

# Spain: an exciting project?

Many explanations have been given for the spectacular growth in recent years of the independence movement in Catalonia. Economic issues, especially the fiscal deficit, are now more important than ever before. The automatic response from those against independence is to accuse Catalan people of being selfish. But this explanation is quite simplistic, especially when Catalan cooperation in all kinds of solidarity campaigns is really strong. On the other hand, Spain is not such an exciting project for pro-independence people. Let's analyse Spain as a project and the conditions offered to Catalan citizens.

## Motivation and incentives.

How does redistribution policy of regions affect both aspects?

Even the most liberal people agree that the state has to meet some basic needs for everyone and the more interventionist admit that complete equality is discouraging. The income per capita distribution of different Spanish regions is irregular; regions such as Catalonia or the Balearic Islands have 120% of the state average while others, such as Extremadura, are 75% below that average.

After redistribution the figures are al-

most swapped. Catalonia's disposable income is lower than average and Extremadura's disposable income is nearly 120% of the state average.

The more productive regions have lower purchasing power. Thus, Catalonia's contribution to Spain is higher than Germany's contribution to the EU.

More subsidised regions have not had incentives to improve their situation and 30 years of solidarity have not improved their economic structure. The system has proved to be unfair and inefficient.

## Spanish plan for the future

The research budget in science, biotechnology and other promising industries is much lower than budgets in other European countries and it is mainly camouflaged military spending.

And, about the very main strategic infrastructure project, the high-speed train, is clearly making a loss; investments (greater than in stronger countries) have already totaled 60 billion euros, which will never be recovered because of the high operational costs.

Investment policy in more conventional infrastructures is not more rational. Against the opinion of the other 26 EU members, Spain alone defends the con-

struction of a central freight rail corridor crossing the Pyrenees. The building of the Mediterranean rail corridor, the option the European Union supports, and despite the creation of a lobby aimed at promoting it, is threatened by the Spanish interest in the central rail corridor and the lack of resources.

Another example of this policy is the fact that the railway line between Barcelona and Valencia still has stretches of single track. This line is the most important route for exports and the most popular tourist entry route.

## Social environment and coexistence

The background for this situation is one of clear hostility from the Spanish government towards the Catalan language and culture. Politicians of regions that benefit from Catalan solidarity deny the evidence and say they just pay our bills.

The question that can help us to understand why the Catalans want to become independent from Spain is:

"Would you work for a company that has reversed the incentives system, that lacks a viable business plan and applies disciplinary measures to the most productive departments to the point of mobbing?"

## RANDOM THOUGHTS

TERRY PARRIS

# Acceptance

Just recently two friends of mine have had accidents, one potentially grave, another needing a long recuperation. Both were sudden accidents, entirely unforeseen, with lives changed in a moment. Both have shown courage in acceptance, in 'what is', no blame attached to life, circumstance or fortune.

How difficult that must be, the very op-

posite of feeling a victim.

There might have been the temptation to think, "If only I hadn't..." or "Why me? What have I done to deserve this?" In fact, excessive thinking would be the enemy of recovery.

Since the effects in the two cases were physical loss, the need was how to adjust or change their way of life.

Acceptance might be the key to more than accidents: sudden unemployment, failed relationships, financial collapse... but acceptance does not imply passivity. It can lead to new ideas, a radical change, an alternative to old ways.

It might make a strong base to start anew, a call to "get up and go" which could only be positive.

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