

EUROBAROMETER 72

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Autumn 2009

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPAIN

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*The interpretations and opinions reflected herein are solely the expression of its authors:
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HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ One in every two Spaniards (47%) has read, heard or seen some type of information on the Spanish Presidency of the European Union Council. Three out of every four considers this an important event.
- ✓ 46% of Spaniards believe that **their country's membership of the European Union** is a positive thing. Two out of every three considers that EU membership has benefited Spain.
- ✓ Confidence in the Spanish government has dropped from 48% last year to 29% at present. At the same time, confidence in the European Union as an institution has increased to 56%. **This figure exceeds the figure recorded in the previous Eurobarometer by five points and is 8 points above the UE27 average (48%).**
- ✓ 40% of Spaniards believe that the European Union's **economic situation** will improve in the next 12 months.
- ✓ As to the impact of the recession on employment, 62% of Spaniards believe the worst has yet to come.
- ✓ When asked about the European Union's priorities in the coming years, 74% mentioned economic recovery.

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The Spanish presidency of the EU Council

- **Slightly fewer than half the Spanish respondents (47%) have read, heard or seen some sort of information about the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.** The corresponding average level of awareness among European citizens is 21%.
- Three of every four Spaniards (74%) believe it is important for Spain to hold the European Presidency in the first half of 2010.
- In general, European citizens as a whole (66%) are optimistic about the future of the European Union, and **Spain is one of the countries at the forefront of this optimism** (75% are quite or very optimistic).

How the Spanish population rates their country's EU membership

- **The overall evaluation of Spain's European Union membership is positive: 64% believe it is positive**, thus making it one of the countries that best rates pertaining to this institution, higher than the European average, which is 53%. Likewise, the benefit of belonging to the EU is also perceived: **two out of every three Spanish citizens believe that Spain has benefited from its membership.**
- In line with the European Union average, **only 29% of Spaniards trust in their national Government as an institution. Confidence in the Government has dropped drastically** since January 2009, when this level was 48%, as has confidence in the national Parliament, from 43% last year to 29% at present.
- The level of **Spanish confidence in the European Union as an institution has increased (56%, 5 points higher than the European Union average).** The level of trust in the **European Central Bank is 46%.**

- Regarding the impact on Spaniards' lives of the various Government levels, as in the rest of the European Union countries as a whole, citizens believe that it is **the national Government that has the most influence on their living conditions** (49%), ahead of local or regional authorities (34%) and the European authorities (12%). In addition, in Spain, **68% of respondents state that political decision making in the heart of the European Union, does not take the public regional or local authorities sufficiently into account.**
- In spite of this, the majority of Spanish citizens consider that **decisions** should be made jointly **within the European Union and not by the Government of each country alone** on a large variety of matters such as the fight against terrorism, environmental protection, defence and foreign affairs and immigration. On the other hand, when it comes to strictly economic matters, such as pensions and taxes, they would prefer the Spanish government to control them.

The general climate of public opinion in Spain

- **74% of Spaniards state they are satisfied with the lives they lead in our country**, with practically no variation compared to the previous measure, and in line with the average of the rest of the European Union countries.
- Expectations for the economic situation in their own country are also in line with those of the rest of the European countries: **27% of Spaniards have better expectations for Spain in the coming 12 months**, a fall compared to the figure recorded in the summer survey (32%). The proportion of those who believe that the financial situation of their household will improve in the next 12 months (27%) is higher, and therefore indicates more optimism than the European Union average.
- **There is also more optimism about the economic situation of the European Union in the next 12 months.** 40% believe the economic situation will improve, while the European average is 30%.

The European Union and the economic recession

- Regarding the **impact of the economic recession on employment, 62% of Spaniards believe the worst is yet to come**, while just 34% believe that the impact of the recession has already hit rock bottom.
- The institutions that the Spaniards perceive to be most capable of dealing with the economic and financial recession are the European Union (26%) and their national Government (25%).
- Slightly over half the respondents (54%) state that Spain would be better protected against this economic and financial crisis if it had kept the peseta. **However, 43% state that, as a whole, the Euro has mitigated the effects of the recession.**
- Regarding the priority measures needed to **reform the financial system** of the European Union, the Spaniards mention the transparency of the profits,

costs and risks of the financial markets (29%) and the need to ensure the accountability of financial managers, including bonuses (24%).

Priorities of the future European Union

- Concern about the recession is crystal clear when Spaniards are asked about the priorities of the European Union in the coming years: **three out of every four (74%) mention economic recovery**. To ensure this recovery, the priorities mentioned by the Spanish are to improve the quality of teaching (36%), to implement a European supervisory system for the financial markets and stronger European institutions, while also facilitating the access of companies to bank loans (both received 34% of mentions).