

# Special Edition on Spain

The Economist, November 2008

**Economist.com**

The Economist magazine has produced a special report on Spain which makes interesting reading. [The Economist Special Report](#)

One reader has sent the following response to this report.

Dear Sir or Madam,

While transiting through Madrid Airport last Saturday I picked up the current issue of the Economist. I was attracted by the 14-page special report on Spain ; it had personal relevance for me. In 2000 I bought an apartment in Estepona. It was marketed in Ireland by one of our top property companies and conveyed professionally at considerable expense through the local acquisition processes.

Six years later what should have been a basic routine economic exchange has turned out to be a nightmare. The internal specifications were ignored and then fundamental construction problems emerged. The response from the developer, despite protests to Estepona Town Hall and legal challenges in the local Court was to do nothing. Moreover he attempted to build twenty-five extra units in an area designated for recreation and services and was only stopped after vigorous representations by a lawyer, not Spanish, who happened to be in residence. The construction company is now in liquidation, Estepona Town Councillors are in jail and the Spanish Legal system is systemically incapable of protecting small property owners.

So what you may and Spain may say? Well in our comparatively small urbanization the injured parties are British, German, French, Dutch and Irish. When we read that Spain has received €186 billion from the taxes of EU citizens and yet is happily complicit in their individual plundering we have a right to be angry, angry with Spain and our respective Members of the European Parliament. While a united Europe may be a great idea at the macro economic level it will not survive if built on an indifference to the basic right of citizen to see their taxes having some minimum payback.

All politics are local said Tip O'Neill. The rejection of the Lisbon treaty in Ireland had more than a small element of payback for the presumptive attitude of our politicians. An anti-EU party has now formed in Ireland and any belief that another ballot will carry the day for our politicians would again be highly presumptive. Better for the EU if it took a little more interest in the rights of its citizens especially in countries like Spain where the basic rights of non-nationals are being trampled on with impunity.

A good start would be the turning-off the flow of cash aid and treating Spain like a packet of cigarettes - a large health warning to all EU citizens who might think of doing business there.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Doyle