



Country Issue: Spain



The Relaunch of Europe

Mapping Member States' Reform Interests

Europa

ip Institut für
Europäische Politik

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Institut für Europäische Politik (Institute for European Politics, IEP) is one of the leading foreign and European policy research centres in the Federal Republic of Germany dedicated to the study of European integration.

Further information on the project can be found here:

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Deadline for data collection: September 2017

Editorial deadline: June 2018

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THE RELAUNCH OF EUROPE

MAPPING MEMBER STATES' REFORM INTERESTS

The Relaunch of Europe. Mapping Member States' Reform Interests (RelaunchEU) is a project conducted by the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) on behalf of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) that surveys the implementation prospects for twelve concrete reform proposals. It covers the policy areas of Social Union, Economic and Monetary Union and Defence Union as well as asylum and migration policy and the EU's institutional set-up. Furthermore, it analyses the support for flexible integration and the positioning towards the five scenarios presented in the European Commission's »White Paper on the Future of Europe« of spring 2017. It covers the positions of national governments and of relevant progressive political parties, which received a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the previous European or national elections.¹

The study follows two main objectives: (1) It demonstrates the scope of action for prompt reforms of the EU in the selected policy areas while also taking into account which member states would, under certain conditions, be willing to implement the specific proposals. (2) It empirically determines which member states could belong to an avant-garde group willing to deepen integration.

Researchers from think tanks and research institutions in the member states of the EU-27 compiled information to determine the position of governments and progressive political parties towards the twelve reform proposals. This qualitative analysis reflects the country experts' views and is based on documents such as coalition agreements, government or party programmes, position papers, press releases, interviews, op-ed pieces, and official documents. It presents a snapshot of the discussions within the governments and parties. In order to keep the country issues short, internal debates and deviating opinions cannot be covered in detail. Positions are subject to change, especially following elections and the formation of new governments. The snapshot was taken at the end of September 2017. More recent developments could not be included. Notable exceptions are the country issues of Austria and Germany, which were updated following the latest coalition negotiations.

The study's results are published in English on the website www.relaunch-europe.eu. It presents maps for every actor and reform proposal, 27 country issues and an analytical paper. The paper compares the positions of all actors in all member states of the EU-27 on the twelve concrete reform proposals and presents five flagship-projects, which bear the chance for a relaunch of Europe.

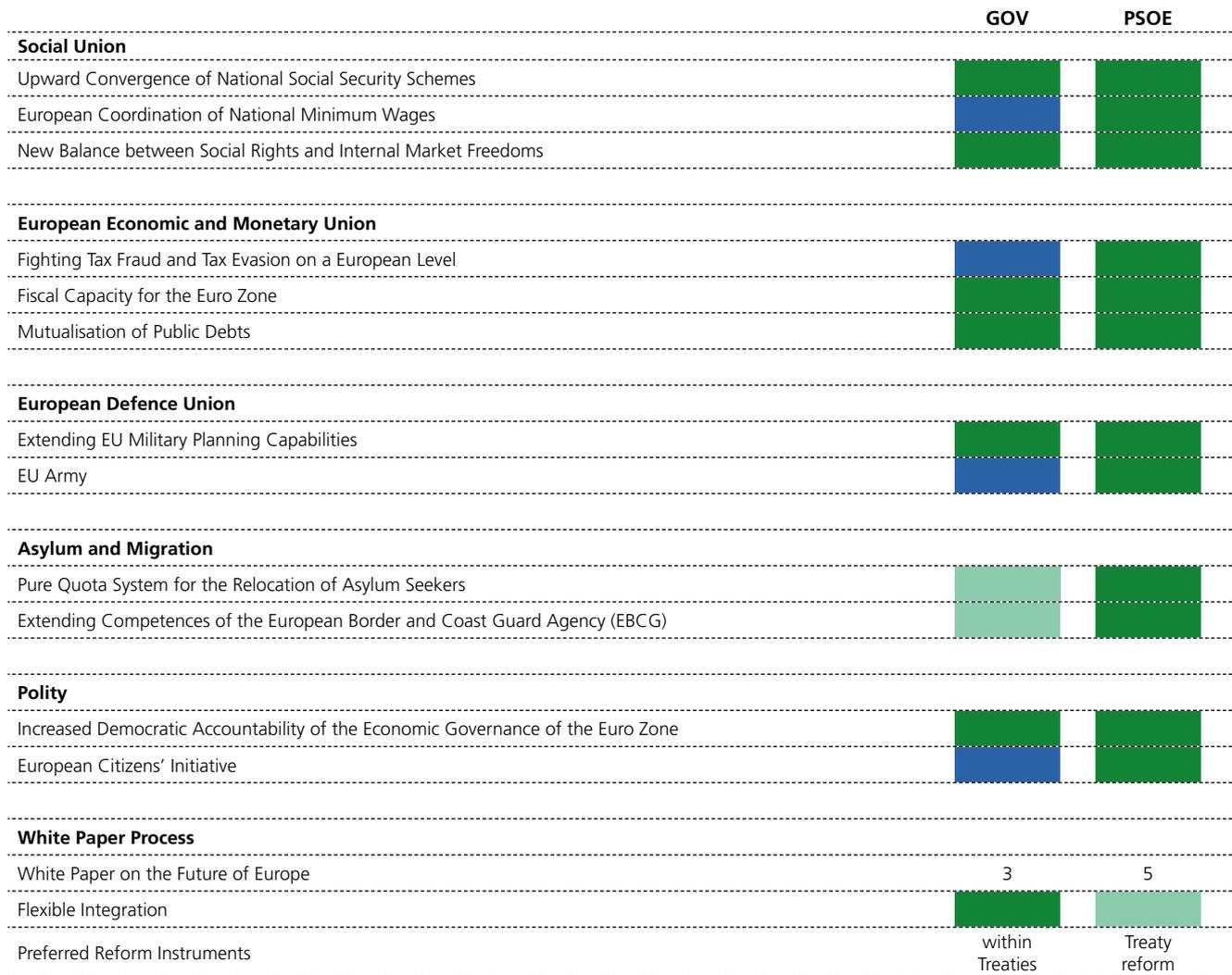
¹ If a party fulfills this criterion, but is not a relevant actor in the national public debate anymore, it was deleted from the sample based on the judgement of the projects' country expert.

SPAIN

Following its re-election in 2016, the conservative party *Partido Popular* (PP) received 33 percent, while the progressive party *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) gained 22.6 percent of the votes. Thus, the PP ultimately formed a new government with the toleration of the PSOE in the Spanish parliament.

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Support of the Spanish government and the PSOE for Deepening EU Integration



Legend

- support for
- support under conditions
- against
- neutral

- GOV** National Government
- PSOE** Biggest progressive party in parliament

- 1 – Scenario 1: »Carrying on«
- 2 – Scenario 2: »Nothing but the single market«
- 3 – Scenario 3: »Those who want more do more«
- 4 – Scenario 4: »Doing less more efficiently«
- 5 – Scenario 5: »Doing much more together«

SOCIAL UNION

Although the social union is not a priority on the current agenda for future EU reforms of the Spanish government, it generally supports the idea of **upward convergence of national social security schemes**. PSOE, too, adopts a rather general position: The party asks for strengthening the EU's social dimension, but in particular for increasing employment and enhancing social protection. More specifically, it supports an EU-wide protection of social standards, which should include an extended investment in national social security schemes. Spain has already introduced a national minimum wage, which ranks ninth highest in the EU in absolute terms. However, the Spanish government has not yet taken a stance on the **European coordination of national minimum wages**. In contrast, PSOE strongly supports it and has proposed to create a binding European framework of minimum wages at around 60 percent of the national median income. Thus, it should be a hard law proposal to be implemented equally by all member states. A **new balance between social rights and internal market freedoms** is not a real priority for the government either. Nevertheless, it supports a continued deepening of the single market that has to take place in parallel to having a greater respect for workers' and social rights, especially to increase labour mobility and support workers through skill- and capacity-building measures (e. g. by more European convergence of education systems and degree recognition or social protection and health systems). PSOE is in favour of rebalancing social rights and internal market freedoms, too. Therefore, it insists that all EU workers exercising their right of free movement of labour have to be guaranteed access to unemployment insurance schemes, health provisions and pension rights.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

While the government currently has no concrete position with regard to **fighting tax fraud and tax evasion on a European level**, it recently joint Germany, France and Italy in presenting a proposal on the taxation of large digital multinationals, based on their revenues rather than profits, to the European Commission. PSOE considers the common fight against tax fraud and tax evasion as essential for the design of a real Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Figured amongst its outlined proposals are a common consolidated corporate tax base (CCCTB), country-by-country reporting, the removal of national exceptions to the Automatic Information Exchange and Administrative Cooperation directives, the creation of a European Tax Agency, a list of cross-border tax evaders and European tax havens, and a European protection for sources uncovering tax evaders and eluders. The government supports a **fiscal capacity for the euro zone** and has proposed a set of reforms to strengthen the euro zone by increasing the resilience of EU economies, unlocking potential growth and fostering job creation with the final goal of a fiscal union. Concrete measures would include a rainy day fund with

member states' withdrawals calculated on observable cyclical indicators in order to counter shocks, support investment and improve productivity, and later on implanting a common unemployment insurance scheme. Such a fiscal capacity would partly be funded by replacing national budgets (for investments or unemployment insurance), but would not necessarily result in an overall increase of euro area spending or the aggregate tax burden. In the long run, the fiscal union would imply having a fully-fledged European budget and the possibility to jointly issue bonds. Furthermore, it needs to be complemented by the strict application of the Stability and Growth Pact. PSOE also explicitly supports a fiscal capacity for the euro zone in order to finance counter-cyclical investments and an EU unemployment insurance. It would also like to use profits of the European Central Bank, a tax on financial transactions, and a fraction of the corporate taxes as sources of funding. The government and PSOE support the **mutualisation of public debt** in the long term as a vital part of any fiscal union, since it would enhance confidence in the euro and reduce redenomination risks. Since the Spanish public debt reached about 100 % of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2017, debt mutualisation would be welcomed and the government as well as all political parties have defended Eurobonds with full joint liability as the best solution to the economic crisis.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE UNION

The government as well as PSC are in favour of a stronger European Defence Union and supportive towards the idea of **extending EU military planning capabilities**, yet without referring to concrete reform proposals. However, the government tends to follow proposals presented by other member states and the European Council, rather than promoting own initiatives. Thus, the Defence ministry underlines that a Defence Union has to be compatible with NATO, while PSOE even refers to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as the European pillar of NATO. As regards the funding of extended European military planning capabilities, the government reaffirmed its commitment to spend 2 % of its GDP on defence, but only as of 2024 as stipulated by the NATO agreement. Currently, Spain spends less than 1 % of its GDP. In contrast, the progressive party claims that more defence spending must be assumed on the supranational level, e. g. by the EU budget or by European tax revenues. Despite its support for a solid European Defence Union, the government has not yet adopted an official stance regarding the establishment of an **EU army**. Unlike the government, PSOE supports the idea of creating European military units which could evolve into a single armed force in the long term; however, the party's positions lack further specification.

ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

Both the government and PSOE have not yet made any concrete contributions to a wider EU debate on the deepening of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Spain

pledged to take in approximately 16,000 asylum seekers from other EU countries under the quota system agreed in 2015. However, the Spanish government has fallen far short of this target, with only 1,100 relocated in the country so far. Regarding a **pure quota system for the relocation of asylum seekers**, the government supports the 2015 Council decisions and demands that a quota system should take into account the following factors: the unemployment rate of each country, the number of immigrants already residing in the country, and efforts made to fight irregular immigration, e.g. Spain's bilateral agreements with North African states aimed at reducing the number of illegal entries from these countries. PSOE fully supports a revision of the Dublin system by establishing a pure quota system for the relocation of asylum seekers within the EU and a reform of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). It is also in favour of the possibility to impose sanctions on member states that are not willing to cooperate on asylum and migration policy, even if such sanctions could be directed against Spain. In contrast, the government is not likely to support any sanctioning mechanisms. The PP-government is convinced of the need to better control the external borders of the EU. Therefore, it has supported the creation of the **European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)** in 2016. However, it showed some concern for the possibility of this new agency deploying border and coast guards in Ceuta and Melilla against its will. Thus, the consent of the member state(s) concerned is seen as a necessary condition for the deployment of the EBCG. According to the Ministry for Home Affairs, an essential function of the EBCG should be the provision of support to neighbouring countries of the EU in controlling their borders in the fight against illegal immigration. Furthermore, there is a need to increase the funding of the agency, especially regarding its task to repatriate asylum seekers. Moreover, member states' efforts (and high costs) at national level to protect European external borders should be considered in the budget. In addition, the government would prefer to maintain the national status of its personnel sent to the agency. PSOE has expressed its broad support for the EBCG, without specifying any of the aspects mentioned.

POLITY

PSOE and the PP-government are both in favour of an **increased democratic accountability of the economic governance of the euro zone**. Backing French proposals, the government asks for a »real« economic government, including all EU member states in general, but with the exception of reforms that are only related to the euro area. It also aims at integrating intergovernmental agreements concluded during the economic crisis into the EU legal framework. Parliamentary control through national parliaments and dialogue with the European Parliament would guarantee national ownership. The government supports advancing towards a treasury responsible for a euro zone budget (such as a European finance minister), which oversees the implementation of conditionality in member states having

received financial assistance and common debt management in the long run. PSOE is supportive of increasing democratic accountability for the EU as a whole, assuming that the completion of the EMU and the political union is only possible with a treaty reform, including full legislative co-decision for the European Parliament and an extension of the qualified majority voting for the Council of the EU. While there is little public debate in Spain on the **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)** and its reform is not a priority of the government, it could be assumed that it would support this reform due to its traditional pro-European stance. PSOE supports the reform of the ECI regulation in order to make it more citizen-friendly, thus becoming an instrument of democratic accountability in the euro zone governance.

WHITE PAPER PROCESS

The Spanish government has welcomed the Commission's **»White Paper on the Future of Europe«** and regards it an opportunity to consolidate its role in the EU's future. Traditionally, Spain has been rather reluctant in embracing the possibility of a multi-speed Europe, as it fears its exclusion from the EU core. Nowadays though, this fear has been mitigated by the newly presented opportunity to move towards the core of the EU after Brexit. Thus, positions within the government have shifted and it is openly endorsing scenario 3, »those who want more do more«. The government, therefore, supports the concept of flexible integration for the same reasons. The progressive PSOE, on the other hand, prefers scenario 5, »doing much more together«. It stressed, however, that deeper integration must be built on the principles of flexibility, pragmatism and the acceptance of national differences. Thus, it supports the concept of **flexible integration** under the condition that it takes place in the form of enhanced cooperation. All states should be able to join the avant-garde when they are ready to do so. A Europe à la carte, where member states could freely choose which provisions will apply in their respective states, is rejected. Unlike the government, which opts for reforms of the EU to be carried out within the treaties, PSOE prefers to open up the treaties.

Legend

Actors Covered by the Study in each EU Member State

- *National Government*: including its members from one or more political parties, the Head of State or Government, relevant executive ministers and administration.
- *Progressive Parties*: They include all parties that are represented either in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) or that are members of the Party of European Socialists (PES) and have gained a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the last national or European elections. They also include La République en Marche (REM) in France.

Concrete Reform Options in Different Policy Areas

Social Union

1. *Upward Convergence of National Social Security Schemes* to provide Europe-wide protection against social risks and to ensure a decent standard of living for EU citizens.
2. *European Coordination of National Minimum Wages* to ensure a decent income within the EU to prevent in-work poverty, to promote social convergence and to avoid social dumping across the EU.
3. *New Balance of Social Rights and Internal Market Freedoms* to compensate the current precedence of internal market freedoms over national social rights.

European Economic and Monetary Union

4. *Fighting Tax Fraud and Tax Evasion on a European Level* for a fair allocation of tax burdens among natural and judicial persons.
5. *Fiscal Capacity for the Euro Zone* to provide stabilisation against economic shocks through public expenditure in the euro zone.
6. *Mutualisation of Public Debts* to tackle the problem of a sharp increase in public debts in some member states as a result of the euro zone crisis.

European Defence Union

7. *Extending EU Military Planning Capabilities* also for executive military missions and operations.
8. *EU Army* establishing a permanent multinational military force under European command.

Asylum and Migration

9. *Pure Quota System for the Relocation of Asylum Seekers* which would replace the Dublin system.
10. *More Competences for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)* expanding the current EBCG tasks in terms of »shared responsibility« between the EBCG and national authorities.

Polity

11. *Increase Democratic Accountability of the Economic Governance of the Euro Zone* to make its institutions more responsive to EU citizens.
12. *European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)*: revision of the ECI regulation to make the instrument more citizen-friendly and effective in order to strengthen the participative democracy in the EU.

White Paper Process

13. *The White Paper on the Future of Europe* by the European Commission presents five possible scenarios for the future course of European integration.
14. *Flexible Integration*: limiting the application of certain rules to certain EU member states.
15. *Preferred Reform Instrument*: Treaty reform, reforms inside or outside the Treaties.

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Imprint

© 2018

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Publisher: International Policy Analysis,
Hiroshimastraße 28, D-10785 Berlin, Germany
www.fes.de/ipa
Orders/Contact: info.ipa@fes.de

Study conducted by:
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ISBN: 978-3-96250-139-6

Front cover image: [AboutLife/shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com)
Design concept: www.stetzer.net
Realisation/Typesetting: perTEXT, Berlin
Print: www.druckerei-brandt.de

August 2018

