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SURVEY

European Sovereignty

European analyses

_Introduction by Gilles Finchelstein
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Introduction

_ Gilles Finchelstein _ Thomas Manz

Does the Covid-19 pandemic, which has brought to light a fair number of weaknesses in all European countries – such as the lack of capacity to manufacture certain products, including masks, here in Europe – herald the return of the idea of sovereignty?

It has already found its way into decision-making bodies, sometimes under the rubric of »European sovereignty«, often in the guise of »strategic autonomy«. And it's not just a word. Indeed, it's in the name of European sovereignty that the European Commission is currently profoundly overhauling its legislation on digital platforms.

And what about the citizens in all this? If sovereignty is on the way back, what do Europeans understand by it? How do they perceive it? To answer these questions the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Fondation Jean-Jaurès, together with Ipsos, launched an extensive opinion survey. It is pathbreaking in two respects.

First of all, in terms of its coverage: it covers a large slice of the European population – almost 75 per cent of the whole European Union – and eight

countries, thereby capturing the full diversity of the continent. How do Europeans assess the words »sovereignty«, »national sovereignty« and »European sovereignty« and what meanings do they attach to them? Do they believe that European sovereignty is already a reality and/or something desirable? In what domains and for what reasons?

Before going into details, country by country, we can summarise the results at the European level in terms of a few figures. The word »sovereignty«, a synonym first of all for independence, has positive connotations (46 per cent as against 31 per cent); the ideas of European sovereignty and national sovereignty are complementary (58 per cent), European sovereignty makes sense (63 per cent have a good idea what it means) and this meaning, in turn, is largely positive (52 per cent as against 26 per cent); European sovereignty is already a reality (51 per cent) and, what is more, a desirable prospect for the future (73 per cent expect that it will become stronger) in response to the global threats and challenges facing us (terrorist threat, climate change, health crisis).

Global analysis

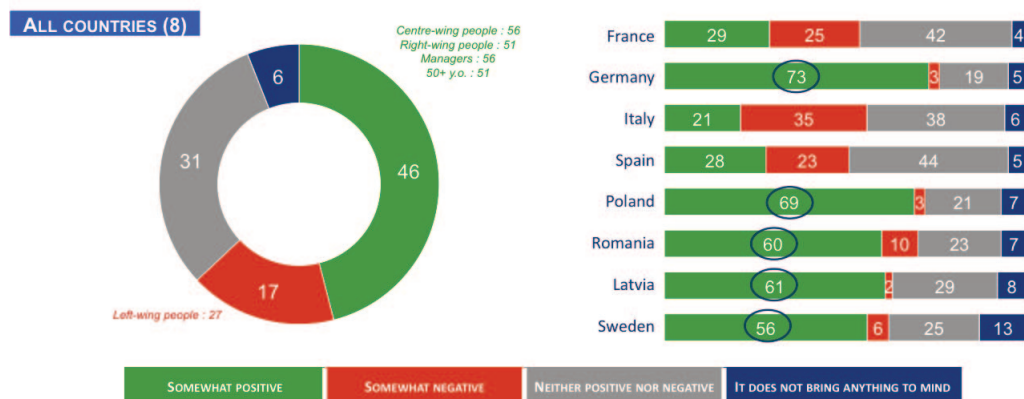
Attitudes to sovereignty differ considerably in the various EU member states

Before discussing European sovereignty it is important to recognise that the concept of sovereignty is interpreted very differently in the various European countries.

It is viewed as positive by a large majority of Germans (73 per cent), Poles (69 per cent), Latvians (61 per cent) and Romanians (60 per cent) and to a somewhat lesser extent by Swedes (56 per cent). In these countries the concept has somewhat negative spontaneous associations for less than 10 per cent of respondents (between 2 and 10 per cent, depending on the country), while others regard it as »neither positive nor negative« (19 to 29 per cent) or it has no associations at all (5 to 13 per cent).

By contrast, in France (29 per cent), Spain (28 per cent) and Italy (21 per cent) only a minority evaluate it positively. In Italy, the negative assessments even outnumber the positive ones, at 35 per cent, which is not the case in France (25 per cent) and Spain (23 per cent).

“Sovereignty” : a somewhat positive expression – less in France, Italy and Spain



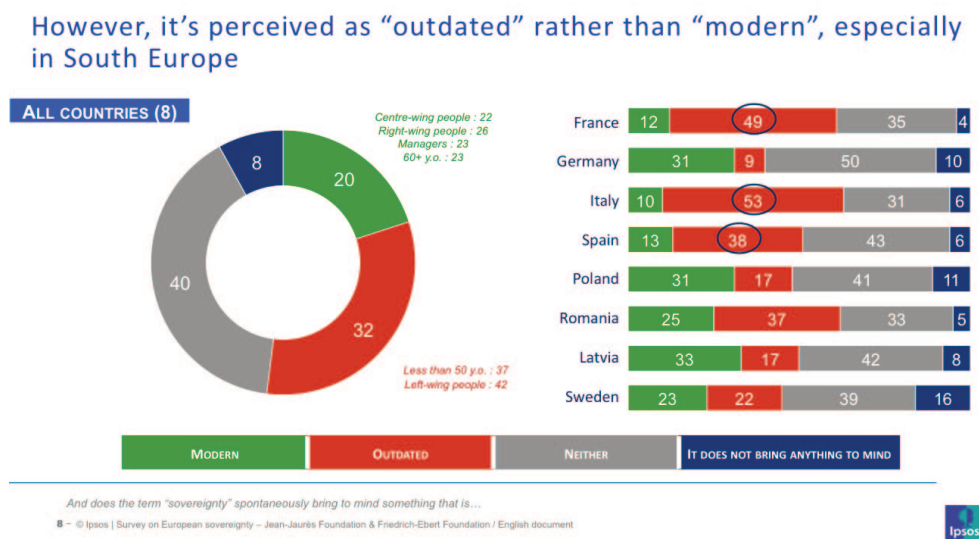
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For the French, the notion of sovereignty refers primarily to monarchy: according to the respondents, among the words, ideas and images that spring to mind when they hear the term »sovereignty«, taking first place is the word »king«, with 300 mentions, followed by »power« and »queen«. The concept of »independence« falls some way behind, being mentioned only a little more often than »monarchy«.

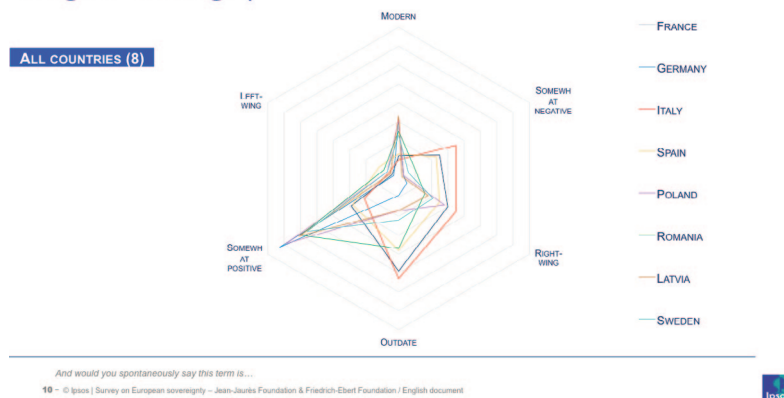
Among the Germans this notion gives rise to completely different spontaneous associations. They are very instructive. Springing most readily to mind for the Germans are the words »independence«, »independent«, »state« and »freedom«. Indeed, the word »king« doesn't crop up at all.

It is therefore not surprising that opinions differ widely, not just in France and Germany, but throughout Europe concerning how modern the concept of »sovereignty« is. Those who most often consider the notion to be outdated are the French (49 per cent in contrast to the 12 per cent who consider it to be modern), the Italians (53 per cent as against 10 per cent), the Spanish (38 per cent as against 13 per cent) and the Romanians (37 per cent as against 25 per cent). In Germany, by contrast, the prevailing view is that the notion is modern (31 per cent as against 9 per cent who regard it as outdated); similarly in Poland (31 per cent as against 17 per cent), Latvia (33 per cent as against 17 per cent) and, marginally, also in Sweden (23 per cent as against 22 per cent). Finally, it should be noted that almost half of all Europeans (48 per cent) regard sovereignty as »neither somewhat modern nor somewhat outdated« (40 per cent) or it means nothing to them (8 per cent).



A majority of Europeans spontaneously associate this term neither with the political left nor with the right (58 per cent). Those who do give it a political association tend to link it rather to the right (23 per cent as against 6 per cent who associate it with the left). Particularly in Germany the concept tends to be regarded as »non-political« (only 8 per cent associate it with »left« or »right«). It is considered to have political connotations much more often in countries that evaluate it negatively: in Italy (41 per cent), Spain (37 per cent) and France (34 per cent) it is associated predominantly with the political right. It is possible that the term's similarity to the notion of »sovereignism« may have contributed to this association with the right and, for some, to negative connotations.

Image of "sovereignty"



In the countries in which attitudes to the concept of sovereignty are rather negative, it is strongly associated with the notion of nationalism (58 per cent of Italians associate this with sovereignty, as do 43 per cent of Spaniards and 43 per cent of the French). Italians and French people also mention protectionism (26 per cent), in comparison, for example, with only 6 per cent in Germany. Finally, the notion of power is also mentioned more often, especially in France (51 per cent), Spain (54 per cent) and Italy (46 per cent), for many rather in a negative sense. Across all countries it is those in which the term »sovereignty« has somewhat negative associations that also most often link it with the notion of power (57 per cent in comparison with only 23 per cent of those with a positive attitude to the notion of »sovereignty«).

In countries in which the notion of sovereignty is regarded positively it is primarily associated with independence (63 per cent in Germany, 65 per cent in Poland, 72 per cent in Latvia), and with self-determination (53 per cent in Germany, 62 per cent in Sweden, 42 per cent in Latvia, 40 per cent in Poland), and much less often with power (23 per cent in Germany, 22 per cent in Sweden, 15 per cent in Latvia, 9 per cent in Poland), nationalism (only 7 per cent in, for example, Germany) or protectionism (6 per cent in Germany).

Concepts linked to sovereignty

IN %, IN TOTAL		ALL COUNTRIES	FRANCE	GERMANY	ITALY	SPAIN	POLAND	ROMANIA	LATVIA	SWEDEN
Independence	42		31	63	22	20	65	55	72	47
Power	37		51	23	46	54	9	41	15	22
Self-determination	34		22	53	25	20	40	22	42	62
Nationalism	31		43	7	58	43	6	32	14	20
Freedom	28		15	35	13	27	61	30	45	34
Protectionism	16		26	6	26	17	5	9	4	11
Protection	13		13	13	10	19	13	12	8	4

Total exceeds 100 because two answers are possible

Which of the following words are spontaneously brought to mind by the term sovereignty? First? Second?

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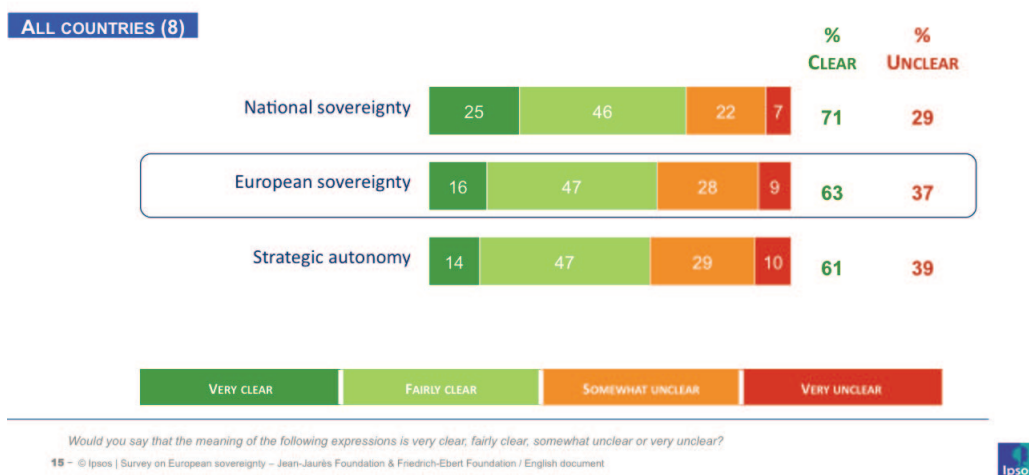


Finally, the notion of sovereignty, in addition to the marked differences in perceptions between countries, is regarded somewhat more positively by older people (52 per cent of people over 60 years of age as against 42 per cent of those under 50 years of age) and by the highly qualified (56 per cent of those in higher socio-professional categories), primarily because they tend to be in a position to make a judgement.

The concept of European sovereignty is elusive and not without controversy

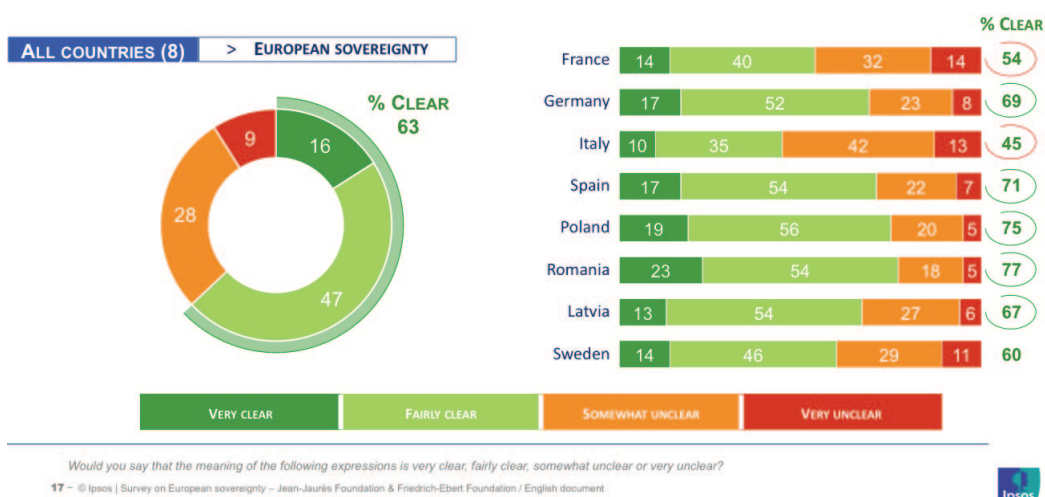
In answer to the question of whether they understand the term »European sovereignty« six out of 10 Europeans replied that they have a good idea what it means (63 per cent, only 16 per cent of whom, however, have a »clear idea«, while the remaining 37 per cent can scarcely imagine what it means). That is 8 percentage points fewer than in relation to »national sovereignty« (71 per cent say they have a good understanding of it) and only a little higher than in relation to »strategic autonomy« (61 per cent).

About two thirds of the respondents think that the concepts of national and European sovereignty are clear



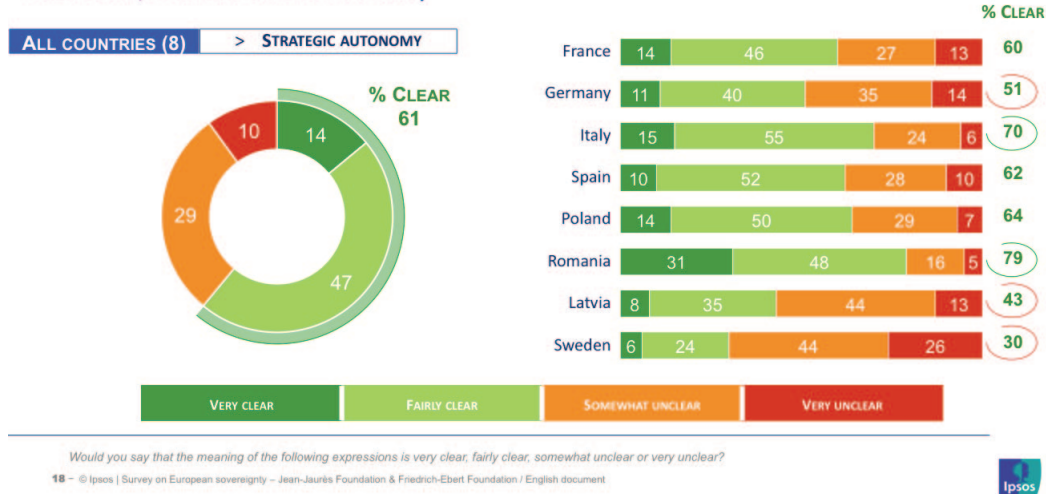
In France and, especially, in Italy the term is understood the least (only by 54 per cent of French people and by 45 per cent of Italians). It is better understood in Sweden (60 per cent), Latvia (67 per cent) and Germany (69 per cent), but above all in Spain (71 per cent), Poland (75 per cent) and Romania (77 per cent).

The same thing goes for European sovereignty



In France and, especially, in Italy the term »strategic autonomy« is better understood. In Germany, Spain, Latvia and Sweden, by contrast, much less.

As for the strategic autonomy, it's rather blurry – in particular in Sweden, Latvia and Germany



The term »European sovereignty« is somewhat better understood by respondents over 60 years of age (68 per cent) and especially by respondents in higher socio-professional categories (74 per cent). The same applies to the term »national sovereignty«.

Understanding expressions linked to sovereignty

IN %, CLEAR		ALL COUNTRIES	FRANCE	GERMANY	ITALY	SPAIN	POLAND	ROMANIA	LATVIA	SWEDEN
National sovereignty	71		68	75	56	70	83	84	78	71
European sovereignty	63		54	69	45	71	75	77	67	60
Strategic autonomy	61		60	51	70	62	64	79	43	30

IN %, CLEAR		ALL COUNTRIES	AGE				OCCUPATION				POLITICAL AFFILIATION		
			18-34 Y.O.	35-49 Y.O.	50-59 Y.O.	60+ Y.O.	MANAGERS	TECHNICIANS	WORKERS	INACTIVE PEOPLE	LEFT	CENTRE	RIGHT
National sovereignty	71		68	66	72	77	80	69	68	71	66	76	79
European sovereignty	63		64	57	61	68	74	61	60	62	63	70	61
Strategic autonomy	61		64	59	59	60	68	61	60	59	61	58	67

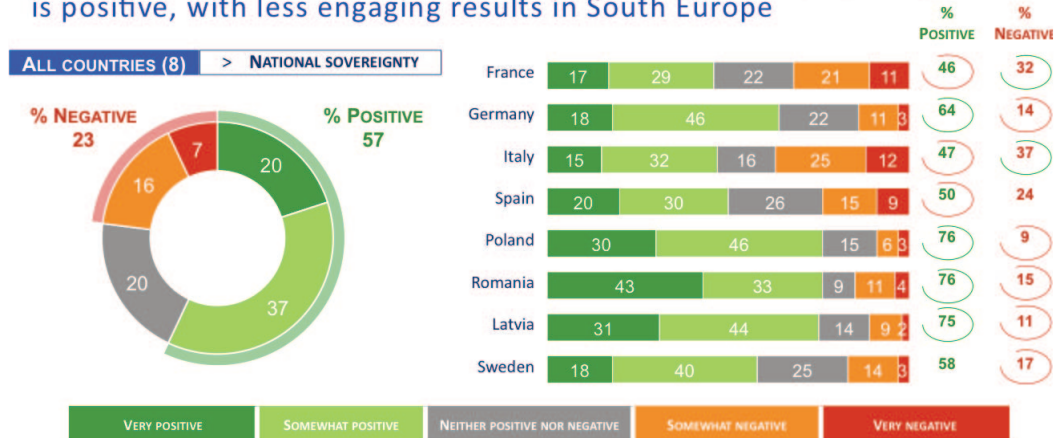
Would you say that the meaning of the following expressions is very clear, fairly clear, somewhat unclear or very unclear?

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Europeans are divided in terms of how they value this term. In all eight countries taken together, just over half regard the term »European sovereignty« as positive (52 per cent). Some 26 per cent view it as somewhat negative and 22 per cent as neither one nor the other. This evaluation is somewhat less positive than in the case of »national sovereignty« (5 percentage points less) and only marginally more positive than in the case of »strategic autonomy« (3 percentage points more).

More than 1 person out of 2 think the “national sovereignty” expression is positive, with less engaging results in South Europe

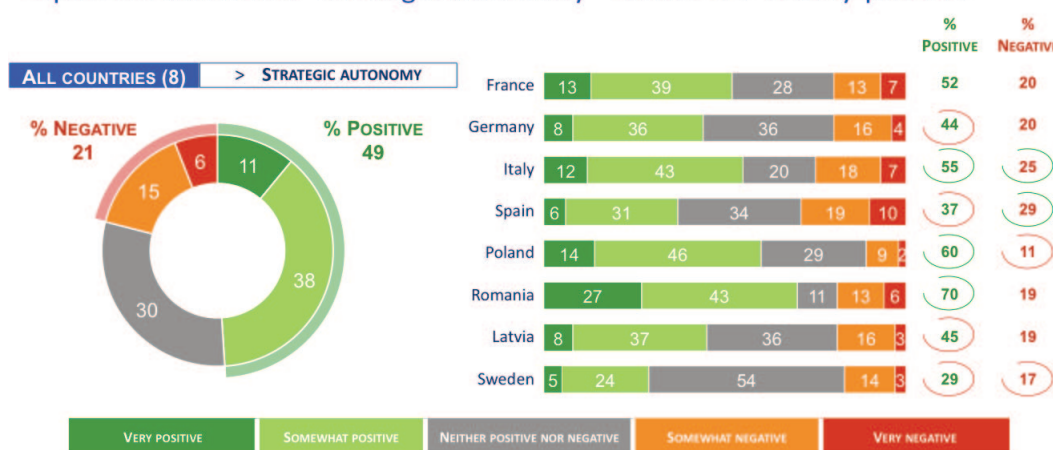


And do the following expressions bring to mind something that is...

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Opinions about the “strategic autonomy” notion are mostly positive



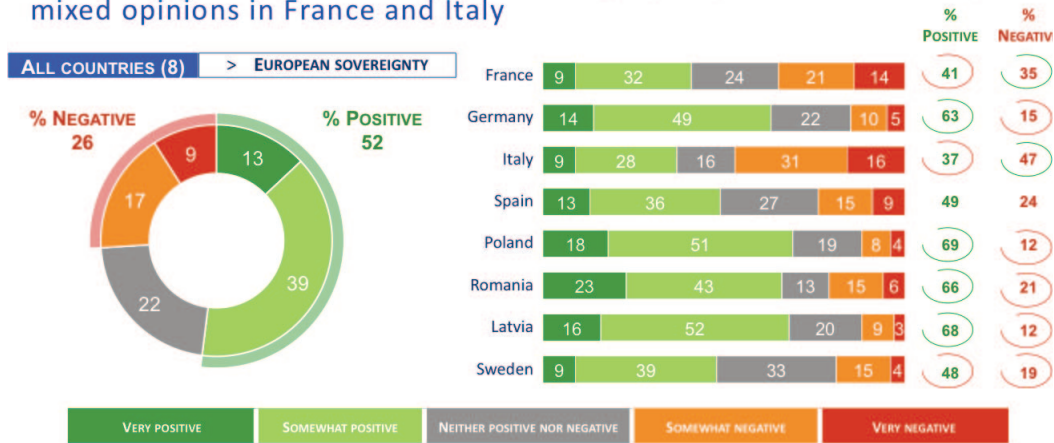
And do the following expressions bring to mind something that is...

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The term »European sovereignty« is regarded positively by a large majority in four of the countries under investigation: Germany (63 per cent), Poland (69 per cent), Romania (66 per cent) and Latvia (68 per cent). Opinions are much more mixed in Spain (49 per cent regard it as positive, 24 per cent negative), Sweden (48 per cent positive, 19 per cent negative), France (41 per cent positive, 35 per cent negative) and above all Italy (37 per cent positive, 47 per cent negative).

The same goes for the “European sovereignty” expression, with very mixed opinions in France and Italy



And do the following expressions bring to mind something that is...

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It is also noteworthy that in France and Italy a majority of respondents even consider it to be contradictory to put the words »sovereignty« and »Europe« together (52 per cent of French respondents and 56 per cent of Italians), compared with only 27 per cent of Germans.

Using “sovereignty” and “Europe” together is possible for more than one person out of two

ALL COUNTRIES (8)

> IT IS CONTRADICTIONARY TO USE THESE TWO WORDS TOGETHER, AS SOVEREIGNTY REFERS ABOVE ALL TO THE NATION



FRANCE	GERMANY	ITALY	SPAIN	POLAND	ROMANIA	LATVIA	SWEDEN
52	27	56	36	39	47	44	41

> IT IS POSSIBLE TO USE THESE TWO WORDS TOGETHER, AS EUROPEAN SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY ARE COMPLEMENTARY



FRANCE	GERMANY	ITALY	SPAIN	POLAND	ROMANIA	LATVIA	SWEDEN
48	73	44	64	61	53	56	59

About the expression “European sovereignty”, which of the following opinions do you agree with more or disagree with less?

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From a sociodemographic standpoint the term is regarded as positive by those over 60 years of age (58 per cent in comparison with 47 per cent of those 35–49 years of age). The same applies to those in higher socio-professional categories (61 per cent). However, the proportion of negative views varies only marginally by age and qualifications (between 22 per cent and 29 per cent, depending on the group in question). It appears that capacity for judgement develops with age and qualifications. Political self-positioning has more influence on how someone evaluates the term: among those identifying as politically in the centre, the term is more often regarded as positive (61 per cent, with only 17 per cent giving negative evaluations) than by those on the left (54 per cent as against 27 per cent negative evaluations) and those on the right (51 per cent as against 30 per cent negative evaluations). The latter doubtless regard European sovereignty as a narrowing of national sovereignty, which is much more important to them (70 per cent positive evaluations as against 48 per cent among those on the left).

The appreciation of expressions linked to sovereignty

IN %, POSITIVE (+) / NEGATIVE (-)			ALL COUNTRIES		FRANCE		GERMANY		ITALY		SPAIN		POLAND		ROMANIA		LATVIA		SWEDEN	
	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
National sovereignty	57	23	46	32	64	14	47	37	50	24	76	9	76	15	75	11	58	17		
European sovereignty	52	26	41	35	63	15	37	47	49	24	69	12	66	21	68	12	48	19		
Strategic autonomy	49	21	52	20	44	20	55	25	37	29	60	11	70	19	45	19	29	17		

IN %, POSITIVE (+) / NEGATIVE (-)			ALL COUNTRIES		AGE				OCCUPATION								POLITICAL AFFILIATION							
	+	-	+	-	18-34 Y.O.	35-49 Y.O.	50-59 Y.O.	60+ Y.O.	MANAGERS	TECHNICIANS	WORKERS	INACTIVE PEOPLE	LEFT	CENTRE	RIGHT									
National sovereignty	57	23	52	26	52	25	59	21	64	20	65	21	56	24	57	22	56	23	48	32	63	17	70	15
European sovereignty	52	26	51	26	47	29	50	28	58	24	61	22	53	25	49	28	51	27	54	27	61	17	51	30
Strategic autonomy	49	21	50	19	47	22	48	22	52	22	59	16	50	20	48	22	47	23	47	25	49	19	57	19

And do the following expressions bring to mind something that is...

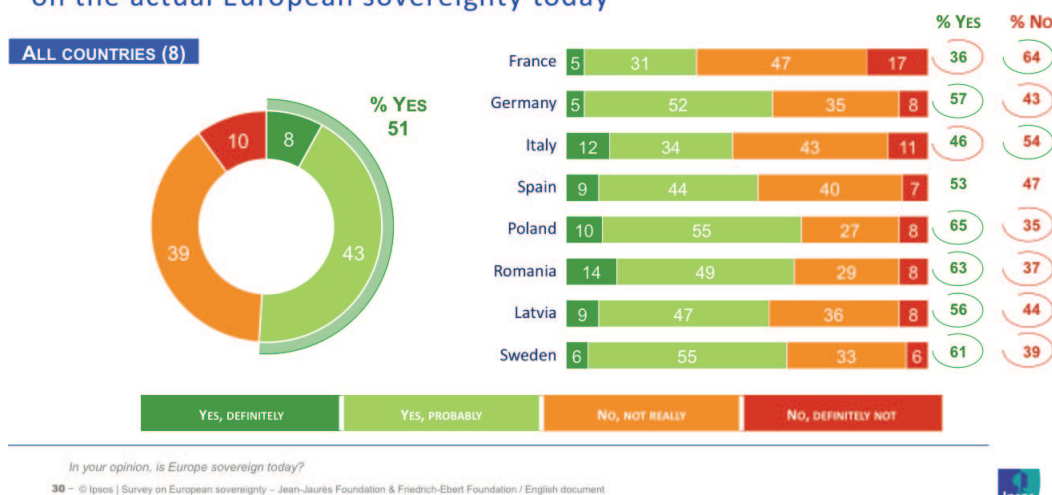
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Only half of Europeans regard Europe today as sovereign

Europeans define sovereignty first and foremost as independence from others (58 per cent give this as one of the two main definitions of sovereignty), as living in accordance with one's own values and ideas (57 per cent) or as the ability to assert one's own interests (51 per cent). The definition of sovereignty as freely chosen cooperation with partners lags far behind (35 per cent). However, only 51 per cent of Europeans regard Europe today as sovereign. While northern and eastern European countries are largely convinced of Europe's sovereignty (61 per cent of Swedes, 65 per cent of Poles, 63 per cent of Romanians, 56 per cent of Latvians and 57 per cent of Germans), those in France and Italy look at the situation quite differently (64 per cent of the French and 54 per cent of Italians take the view that Europe is not sovereign). Spanish people are divided on this question, with a slight majority regarding Europe as sovereign (53 per cent).

Very mixed (and contrasted depending on the countries) opinions exist on the actual European sovereignty today



For most people, the economy is the most important factor in determining Europe's sovereignty (69 per cent regard a strong economy as indispensable for Europe's sovereignty), although other considerations are also regarded as almost as important. For example, a large majority of Europeans consider it as essential that Europe pursue a common security and defence policy (67 per cent overall and a majority in all countries); that in strategic areas such as food supply and health care provision production must take place in Europe (65 per cent overall and a majority in all countries, apart from Poland); that Europe should have its own energy sources (60 per cent and a majority in all countries, apart from Poland and Sweden); that it strongly defend its values (61 per cent, apart from Poland and Sweden); that it control its external borders (59 per cent, apart from Poland); that it should possess common instruments for combating foreign interference (58 per cent, apart from Poland); that it should have control over its strategic infrastructure (52 per cent, apart from Poland and Sweden); and that it should have its own tax revenues (53 per cent, although only a minority in Germany, Poland and Sweden).

Control over digital infrastructure is regarded as critical by a little less than half of Europeans (46 per cent), but by a slim majority in France (51 per cent), Spain (51 per cent) and, especially, Romania (60 per cent).

Elements that Europe needs to have in order to be sovereign

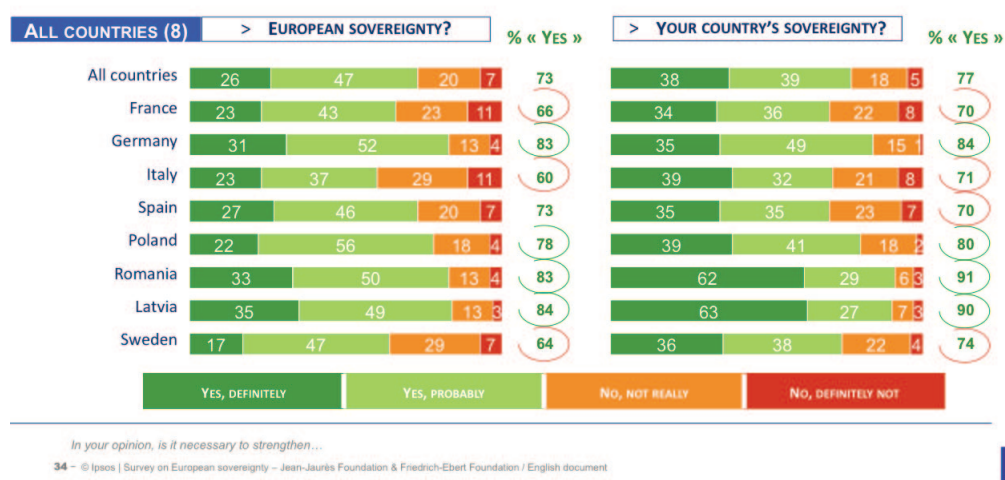
IN %, ESSENTIAL	ALL COUNTRIES	FRANCE	GERMANY	ITALY	SPAIN	POLAND	ROMANIA	LATVIA	SWEDEN
A prosperous economy	69	67	67	73	75	59	82	71	45
A common security and defence policy	67	67	71	72	67	53	75	70	50
Guarantee European production in strategic domains such as food or health	65	70	65	66	72	46	75	64	56
European energy resources / Its own energy resources	60	62	59	64	64	43	72	59	44
Strong defence of its own values (democracy and rule of law) both inside and outside its borders	61	63	65	58	62	48	73	65	50
Control of the EU's external borders	59	63	61	56	60	39	68	59	66
Common tools to combat foreign interference (fight against misinformation campaigns, the funding of political parties by foreign nations, etc.)	58	64	60	61	57	40	66	60	64
Control of strategic infrastructures (ports, airports, energy, etc.)	52	55	52	56	56	29	67	52	50
Its own tax resources	53	57	45	63	61	32	68	54	34
Control of digital infrastructures (social media, 5G, Cloud, data storage, submarine cables, satellites, etc.)	46	51	49	47	51	24	60	39	42

Almost three-quarters of Europeans think that European sovereignty should be strengthened

While a large majority of Europeans take the view that their country's sovereignty should be strengthened (77 per cent overall, 70 per cent in France and Spain and 91 per cent in Romania), they do not consider it to be contradictory to strive at the same time to strengthen European sovereignty. In fact, 73 per cent of Europeans believe that European sovereignty should be strengthened, in particular Latvians (84 per cent), Romanians (83 per cent) and Germans (83 per cent), to a lesser extent, but still by a large majority the Spanish (73 per cent), the French (66 per cent), Swedes (64 per cent) and even Italians (60 per cent).

Even though the notion of European sovereignty doesn't seem to appeal much to French people or Italians, a majority of them are not substantially opposed to it.

The idea to strengthen European sovereignty pleases a solid half of the respondents – almost as many think this for national sovereignty



The majority of Europeans take the view that European sovereignty should be strengthened, above all to counter the threat of terrorism (37 per cent offer this as one of the two main reasons, especially in France, Poland, Romania and Sweden), to meet the challenge of climate change (34 per cent, especially often in Germany) and to prevent threats to health (31 per cent, especially in Italy and Spain). These global challenges, in their view, require a global response, because their country does not have sufficient international clout (27 per cent overall and as much as 39 per cent in Italy and 37 per cent in Latvia), or other actors, first and foremost China, are seeking hegemony (20 per cent overall, 25 per cent in France and 27 per cent in Sweden). Russia's power ambitions are cited as a reason by only 13 per cent of Europeans overall, but by 30 per cent in Poland (the third most often cited reason for strengthening European sovereignty) and by 31 per cent in Latvia (again, the third most often cited reason).

European Sovereignty

Reasons justifying the wish for strengthening the European sovereignty

IN %, IN TOTAL	ALL COUNTRIES	FRANCE	GERMANY	ITALY	SPAIN	POLAND	ROMANIA	LATVIA	SWEDEN
The terrorist threat	37	42	37	28	31	43	44	38	43
The issue of climate change	34	30	42	34	31	32	16	18	34
The health threat	31	26	30	38	41	26	33	30	26
The lack of clout of your country on the world stage	27	30	19	39	32	17	31	37	15
China's lust for power	20	25	18	23	19	20	15	9	27
The USA's lust for power	17	14	21	13	22	12	20	21	13
The lust for power of tech giants (GAFAM)	14	19	11	10	15	17	17	13	15
Russia's lust for power	13	6	13	9	8	30	21	31	22
Turkey's lust for power	7	9	11	6	2	3	4	3	6

In your opinion, which of the following reasons best explain the need to strengthen European sovereignty? First? Second?

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(To those who think European sovereignty should be strengthened)



What is currently hindering the realisation of European sovereignty, according to Europeans, is not the unwillingness of the population (only 11 per cent take this view), but rather the fact that some European countries are led by nationalists (23 per cent overall, 38 per cent in Sweden and 35 per cent in Germany); pressure from certain foreign countries in whose interest it is that Europe does not become stronger (22 per cent overall, 41 per cent of Latvians and 36 per cent of Romanians); the weakness of European institutions as currently constituted (16 per cent); cultural differences between European states (16 per cent); and, to a lesser extent, pressure from big industrial corporations or digital platforms (9 per cent).

Germany

The survey on European sovereignty confirms Germans' positive and pro-European attitude towards the European Union, arising from historical responsibility for two world wars and German partition. Germany has benefited from European integration more than perhaps any other country: for Germans, since 1945 and 1989 peace, freedom and prosperity have been closely linked to the European idea. Whether as German Europeans or European Germans they see no contradiction in the desire to enhance both national and European sovereignty, rather a mutual reinforcement. In the past, at moments of crisis for the EU (the financial crisis in 2008–2009 and the 2015 refugee crisis) Germany – not always with the approval of other member states – has stepped up to the plate as crisis manager. Even though the German side has launched few initiatives in recent years towards further developing and deepening the Union, it is nevertheless absolutely clear to Germans that global challenges can only be tackled together with the EU.

Because of its historical experiences with fascism and National Socialism anything redolent of nationalism is likely to encounter considerable scepticism in Germany. No surprise therefore that in the survey the Germans were pre-eminent in regarding nationalist governments in Europe as the main hindrance to more European sovereignty. In contrast to other countries, in Germany »sovereignty« is not associated with nationalism, but rather with positive notions: independence, self-determination and freedom were ranked above all other answers. The fact that sovereignty is regarded as neither right-wing nor left-wing, but rather as neutral fits this picture and is something specific to Germany. Germans' positive attitude towards this idea may also derive from the fact that in everyday speech »sovereign« (souverän) is often used to characterise people who are able to master a difficult situation with tenacity and flair. People would thus like to see the EU as an institution and Germany as a country tackling political challenges successfully and confidently and being able to solve problems.

Sovereignty? A positive notion highly valued in Germany

»When you hear the word »sovereignty« what ideas or images spontaneously come to mind?« While the French overwhelmingly associate the term »sovereignty« with the semantic field attached to royalty (»king«, »queen«, »monarchy« and so on), the responses recorded »beyond the Rhine« outline a set of views that are significantly more favourable towards the idea of European sovereignty: independence, the state, freedom, autonomy, power, self-determination, security, trust, strength and so on.

The term »sovereignty« overall evokes »something generally positive« for three-quarters of Germans (73 per cent), whereas the figure is below 50 per cent, on average, in the eight countries in the survey, and only 29 per cent in France. The Germans also provide the largest number of respondents,

alongside the Poles and the Latvians, who regard the term as »modern« (31 per cent), while less than 10 per cent regard it as »outdated« (50 per cent go for »neither one nor the other«). This differs considerably from the scores recorded in France and Italy, where the majority regard sovereignty as »outdated« (49 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively). The lack of political affiliation in relation to sovereignty is another distinctively German feature: only 3 per cent of those asked consider the term »left-wing«, 5 per cent »right-wing«, while the consensus of a large majority (77 per cent) is that it is »neither left-wing nor right-wing« (15 per cent had no opinion). In the other countries opinions are more divided, and while the majority of Europeans (58 per cent) do not attribute any political affiliation to the word, for the remainder it is rather associated with the right (23 per cent) than with the left (6 per cent).

Finally, when asked to choose from a list the two words that they most associate with the term

»sovereignty« more than half of Germans opt for »independence« (mentioned by 63 per cent) and »self-determination« (53 per cent), with »freedom« (35 per cent) taking third place. Once again, the Germans look favourably on the notion, in contrast to southern Europe. In France, Italy and Spain, the words »power« and »nationalism« come to mind instead.

European sovereignty: two words that go together well

Do the largely positive connotations observed in Germany indicate stronger support for the concept of »European sovereignty«? Certainly, around 70 per cent of Germans stated that they had a clear idea of what the expression means, and 63 per cent had a positive attitude towards it (especially CDU, SPD and Green voters, with only AfD supporters split). When it comes to what people understand by the idea of »national sovereignty« 75 per cent of Germans stated that they have a good understanding of it and 64 per cent that it has positive associations, a little above the European average with regard to both terms. The expression »strategic autonomy«, by contrast, is less well understood (51 per cent of Germans have a good idea of what it means, as against an average of 61 per cent for the eight countries in the study overall), although people's assessments remain broadly positive (44 per cent positive opinions as against 20 per cent negative, with a European average of 49 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively).

The notion of European sovereignty is thus well understood and well regarded in Germany, and few Germans see any contradiction with national sovereignty. Three-quarters of Germans (73 per cent, the highest percentage out of the eight countries under investigation, 15 percentage points above the European average) thus feel that it is possible to reconcile the notions of sovereignty and Europe, »because European sovereignty and national sovereignty are complementary«. Only 27 per cent (as against a European average of 42 per cent) consider that the two terms are contradictory, with »sovereignty referring above all to the nation«.

Here again, the fairly clear distinction between Germany and the average in the countries under study derives from the meaning attached to the concept of sovereignty. For Germans, besides »independence from others« (mentioned by 63 per cent), sovereignty also means »cooperation freely agreed with one's partners« (49 per cent), while on European average this item ranks last (35 per cent).

European sovereignty, already a reality for most Germans

To the question »in your opinion, is Europe already sovereign?«, the majority of Germans reply in the affirmative (57 per cent, with 43 per cent taking the opposite view). Once again, this is above the European average, which is finely balanced on this issue (51 per cent saying »yes« as against 49 per cent saying »no«), and a long way from countries in which critical views prevail, such as France (64 per cent »no«) and Italy (54 per cent).

Opinions on whether Europe has true sovereignty differ from one country to another, although there is consensus on the essential conditions for achieving sovereignty: »a common security and defence policy« is regarded as essential by 71 per cent of Germans (with an average of 67 per cent in the eight countries in the survey); »a strong economy« (mentioned by 67 per cent in Germany, with a European average of 69 per cent); »safeguards on European production in such strategic areas as food and health« (65 per cent, 65 per cent); »strong defence of its own values – democracy, rule of law – both internally and externally« (65 per cent, 61 per cent); »control over the EU's external borders (61 per cent, 59 per cent); »common instruments for combating foreign interference« (60 per cent 58 per cent); »European energy sources« (59 per cent, 60 per cent); »control over its strategic infrastructure – ports, airports, energy« (52 per cent, 52 per cent); »control over its digital infrastructure – social networks, 5G, the cloud« (49 per cent, 46 per cent); and »its own tax revenues« (45 per cent, 53 per cent). The ranking of the various elements differs slightly from one country to another, but the levels remain similar.

And even when a particular condition is not regarded as »essential« in a given country, it is at least considered »important«. The European average is above 90 per cent for »essential or important« for each of the 10 proposed conditions.

Whether European sovereignty already exists or not, respondents in all the countries in the survey are calling for it. Broadly speaking, 73 per cent of Europeans believe that European sovereignty should be »strengthened«, a rate that rises to 83 per cent in the case of Germany, one of the highest, along with Latvia (84 per cent) and Romania (83 per cent). For Germans it is as important to strengthen European sovereignty as to strengthen national sovereignty (84 per cent). This massive support can be explained by its expected benefits. Asked to choose two reasons to justify this, Germans prioritise »the challenge of climate change« (42 per cent, with an average of 34 per cent it is ranked second in the eight countries in the survey), »the threat of terrorism« (37 per cent in Germany and ranked first across the eight countries with an average of 37 per cent), as well as »the threat to health« (30 per cent, 31 per cent). Strengthening European sovereignty also appears important to Germans in order to curb »US great-power ambitions« (21 per cent), which is mentioned more often than »Chinese great-power ambitions« (18 per cent), while the European average has this the other way around (17 per cent for the United States, 20 per cent for China). In Germany mention is made a little more frequently than elsewhere of

»Turkish great-power ambitions« (11 per cent/7 per cent European average) – undoubtedly because of the special relations between the two countries – and less often »their country's lack of clout at international level« (19 per cent, 27 per cent European average).

Going forward, what is it that is most hindering the further strengthening of European sovereignty? For Germans, one reason stands out, chosen by one person in three (35 per cent): »the fact that some European countries are governed by nationalists«, an item that is more broadly mentioned than in other countries (23 per cent on average across the eight countries, with only 15 per cent in France, and 14 per cent in Romania and Latvia). Germany shares this particular standpoint with Sweden (38 per cent on this point). »Pressure from certain foreign countries in whose interest it is that Europe does not become stronger«, which is most often cited in Latvia (41 per cent) and Romania (36 per cent), garners only 17 per cent in Germany, at the same level as »cultural differences between European countries«, further proof of how deeply embedded Germany is in the European Union. »The weakness of the European institutions« (Commission, Parliament)« follows at 14 per cent, while it is the primary reason put forward by the French (23 per cent) and the Italians (22 per cent). »Popular reluctance« and »pressure from big industrial corporations or digital platforms« are also mentioned, but by less than 10 per cent of the sample.

France

France, the country that initiated the discourse on European sovereignty, stands out in this investigation because of the ways in which its history and political identity frame the idea in the popular imagination. The close association between the term »sovereignty« and the notion of monarchy testifies to the pervasive, albeit ambivalent memory of the figure of the king in the collective unconscious and to the »vertical« dimension of power, which even today remains alive in the Fifth Republic's presidential system. Sovereignty also refers to the central and controversial question of France's relations with its external environment. It reveals a general French fear of loss of status or even a kind of self-assertion in the face of globalisation – sovereignty, associated with »strength«, is rooted in the notion of the French nation's influence in the world. Shaped by its model of a centralised republic, »one and indivisible«, and difficulties imagining political leadership at different levels of responsibility, France's instigation of European sovereignty embodies an effort to provide its citizens with opportunities beyond the national framework, although not without a certain ambiguity. The French view Europe in terms of a »greater France«, and their expectations, which are very high, are regularly disappointed. This explains their pessimism concerning the current state of European sovereignty. However, it is precisely this state of affairs that evokes in the French a desire to strengthen every possible area of EU political action.

Sovereignty? In France, an idea associated with royalty

By way of preamble to the questions on European sovereignty, Ipsos asked the French and the Germans what comes to mind when they hear the term »sovereignty«. In France, the response was unequivocal. Out of the 1,000 persons interviewed, 300 (!) spontaneously associated sovereignty with »king«. As many as 30 per cent gave this answer, which is exceptional for open questions of this kind. Usually, the most frequent responses total around 10 per cent. This figure is even more remarkable, given that a whole host of associations clustered around the word »king« in the same semantic field: »queen« (8.7 per cent of words mentioned), »royalty« (5.7 per cent), »sovereign« (4.9 per cent), »monarchy« (4.5 per cent), »kingdom« (4.3 per cent), and even »crown«, »royal«, »château«, »prince«, all garnering between 1 and 3 per cent of the words mentioned.

By comparison, in Germany the terms that come to mind most frequently are rather in the range of 10 per cent and refer to »independence«

(»Unabhängigkeit«, 7.4 per cent of mentions, »Unabhängig«, 4.8 per cent), »the state« (»Staat«, 4.2 per cent) or »freedom« (»Freiheit«, 3.7 per cent). However, one would be wrong to conclude at this stage that these represent opposing visions. The values highlighted in Germany are also present in France, and in relatively similar proportions: the term »independent« is mentioned by 7.9 per cent of the French, the term »state« by 3.7 per cent and »freedom« by 2.8 per cent. It's just that these evocations are eclipsed by the predominant association between »sovereignty« and »king«, which necessarily affects the term's connotations.

Consequently, the word »sovereignty« only evokes »something rather positive« for 29 per cent of the French, in comparison with almost half of Europeans as a whole (46 per cent) and just under three-quarters of Germans (73 per cent). Similarly, just under one in two French people consider the notion to be »outdated« (49 per cent), with only 12 per cent regarding it as »modern« and 35 per cent as »neither one nor the other«. This is a considerable distance from the European average (32 per cent »outdated«, 20 per cent »modern« and 40 per cent »neither one nor the other«), and even further away from the levels found in Germany

(9 per cent »outdated«, 31 per cent »modern« and 50 per cent »neither one nor the other«). On these two questions, France is a lot closer to its southern European neighbours, Italy and Spain.

On the other hand the findings are more homogenous when it comes to the political orientations associated with the word »sovereignty«. In each of the eight countries in the survey, the majority agree that it is »neither left-wing nor right-wing« (a European average of 58 per cent take this view, 53 per cent in France). For others it remains more associated with the political right (23 per cent European average, 30 per cent in France), very rarely with the political left (6 per cent European average, 4 per cent in France).

The spontaneous reply of »royalty« wanes when the focus shifts to closed questions and respondents have to choose their responses to the term »sovereignty« from a fixed list. In that case the French opted for »power« (51 per cent de citations), ahead of »nationalism« (43 per cent), »independence« (31 per cent) and »protectionism« (26 per cent). This ranking still deviates significantly from the European average, in terms of which the term »independence« comes to mind (mentioned by 42 per cent, +11 points in comparison with France), ahead of »power« (37 per cent, -14) and »self-determination« (34 per cent, +12). This is even more remote from the results in Germany, which favours the trio »independence« (63 per cent), »self-determination« (53 per cent) and »freedom« (35 per cent).

European sovereignty, viewed much less favourably in France than elsewhere

A little over half of French people (54 per cent, as against 63 per cent on average for the eight countries in the survey) claim to have a clear idea of what is meant by »European sovereignty«. This is below the figure for the idea of »national sovereignty« (68 per cent of the French and 71 per cent of Europeans overall clearly understand what it means), and even less than in the case of what one might suppose to be the more difficult notion

of »strategic autonomy« (60 per cent in France, 61 per cent European average). If one puts to one side those who have a »fairly good« understanding of what these expressions mean and focus solely on those who have a »very good« understanding, France catches up with the European average on each of these three terms, although with scores that still suggest a paucity of information. Those French people who claim that they understand »very well« what »European sovereignty« means falls to 14 per cent (16 per cent European average), the same score as in the case of »strategic autonomy« (14 per cent, 14 per cent on average), and 10 percentage points less than in the case of »national sovereignty« (24 per cent in France, 25 per cent European average).

This approximate level of understanding does not preclude rather favourable preconceptions. On average in the eight countries in the study the notion of »European sovereignty« has positive connotations for 52 per cent of respondents, as against 57 per cent positive preconceptions with regard to »national sovereignty« and 49 per cent as regards »strategic autonomy«. France distinguishes itself once again in terms of its slightly harsher assessments: 41 per cent of respondents take a positive view of the notion of »European sovereignty« (66 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively, among LREM and EELV supporters, but only 36 per cent among supporters of LR, 33 per cent with regard to LFI and 28 per cent with regard to RN supporters), as against 35 per cent with negative views and 24 per cent whose views are »neither negative nor positive«. This is a long way from the enthusiasm displayed by Poles (69 per cent taking a positive view), Latvians (68 per cent), Romanians (66 per cent) or Germans (63 per cent). Only Italy comes below France, in fact with majority of low opinions (37 per cent »positive«, 47 per cent »negative« and 16 per cent »neither positive nor negative«).

It is only in France (52 per cent) and Italy (56 per cent) that the majority of respondents take the view that it is »contradictory to talk of European sovereignty because sovereignty refers above all to the nation«. In all the countries in the survey (58 per cent European average), and especially in Germany (73 per cent), the general consensus is that »it is possible to use these two words together because European sovereignty and national sovereignty are complementary«.

These differences refer once again to how »sovereignty« is understood. In France, this notion is associated above all with »living in accordance with one's own values and preferences« (item chosen by 60 per cent of the sample, as against below 50 per cent in Germany and Sweden), »the ability to assert one's own interests« (mentioned by 59 per cent in France, as against below 40 per cent in Germany and Poland), but significantly less with »free cooperation with one's partners« (27 per cent, as against 49 per cent in Germany and 52 per cent in Sweden).

European sovereignty, a wish but not a reality for the majority of French people

eight countries in the survey, the French are the most sceptical. While one French person in two (36 per cent) believe that »yes, Europe today is sovereign«, two out of three (64 per cent) think that that is not the case. The balance observed in France is the opposite of the one in Poland (65 per cent / 35 per cent), Romania (63 per cent / 37 per cent) or Sweden (61 per cent / 39 per cent). Opinions are more divided in the other countries, but only Italy, like France, has a majority of »no's« (46 per cent / 54 per cent).

In all countries, opinion is divided, however, on the essential conditions required for genuine European sovereignty, with similar rankings: »a strong economy« (mentioned by 69 per cent on European average, 67 per cent in France); »a common security and defence policy« (67 per cent in Europe overall, 67 per cent in France); »safeguards on European production in such strategic areas as food and health« (65 per cent, 70 per cent); »European energy sources/own energy sources« (60 per cent, 62 per cent); »strong defence of its own values – democracy, rule of law – both internally and externally« (61 per cent / 63 per cent); »control over the EU's external borders« (59 per cent, 63 per cent); »common instruments for combating foreign interference« (58 per cent, 64 per cent); »control over strategic infrastructure« (52 per cent, 55 per cent); »its own tax revenues« (53 per cent, 57 per

cent); and »control over digital infrastructure« (46 per cent, 51 per cent). For the French and the Italians, however, it does not pass muster.

But there is no question of euroscepticism here. On the contrary, two-thirds of French people (66 per cent) think »that European sovereignty needs to be strengthened«, almost as many as believe that »their own country's sovereignty needs to be strengthened« (70 per cent). The notion of reinforcing European sovereignty obtains a solid majority in all eight countries. Italy is least enthusiastic, at 60 per cent, while the European average is 73 per cent. Views are even more favourable concerning the reinforcement of national sovereignty, but still of the same order of magnitude (77 per cent favourable opinions, on average).

The majority of respondents thus feel that European sovereignty should be strengthened, especially insofar as they regard it as a means of responding to international issues of public concern: »the terrorist threat« is the reason most often given in France (42 per cent) and on average in the eight countries in the survey (37 per cent), »the challenge of climate change« (30 per cent in France, 34 per cent in the eight countries overall) and »the threat to health« (26 per cent in France, 31 per cent in Europe overall).

For the French, as for Europeans overall, reinforcing European sovereignty would also appear to be a solution to current geopolitical concerns, for example, providing a means of overcoming »their country's lack of clout at international level« (mentioned by 30 per cent in France, 27 per cent on European average), or of dealing with »Chinese great-power ambitions« (mentioned by 25 per cent in France, 20 per cent on average). Finally, in France more than elsewhere people expect that strengthening European sovereignty would help to deal with »the power ambitions of the digital giants – GAFAM« (mentioned by 19 per cent, the highest rate among the eight countries under investigation).

Europeans are divided on the reality of European sovereignty, but as a consequence there is consensus on the need to reinforce it, beyond a certain national variation in ranking. But in that case, how can the difficulties be explained? The French identify first and foremost »the weakness of the European institutions (Commission, Parliament)« (mentioned by 23 per cent, 19 per cent on

average in the eight countries), »pressure from certain foreign countries in whose interest it is that Europe does not become stronger« (mentioned by 21 per cent, 22 per cent in Europe overall), as well as »cultural differences between European countries« (16 per cent / 16 per cent). The reason mentioned most often by European average – »the fact that some European countries are governed by nationalists« (23 per cent) – on the other hand, is mentioned less often in France (15 per cent).

Spain

In Spain there seems to be some confusion about the term "sovereignty". This is not surprising. One reason for this may be the fact that Spain is a constitutional ("parliamentary") monarchy. Without ruling out this option, it is very likely that, among other causes, the late implementation of democracy in Spain in the late 70ties of the 20th century, after 40 years of dictatorship, must also be considered. Sovereignty is not the only term in the study in need of further clarification in Spain. It would be interesting to know what Spaniards put behind the term "nationalism", one of the terms most associated with "sovereignty" according to the survey. In general, nationalism can have negative connotations (understood as a withdrawal into oneself) or positive ones (in the emancipatory sense of the 19th century). In Spain, the term nationalism is applied to both, the regional level such as in Catalunya or the Basque country as the national level. This meaning might vary according to the respondent's place of origin and political positioning.

The study shows once again the deep Europeanism of Spaniards, which has been little harmed by the EU's management of the last economic crisis (2007/8). Not only is European sovereignty rated positively by the majority: it is also compatible with national sovereignty (64/36). In fact, the convergence of these results with Germany is interesting (73% see it as compatible and 27% as contradictory). These results are the most positive for the European project in the eight countries covered by the study.

Sovereignty? An ambiguous idea for most Spaniards

Is this because Spain is a constitutional monarchy? Whenever Spaniards are asked what comes into their minds when they hear the term »sovereignty« they seem a little awkward: a mixture of »neither positive nor negative« (44 per cent of responses), »neither outdated nor modern« (43 per cent), »neither right-wing nor left-wing« (56 per cent) ... In each instance, a large majority (whether relative or not) of respondents replies »neither ... nor«.

On other issues, opinions are divided: 28 per cent of Spaniards have a »rather positive« view of sovereignty, as against 23 per cent who take the contrary view. This lags a long way behind the highest scores registered in the survey, in Germany (73 per cent answering »rather positive«) or in Poland (69 per cent), and instead is similar to the lowest levels, like those registered in France (29 per cent positive) and Italy (21 per cent). The 60 per cent of positive associations recorded in Romania,

however, prevents us from inferring a linguistic bias specific to Latin countries.

Furthermore, over one in three Spaniards regard the term »sovereignty« as »outdated« (38 per cent), higher than the European average (32 per cent). Only 13 per cent consider it, by contrast, to be »modern«, one of the lowest scores, along with those registered in France (12 per cent) and Italy (10 per cent). As for political orientation, while there is no majority view, one in four Spaniards (25 per cent) associate sovereignty with »the right«, as against 12 per cent who associate it with »the left«. While this is very much a minority view, these 12 per cent of respondents are relatively atypical by comparison with the figures recorded in the other countries: nowhere else is 10 per cent achieved on this item, with a European average of only 6 per cent.

When asked to select two words from a list of ten that one might associate with sovereignty, Spaniards choose »power« (mentioned by 54 per cent) and »nationalism« (43 per cent), two concepts that are not necessarily constructive in relation to the European project, and which also take top billing in

France and Italy. Some way below this are mentions of »freedom« (27 per cent), »independence« (20 per cent) and »self-determination« (again 20 per cent).

Finally, when asked about the associations with sovereignty that come to mind in relation to particular concepts rather than words, »living in accordance with one's own values and preferences« is mentioned by 63 per cent, »the ability to assert one's own interests« by 58 per cent and »independence in relation to others« by 43 per cent. »Cooperation freely agreed with one's partners«, chosen by half of Germans and Swedes, only comes at the bottom of the list in Spain, at 36 per cent.

European sovereignty, fairly well regarded

Generally speaking, the expression »European sovereignty« is less well understood in countries in which the idea of sovereignty has rather adverse connotations. This is not the case in Spain, where 71 per cent of respondents state they understand these terms »well«, one of the highest figures among the eight countries in the survey (63 per cent on average), similar to the scores for »national sovereignty« (70 per cent). The level of understanding of the term »strategic autonomy«, by contrast, falls back to the European average, garnering 62 per cent in Spain as against 61 per cent in the countries in the survey overall.

The good understanding of the concept of European sovereignty is perhaps fostered by its connotations. For just under half of Spaniards (49 per cent), this term conjures up »something positive«, in contrast to 24 per cent for »negative« and 27 per cent »neither positive nor negative«. In detail, positive judgements are given by 74 per cent of supporters of the People's Party, 57 per cent among supporters of the PSOE and even 45 per cent among Vox supporters (as against 25 per cent negative opinions). Only the supporters of Unidas Podemos stand out here, with 33 per cent positive opinions and 42 per cent critical ones. European sovereignty has positive associations for half of Spaniards, similar to the level of support for »national sovereignty« (50 per cent / 24 per cent / 26 per

cent), an exception also seen in Germany. In the other countries, indeed, national sovereignty is a little more highly regarded than European sovereignty, with positive assessments ranging from 5 to 10 percentage points higher. Concerning »strategic autonomy«, on the other hand, they take a harsher view. This term evokes positive associations only among 37 per cent of Spaniards, 12 percentage points below the European average of 49 per cent. The fact that in Spain the term »autonomía« refers to the debate on the status of the regions (starting with Catalonia) undoubtedly goes a long way towards explaining the results.

To sum up, the majority of Spaniards see no problem in associating the terms sovereignty and Europe and no contradiction with the notion of national sovereignty. For 64 per cent of those interviewed, »it is possible to use the two words together because European sovereignty and national sovereignty are complementary«. Only one person in three (36 per cent) consider, on the contrary, that sovereignty refers above all to the nation. Germany, where the balance of judgement is most favourable to the European project of all eight countries in the survey, stands somewhat apart in this respect (73 per cent / 27 per cent).

Spaniards favour strengthening European sovereignty even more than that of their own country

So, »is Europe today sovereign?« Like all Europeans, Spaniards are divided. A slim majority (53 per cent) responds in the affirmative, as against 47 per cent who take the contrary view.

It's true that, for many, the check list of essential elements that Europe must have in order to be considered sovereign has been satisfied: »a strong economy«, considered »essential« by 75 per cent of Spaniards; »safeguards on European production in such strategic areas as food and health« (deemed essential by 72 per cent); »a common security and defence policy« (67 per cent); »European energy sources« (64 per cent); »strong defence of its own

values – democracy, rule of law – both internally and externally« (62 per cent); »its own tax revenues« (61 per cent); »control over the EU's external borders« (60 per cent), to mention only the items considered essential by over 60 per cent of respondents.

There is still some way to go. And three-quarters of Spaniards (73 per cent, a clear majority of them supporters of the five main political parties, PP, PSOE and Ch, but also VOX and UP) concur with the view that European sovereignty should be »strengthened«. This is regarded as even more desirable than reinforcing national sovereignty (70 per cent), a view that is unique to Spain. Once more, this can be explained in terms of the Spanish debate on the status of its regions, with people who declare themselves close to separatist or »nationalist« parties (ERC, Junts, PNV...), but also to Podemos prominent among those who oppose any strengthening of national sovereignty, which they associate with centralisation from Madrid.

Many reasons are given to justify strengthening European sovereignty, but »the threat to health« (mentioned by 41 per cent, as against a 31 per cent European average) comes up most often, perhaps not surprisingly in a country that has been severely

hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. »Their country's lack of clout at international level« (32 per cent in Spain, 27 per cent on average), »the challenge of climate change« (31 per cent, 34 per cent) and »the terrorist threat« (31 per cent, 37 per cent) are the other reasons mentioned most frequently. To a lesser extent, people believe that an enhanced European sovereignty would also make it easier to stand up to »US great-power ambitions« (mentioned by 22 per cent, 17 per cent on average), which Spaniards consider slightly more of a threat than »Chinese great-power ambitions« (19 per cent, 20 per cent), while the other countries take the opposite view.

As for the remaining obstacles that need to be dealt with, »pressure from certain foreign countries in whose interest it is that Europe does not become stronger« is ranked first (mentioned by 24 per cent), followed by »the weakness of the European institutions (Commission, Parliament) in their present condition« (22 per cent), »the fact that some European countries are governed by nationalists«, and, to a lesser extent, »cultural differences between European countries« (12 per cent), »popular reluctance in various European countries« (12 per cent), and »pressure from big industrial corporations or digital platforms« (9 per cent).

Italy

Since 1945 Italy's sense of nationhood has been somewhat fractured. After 20 years of fascist rule under Benito Mussolini and Italy's participation in the Second World War as an ally of Nazi Germany, but also the rise of the resistance against the Nazis and the Fascists, followed by military defeat, any kind of nationalist rhetoric was discredited for most of the population. On top of that, the two biggest political forces up to the early 1990s were the entrenched party of government the Christian Democrats and the entrenched party of opposition the Communists. Both belonged, first and foremost, to their respective »universal church«, Catholicism and Soviet-style communism. In this context it is not surprising that many Italians identified more closely with Europe than with their own country. After this ideological antagonism had dissipated Italy was one of the countries in which the EU enjoyed its highest approval ratings. A more aggressive national or nationalistic rhetoric has emerged only in the past few years, since 2011 in the wake of the euro crisis, followed by the refugee crisis. Since then the EU's approval ratings have plunged, while the political parties Lega and Fratelli d'Italia, which characterise themselves as »sovereignistic«, regularly achieve approval ratings of around 40 per cent in opinion polls. Whether a united Europe or a »sovereign« Italy gains the upper hand has become a key issue of party political contention.

In Italy, sovereignty generally has adverse connotations

Out of the eight countries in the survey the term »sovereignty« has the worst connotations in Italy. Just over one in three Italians (35 per cent) – especially those below 35 years of age and people with left-wing sympathies – have a negative view of the word, as against 21 per cent who take a positive view and 38 per cent whose opinion is »neither positive nor negative«. At the same time, it is only in Italy that an absolute majority considers sovereignty to be »outdated« (53 per cent), as against a mere 10 per cent who consider it to be »modern« and 31 per cent »neither one nor the other". This is far above the European average (32 per cent consider the term to be »outdated«, 20 per cent »modern« and 40 per cent »neither one nor the other«), and particularly far from what is observed in Germany, where only 9 per cent of respondents opt for »outdated«, 44 percentage points below Italy.

In seeking to explain this phenomenon a first clue lies in the fact that Italians are more likely to attribute the term to a political affiliation. Just over one in three Italians (35 per cent) regard sovereignty

as a »right-wing« idea, as against only 5 per cent of Germans. Italians and Germans do agree on one thing, however: it is not a left-wing idea (only 6 per cent of Italians and 3 per cent of Germans take this view), the remainder of respondents opting for »neither left-wing nor right-wing« (48 per cent in Italy and 77 per cent in Germany). The more intense »politicisation« of the word »sovereignty« in Italy leads to more divided views, and it's understandable that left-leaning Italians take a more negative view, something also observed in France.

A second clue is provided by the closed questions. Respondents are provided with a list of words that they may or may not associate with the term »sovereignty« (they have to choose two). The top three choices among Italians are »nationalism« (mentioned by 58 per cent), »power« (46 per cent) and »protectionism« (26 per cent), while Germans choose »independence« (63 per cent), »self-determination« (53 per cent) and »freedom« (35 per cent). In these two countries people are clearly not talking about the same thing.

European sovereignty? Two words that don't go together well

The decidedly mixed view of the term »sovereignty« in Italy has a depressive effect on the concept of »European sovereignty«. The very linking of the two words is called into question. Less than half of Italians (45 per cent) consider that they have a »very good« (10 per cent) or a »fairly good« (35 per cent) understanding of what it means. All the other countries register above 50 per cent, some even well over 50 per cent on this question: France stands at 54 per cent, Sweden 60 per cent, Germany 69 per cent, Spain 71 per cent, Poland 75 per cent and Romania 77 per cent. The problem lies in the term »sovereignty« itself, because the same lack of understanding is observed in relation to the idea of national sovereignty (only 56 per cent of Italians have a good understanding of what it means, as against a 71 per cent European average), whereas in the case of »strategic autonomy«, an expression that one might assume is less well known, 70 per cent of Italians claim that they have a good understanding of its meaning, the second highest score among the eight countries in the survey (behind Romanians, at 79 per cent).

Both corporate and opinion barometers regularly show that people tend to like that they know and what they understand. In Italy, the ambiguity surrounding the notion of sovereignty hardly works in its favour. Indeed, it is the country that takes the most negative view of it. European sovereignty only has positive connotations for 37 per cent of Italians, the lowest score among the eight countries in the survey (41 per cent are inclined towards a positive view in France, 48 per cent in Sweden, 49 per cent in Spain, and above 60 per cent in Germany, Poland, Romania and Latvia). Italy is also the only country, besides France, in which the majority (56 per cent) of persons interviewed believe that »it is contradictory to use these two words together because sovereignty refers primarily to the nation«. On average in the eight countries in the survey, a majority believe the opposite: »it is possible to use these two words together because European sovereignty and national sovereignty are complementary« (58 per cent). This brings us back to the meaning people attach to sovereignty. In Italy, it is

»the ability to assert one's own interests« (mentioned by 64 per cent), and »independence in relation to others« (59 per cent). Independence is also cited in Germany and Sweden (63 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively), but followed immediately by »cooperation freely agreed with one's partners« (49 per cent and 52 per cent).

Strengthening European sovereignty? Fewer people want it in Italy than elsewhere, but still a majority

But does Europe have sovereignty today? Similarly to the French, and in contrast to the other countries surveyed, the majority of Italians do not think so: while 46 per cent consider that »yes, Europe is sovereign«, 54 per cent believe the opposite. The Italians are nevertheless in agreement with their neighbours when it comes to the essential elements that Europe must have in order to be sovereign, and indeed are a little more exacting: »a strong economy« (73 per cent of Italians consider this to be »essential«, as against a 69 per cent European average), »a common defence policy« (72 per cent, 67 per cent), »safeguards on European production in such strategic areas as food and health« (66 per cent / 65 per cent) and »Europe's own energy sources« (64 per cent / 60 per cent).

There is an even stronger emphasis on some criteria, such as »Europe's own tax revenues« (63 per cent of Italians consider this to be essential, as against a European average that is 10 percentage points lower, at 53 per cent). By contrast, one might have expected a higher score than elsewhere regarding »control over the EU's external borders« given the problem with migrants arriving on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa. But that is not the case. Italy is even the country, alongside Poland, in which this issue is least often considered to be »essential« (56 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively, as against values ranging from 59 per cent to 68 per cent in the other countries).

While the notion of European sovereignty appears to be more opaque and poorly regarded in Italy than

elsewhere, 60 per cent of respondents nevertheless believe that it should be strengthened. This score is lower than in the other countries – the European average is 73 per cent – but it is clear nonetheless. By comparison, support for strengthening national sovereignty (71 per cent) is more substantial, even though again somewhat lower than the average among the eight countries in the survey (77 per cent). As in the other countries, the people who most favour strengthening sovereignty are in the higher socio-professional categories, among the most highly paid, the best educated and left-leaning people.

Invited to choose from a list two reasons that justify their desire to strengthen European sovereignty, Italians most often choose »their country's lack of international clout«. This answer is given by 39 per cent of respondents, the highest score among the eight countries in the survey, 12 percentage points above the European average (27 per cent). The other reasons cited most often are more conventional: »the threat to health« (38 per cent, as against

a 31 per cent European average) – in all likelihood an effect of the Covid-19 crisis which has hit Italy hard – and »the challenge of climate change« (34 per cent / 34 per cent). The »terrorist threat«, which on average tops the list in the other eight countries in the survey (mentioned by 37 per cent), is by contrast mentioned less frequently in Italy (28 per cent). Around a quarter of Italians nevertheless believe that the strengthening of European sovereignty would make it easier to resist »China's great-power ambitions« (23 per cent). As for the current obstacles facing such strengthening, Italians mention four reasons of more or less equal importance: »the weakness of European institutions (Commission, Parliament...)« (mentioned by 22 per cent), »pressure from certain foreign countries in whose interest it is that Europe does not become stronger« (20 per cent), »the fact that some countries are led by nationalists« (19 per cent) and »cultural differences between European nations« (19 per cent).

Latvia

The reality of national sovereignty in Latvia is broadly regarded as a historical achievement etched deeply in the social memory of the nation. The national mythology regards history as a gradual and inevitable unfolding of the nation's right to statehood which culminated in the early 1990s. The movement for independence was explicitly concerned with formulating the appropriate, effective and internationally valid legal strategy for wresting sovereignty away from Moscow and back to Riga. Sovereignty is thus equated with words like independence and freedom as the survey confirms. Similarly, the close association between sovereignty and self-determination is a historical product when the latter term structured the international order in the wake of World War I. It was precisely the interwar experience which infused the consensual political decision in the 1990s to join the European Union and the NATO. Latvia's geopolitical vulnerability, as discovered after WWI, was resolved by a voluntary incorporation in a larger political unit after the restoration of independence. For this reason, European sovereignty, while unclear in practical terms, is seen as the underwriter of national sovereignty rather than a threat. Furthermore, since the EU celebrates national diversity, the formal loss of sovereignty over many areas of decision-making is not perceived as a hostile outcome. The basis of the state is the Latvian nation which realises itself culturally. As long as the cultural expression of the nation is not in any way limited, European sovereignty will be a positive. Thus, sovereignty is conceptualised in political and cultural rather than economic terms. For example, the restoration of a national monetary unit in the 1990s was seen as an important symbol of independence. Yet the introduction of the euro in 2014 met with little resistance and any grievances were expressed in cultural terms and not as a loss of monetary sovereignty.

Sovereignty: a positive but divided view

Despite a highly unusual political history – creation of the first Republic of Latvia in 1920, loss of independence in 1940 and regained only recently in 1991 – Latvia does not stand out as much as some other countries in the survey. Overall, the results for Latvia are fairly close to those of countries that have a positive view of sovereignty and European sovereignty, such as Germany and Poland.

Latvians thus react favourably to the word »sovereignty«, which conjures up »something positive« for 61 per cent of them (2 per cent have a negative view, 29 per cent have a view that is »neither positive nor negative«). This score is 15 percentage points higher than the average among the eight countries in the survey (46 per cent), while falling short of the scores registered in Germany (73 per

cent) and Poland (69 per cent). Latvia sets itself apart in terms of its sharp generational divide: sovereignty evokes »something positive« for 45 per cent of 18–34 year-olds, 60 per cent of 35–49 year-olds, 64 per cent of 50–59 year-olds and 74 per cent of those 60 years of age and over. The social divide is almost as clear: 76 per cent among the most highly educated have a »positive« view, 50 per cent among the less educated, 73 per cent among the most affluent and 58 per cent among the least affluent.

Going into more detail, one in three Latvians (33 per cent) consider the word »sovereignty« to be »modern«, 17 per cent find it »outdated«, while the majority (42 per cent) opt for »neither one nor the other«. A large majority (60 per cent) do not attach a political affiliation to it: below one in five Latvians (18 per cent) consider sovereignty to be a »right-wing« idea, as against 5 per cent who regard it as »on the left«. In Latvia, sovereignty mainly evokes the notion of »independence« (mentioned by 72 per cent), and to a somewhat lesser extent »freedom«

(45 per cent) and »self-determination« (42 per cent). This trio is also found in Germany and Poland (and to a lesser extent in neighbouring Sweden), a far cry from France and Italy, where the words »power«, »nationalism« and »protectionism« take the top three places. None of these words are mentioned by more than 15 per cent of respondents in Latvia.

Finally, turning from words to ideas associated with sovereignty, Latvians are perfectly in line with the average in the eight countries in the survey. »Independence in relation to others« is mentioned by 60 per cent (with a 58 per cent European average), »living in accordance with one's own values and preferences« by 56 per cent (57 per cent on average), »the ability to assert one's own interests« by 49 per cent (51 per cent) and »cooperation freely agreed with one's partners« is mentioned by 36 per cent (35 per cent).

Some 44 per cent of Latvians consider it contradictory to associate sovereignty and Europe, somewhere in the middle of the eight countries in the survey

As was observed in the other countries in the survey, a favourable view of sovereignty goes hand in hand with a good understanding and a clear perception of various expressions associated with it. Latvia does not deviate from the rule. Just under eight out of ten Latvians (78 per cent) have a »good« understanding of the expression »national sovereignty«, which conjures up »something positive« for three out of four people (75 per cent). This is clearly above the European average (57 per cent have a favourable view of this expression), at the same level as observed in Poland and Romania (76 per cent).

At a somewhat lower level, two-thirds of those interviewed (67 per cent, as against 63 per cent on average) have a good understanding of what European sovereignty means, and 68 per cent have a favourable view of it. Again, this is well above

average (52 per cent positive views), again in line with Poland (69 per cent) and Romania (66). In more detail, as in the case of »sovereignty« the notion of European sovereignty is more valued by older people (74 per cent) than by young people (58 per cent), and more by the higher qualified (73 per cent) than by the least qualified (62 per cent). Political affiliation is only a marginal consideration in relation to this idea, across the board.

Nevertheless, people remain fairly divided on the association between the terms sovereignty and Europe. The majority of Latvians (56 per cent) see no problem with linking the two words »because European sovereignty and national sovereignty are complementary«, but a substantial minority of 44 per cent (with 42 per cent on average among the eight countries in the survey) consider the two words to be contradictory »because sovereignty refers above all to the nation«.

As in Sweden, and in contrast to the other countries in the survey, Latvians have a poor understanding of the concept of »strategic autonomy«. The majority (57 per cent) of those interviewed lack understanding of the term. Even so, it conjures up »something positive« for 45 per cent of respondents, as against 19 per cent who take the opposite view and 36 per cent whose view is »neither positive nor negative«.

Latvians are divided on the reality of European sovereignty

But is Europe sovereign today? Opinion is divided: 56 per cent in fact believe that it is, while 44 per cent take the contrary view. This is still above the European average (51 per cent / 49 per cent), although some way below the levels observed in Poland (65 per cent »yes«) and Romania (63 per cent).

If Latvians are more sceptical concerning the reality of European sovereignty, it may be because a larger proportion of them believe that it is »essential« that Europe has certain features, without which one cannot really talk of having sovereignty. These include: »a strong economy«, which 71 per cent of Latvians consider essential; »a common security

and defence policy« (essential for 70 per cent); »strong defence of its own values – democracy, rule of law – both internally and externally« (65 per cent); »safeguards on European production in such strategic areas as food and health« (64 per cent); »common instruments for combating foreign interference (to combat disinformation campaigns, foreign funding of political parties and so on)« (60 per cent); »its own energy sources« (59 per cent); »control over the EU's external borders« (59 per cent); »its own tax revenues« (54 per cent); and »control over strategic infrastructure (ports, airports, energy...)« (52 per cent).

It is thus understandable that a higher proportion of Latvians (84 per cent, of whom 35 per cent answered »yes, absolutely!«) would like to strengthen European sovereignty. This score is almost as high as for strengthening national sovereignty, which is not far from unanimity (90 per cent). Many – and diverse – reasons are offered for deepening European sovereignty. Latvians most often mention »the terrorist threat« (38 per cent),

in common with many countries, but almost at the same level as »their country's lack of clout at international level«, more specifically (37 per cent). They are also the only country, along with Poland, that puts »Russia's great-power ambitions« in the top three (mentioned by 31 per cent – 73 per cent of whom are close to the nationalist Nacionāla Apvienība – as against a 13 per cent European average). This is followed by »the threat to health« (30 per cent), »US great-power ambitions« (21 per cent) and »the challenge of climate change« (18 per cent). Support for the other reasons mentioned falls below 15 per cent. Concerning the obstacles delaying the implementation of European sovereignty, Latvians cite one above all: »pressure from certain foreign countries in whose interest it is that Europe does not become stronger«, mentioned by 41 per cent (52 per cent of them older people). Far behind this comes »the current weakness of the European institutions (Commission, Parliament)« at 15 per cent, with everything else below it.

Poland

Poland is one of the most Europhile countries in the EU. In opinion surveys, approval of European integration regularly reaches record levels. This pro-European attitude expresses overall positive economic and political experiences since EU accession in 2004. But there is an even deeper longing for Poland's solid rooting in Western Europe, which is symbolised by the EU. As a bastion of Roman Catholicism, the Latin alphabet and multiple historical connections – economic, commercial, cultural and political – with Western and Central Europe, Poland has always seen itself as part of Western Europe and Roman Catholic Christendom (in contrast to the Orthodox Church in the eastern part of the continent, dominated by Russia). However, this ambition of the deepest possible embedding in the EU is at variance with a quite different line of historical experience: to many people, Poland only fully regained its sovereignty in 1990, with the withdrawal of the Red Army – in the country since 1945 – having been robbed of its very statehood for almost 200 years (with the 20-year hiatus of the Second Republic between 1918 and 1939). The idea of transferring this sovereignty, which had been regained at long last, to Brussels has been hard to stomach for this portion of the population. Finally, the notion of a »European sovereignty« in the realm of security and defence remains very much subject to historical overdetermination. Across the political spectrum, there is little trust in such ideas: the great majority take the view that only the United States and NATO are capable of ensuring Poland's security, especially against Russia, which directly borders Poland's Warmia-Masuria province. Reliance on European allies proved a washout in the country's hour of need in 1939 (»mourir pour Danzig?«). Generally speaking, Poland is trying to pursue a middle course between the need to consolidate the EU in a complex world, to safeguard its own democratic sovereignty and to maintain a close alliance with the »security provider of last resort«, the United States.

In Poland, people take a more positive view of sovereignty...

The Poles have not often been sovereign in their history, which perhaps explains their particular attachment to the term. Over two-thirds (69 per cent) have a positive view of it, and over three-quarters among people aged over 50. This is one of the highest percentages among the eight countries in the survey, along with Germany (73 per cent). Only 3 per cent of Poles have a negative view of the word »sovereignty«, as against 21 per cent whose opinion is »neither positive nor negative«. Poles are also above the European average in considering the term to be »modern« (31 per cent, the same as Germany, in contrast to a 20 per cent average among the eight countries in the survey), as against 17 per cent who consider it »outdated« (32 per cent on average) and 41 per cent who see it as »neither one nor the other«. While the majority do not associate

it with any political orientation (»neither right-wing nor left-wing«, 46 per cent), others associate it rather with the right (28 per cent) than with the left (7 per cent).

In Poland, sovereignty refers first and foremost to »independence« (mentioned by 65 per cent, 23 percentage points higher than the European average of 42 per cent) and to »freedom« (61 per cent, as against only a 28 per cent European average, an extremely significant difference of 33 percentage points). The association between sovereignty and freedom is not observed anywhere else to such a degree. »Self-determination« (mentioned by 40 per cent as against a 34 per cent European average) takes third place. The ideas of »power« (mentioned by 9 per cent as against a 37 per cent European average), »nationalism« (6 per cent in Poland, 31 per cent on average) and »protectionism«, by contrast, are mentioned much more rarely than elsewhere. In Poland, sovereignty is associated much more often with the notion of »independence in relation to others« (69 per cent, a European

record for this item) and »living in accordance with one's own values and preferences« (60 per cent). There is significantly less concern with »the ability to assert one's own interests« (37 per cent) and »cooperation freely agreed with one's partners« (35 per cent).

... and a very favourable view of the associated expressions national and European sovereignty

The very positive connotations of the term »sovereignty« in Poland also foster understanding and appreciation of related expressions. Most Poles have a good idea of what »national sovereignty« (83 per cent), »European sovereignty« (75 per cent) and even »strategic autonomy« (64 per cent) mean – all these scores are higher than the corresponding European average (71 per cent, 63 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively). Overall, these expressions are clearly more highly thought of than elsewhere. In Poland, national sovereignty evokes »something positive« in three-quarters of respondents (76 per cent, the highest score alongside Romania out of the eight countries in the survey, with an overall average of 57 per cent), while European sovereignty elicits positive associations in 69 per cent, including in 88 per cent of supporters of PO, 82 per cent of supporters of SLD and even 69 per cent of those close to the PiS. Again, this is a European high, as against an average for the eight countries in the survey of 52 per cent. Finally, six Poles out of 10 also take a favourable view of »strategic autonomy«, again more than 10 percentage points higher than the average (60 per cent / 49 per cent).

The majority of Poles do not see a contradiction between European sovereignty and national sovereignty. For 61 per cent of them, the terms sovereignty and Europe are compatible »because European sovereignty and national supervisory board are complementary«, as against 39 per cent who take the view that they are contradictory »because sovereignty refers above all to the nation«. In turn, there is a political divide on this issue between

people on the political left, three-quarters of whom consider the two notions complementary, and people on the right, who are clearly much more divided.

Poles believe in European sovereignty and would like to strengthen it

For two out of three Poles (65 per cent, with 35 per cent taking the opposite view), Europe's sovereignty is already a reality. Once again, this is the highest figure out of the eight countries in the study, as against a European average of 51 per cent. By way of comparison, only 36 per cent of French respondents take this view, while 64 per cent do not, the opposite state of affairs.

It has to be said that Poles are less demanding than their European neighbours when it comes to the essential elements that Europe has to have before it can be considered sovereign: »a strong economy«, considered essential by 59 per cent of Poles, but by 69 per cent of Europeans overall; »a common security and defence policy«, mentioned by 53 per cent of Poles and 67 per cent of Europeans; and »strong defence of its own values – democracy, rule of law – both internally and externally« (mentioned by 48 per cent in Poland, with a 61 per cent European average).

All the other elements are considered by a majority to be »important, but not essential« in Poland, while by European average each one is deemed »essential«. »Safeguards on European production in such strategic areas as food and health« (mentioned by 46 per cent as »essential« in Poland, with a 65 per cent European average), possessing »European energy sources« (43 per cent / 60 per cent), having »common instruments for combating foreign interference« (40 per cent, 58 per cent), »control over the EU's external borders« (39 per cent, 59 per cent European average), »its own tax revenues« (32 per cent / 53 per cent), »control over strategic infrastructure (ports, airports, energy...)« (29 per cent, 52 per cent); and »control over digital infrastructure (social networks, Cloud, 5G...)« (24 per cent / 46 per cent).

Whether it's a reality or not, most Poles (78 per cent) would like to strengthen European sovereignty, as well as national sovereignty (80 per cent). In each case they are above the European average (73 per cent and 77 per cent, respectively). Such reinforcement would help in combating »the terrorist threat« more effectively (mentioned by 43 per cent in Poland, 37 per cent European average) and, a particular view shared with Latvia, in standing up against »Russia's great-power ambitions« (mentioned by 30 per cent in Poland and 31 per cent in Latvia, as against a European average of only 13 per cent).

The other reasons mentioned are substantially in line with the average ranking in the eight countries in the study, although with varying degrees of intensity. Thus strengthening European sovereignty would make it possible to tackle »the challenge of climate change« (mentioned by 32 per cent in Poland, with an average of 34 per cent), »the threat to health« (26 per cent / 31 per cent), and »China's great-power ambitions« (20 per cent / 20 per cent). »Their country's lack of clout at international level«, on the other hand, is mentioned by only 17 per cent

in Poland, as against an average of 27 per cent. One perhaps detects here an underlying national pride that is more pronounced than elsewhere.

Poland is, however, perfectly in line with the European average with regard to the main obstacles to strengthening European sovereignty. The fact that the supposedly eurosceptic Andrzej Duda, who is also close to the Kaczyński brothers, has been president of Poland since 2015, does not prevent Poles from ranking in first place »the fact that some European countries are governed by nationalists« (mentioned by 22 per cent, although only half that among PiS supporters). Ranked at the same level is »pressure from certain foreign countries in whose interest it is that Europe does not become stronger« (22 per cent, 32 per cent among PiS supporters), followed by »cultural differences between European countries« (18 per cent), »the weakness of the European institutions (Commission, Parliament), as they stand at the moment« (16 per cent), »popular reluctance in various European countries« (12 per cent) and »pressure from big industrial corporations or digital platforms« (10 per cent).

Romania

In Romania, the idea of European sovereignty is marked by the a ambiguous perception of the notion of sovereignty itself in Romania. This ambiguity may be due, in part at least, to the traumas of the authoritarian regimes Romania went through in the XX century, an experience still strongly present in the public conscience. The internal mechanics of political life before and after Romania's accession in the EU may explain the lack of clarity as well. Whereas the altogether new concept of European sovereignty was explored at first rather reluctantly and cautiously in Romania in the last few years, and more or less as a reaction to European wide debates in which Romania had to be present with a position, national sovereignty has been a topic often approached by Romanian political parties. For sure, the persistent influence of some of these parties in the first years of the transition, such as the far-right Great Romania Party, which entertained a particularly nationalist ethnic-centered version of independence, can be linked to the fact that these ideas were already part of the political ethos of the communist years. Indeed, in foreign policy the Ceausescu regime pursued an "independent" path from the Soviet Union and at home fashioned itself as a nationalist, patriotic regime. Although these parties have died out since Romania's accession to the EU, their ideas still circulate in the background and are vented out in the open regularly, sometimes by top politicians. Also, mainstream parties have played at times with ideas of national sovereignty, when rather ambiguously and subdued, for electoral reasons and to present themselves as protectors of Romania's sovereignty against certain political or economic "dictates" of Brussels. This clashed so far with Romania's generally above the average euro-enthusiasm, and in particular with a new awareness in the country of the benefits of EU membership in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 and also as a result of the immediate and direct experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. These two events have given a new meaning to European sovereignty in Romania and are reflected in the way Romanians perceive themselves and their national sovereignty relating to a European one.

Sovereignty? An ambivalent term in Romania

Does Romania's turbulent political history colour people's perceptions of sovereignty? After a succession of authoritarian regimes in the twentieth century, Romanians have a positive view of the term. »Sovereignty« spontaneously conjures up »something positive« for 60 per cent of those interviewed, »something negative« for 10 per cent and »neither positive nor negative« for 23 per cent. While falling short of the level observed in Germany (73 per cent), this is above average for the eight countries in the survey (46 per cent positive associations), and almost the opposite of what is found in France (only 29 per cent positive associations) or Italy (21 per cent).

Nevertheless, 37 per cent of Romanians consider the notion »outdated«, which is markedly above the

European average (32 per cent), as against only 25 per cent who consider it to be »modern« and 33 per cent »neither one nor the other««. The majority of respondents (62 per cent) do not attribute any political affiliation to sovereignty, although among those who do, it is rather associated with the right (mentioned by 16 per cent) than with the left (9 per cent). These scores place Romanians somewhere in the middle ground in relation to the other countries in the survey. Sovereignty generally has positive connotations for a solid majority of Romanians, although the particular features they attribute to it are rather mixed.

This ambivalence is reflected in the words respondents associate with it. Behind »independence« (mentioned by 55 per cent) and »power« (41 per cent), two terms ranked top overall among the various countries, 32 per cent of Romanians choose »nationalism« and 30 per cent »freedom«. This may seem a minor point, but Romania is the only country

in which these two words are ranked at more or less the same level, and, what is more, ranked in third and fourth positions. Elsewhere people opt for one or the other: 61 per cent of Poles, for example, associate sovereignty and freedom, but only 6 per cent link sovereignty and nationalism; by contrast, 58 per cent of Italians choose »nationalism«, but only 13 per cent »freedom«. The 30 per cent of Romanians who associate sovereignty with the word freedom are well distributed among the population, while those who associate it with the word »nationalism« tend to be those under 50 years of age and supporters of the radical right (mentioned by around 40 per cent in each of these categories).

Romanians have a positive perception of European sovereignty, but tend to oppose it to national sovereignty

The relative ambiguity of the term sovereignty in Romania does not adversely affect people's understanding of related expressions. On the contrary, 84 per cent of Romanians have a good idea of what »national sovereignty« means (as against 71 per cent on average in the eight countries in the survey), 77 per cent have a good idea of what »European sovereignty« means (63 per cent on average) and 79 per cent understand what is meant by »strategic autonomy« (61 per cent on average). In each instance, Romania records the highest level of understanding.

The three expressions are also viewed particularly positively in Romania: 76 per cent have »very« or »fairly« positive assumptions about national sovereignty (as against a 57 per cent European average, +19 percentage points), 66 per cent in relation to »European sovereignty« (52 per cent on average, +14 percentage points) and 70 per cent with regard to »strategic autonomy« (49 per cent on average, +21 percentage points). Romanians also stand out in terms of the intensity of their responses, with higher scores for »very positive« for each expression than those observed in the other countries. It's worth noting, however, that European sovereignty

evokes less enthusiasm among young Romanians (57 per cent) than among their elders (77 per cent among those 60 years of age or above).

The notion of European sovereignty is therefore both well understood across the board and has positive connotations in Romania. Nevertheless, associating the terms sovereignty and Europe raises questions. While a slight majority of those asked (53 per cent) believe that it is possible to use these words together »because European sovereignty and national sovereignty are complementary«, a similar proportion (47 per cent) believe rather that »the two terms are contradictory because sovereignty refers above all to the nation«. Opinion is very divided, more so than the European average (58 per cent consider the two words to be »complementary«, 42 per cent »contradictory«), and above all a lot more than is observed in the countries in which, as in Romania, there is a positive perception of European sovereignty. In Germany, for example, 73 per cent of those asked believe that the two words go well together, as against only 27 per cent who take the opposite view. This difference can perhaps be explained by the ambiguous perception of the notion of sovereignty in Romania. Two-thirds of Romanians associate the expression with »living in accordance with one's own values and preferences«, 60 per cent with »independence in relation to others«, but only 29 per cent with »cooperation freely agreed with one's partners«. In Germany, this notion of cooperation is mentioned by just under half (49 per cent).

Virtual unanimity in Romania on strengthening European sovereignty and national sovereignty

But do people believe that Europe is sovereign today? While on average views are divided among the eight countries in the survey (51 per cent / 49 per cent), Romania is one of the countries in which people are most positive on this point, with 63 per cent of affirmative responses, as against only 37 per cent who say »no«.

Romanians are, on the other hand, much more demanding with regard to the conditions that have to be met in order to be able to say that such sovereignty has been attained. For a very large majority, it is thus »essential« that Europe has: »a strong economy« (mentioned by 82 per cent in Romania, as against a European average of 69 per cent); »a common security and defence policy« (75 per cent, 67 per cent on average); »safeguards on European production in such strategic areas as food and health« (75 per cent, 65 per cent); »strong defence of its own values – democracy, rule of law – both internally and externally« (73 per cent, 61 per cent); »European energy sources« (72 per cent / 60 per cent); »control over the EU's external borders« (68 per cent, 59 per cent); »its own tax revenues« (68 per cent, 53 per cent); »control over strategic infrastructure (ports, airports, energy...)« (67 per cent, 52 per cent); »common instruments for combating foreign interference« (66 per cent, 58 per cent); and »control over digital infrastructure (social networks, cloud, 5G)« (60 per cent, 46 per cent). More than in any other country in the sample Romanians consider each of these points to be »essential«.

In any case, for 83 per cent of Romanians (and 73 per cent of Europeans in general), European sovereignty should be strengthened. It is not up for question, and support for such strengthening in Romania is almost as massive as for the idea of »strengthening national sovereignty« (91 per cent).

The main reason offered (»the terrorist threat«, mentioned by 44 per cent) also ranks first on average in the eight countries in the survey. Next comes »the threat to health« (33 per cent in Romania, with a European average of 31 per cent) and »their country's lack of clout at international level« (31 per cent, 27 per cent). Romanians seem less concerned than their neighbours about »the challenge of climate change« (mentioned by only 16 per cent, as against a European average of 34 per cent), while on the contrary they are more alarmed by »Russia's great-power ambitions«: 21 per cent in Romania and 13 per cent on average, although this is far below the levels observed in Latvia (31 per cent) and Poland (30 per cent).

As in Latvia (41 per cent), Poland (22 per cent) and Spain (24 per cent), the obstacle to strengthening European sovereignty mentioned most often in Romania (36 per cent) is »pressure from certain foreign countries in whose interest it is that Europe does not become stronger«. This is followed by »the current weakness of the European institutions (Commission, Parliament)« (19 per cent). »The fact that certain European countries are led by nationalists« (14 per cent, as against 23 per cent on average for the eight countries in the survey), »cultural differences between European countries« (11 per cent), »popular reluctance in different European countries« (10 per cent) and »pressure from big industrial corporations or digital platforms« (10 per cent) lag some way behind.

Sweden

In Sweden, citizens and politicians still have a notion of the nation's expression in the form of independence and of the importance of "ruling over their own destiny", both nationally and on an individual level. This can be attributed to a lack of negative experiences with its own nationalism. Sweden lacks a comparable belligerent history, or the experience of existential crisis compared to other European countries. Thus, Swedish nationalism may for this reason have been of the less explicit kind. Nevertheless, a notion of Swedish exceptionalism has been cultivated and still resonates in public debate. This can be linked back to the establishment of the social democratic "Folkhemmet" (People's home) in the 1930s, which was essentially the central model of self-reliant modernization of Swedish society and economy. This enabled the country to transform itself from the poorest nations of Europe to one of the richest countries during the 20th Century with a strong democracy, a high degree of equality in international comparison and a developed universal welfare state. This notion of self-reliance meant that Sweden has always been wary of too strong international ties, opting for non-alliance instead of NATO-and as an EU-member since 1995 keeping its skeptical stance towards further integration steps out of fear of losing more national sovereignty. Hence, the overwhelmingly positive view of European sovereignty as shown in the survey seems perplexing. However, the answers show that national and European sovereignty do not have to be a contradiction but are complementary. The Swedish population seems to be at ease with the notion of the EU resembling an intergovernmental cooperation rather than a federal project. Therefore, in the Swedish view European sovereignty does not have to be developed at the expense of national sovereignty.

Sovereignty: a fairly positive and consensual view in Sweden

The term »sovereignty« was overall viewed slightly more positively in Sweden than in the eight countries in the survey as a whole. The term evokes something »fairly positive« to half of the Swedes interviewed (56 per cent, as against a European average of 46 per cent). Some 6 per cent have a »negative« view (as against a European average of 17 per cent), while 25 per cent are »neither positive nor negative« (against an average of 31 per cent) and 13 per cent have »no opinion at all« (as against 6 per cent). The proportion of those with a positive view grows with age (47 per cent among 18–34 year-olds, 53 per cent among 35–49 year-olds, 59 per cent among 50–59 year-olds and up to 65 per cent among the over-60s), and with income category (54 per cent among those on low incomes, 58 per cent among people on average incomes, and 64 per cent among

those on above-average incomes). While Sweden lags some way behind the countries most favourable to the idea of sovereignty (73 per cent of respondents have a positive view in Germany, 69 per cent in Poland, 61 per cent in Latvia and 60 per cent in Romania), it is well ahead of the more sceptical countries (France, with 29 per cent positive views, Spain with 28 per cent and Italy with 21 per cent).

The perceptions associated with the concept of »sovereignty« confirm its rather positive and consensual reception. The notion is perceived as »modern« by 23 per cent of the Swedes, as rather »outdated« by 22 per cent of them, and as »neither one nor the other« by a relative majority of 39 per cent of the panel (16 per cent expressed no opinion). Half of the respondents do not associate it with a political affiliation (it is perceived as »neither left-wing nor right-wing« by 49 per cent), even though sovereignty is, as elsewhere in Europe, marginally more associated with the right (21 per cent) than with the left (7 per cent).

When asked to choose two words they associate with the concept of »sovereignty« from a list,

Swedes most often choose »self-determination« (62 per cent in Sweden, as against a European average of 34 per cent), »independence« (47 per cent in Sweden, 42 per cent on average) and, to a lesser extent, »freedom« (34 per cent, 28 per cent). Below-average were Swedish associations with the words »power« (22 per cent in Sweden, 37 per cent on average) and »nationalism« (20 per cent in Sweden, 31 per cent on average). These results, as well as the fact that a majority are undecided between »modern« and »outdated« and do not associate sovereignty with a political affiliation, suggest that the concept of sovereignty may be less divisive in Sweden than elsewhere, especially in comparison with Southern Europe. Sweden is also the country that associates it the most with the idea of »cooperation freely agreed with partners« (52 per cent, against a European average of only 35 per cent). Sovereignty is almost equally associated with the idea of »independence from others« (55 per cent in Sweden, 58 per cent on average), »living in accordance with one's own values and preferences« (48 per cent in Sweden, 57 per cent on average), and »the ability to assert one's own interests« (45 per cent in Sweden, 51 per cent on average).

European sovereignty: overall a positive view in Sweden, even though many express no opinion

As we can see, in every country of the panel the perception of the term »sovereignty« influences how the associated expressions »national sovereignty« and »European sovereignty« are understood and assessed. Some 71 per cent of the Swedes thus declare they understand »well« what »national sovereignty« means (as against 75 per cent in Germany and only 56 per cent in Italy), and 60 per cent of them declare they understand the meaning of »European sovereignty« (69 per cent in Germany, 45 per cent in Italy). »National sovereignty« evokes »something positive« to 58 per cent of the Swedes (64 per cent in Germany, 47 per cent in Italy), and »European sovereignty« evokes the same among 48 per cent of them (63 per cent in Germany,

37 per cent in Italy). It should be noted that, as in the case of sovereignty, favourable views of European sovereignty grow with age and income category: ranging from 42 per cent in the younger generation to 53 per cent in the oldest, and from 43 per cent among those on low incomes to 57 per cent among those on the highest incomes. Furthermore, supporters of the main two traditional political parties are more enthusiastic (62 per cent favour European sovereignty among the Social Democrats, and 66 per cent among the Moderates) than those on the right (40 per cent among supporters of the Sweden Democrats) or on their left (41 per cent amongst the Vänsterpartiet).

People's understanding of »European sovereignty«, however, appears to be fairly vague in Sweden, with a higher score than elsewhere for the neutral answer »neither positive nor negative« (33 per cent, as against an average of 22 per cent). We can observe something similar in relation to »strategic autonomy«: only 30 per cent of Swedes declare they have a good understanding of what it means (as against a European average of 61 per cent), and only 29 per cent of them have a positive view of the notion, while the majority sees it as »neither positive nor negative« (54 per cent, 11 percentage points above the European average).

The majority of Swedes, however, do not seem to see any contradiction between »national sovereignty« and »European sovereignty«: 59 per cent consider it possible to link »sovereignty« and »Europe« »because European sovereignty and national sovereignty are complementary«, while 41 per cent support the opposite view, namely that the two terms are contradictory because »sovereignty refers first and foremost to the nation«.

European sovereignty to control borders and fight terrorism

Swedes (61 per cent), alongside Poles (65 per cent) and Romanians (63 per cent), are most convinced that European sovereignty already exists. Accordingly, they are a little less demanding than their neighbours regarding the list of qualities necessary for Europe to be sovereign. The order of

importance of these qualities also differs among countries.

Two-thirds of Swedes (66 per cent) deem it »essential« that »the controls its external borders«. An equivalent share (64 per cent) thinks that Europe has to have »common instruments to fight external interference«. These two elements are mentioned most often in Sweden, but are ranked only sixth and seventh in the other countries (mentioned by 59 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively). Swedes opt next for »safeguards on European production in such strategic areas as food and health« (56 per cent), albeit with less intensity than the European average (65 per cent). Half of the Swedes deem it essential that Europe has »a common security and defence policy«, »strong defence of its own values – democracy, rule of law – both internally and externally« and »control over strategic infrastructure (ports, airports, energy, etc)«. Those three items are chosen by 50 per cent in Sweden, as against 67 per cent, 61 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively by European average. All the other propositions are deemed »important but not essential«. A »strong economy«, for instance, is generally first on the list in Europe: 69 per cent of those surveyed consider it »essential«, as against only 45 per cent in Sweden. The same goes for the idea that the EU should have »its own energy resources«, which is considered essential by 60 per cent of Europeans on average, but only by 40 per cent of the Swedes.

The majority of Swedes consider that European sovereignty already exists, but two-thirds (64 per

cent) also think it needs to be strengthened. This, however, is the second lowest score in Europe — only Italy's is lower, at only 60 per cent. It is also differs most from the score recorded for national sovereignty, considered essential by 74 per cent of Swedes (+10 percentage points).

The reasons given for strengthening European sovereignty are the same as elsewhere, in terms of both ranking and intensity: »the terrorist threat« is at the top of the list (mentioned by 43 per cent in Sweden, as against a European average of 37 per cent), before »the challenge of climate change« (34 per cent, 34 per cent). Swedes fear »China's great-power ambitions« somewhat more (27 per cent, 20 per cent) and the »threat to health« somewhat less (26 per cent, 31 per cent) than its European counterparts. After Latvia (31 per cent) and Poland (30 per cent), Sweden also sees the strengthening of European sovereignty as a means of opposing »Russia's great-power ambitions« (22 per cent, as against an average of 13 per cent).

As for the obstacles to such strengthening, Swedes mostly mention the fact that »some countries are led by nationalists« (38 per cent, against an average of 23 per cent), and to a lesser extent, about »cultural differences between countries« (24 per cent, 16 per cent). »Pressure »pressure from certain foreign countries in whose interest it is that Europe does not become stronger« is quoted by less than a fifth (17 per cent), and only 13 per cent — the lowest score of all eight countries — chose »the weakness of the European institutions (Commission, Parliament) as they stand today«.

Methodology

Survey conducted by Ipsos for the Fondation Jean-Jaurès and the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation among 8,000 people interviewed by internet via the Ipsos' Access Panel from 28 December 2020 to 8 January 2021, constituting 8 samples of 1000 people representative of the national population aged 18 and over in Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Sweden. The samples were constituted according to the quota method (gender, age, occupation, urban area, region).

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