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Spaniards want new king to play greater role in politics: poll

● The findings echoed widespread frustration over political bickering in Spain.

Madrid.—Most Spaniards want their new king, Felipe, to play a greater role in politics and build bridges between the country's divided parties and regions, a poll showed on Sunday.

Spain's monarchy has tried to stay out of the intricacies of factional rivalries in recent years - though Felipe's father, King Juan Carlos, is widely credited with helping smooth the country's transition to democracy in the 1970s after the Francisco Franco dictatorship.

The poll in newspaper *El País* suggested three quarters of Spaniards thought Felipe, sworn in on Thursday after the abdication of his father, should personally push parties to reach agreements on Spain's problems if politicians failed to do so. The findings echoed widespread frustration over bickering between the governing centre-right People's

Party and the main opposition Socialist PSOE during debates on recent legislation, such as on increasing transparency and fighting corruption. Spanish politics is heavily partisan and regional, and growing separatist sentiment in Catalonia has seen the biggest political parties haemorrhaging votes in the wealthy territory and beyond. Dialogue between parties in Catalonia and their national counterparts in Madrid has almost completely broken down.

Urgent need

The Metroscopia survey of 600 people for *El País* found 91 percent believed there was an urgent need for more political pacts to solve Spain's problems. Seventy-five percent said they would back the new king actively pushing for such agreements. Most Spaniards con-

Poland says Cameron gave up chance for say on Juncker

London.—Prime Minister David Cameron's has his own past decisions to blame for his lack of influence over the appointment of the next European Commission president, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said yesterday.

Cameron is looking increasingly isolated in his battle to prevent the top job going to former Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, the favoured candidate of the European People's Party (EPP), which emerged as the largest political group in the European Parliament after elections last month.

The British leader, who believes Juncker is

too federalist and will prevent Europe from achieving much-needed reform, pulled his Conservative party out of the EPP in 2009.

"If the Tories (Conservatives) were part of the European People's Party he could have made that argument ... when EPP chose its candidate and he may well have prevailed, but EPP made its choice," Sikorski told the BBC's Andrew Marr show. "The rules of democracy are that the largest party gets the top job." A British official said this week that Cameron could force a vote on the issue at a meeting of EU leaders in Brussels on Friday if they attempt to push through the selection of Juncker.



A TIME FOR TENNIS

The Hotel La Residencia hosted a tennis-themed Garden Party on Sunday ahead of the start of the Wimbledon championship which got underway yesterday in London. Scores of people attended the Deya Garden Party with the Hotel La Residencia serving up a real hit event. See Reports Inside.