

IMMIGRANTS IN SPAIN - THEIR ROLE IN THE ECONOMY AND THE EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS

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Abstract: *In the last decade Spain definitely became a country of immigrants. This article describes the characteristics and economic role of immigration, the official policy towards the phenomenon and the effects of the financial and economic crisis of the last two years. The five million immigrants had important effect on the Spanish demography, employment and education system. Foreigners found vacant jobs first of all in the construction industry and agriculture. To the end of 2007 however, the construction boom ended and Spain sank into a deep recession. Unemployment rate jumped to 20 percent to the spring of 2010 leaving mass of immigrants without jobs. Tolerance of the Spanish people towards immigrants seems to decrease and foreigners has become another problem for the – otherwise overloaded government.*

Keywords: *immigrants, Spain, crisis, employment, immigration policy*

Introduction

Spain was a country of emigrants for a long time. In the eighteenth century many left for the Latin-American colonies and between 1960-75 to Europe, mainly to France and Germany. As a consequence of the civil war also many Spanish people went abroad in the first half of the past century. It was first in 1975 that more people returned than emigrated from the country.

Spain went through significant economic and social changes with the democratic transformation. Since the middle of eighties the country became a member of the European Union and changes continued. Wealth increased, economy developed, but inequalities sharpened. The role of education grew and indicators improved in this field. As a consequence, the number of those

people willing to take less favourable jobs decreased. The share of service sector became bigger and Spanish women entered the labour market in large numbers.

Parallel to all these changes Spain became a country of immigrants. This article examines this fact, describing the characteristics, economic role of immigration, the policy towards immigrants and the effects of the financial and economic crisis that began at the end of 2007.

I. Immigration as a new phenomenon

Since the end of the nineties immigration has been increasing in Spain. Graph 1 shows the dynamic year-to-year increase. (The last year shows the effect of the crisis). Immigration became a topic in several places (media, academic debates, conferences, journals)

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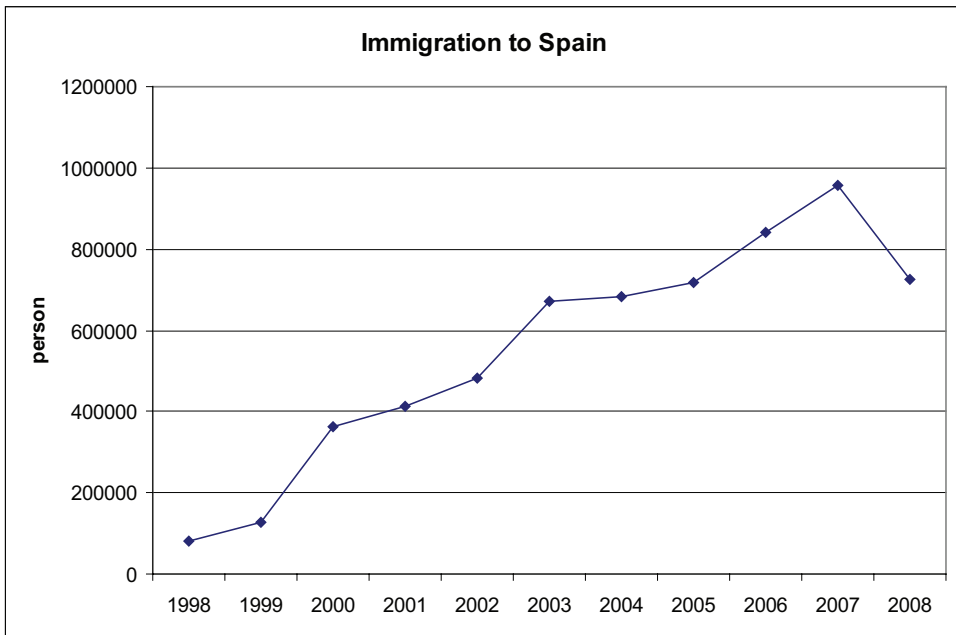
and a factor to deal with in education and health system.

Between 2000 and 2007 Spanish economy showed an impressive boom period with an average of 3,5% GDP growth. The growth was based mainly on the service and construction sector and this created a lot of jobs. Although the Spanish labour market represents 9% of the employed in the EU, between 2001 and 2007 the Spanish share in EU-employment increase was 31% (Mahía-del Arce, 2010). Vacant jobs (existing because of structural problems on the

labour market and not because of the lack of Spanish workers) attracted a mass of immigrants into the country as a „pull“ factor. A further attraction has been the welfare state and the high share of black economy (20% of the active labour force).

In the last decade the number of immigrants increased fivefold. 5.7 million foreigners live in Spain today, which means 12.2% of the population¹. With this number Spain is in the second place after the USA among OECD countries regarding the absolute

Graph 1



Source: Eurostat

¹ Data for January 2010, national statistical office. <http://www.ine.es/prensa/hp595.pdf>

numbers of immigrants (Sanromá et al., 2009). The share of foreign residents in the Spanish population was only 2.3% in 2000 but already 12% in 2009 (Castro Martin, 2010); thus after Luxemburg and Switzerland Spain is on the third place among OECD countries. The latest survey of the Spanish statistical office (INE) (Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes, 2007) provides detailed information on immigrants in the country (age, gender, nationality, legal status, job, wage, etc.). This information complete other statistical sources like local registers (Padrón Municipal), active population register (Encuesta de Población Activa), and census (Censo de Población).

Family reuniting is one of the most important immigration channels. In 2007 16.5 % of the foreign residents arrived by this way, and from this 42% were women and 58% were men (Anghel-Vegas, 2010, p. 13). Spanish law allows family reuniting depending on the origin of the immigrants (from EU, EEA or third country). Around 25-30% of the foreigners in Spain aim to bring also parents into the country. This intention changes according to regions; in the case of Ceuta, Galicia, Canary Islands the share is only 12-18%, Basque Country, Navarra and Murcia show data of 30-37% (Anghel-Vegas, 2010). Family reuniting affects the working conditions of immigrants too. According to the econometric analysis of Anghel-Vegas the immigrant who brought his family finds a job with a 30% bigger probability than the one who does

not live with his family. Apart from this, those foreigners whose families already live in Spain remain in the country with higher probability.

An important feature of the Spanish immigration is that foreigners come from many countries: Latin-America, Africa, Eastern Europe, but also from the developed EU-countries. These people mainly look for jobs but the number of retired foreign residents is also high. The economic crisis of the Latin-American countries around the turn of the millennium intensified the emigration from there („push” factor), and those who settled in Spain were considered as a channel and basis for the others, attracting further immigrants into the country. In 1996 the share of Latin-Americans was 17.4% among foreigners in Spain, but 35.8% in 2007 (Muñoz de Bustillo, 2009, p. 5). 54 % of the Latin-American immigrants come from Ecuador, Columbia and Bolivia.

The number of Romanian and Bulgarian residents jumped in 2007 when the two Eastern European countries joined the EU and the situation of the illegal immigrants was regulated. The number of Romanian immigrants increased further afterwards too; in 2008 they were the most important nationality in Spain, for the first time preceding the Moroccans (see table 1). One part of the foreign immigrants stays illegally in Spain; their number was around 650 000 in the end of 2008 (Pérez Infante, 2009).

Table 1: Foreign residents in Spain according to nationality

	2005	%	2008	%	2010	%
Romania	192134	7.01	718844	16.07	829715	14.5
Morocco	493114	18.00	717416	16.04	746760	13.1
Columbia	204348	7.46	274832	6.14	289296	5.1
Ecuador	357065	13.04	421527	9.42	395069	6.9
Bolivia	50738	1.8	85427	1.9	210624	3.7
Peru	82533	3.01	130900	2.93	139284	2.4
China	85745	3.13	138558	3.10	156607	2.7
Bulgaria	56329	2.06	144401	3.23	169195	3.0
Other	1265659	46.21	1927021	43.08	2936550	51.44
Total	2738932	100	4473499	100	5708940	100

Source: based on Pajares (2009) p.37. and INE data for 2010

In regional respect the most important targets for immigrants are Catalonia and Madrid but many foreigners settled in Valencia, Murcia and Andalusia. As a consequence in these regions the share of immigrants in population is high, above 10%, while there are regions where we can hardly find foreigners (2-4%), for example Galicia, Extremadura, Basque Country, Asturias, Cantabria. From certain aspects immigration increased regional disparities in Spain. Labour market differences among regions increased

because immigrants were attracted by regions with a dynamic labour market and their arrival stimulated further the market (Cuadrado et al, 2006). However immigration has had beneficial effect on rural areas in danger of depopulation. Collantes et al. (2010) proved in the case of 22 such provinces that depopulation slowed down significantly due to the settlement of immigrants. Certain villages attracted Latin-American people with special programs in order to avoid depopulation.

Table 2: Spanish regions attracting the highest number of immigrants

Foreign residents	2008	%	2010	%
Catalonia	974473	21.78	1193283	20.90
Madrid	796979	17.82	1071292	18.77
Andalusia	551771	12.33	698375	12.23

Valencia	577615	12.91	884622	15.50
Canary islands	223972	5.01	305661	5.35
Murcia	197805	4.42	240605	4.21
All	4473499	100.00	5708940	100.00

Source: based on Pajares (2009) p.39, table and INE data

Immigration affects regional growth, development of employment and productivity. Conde Ruiz et al. (2008) analysed these effects in the 2000-2006 period. According to their results immigration had a positive effect on employment: female employment increased mostly in those regions where immigration was high. This is due to the fact that many immigrants became household employees, undertaking personal services (like taking care of children or old people), which eased the job-taking of Spanish women. In 2009 there were 850 000 people employed in domestic services, half of which were immigrants (Muñoz-Antón, 2010, p.58). The activity rate and unemployment rate of immigrants are also higher than in the case of native people.

Immigration, however had a negative effect on productivity, because in those areas where employment increased the most, productivity increased the least. This may have had two reasons. First, immigrant workforce could have reduced wages on the labour market, thus the economy became more labour-intensive and productivity decreased. Second, it can be that in those regions where productivity increased by introducing developed technologies, immigrants had not found enough jobs because of lack of qualification (Conde Ruiz et al, 2008).

Education and qualification level

of immigrants, however, is not low in general. Intermediate qualification is even higher in the case of foreigners than among Spanish (table 3) and the share of high qualified is quite big.

Table 3: Education level of employed population according to nationality, percent, 2007

Education	Spanish	Foreigners
Illiterates	0.20	1.49
Primary school	14.61	20.68
Secondary school	51.88	56.81
Higher education	32.55	20.64
Postgraduate degree	0.76	0.38

Source: Ruesga, 2008, p. 53.

Education level can influence the wages of immigrants. Two studies can be mentioned regarding this. In the first study Simón et al. (2007) observed that the average salary of workers coming from developed countries is higher than the average salary of the workers stemming from less developed countries. The average wage of immigrants coming from developing countries is lower than the average wage of the Spanish workers and this difference is not really influenced by education level (only to 7%) but by the

characteristics of the job (to 31%, Simón et al, 2007). (That means that in certain jobs taken mainly by these immigrants, wages are lower, independently from the qualification of the employee.)

In the second study Carrasco et al (2007) analyse the effects of immigration on Spanish wages in the early immigration period, between 1995 and 2002. The results show that immigrants had hardly any effect on wages or employment level. It is true, however that the study refers only to the legal immigrants and does not deal with the later period of mass immigration.

Foreigners found jobs mainly in construction industry, hotel trade, agriculture and households. In these sectors the share of temporary employed people is also high. In 2006 the share of temporary employment among Spanish workers was 30,2% and among foreigners it was 60,6% (Pérez Infante, 2009).

Table 4: Distribution of employment among main sectors, percent, 2008

	Spanish	Foreigners
Agriculture	3.8	5.3
Industry	16.7	11.6
Construction	10.9	21.7
Services	68.6	61.4

Source: Pérez Infante, 2009

Observing a detailed sectoral distribution according to the home country of immigrants it can be seen that African, Latin-American and EU-immigrants tend to occupy different branches (table 5.). It is also apparent here that most of the immigrants work in construction, trade, services, but for

example relatively high percent of African people work in agriculture (almost 13%) and in construction (29%), and relatively high share of Latin-Americans work as a household employee (13%).

There is a very detailed sectoral distribution available on those workers who are in the social security system (Pérez Infante 2009, p.247), on the basis of which the distribution of foreign and Spanish employees and the similarity of the two distributions can be calculated. We can apply the Finger similarity index for this $F = \sum \min(w_k, w_s)$, where w_k is the share of foreigners and w_s is the share of Spanish workers in the given branches. According to my calculations the index was 0,399 in 2007, which means that the structure of the sectoral distribution of the two groups is different, they are only to 40% similar.

Among the agricultural workers the share of foreigners is higher than the average (16%) but in certain regions is even higher. Spanish workers began to leave this sector and turned to other sectors with „more pleasant” conditions. Kostova (2007) examined the immigration data of 19 years and found a continuous increase, according to which the share of immigrants working in agriculture was in Almería 4% in 1991, 47% in 2001 and 34% in 2004. In Murcia the same data was 5.8% in 1991, 53% in 2002 and 41% in 2004. According to the data the share of immigrants decreases a bit from the peak of 2002 because foreign workers leave agriculture too as their conditions improve. Thus, similarly to the local workforce, they turn towards more rentable and less “hard” sectors.

Tourism employs a lot of foreigners also. Spain is the third destination in the world regarding the number of tourists arriving and second in revenues from

Table 5: Distribution of immigrants with more than 3 years of residence in Spain according to origin and sectors

2007	Total foreigners	%	EU-27	%	Africa	%	America	%
Agriculture	116325	5.13	27413	4.18	48078	12.94	29385	2.97
Fishery	2677	0.12	670	0.10	991	0.27	710	0.07
Mining	3885	0.17	2029	0.31	137	0.04	1334	0.13
Manufacturing	249857	11.01	80945	12.35	47095	12.67	97805	9.87
Electric energy, gas, water	6794	0.30	1617	0.25	135	0.04	4363	0.44
Construction	438414	19.32	124330	18.97	110627	29.77	161177	16.27
Trade, repair	287104	12.65	76956	11.74	46763	12.58	128354	12.95
Hotels, restaurants	298315	13.15	68238	10.41	31156	8.38	139795	14.11
Transport, storage	132490	5.84	43562	6.65	20689	5.57	60405	6.10
Financial intermediation	20591	0.91	6248	0.95	2053	0.55	10965	1.11
Real estate sector	208393	9.18	72495	11.06	19965	5.37	95697	9.66
Public administration, defence	36601	1.61	15265	2.33	6285	1.69	13367	1.35
Education	70736	3.12	35557	5.43	6120	1.65	22724	2.29
Health	83395	3.68	22263	3.40	5697	1.53	50969	5.14
Other social activity	95187	4.19	28078	4.28	11587	3.12	42718	4.31
Household activity	213720	9.42	48348	7.38	13725	3.69	129533	13.07
Extra-territorial organism	1706	0.08	748	0.11	257	0.07	701	0.07
Not known	2903	0.13	610	0.09	239	0.06	884	0.09
Total	2269092	100	655372	100	371600	100	990887	100

Source: calculations based on the data of Instituto Nacional de Estadística

tourism². 16% of employees in tourism were foreigners in 2006 but in hotels and restaurants their share was 63% (Cánoves – Blanco, 2009). The main problem here is the lack of qualification of foreigners to which companies complain. However because of the lack of labour they have to employ them and this can affect the quality of services.

Cachón (2009) distinguishes three types of foreign employees. The „*adapted*” workers are firm participants in the labour market, together with local workers, with similar conditions and bargaining power. Many employees coming from the EU belong here. The „*uncertain*” immigrant workers live legally settled in Spain but they are not firmly inserted in the labour market, their job is insecure, they have temporary working license and often change jobs. Finally the „*unproved*”, non-documented immigrants are those who work illegally in the black economy in Spain and can spend long periods without work.

II. The economic role of immigrants

Immigrants became an important factor on the labour market. As it was mentioned, between 2000 and 2009 five million people came to Spain, mostly of working age between 16 and 44 years. They occupied approximately half of the vacant jobs created since 2000, thus no wonder that their weight in employment increased from 1 to 14.8% percent during eight years. The mass of immigrants had beneficial effects on unemployment and

structural problems of labour market. Beside of high unemployment always existed such badly paid jobs, for which it was difficult to find Spanish workers; those were taken by immigrants. The increase of employment of foreigners thus happened independently (or complementarily) of the employment of local people. „Replacement”, meaning foreigners taking away jobs from Spanish people is not typical (Pérez Infante, 2009). With the increase of employment, tax revenues of the government also increased, similarly to the revenues of social security system. In the year 2005 for example a surplus of around 5 billion was created from the payments of immigrants (tax, VAT, social security) and the expenditure on them (health, education - Nieto, 2007). In 2007 the social security system had 2 million immigrant contributors.

Wages of immigrants are on average 30% lower than local workers (Pérez Infante, 2009). This stems also from the fact that several immigrants find jobs where wages are originally low, and they are young with less time spent at the company than the Spanish colleagues. This wage-difference decreases with time, but never disappears. The assimilation of South Americans and Eastern Europeans is quickest in this respect. (Izquierdo et al., 2009).

Fernández- Ortega (2006) observed how immigrants integrate in the Spanish labour market. In the beginning, in the case of immigrants unemployment and over-qualification level is higher compared to the Spanish workers and the

² Data for 2008 and 2009, UNWTO World Tourism Barometer Vol.8 No.2 June 2010.

number of temporary contracts is higher also (61,4% compared to the 32 percent Spanish average). Five years after their arrival however the unemployment rate of immigrants decreases to (or below) the local level, but over-qualification and temporary jobs remain.

Mass immigration influences the Spanish demography, which showed the symptoms of getting older: life expectancy increased and the number of births decreased. In 1900 life expectancy was 34.8 years and in 2007 81 years, above EU-average. Average number of children was 2.8 in 1975, 1.15 in 1998 and 1.46 in 2008, below EU-average (Castro Martín, 2010).

Population in Spain increased from 40.5 million to 46.9 million between 2000 and 2010. Only 11% of the increase is natural growth, the remnant is the effect of immigrants. As for young immigrants, they have a rejuvenating effect on Spanish society. This, however is only temporary, because immigrants are also getting older. In 2020 a part of the immigrants and several Spanish people from the „baby boom” generation will enter the retirement age, which will mean a heavy burden for the social security and health system. The size of this burden and the demographic effects of immigration will depend on several factors, such as:

- age structure of immigrants can change with family reuniting
- part of immigrants can return home (according to a survey made in 2007, 81% wants to stay)
- life expectancy among immigrants
- number of births among immigrants (generally a bit higher than among local people)

During the assimilation process it is presumable that after a certain period the birth rate of immigrants will be similar to the local rate, which means a decrease in their case. This is of course different depending on the nationality of the immigrants (in the case of Africans for example the birth rate is higher than elsewhere).

Immigrants are not only employees but can be entrepreneurs as well. Cavalcanti and others (2007) describe five types of companies run by immigrants. The “ethnic oriented” entrepreneur sells products for ethnic communities living in Spain. The „circular” companies are heterogeneous transnational trade firms functioning among Spain and the home countries of immigrants (export-import, money transfer, etc.). The entrepreneurs *specialised on immigrants* were established for solving the problems of immigrant population (like real estate agents, lawyers, civil societies). The above three types of entrepreneurs can be found generally in those districts where immigrants live in great numbers.

The companies built on exotic features aim a broad scale of clients; they can be anywhere, exploiting some kind of ethnic characteristics (restaurants, handicraft shops, alternative therapies, etc.). These can be run not only by immigrants, but also by Spanish people who have connections with the given foreign country. Finally the fifth type of entrepreneur is the *general* company that can deal with anything for anybody (like bars, food shops, construction companies).

III. Spanish immigration policy

Spanish policy towards immigrants was friendly in the last decade. The first law regulating immigration was implemented in July 1985 when the number of immigrants was not yet high. Concerning the entering conditions and rights this law was relatively restrictive, it dealt with immigration as a temporary problem. It did not make family reunion and stable settlement possible, but made the obtaining of working licence difficult. As a consequence, the number of illegal immigrants increased. The 1985 law was modified in 1996 acknowledging the rights of foreigners (for example to education, lawyer, and interpreter).

In 2000, based on a wide political consensus a new law entered into force, which resembled more to the regulation of other European countries. This law focused on integration of immigrants, political and social rights. It was recognised that the phenomenon is permanent and the law facilitated the creation of bilateral agreements with sender countries. Spain signed several agreements with Ecuador, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Morocco, Niger, Poland and Romania, regulating the possibilities to work, communication of jobs available, living and working conditions of immigrants, and provision of seasonal workers and facilitation of their return.

Based on the year 2000 law, from 2001 to 2004 „Plan Greco” was created (Programa Global de Regulación y Coordinación de la Extranjería e

Inmigración), the aim of which was to treat mass immigration³. It had four targets:

- Global and coordinated treatment of immigration
- Integration of foreign residents and their family
- Regulation of immigration and entry conditions
- Accommodation of refugees

A program of voluntary return was launched by the Spanish government in 2003 (PREVIE⁴), for those non-EU immigrants who live in bad social conditions. This program meant the cover of their return costs and expenditures. Mainly Argentines, Brazilians, Bolivians used this possibility, mainly women but later more and more men too.

Spanish immigration policy became more active from 2004. Labour offices created for example the “special catalogue of vacant jobs” on those areas where it is difficult to find labour force.

The Spanish government launched several special regulation programs for the treatment of illegal immigration. The special amnesty programs are the most important in this respect when lots of immigrants were legalised on certain conditions. Five such processes can be mentioned so far, the first in 1985-86 (43 thousand people), the second in 1991 (128 thousands), the third in 1996 (24 thousands) the fourth in 2000-2001 (200 thousand people) and finally in 2005. That year, illegal immigrants received a three-month legalisation period, which

³ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/migmmain.showPractice?p_lang=en&p_practice_id=10

⁴ Programa de Retorno Voluntario para Inmigrantes en situación de Vulnerabilidad Social

meant that on certain conditions (clean record, proved registration, participation in social security system) they could obtain a one-year residence permit. In this way 691 655 illegal immigrants were „legalised”, mainly Ecuadorians, Romanians and Moroccans (Cánoves – Blanco, 2009).

Following the enlargement of the EU in 2004 Spain opened at once its labour market towards the new Eastern members. Although Spanish government would like it, a common immigration policy still does not exist in the EU.

Between 2007 and 2010 the „Strategic Plan of Citizenship” (Plan Estratégico de Ciudadanía) entered into force to integrate immigrants. The Plan contains 12 areas with aims and measurements (receiving immigrants, education, employment, accommodation, social services, health care, childhood, equal chances, gender, etc.). The government allocated 500 million euros per year to the Plan. The majority of the budget (42%) is spent on education, 23% on reception of immigrants, 11% on employment, and 24% on other nine areas⁵.

Immigration laws and regulations were considered „too tolerant” by 42% of Spanish people in 2008, while in 2004 only 24% had this opinion (Cea D’Ancona-Valles Martínez, 2009, p. 69).

IV. Effects of the crisis

Between 2001 and 2008, in the period of growth net 4.7 million jobs were created in Spain. Half of them were taken by immigrants. After the labour-

intensive growth, however, the crisis had similarly strong job-destructive effects. The „inflexion point” was in the third quarter of 2007, labour market indicators worsened from that time. (Domingo et al, 2010). Regarding domestic workers unemployment increased already from mid-2007 (existing jobs were liquidated), while in the case of immigrants mass unemployment can be observed only from mid-2008, new „active labour” entered the market who could not find job (Mahía – del Arce, 2010). Unemployment rate of immigrants was 17% in 2008 and 29% in 2009.

Unemployment hits immigrants harder than Spanish workers, because immigrants do not have alternative incomes apart from their salaries, their savings are scarce, their average working time is less than in the case of their Spanish colleagues thus they receive less compensation or aid. The effect of the crisis is shown also by the fact that the remittances of immigrants decreased in 2009 by 9,7% compared to the previous year⁶ (El País, 2010.03.31).

Concerning the ethnic groups, unemployment affected mainly Moroccans (their unemployment rate was 35% at the end of 2008), who lost their jobs. Most of the Moroccans worked in the construction sector which was hit the most by the crisis. Unemployment increased significantly among Romanians too, but this was caused mainly by the increase of the active population.

Regarding the sectoral distribution, most of the unemployed come from

⁵ Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration. Executive Summary. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. www.mtas.es

⁶ El País, 2010.03.31.

the construction and service industry. The crisis began earlier, in 2007 in the construction industry and in 2008 unemployment increased mainly in the service sector. First unqualified workers lost their jobs, but later lots of skilled workers became unemployed, bricklayers, carpenters, painters, upholsterers, etc. (Pajares, 2009).

As a consequence of the crisis the opinion of Spanish people on immigration worsened and tolerance decreased. The "Racism and Xenophobia" report of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration shows this tendency. The report is based on a survey made in the autumn of 2008. The worsening judgement is shown by the fact that in 1996 only 28% of Spanish people found immigrants „too much“, in 2005 already 60% and in 2008 77% (Cea d’Ancona- Valles Martínez 2009). Regarding the regions, mainly the population of Murcia, Valencia, Aragón, Castilia, Catalonia and Andalusia found the number of immigrants too big. Regarding the respondents, generally the older, less qualified, less educated and

right-wing people proved to be more xenophobic.

It can be seen in table 6 that in the past years the “perception” of Latin-Americans and Eastern Europeans as immigrants became stronger in the Spanish society. Spanish people seldom see foreigners from the EU as “immigrants”. The least “liked” immigrants are those who look foreign, for example Africans.

The acceptance of immigrants counts a lot in the quality of life of a given district or area. The more accepted immigrants are in the everyday life, the better they can participate in the activities of the city, adapt themselves (Dominguez et al, 2010). The effect of immigration, the “visibility” of immigrants is different in certain territories. In a big town 3000 foreigners can be almost invisible, while in a mountain village of 700 inhabitants 100 immigrants are well noticeable in school, or everyday life.

The attitude of the Spanish government seems to be stricter, it wants to restrict the quantity of immigrants in order to reduce unemployment. There are four ways to

Table 6: „If you think on foreign immigrants in Spain, which ethnic group occurs to you at once?“ Responses in percentage (open question)

	1993	1996	2000	2007	2008
Moroccan, North African	41	50	58	31	25
African in general	13	12	12	9	11
Latin-American	6	6	5	25	23
Black	5	4	2	2	3
Eastern European	1	1	1	16	12
Asian	1	1	1	2	2

Source: Racism and Xenophobia report, Cea D’Ancona, – Valles Martínez (2009), p.56

achieve this aim (Felgueroso – Vázquez, 2009):

- restriction of job-seeking immigrants via the shortening of the catalogue of vacant jobs,
- promoting the return of immigrants (see below)
- restriction of family reunion
- increased punishment for illegal immigration

Motivated by the crisis and its effects the Spanish government launched the new plan for voluntary return in September 2008 (Abono Anticipado de Prestación Extranjeros, APRE), according to which unemployment aid is paid in advance for those jobless non-EU immigrants who have not asked for Spanish citizenship yet. This latter condition excludes a lot of Latin-American immigrants who have tried for years to obtain Spanish citizenship (Quicios García, 2010). Are also excluded those who had a job in the black economy or who are not registered in the labour office. Those who apply for the „return aid”, receive 40% of the money in Spain and 60% in their home country after return. They have to undertake that they will not return to Spain during 3 years. Until end-2009 only few immigrants used this possibility, 8724 gave in the application instead of the expected 100 thousand⁷.

The logic of the crisis treating policy of the government is that domestic workers should fill the vacant jobs instead of immigrants. This is, however, a false logic, because according to the experiences up to now, immigrants have not “taken jobs” from Spanish people, because:

- they filled those jobs for which local working force was not available
- there were not enough domestic workers for the increased demand for labour (because of the aging of Spanish population)
- immigrants helped the massive labour market inclusion of Spanish women by taking household work.

The crisis hit not only the immigrants already in Spain but decreased also the will to immigrate. According to the statistical office, in 2007 75 thousand immigrants arrived to the country monthly, but in the beginning of 2010 this decreased to 35 thousand each month. Many immigrants returned, mainly those who came from relatively developed countries.

Conclusion

In the last decade immigration became a serious social and economic factor in Spain. The five million immigrants had an important effect on Spanish demography, employment and education. Foreigners found jobs mainly in the construction, service and agricultural sector, where they could find easily work until 2007. The labour intensive growth of the Spanish economy absorbed the young immigrant mass.

However, at the end-2007, the construction “bubble” burst, and Spain also became the victim of the world financial and economic crisis. The economy sank into recession and the foreign employees were sent home. Unemployment rate jumped to 20%

⁷ <http://www.europapress.es/epsocial/inmigracion-00329/noticia-mas-8700-parados-inmigrantes-solicitaron-acogerse-plan-retorno-voluntario-primer-ano-vigor-20091113151416.html>

in 2010 and the investors did not trust in the Spanish economy. Immigrants became suddenly a big problem to treat. In the meantime other problems are also mounting ahead of the Spanish government: budget deficit and government debt has to be decreased, banking system and labour market should be reformed, and investors have to be calmed continuously.

Apart from this, tolerance of the Spanish population seems to decrease towards either the strict measures of the government or the immigrants. The question is thus, how to create the basis for a sustainable long-run economic development with the inclusion of immigrants and their descendents.

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