



# The Anna Lindh Report 2014

Intercultural Trends and Social Change  
in the Euro-Mediterranean region

# The Anna Lindh Report 2014

## **Direction**

Andreu Claret (Executive Director)  
Gemma Aubarell (Head of Programme and Operations Unit)

## **Coordination and Editing**

Eleonora Insalaco (Programmes Manager and Coordinator of the Anna Lindh Report)  
Paulina Raduchowska (Programme Assistant)

## **Publication and Communications**

Paul Walton (Head of The Executive Office and Communication Manager)  
Sarah Zaaimi (Press Officer and Media Specialist)

## **Opinion Poll**

Gallup Europe

## **Design**

Equinox Graphics

## **Print**

Claes-Roels

## **Translation**

Cybertranslator

## **Online Publication**

Consult and Design International

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## **Scientific Committee**

Juan Díez-Nicolás (Director of the Chair for Research in Social Sciences and Security at the European University of Madrid), Cengiz Günay (Senior Fellow at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs and Lecturer at the University of Vienna), Antoine Messarra (Professor at the Lebanese University and at Saint Josef University), Sara Silvestri (Senior Lecturer at City University London and Affiliated Lecturer at the University of Cambridge), Mohamed Tozy (Director of l'Ecole de Gouvernance et d'Economie de Rabat).

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# Openness to Diversity Beyond the Spanish Economic Crisis

Juan DIEZ-NICOLAS

Despite the economic crisis in Europe, and historic social changes across the Arab region, trends in Spanish public opinion on intercultural affairs and values have not changed dramatically since the first Anna Lindh/Gallup poll. At the same time, Juan Diez Nicolas highlights how there has been a relevant change related to the perception of Spaniards' to the values of the countries of the southern Mediterranean. The author also exposes a continued openness to cultural diversity, despite the changing context of the last years.

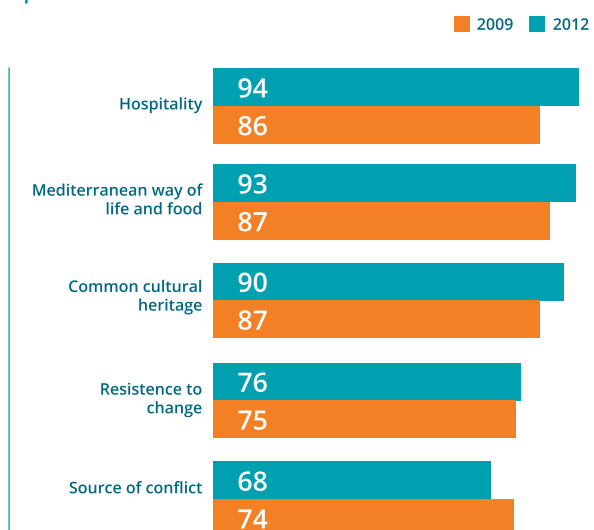
Spain is one of the five countries that have been studied in 2009 and 2012 – along with Egypt, Germany, Morocco, and Turkey – and a comparison of the responses to the eight questions asked on both occasions demonstrates almost identical results. It is this finding that illustrates the great stability of social values and attitudes over time, in particular a short period such as three years as in this case, a period in Spain in which there have been no exceptionally significant economic, social or political changes.

## Spain as a representation of the Mediterranean

In both 2009 and 2012, more than three quarters of Spaniards referenced spontaneously to Italy and Spain when asked about countries in the Mediterranean region (only Greece and France were also mentioned in around 50% of their samples). Spain was the third Mediterranean country most mentioned by respondents in European countries (behind Italy and Greece), and the fourth country most mentioned by respondents in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries (SEM) behind Egypt, Morocco and Turkey, highlighting that it was the European country most referenced by non-European countries.

For Spaniards, hospitality, 'Mediterranean way of life and food', and common cultural heritage' were cited by more than 85% in 2009 and more than 90% in 2012 as the characteristics that best describe the Mediterranean region. Turmoil and 'source of conflict' are the two less mentioned characteristics in Spain, in European countries, and in SEM countries, but nonetheless around 70% of respondents in each country or region answer that the two characteristics strongly or somewhat characterise the Mediterranean region. European countries strongly or somewhat agree (around 80%) more than SEM countries (around 66%) that civic participation in democratic transition and resistance to change characterise the Mediterranean region. At the same time, Spain ranks third and fourth, respectively, among the thirteen

**Chart 14.1**  
Characteristics of the Mediterranean region for Spaniards



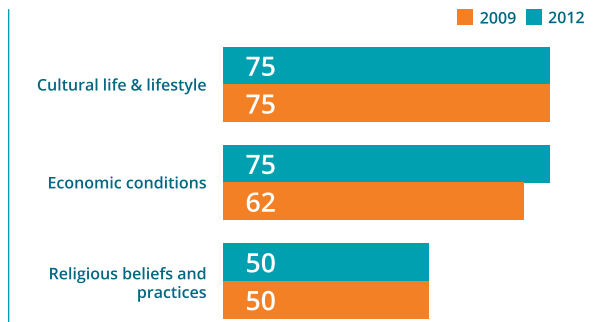
**Survey Question:** I will read out a set of ideas/images that may come to the minds of different people, and please tell me, if you think these characterize the Mediterranean region strongly, somewhat or not at all?  
**Base:** % of all respondents of the sum of 'Strongly characterize' and 'Somewhat characterize' answers are shown (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

surveyed countries, almost with the same proportion as the average for the eight European countries (reference Chart 14.1).

Around three out of four Spaniards, in both surveys, would start life again in one European country if they had the choice, compared to only around 15% who would choose an American country. The majority of respondents would start a new life in their own country, though the proportion who provides that answer is below 50% in all European countries with Germany (47%) and Spain (42%) ranking the highest in Europe, and Albania the lowest (6%), and above 50% in almost all SEM, with Morocco ranking the highest (66%). There is a slight increase in Spanish citizens' interest in news and information from SEM countries

**Chart 14.2**

**Interest in news and information about SEM countries in Spain**



**Survey Question:** Thinking about the countries bordering the southern and eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, how much interest would you say you personally have in news and information about their...? **Base:** % of all respondents of the sum of 'Very interested' and 'Somewhat interested' answers are shown (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

with respect to the 2009 Survey, especially regarding economic conditions in addition to cultural life and lifestyle, although there is no increased interest about religious beliefs and practices; more than three quarters of the survey sample are very or somewhat interested in the first two issues, but only one in two in religious beliefs and practices. Interest on receiving news on economic conditions and political changes about SEM countries in Spain, Belgium and Denmark is lower in comparison with all the other European countries surveyed, but higher than in all the SEM countries (Chart 14.2).

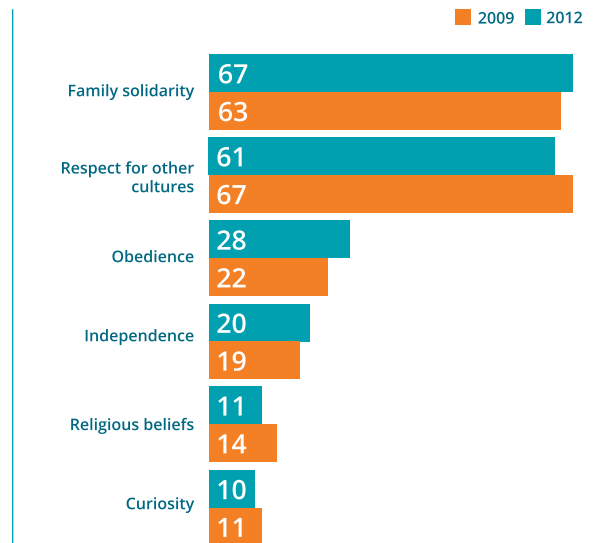
There is also a slight increase (from 38% to 44%) in the proportion of Spaniards who have personally talked or met with any person or persons from countries bordering the southern or eastern shore of the Mediterranean, while the reasons for meeting them remain the same in both Surveys, ranging from less than 40% who met because of business or work, to 2% who did it through chatting on the Internet. The proportion of Spaniards who have interacted with persons from SEM countries is slightly above the average for all European countries, but nevertheless it ranks more or less in the middle (44%), and certainly above the proportion of respondents in SEM countries who have interacted with Europeans, except Moroccans (57%).

**Stable value trends and changes in perceptions**

The last three questions repeated in the 2012 Survey deal with perceived key values when bringing up children. Respondents were firstly asked about the most important and the second most important value when bringing up their own children. More than 60% of Spaniards mentioned in either first or second rank the importance of family solidarity and respect for the

**Chart 14.3**

**Key values to Spanish respondents when bringing up their children**



**Survey Question:** Assuming that we limit ourselves to six values only I'd like to know which one of these six would you say is most important when raising children? And the second most important? **Base:** % of all respondents of the sum of 'Most important' and 'Second most important' answers are shown (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

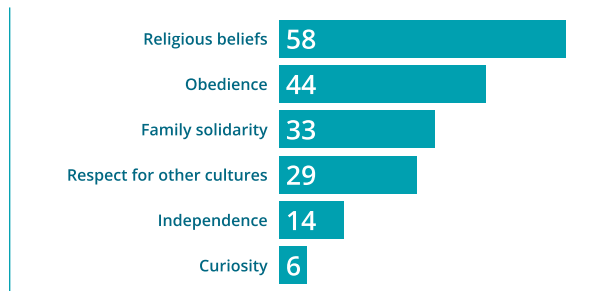
other in both Anna Kindh/Gallup Surveys, although the order was reversed in 2009 (reference Chart 14.3).

The same two values were mentioned by more than half the respondents from European countries, while even though half the respondents from SEM countries also concurred that family solidarity is the most important value when bringing up their children, about the same proportion mentioned religious beliefs. More generally, Spain ranks third among the countries that give the greatest importance to family solidarity, behind Albania and Turkey, and also third regarding the importance attached to respect for other cultures behind Italy and Denmark.

Yet Spain ranks particularly low concerning the importance given to 'curiosity', only higher than Albania, Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, as well as to 'religious beliefs', only higher than Belgium and Denmark, and to 'independence', the lowest importance given by any of the eight European countries and only higher than that four of the SEM countries, all but Morocco.

The same two values, though in proportions around 50% were mentioned, and also in reversed order in 2009, when asked about the values that were more important to parents in Europe when raising their children. But there is a great difference when Spaniards were asked their opinion regarding the values that were more important to parents raising their children in SEM countries. In 2009 more than 40% of Spaniards mentioned 'respect for other' and

**Chart 14.4**  
Key values to parents raising children in SEM countries, according to Spaniards



**Survey Question:** Which one of these six values would you say is most important to parents raising children in the societies of SEM countries? And the second most important? **Base:** % of all respondents of the sum of 'Most important' and 'Second most important' answers are shown (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

'family solidarity' as the values that, in their opinion, parents in SEM countries considered more important in raising their children. However, in 2012 Spaniards' opinions have changed dramatically, with almost 60% thinking that parents from SEM countries give more importance to 'religious beliefs' and 44% to obedience, and only around 30% to 'family solidarity' and 'respect for other' (Chart 14.4)

In this way, while the values and attitudes of Spaniards have practically not changed between 2009 and 2012, there appears to be a more significant change with respect to their perception of the values that parents in SEM countries give in raising their children. One might attribute this change in Spaniards' perception to the greater emphasis that media has attached to religion in the information provided about SEM countries. Most news regarding those countries make some reference to religious beliefs and practices in politics, in social movements, in social conflicts, in lifestyle, and therefore religion occupies a central place in the opinions and images Spanish citizens hold about SEM countries.

### Openness to cultural diversity

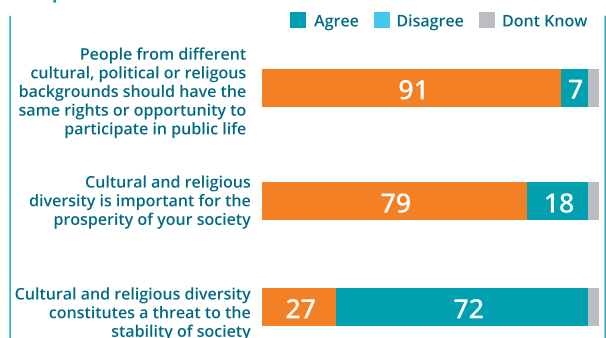
Apart from those questions repeated in the two Survey editions, Spaniards in 2012 appear to be very positive about the gains that would result from a project for the UfM. More than 60% of respondents think there would be gains in relation to spiritual and moral values, individual freedom and the rule of law, while more than 70% expect gains in gender equality, youthful dynamism, social solidarity and concern for the environment, and more than 80% believe there would be gains in innovation and entrepreneurship and in respect for cultural diversity. Respondents in European and SEM countries seem to agree with the same four gains that would result from the project of

a UfM. The only major difference, specifically in the order of preferences, is that in SEM countries concern for the environment is the most mentioned gain, together with respect for cultural diversity.

Spaniards seem to be highly relativists, as only 18% agree that there are absolute guidelines to what is good and bad and what is truth, while 80% think there are no absolute guidelines. This relativism is confirmed through the acceptance of cultural diversity. Thus, 91% of Spaniards agree that 'people from different cultural, political or religious backgrounds should have the same rights or opportunity to participate in public life', 79% agree that 'cultural and religious diversity is important for the prosperity of Spain', and 72% disagree with the assertion that 'cultural and religious diversity constitutes a threat to the stability of society'. (Chart 14.5) More than 50% of respondents in SEM countries (80% in Morocco) believe that there are absolute guidelines (except in Egypt, 44%), while the proportion in European countries is in all cases below 40%, and the proportion in Spain is the second lowest of all countries, only a little higher than in Albania. More than 80% of respondents in European and SEM countries also agree, like Spaniards, that 'people from different cultural, political or religious backgrounds should have the same rights or opportunity to participate in public life', and that 'cultural and religious diversity is important for the prosperity of their country', but the opinions on the assertion that 'cultural and religious diversity constitutes a threat to the stability of society' are divided by half among those who agree and who disagree in both regions.

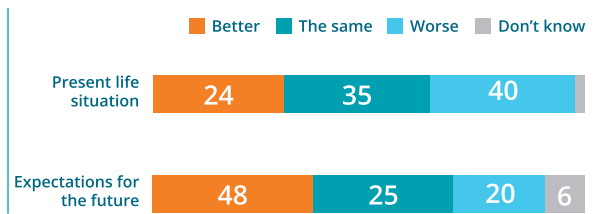
On the whole, Spaniards are also optimistic. It is true that since the commencement of the financial crisis in 2007 the appraisal of Spanish citizens about the national and personal economic situation has

**Chart 14.5**  
Views about political, cultural and religious diversity in Spain



**Survey Question:** Could you please tell me, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **Base:** % of all respondents, where 'Agree': sum of 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree somewhat' answers, and 'Disagree': sum of 'Strongly disagree' and 'Disagree somewhat' answers (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

**Chart 14.6**  
**Personal life satisfaction in Spain**



**Survey Question:** Taking everything into consideration, would you say, compared to 5 years ago, your present life situation is: Better, Worse, The same? And how do you expect it will change in 5 years? **Base:** % of all respondents (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

been quite negative (40% answered in 2012 that it was worse than 5 years before), but they remain nonetheless optimistic about the future (48% said that it would be better five years afterwards) (Chart 14.6). It should be underlined that Spain and Italy are the two countries that evaluate worse their present compared to their past, and that SEM countries in general evaluate positively and in a greater proportion to European countries the present in comparison with the past, although this may also be due to the fact that the financial crisis has affected the European economies relatively more. More than 40% of respondents in all countries, with the exception of Italy and Spain, believe that the future will be better than the present, and the optimism is greater in all SEM countries compared with all European countries, except from Albania.

With regards to the role of women in society, two thirds of Spaniards think that women play a greater role in Spanish society in 2012 than they did five years before, and almost the same proportion believe they will play a greater role in five years. Once again, respondents in SEM countries are more optimistic about the present and the future role of women in their societies than respondents in European countries, with the only exception of Egypt that is the only country where the proportion is below 50% in both evaluations.

### Hopes for the future

As a final point, Spaniards' political values are very clearly in favour of democracy, and are also optimistic. Thus, 47% thought in 2012 that the ultimate effects of the social movements generally known as the 'Arab Spring' will be positive on the relation between Europe and the Arab countries, and only 25% expect them to be negative. There are no differences in this opinion between Spaniards, Europeans and respondents in SEM countries. Democracy for Spaniards means mainly 'freedom', 36% specifically and spontaneously answered freedom, 24% replied freedom of speech,

and 11% answered free elections. A second dimension seems to refer to relativism and acceptance of diversity with 20% answering respect and dignity for everybody, and 12% mentioning equality and equal treatment. Other responses about the meaning of democracy were mentioned by less than 10% of respondents in each case. Again, no significant differences appear on the meaning of democracy between Spain, European and SEM countries.

Spaniards seem to be departing from the more traditional meaning of democracy, linked to political participation through voting and political parties, and supporting the new models of democratic orientation, more based on civil society. To illustrate, when asked about what would be the most efficient way to contribute to solving social problems in Spain, 26% answered through joining social movements and 16% through their individual action, while less than 15% replied joining or supporting an NGO, a political party, a religious association, a faith based initiative, or using social media to express their political views. At the same time, while Europeans rely more on joining social movements and on their individual action, respondents in SEM countries prefer their individual action and joining or supporting a political party, something that is probably due to the fact that these countries are now beginning to experience democratic practices based on political parties, while Europeans are becoming more skeptical about them.

**Juan DIEZ-NICOLAS** is Director of the Chair for Research in Social Sciences and Security at the European University of Madrid.