in Europe; furthermore, in comparison to the same statistic measured at the beginning of the year, the percentage of optimists has gone up considerably: the percentage of people that believe Spain's economic situation is going to improve has increased from 18% to 32%.
- Spanish citizens are the most optimistic in the EU regarding their **expectations for the Union's economic situation over the next twelve months**. 36% of citizens think that it is going to improve, which not only represents the highest percentage of all the countries surveyed, but also shows an increase of 17 percentage points with regard to the same statistic measured at the beginning of this year (when only 19% of them thought that the EU's economic situation was going to get better).

Opinion of the Spanish public regarding their EU membership.

- **Spaniards hold a relatively unanimous and positive opinion regarding what being a member of the European Union means for Spain: more than 7 out of every 10 people consider it to be something good (71%). Also, the majority of Spaniards (70%) feel that Spain has "benefited" from belonging to the European Union.** This perception has increased by seven percentage points since the previous poll, which means that the perception of it being beneficial has become stronger.

- One out of every three Spaniards (34%) has confidence in their **national Government** as an institution, which is slightly higher than respondents elsewhere in the EU-27. This percentage is slightly higher than the confidence they hold in the **Congress** as an institution (32%). Regarding the same statistic, as measured in January, the degree of trust placed in the Government and in the Congress has fallen (by 14 and 11 percentage points, respectively).
- **The European Union inspires confidence in more than half of Spain's citizens (51%)**, a figure that surpasses the average recorded for the EU-27 by four points. This figure places Spain in first place among the Big Five (Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom), in terms of the confidence placed in the said institution. In comparison with the same statistic in the January 2009 poll, a slight drop can be observed (55% of the citizens had confidence in the EU at that time).

In the opinion of more than eight Spaniards out of ten, the European Union should **lead the world in democracy and peace (84%)**, **protect the environment (82%)** and **cooperate in research and innovation (80%)**.

- Opinion regarding the **European Central Bank** is similar to that described for the European Union, although the percentages in this case are somewhat lower (44%). The confidence placed by Spanish population in this institution has not varied over time, even though it has varied five percentage points in the EU-27 as a whole.
- On the other hand, in terms of the impact that different levels of government have on the living conditions for their citizens, **in most of the EU-27 countries it is the public authority at national level that is mentioned the most**. In the case of Spain specifically, national authorities are perceived to have the most impact (43%), followed by regional or local governments (38%) and the EU (11%).

The European Union, the world and globalization.

- **The general opinion is that economic power determines a country's overall power and influence.** In the case of people residing in Spain, 57% share this opinion; however, 22% think that the most important thing is the country's political influence, 12% consider it to be its military power and 7% feel it is the country's cultural influence.
- 71% of Spanish citizens consider that economic power is what best defines the European Union: therefore, **most Spaniards believe that the European Union holds power and influence in the world.**
- **In most countries, more than half the population sees globalization as an opportunity for economic growth.** In Spain, 59% of the population feels this way (nine percentage points higher than the poll undertaken in March 2008).
- **Spanish citizens feel that the European Union plays a positive role in globalization,** protecting citizens from globalization's negative effects (55%) and allowing them to benefit from its positive effects (60%). In comparison to the data obtained in January 2009, the number of people who perceive the European Union's role on the effects of globalization as being positive has gone up (previously, 48% felt that the EU protected them against the negative effects and 51% felt that it allowed them to benefit from globalization's positive effects).

The European Union and the economic crisis.

- Citizens see the European Union as the institution that is most capable of effectively dealing with the repercussions of the economic and financial crisis. In Spain, 24% of the population considers that the EU is the most

capable institution in this regard, followed by the United States (22%) and the Spanish Government (18%).

- **The measures that citizens give most priority to when requesting help from the European Union** to overcome the effects of the financial and economic crisis are those that are focused on **providing support to SMEs (small- and medium-sized enterprises) and the unemployed.**

European identity.

- **In comparison to last year, the sense of “feeling European” has become stronger amongst the Spanish:** the percentage of people who feel “European to a large extent” went up by six percentage points (from 40% to 46%), while the equivalent figure across the European Union as a whole only went up by three points.
- **For Spaniards, geography, democratic values and the sharing of a common culture and history are the main elements that comprise European identity.**

The Future of the European Union in 2030.

- 67% of the Spaniards look the future of the European Union optimistically and, as is the case in most of the statistical indicators, Spanish citizens are the most optimistic in the European Union (in which 64% are optimistic).
- Citizens feel that economy and employment will be more important in the future, although they would prefer that this were the case for the environment and for leisure. They would like to have a society where solidarity and tolerance exist, although they think that the society of the future will be more individualistic and less tolerant than they would desire

and that, although they would like to have more time to dedicate to their families, few of them believe that this will actually happen.

- **Of the top five issues** that they believe Spain will have to confront in 2030, **three of them are of an economic nature: the economic situation (28%), unemployment (26%) and pensions (14%); and the other two are within the social sphere: concerns regarding delinquency (18%) and immigration (15%).**

Immigration.

- 58% of the Spanish think that immigrants are necessary for work in certain sectors of their economy, that the arrival of immigrants in Europe could be effective in solving the problem of an ageing population (62%) and, a similar proportion that immigrants play an important role in promoting better understanding and tolerance with the rest of the world.
- For more than sixty percent of Spanish citizens, people belonging to other ethnic groups could also be an opportunity for enriching the cultural life of Spain.
- On the negative side, just under half of the Spanish poll (48%) considers that the presence of people from other ethnic groups gives rise to feelings of insecurity and 57% of the poll feels that the presence of these groups is causing unemployment to rise in Spain.