

Sovereign Europe a place of longing – Survey on European sovereignty in eight countries

There are few things on which European politicians are so united as on the need for more European sovereignty. In this way the EU could assert itself on the world stage as a global actor and shape international politics. A sovereign Europe has become a place of longing in European capitals, sought after, but not yet achieved. But what does the broader population think about the concept of European sovereignty? How is it understood and evaluated in different European countries? How sovereign is Europe already seen to be?

In order to answer these questions the opinion research institute Ipsos, on behalf of the Fondation Jean-Jaurès and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, interviewed 8,000 people online between 28 December 2020 and 8 January 2021, based on representative samples. The countries included in the survey (based on the quota method) are: France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden.

The discussion about the meaning and necessity of a sovereign Europe has gone beyond the narrower circles of political debates to the consciousness of European citizens: two thirds of those surveyed understand what is at stake when European sovereignty is mentioned. However, only half (51 per cent) of those interviewed regard Europe as already sovereign. The most optimistic views are expressed in Poland (65 per cent), Romania (63 per cent) and Sweden (61 per cent), followed by Germany (57 per cent), Latvia (56 per cent) and Spain (53 per cent). The most critical views are expressed in France (36 per cent) and Italy (46 per cent).

Consistent with this, almost three-quarters of those asked (73 per cent) advocate the strengthening of European sovereignty. They regard this as an opportunity to respond to international developments that are of close concern to the public: “the terrorist threat” (37 per cent), the “challenge of climate change” (34 per cent on average in the eight countries in the survey; in Germany as much as 42 per cent) or the “threat to health” (31 per cent). Respondents also regard strengthening European sovereignty as a solution to current geopolitical challenges, such as “China’s great-power ambitions” (20 per cent).

However, the notion of European sovereignty is controversial. Only just over half (52 per cent) associate it with something positive. More positive views predominate especially in Germany, Poland, Latvia, Romania and to a lesser extent in Sweden. By contrast in France, Spain and Italy only a minority hold positive views. Respondents believe that the greatest obstacles to more European sovereignty lie in the fact that some European countries have nationalist governments, pressure from countries outside the EU that have no interest in the emergence of a sovereign Europe, and the weakness of the EU institutions.

We cordially invite you to attend the presentation of the study on March 2nd at 10 am. To do so, please register via the subsequent [link](#). Please also note that all documents are under embargo until March 2nd, 2021 12 noon. A summary of all the results may be found [here](#) .

Contact:

Catrina Schläger
FES-Berlin (International Policy Analysis)
Catrina.Schlaeger@fes.de

Dr. Thomas Manz
FES-Paris
Thomas.Manz@fesparis.org