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Irregular Migration in Spain since the turn of the millennium –  
development, economic background and discourses

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## **Database on Irregular Migration (<http://irregular-migration.hwwi.net>)**

This website aims at increasing transparency in the field of irregular migration. The database provides an inventory and a critical appraisal of data and estimates in the European Union. Quantitative information is accompanied by substantial background materials, both on issues of general concern and on the situation in individual countries.

The database was created in the context of "CLANDESTINO: Counting the uncountable – data and trends across Europe", a project funded by the European Commission, DG Research, Sixth Framework Programme (2007-2009) (<http://clandestino.eliamep.gr/>). The Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI) hosts the database and aims at expanding and updating it in the coming years.

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## 1 Introduction

Irregular migration in Spain is associated with immigration, and not emigration. After a history dominated by emigration, including clandestine emigration, the external migration pattern in Spain since 1996 has been characterized by a massive influx of immigrants seeking work. In those years with a maximum migratory influx, Spain was only behind the United States in the OECD ranking of the number of migrants received. In relative terms indicated by immigration rates, Spain became one of the top destinations for emigrants halfway through the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This boom in labour immigration has a significant bearing on public perceptions and debates sparked by the migratory phenomenon in the Spanish society. The most frequently used concept is that of “irregular immigration” and, to a lesser extent, “illegal” or “clandestine immigration”. The topics of concern in relation to irregular immigration are divided into two categories: irregular entries (flows) and irregular residency and employment (stocks). In the former there is an abundance of references to the control of borders and to the “humanitarian drama” of risky voyages aboard cramped and rickety vessels. The second case often deals with the causes and consequences of a large and irregular immigrant population on the employment market and in public services. The concept of “befallen irregularity” is used because of the frequency with which legal residents re-enter irregular conditions after failing to comply with certain conditions (usually concerning work contracts) that are required in order to renew their work permits. Immigration issues are usually addressed in Spain with references to the citizenship of persons (foreigners) rather than their place of birth (origin) or the country from which the migrant departed before entering Spain.

Irregular immigration in Spain is both systematic and systemic in nature. It is systematic in that it has mirrored economic trends in recent decades, with a high percentage of immigrants having been, at some point during their residency in Spain, in an irregular administrative status, either because they entered the country without the proper documents or because, despite having the proper documents at the border, they failed to obtain residency and/or employment permits from the start. It is systemic because there are close ties between the presence of a large informal economy, the pronounced segmentation of the labour market with low productivity levels and a high demand for unskilled labour that leads to informal employment opportunities, which particularly attract irregular immigrants. In this sense, the structure and specialization of Spain’s economy are an essential contextual reference (embeddedness) in explaining irregular immigration in Spain. This context is, in turn, not independent of the track record of the informal economy in Spanish history (path dependency). Immigration policies have hinged on the so-called “needs of the labour market”, both in times

of economic growth, which see a greater permissiveness toward irregular immigration, and in times of crisis, with the implementation of more restrictive migratory policies and practices.

The makeup of Spain's immigrant population has varied in recent decades, from a preponderance of European Union immigrants, often as a result of tourist activities and residential migrations, to the growth and diversification of immigration from beyond Europe, clearly driven by the search for employment and accentuated by a greater propensity toward insertion in the secondary job market. There was an inflow of immigrants from Romania and Bulgaria mostly before these countries became EU member states so that their inflow requires a differentiation of the above described profiles. These immigrants often started off without regular status and became regular by definition in terms of residency. However, the insertion into the job market of these "neo-Europeans" often resembles that of non-EU immigrants.

An overwhelming proportion of administrative irregularities in Spain results from a combination of legally crossing the border and then staying irregularly in the country, normally by overstaying a tourist visa. Only a minority of cases, typically involving African immigrants, results from illegal border crossing. This way of illegally entering the country is, in turn, closely associated with the arrival by sea of small vessels (known in Spanish as *pateras* and *cayucos*) carrying boat people to Spain's Mediterranean and Atlantic (Canary Islands) coasts. The most common means of transport in immigration is the airplane. Only in the case of neo-European countries with a certain geographic proximity does land transport play a significant role, while in the case of Africa, maritime transport achieves some relevance. Even in the case of African immigration, illegal entries in *pateras* account for only 6.3% of arrivals.

**Table 1. Immigrants, having entered Spain after 1990, by continent (country) of departure and type of transport used (%)**

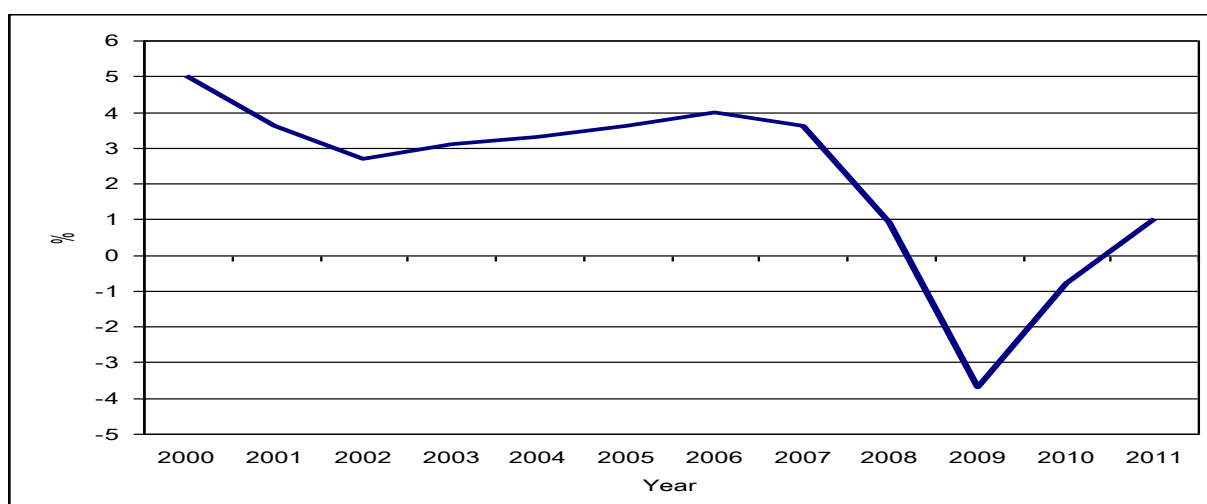
Country of departure	Car	Bus (public transport)	Private bus	Plane	Ship	Train	Patera, cayuco and similar	Walking	Other	Total
TOTAL	10.1	11.9	3.2	62.7	9.2	1.4	1.0	0.2	0.3	100%
EU 27 WITHOUT SPAIN	24.8	28.8	7.3	32.4	2.1	3.7	0.0	0.2	0.5	100%
Romania and Bulgaria	15.4	60.5	14.2	8.6	0.0	0.9	0.1	0.1	0.3	100%
AFRICA	5.4	5.9	1.2	23.9	55.2	0.4	6.3	1.1	0.6	100%
AMERICA	0.0	0.0	0.0	99.9	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100%
ASIA AND OCEANIA	0.1	0.4	0.0	97.8	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.0	1.0	100%

Source: INE. National Survey of Immigrants 2007.

## 2 Economic Background

After the acute economic crisis of 1991-1993, with unemployment topping 20% of the active population, Spain entered a long period of economic expansion in 1994 that lasted until 2007. The impact of the recession of 2008-2009 has been severe, especially in terms of employment, and according to national and international forecasts, Spain's recovery will be slower than that of the United States, Germany, France and the United Kingdom. According to an International Monetary Fund forecast from January 2010, the Spanish economy will shrink by 0.6% in 2010, recovering somewhat in 2011 to grow by 0.9%, versus the 2.7% and 2.4% in the USA, 1.5% and 1.9% in Germany, 1.4% and 1.7% in France and 1.3% and 2.7% in the United Kingdom (IMF, 2010).

Graph 1. GDP growth rate in Spain (2009-2011 estimates)



Source: Eurostat.

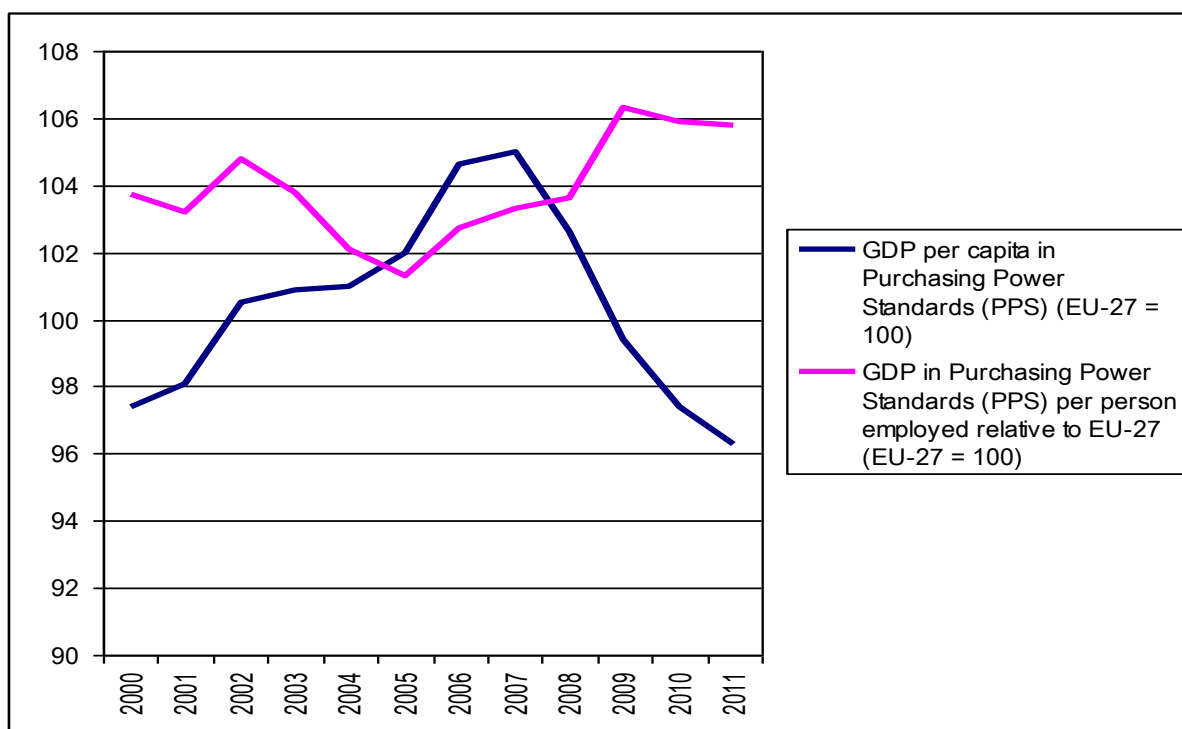
The economic growth in Spain between 2000 and 2007 was characterized by the creation of abundant employment and by the scarce advances in productivity. According to the National Labour Survey, almost five million additional jobs were created during these years, the unemployment rate fell to a low of 8.3% of the active population in 2007 and per capita income, measured in purchasing power parities, exceeded the EU-27 average. This spectacular success in terms of employment, however, showed its vulnerability starting in 2008, when the downturn led to considerable job losses and a rapid increase in unemployment. According to the National Labour Survey, unemployment in the fourth quarter of 2009 reached 18.8% (4 326 500 unemployed), with a total of 1 864 700 jobs lost since the high in the third quarter of 2007, equivalent to about one-third of the jobs created between 2000 and 2007.

**Table 2. GDP, GDP per capita and employment in Spain, 2000-2008**

Indicators	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
GDP (€ current prices)	630 263	680 678	729 206	782 929	841 042	908 792	984 284	1 052 730	1 088 502
Population	40 264	40 721	41 314	42 005	42 692	43 398	44 068	44 874	45 593
GDP per capita	15 653	16 715	17 650	18 639	19 700	20 941	22 335	23 460	23 874
Employment (National Labour Survey)	15 505.9	16 146.3	16 630.3	17 295.9	17 970.8	18 973.2	19 747.7	20 356.0	20 257.6
Unemployment rate (National Labour Survey)	13.9	10.6	11.5	11.5	11.0	9.2	8.5	8.3	11.3

Source: INE. National Accounts, National Labour Survey.

**Graph 2. GDP per capita PPS (EU-27=100) and GDP PPS per person employed (EU-27=100; 2009-2011 estimates)**



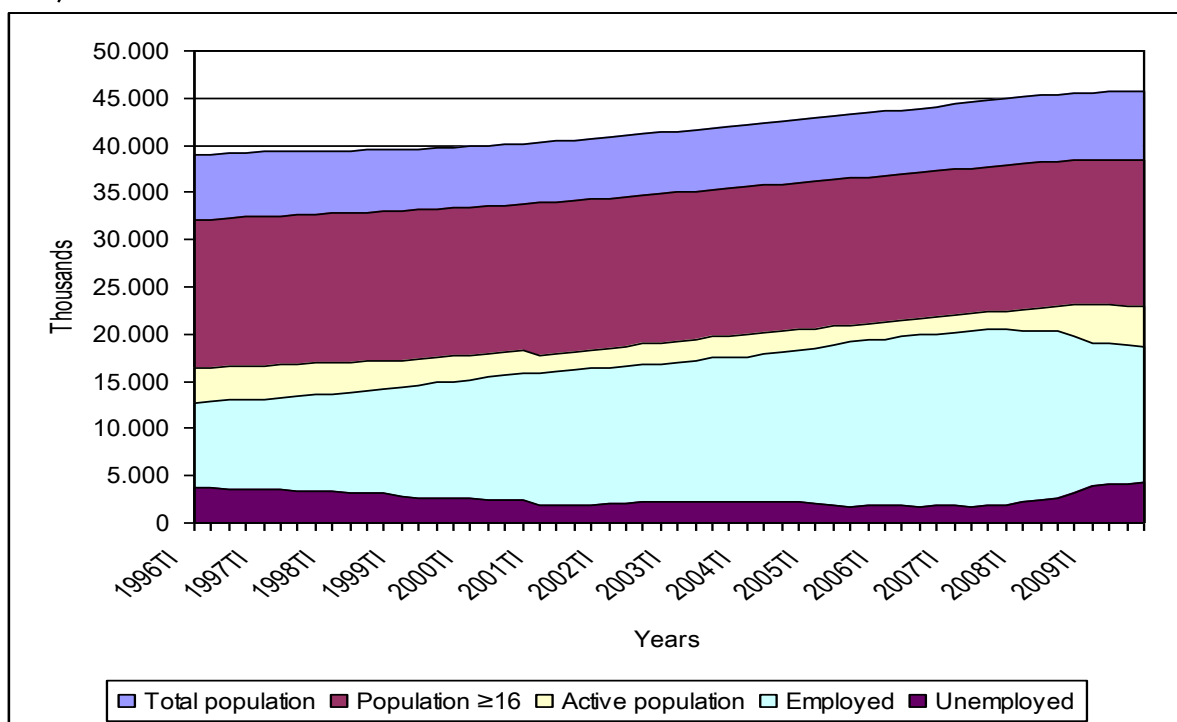
Source: Eurostat.

The intense creation and destruction of employment in the Spanish economy is associated with the prior growth pattern, centred on the expansion of the construction industry (real estate bubble) and of stagnant services (low labour productivity in services, Spain's specialization in tourism). Both sectors, along with domestic services, are particularly prone to the underground economy. It is no surprise that their expansion created so many low-paying, informal employment opportunities. These low productivity jobs, in turn, were Spain's main appeal for work-related immigration in general, and for irregular immigration in particular.

Immigration played a key role in the recent economic growth. According to estimates from the Economic Office of the President of Spain, 50% of the economic growth from 2000 to 2005 was attributable to immigration. “When this effect on GDP is decomposed into the contribution from the growth of the population and the growth of per capita income, approximately two-thirds of the positive impact of immigration is due to its contribution to the population, while a third is due to the positive impact on per capita income. Immigration has had a positive impact on per capita income, both through the percentage of working-age population and on the employment rate in the last decade. It is also believed, however, that immigration has a negative impact on job productivity by reducing capital deepening (Economic Office of the President of Spain, 2006:2).

The growth pattern of Spain’s economy from 2000 to 2007, which centred on expanding employment and not on raising productivity, drove the substantial increase in labour supply through immigration. Immigrants, whose activity rate is approximately 20 points higher than that of Spaniards, contributed to this growth in supply, although the increased participation of Spanish women in the labour market also played a prominent role. This growth pattern has come to a halt in the current economic crisis, with the interruption in the growth of activity rates and a lower population increase.

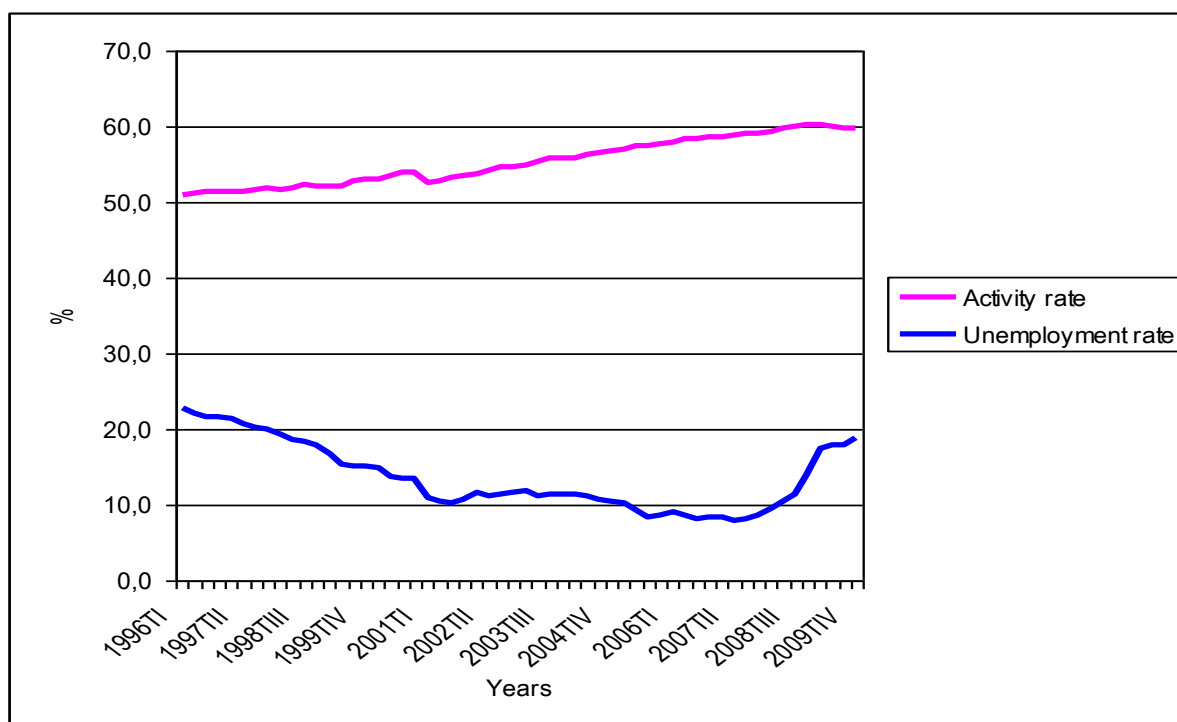
**Graph 3. Population, active population, employment and unemployment in Spain (1996-2009)**



Source: INE. National Labour Survey.



Graph 4. Activity and unemployment rates (1996-2009)



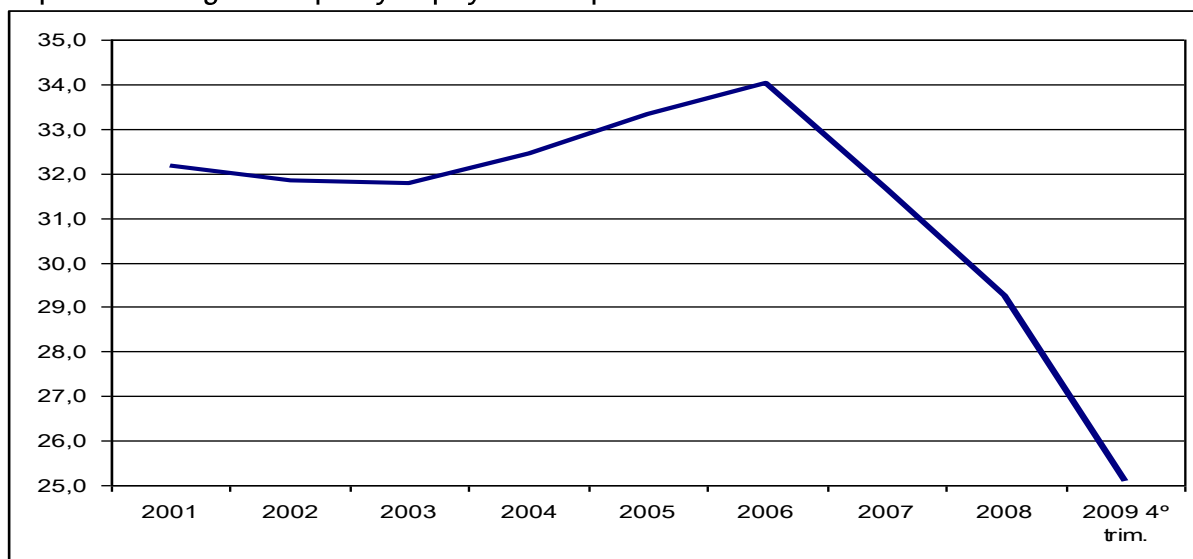
Source: INE. National Labour Survey.

The economic downturn led to the rapid destruction of jobs in those sectors where employment had expanded quickly during the previous economic boom. Jobs in Spain's secondary labour market segment have been most affected by this crisis. This is evident in the non-renewal of many temporary contracts, which abound in this market segment. The highly transient nature of employment in Spain is rooted in the labour reforms of the 1980s. Despite the feeble attempts in various subsequent reforms to stop this transience, Spain has the highest rates of temporary employment in the EU. In 2006, temporary contracts represented a total of 34% of all contracts. The downturn had reduced this number to 25.1% by the fourth quarter of 2009. The recent growth in labour productivity is, in turn, explained by this destruction of temporary jobs and not by technical advances or by higher production efficiency.

As a consequence of this unequivocal and selective impact of the crisis on those jobs that had been the routine path for non-EU immigrants to integrate into the workplace, the main appeal of Spain's labour market to new foreign arrivals has, for the time being at least, disappeared. As we shall see in a later section, after a relatively short time lag, Spanish migration rates have dropped substantially. The situational adversity of the crisis, however, does not mean that the vicious circle between the informal economy and irregular labour immigration has disappeared. Despite the aim of promoting an economic growth pattern more focused on innovation and increased productivity, it seems likely that the next growth cycle will also bring

with it a new wave of low-productivity jobs, and that a non-trivial percentage of these jobs will again flourish within the same informal economy.

**Graph 5. Percentage of temporary employment in Spain**



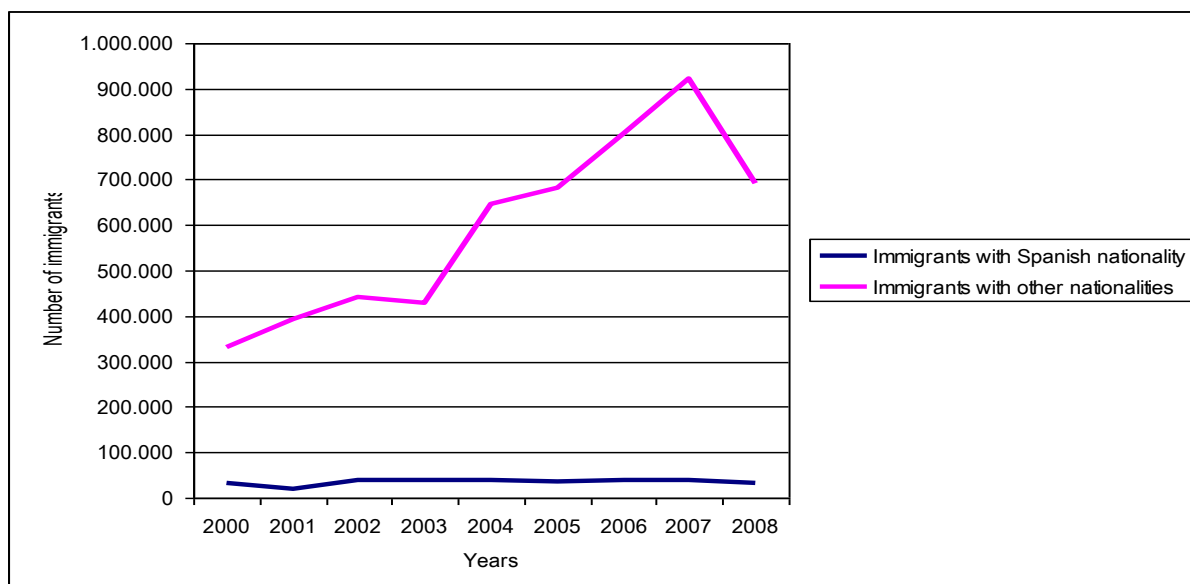
Source: INE. National Labour Survey.

### 3 Development of migration

#### 3.1 Immigration in general

Of all the statistical sources that provide information on Spain's immigrant population, only a few offer data on migration flows. The most prominent and detailed data is on stocks of foreigners or of people born abroad and currently residing in Spain. As for migration flows, the Statistic on Residential Variations provides an annual summary, though with a significant time lag (only information on 2008 was available in January 2010), of mobility in local population registries. It is not, therefore, a direct measure of migration flows across national borders, but rather an indication derived from an administrative record, the *Padrón Municipal de Habitantes*<sup>1</sup>.

Graph 6. Number of immigrants by nationality



Source: INE. Statistic on Residential Variations.

The number of immigrants from abroad rose to a maximum of 957 906 in 2007, followed by a sharp reduction in 2008. The percentage of immigrants of Spanish nationality is low and decreasing (3.9% in 2007). Net immigration fell by 37% between 2007 and 2008, and the reduction will probably be greater in the data for 2009. The net reduction is not only due to the lower number of arrivals in 2008, but to an increased rate of departure. In 2003, only 25 959 people emigrated abroad, a number that had risen to 266 460 by 2008, 87% of whom were

<sup>1</sup> This link with the *Padrón* means that the Statistic on Residential Variations also includes irregular immigrants enrolled in the register. Another implication is that the various weaknesses of the municipal register are transferred to the net migration estimates. One significant drawback is the limited coverage provided by the *Padrón* in registering moves abroad.

foreign nationals. This predominance of foreigners in the outflow indicates the importance of return migration and of emigration to other countries with a better employment outlook.

**Table 3. Net immigration in Spain (2002-2008)**

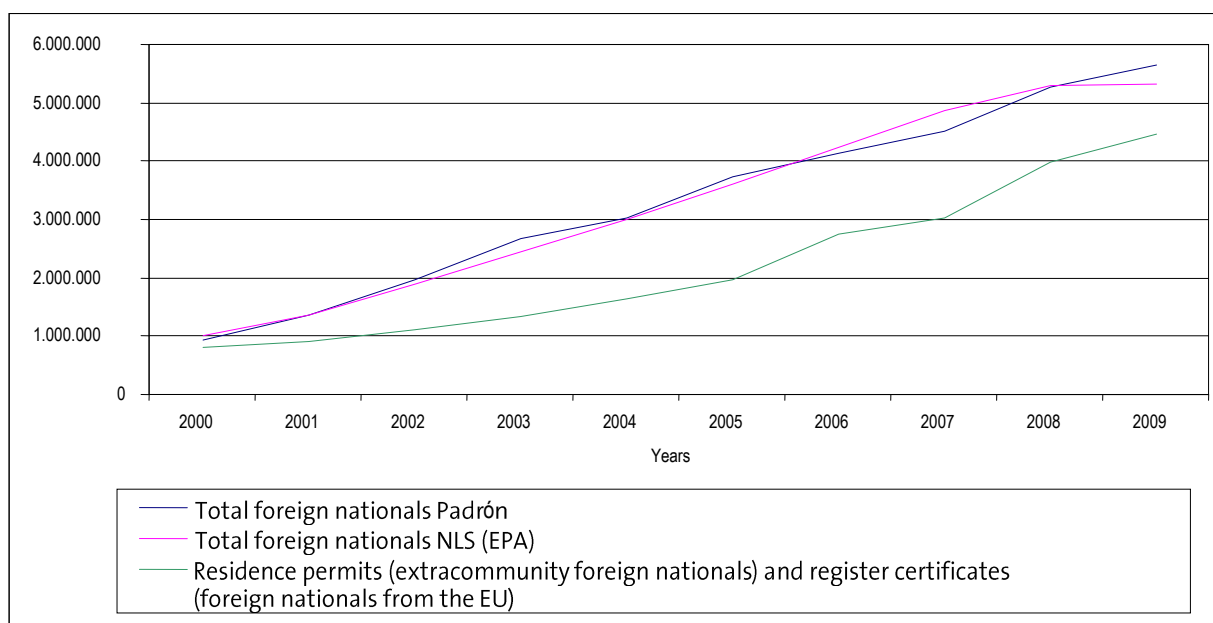
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Net immigration	446 655	444 051	629 469	651 273	698 548	731 201	459 549

Source: INE. Statistic on Residential Variations.

The distribution of foreign immigrants by country of origin shows a considerable preponderance from American countries at the beginning of the 21st century (54.5% in 2000). In subsequent years the proportion associated with European countries recovered (from 26% in 2000 to 40.5% in 2007), this phenomenon being mostly attributable to immigration from Romania. The reduction in immigration in 2007 and 2008 centres mainly around Americans and Europeans, the reduction being less among Africans and Asians (see Pajares 2009: 186, on the “silent return” of Romanians).

The information on stocks of immigrant population in Spain comes from the local population registry (*Padrón*), the National Labour Survey and statistics on residence permits. Data on labour supply are also provided by the statistics on foreigners who pay into Social Security. Each of these sources has unique features that limit a direct comparison between them.

**Graph 7. Total foreign nationals in different statistics**

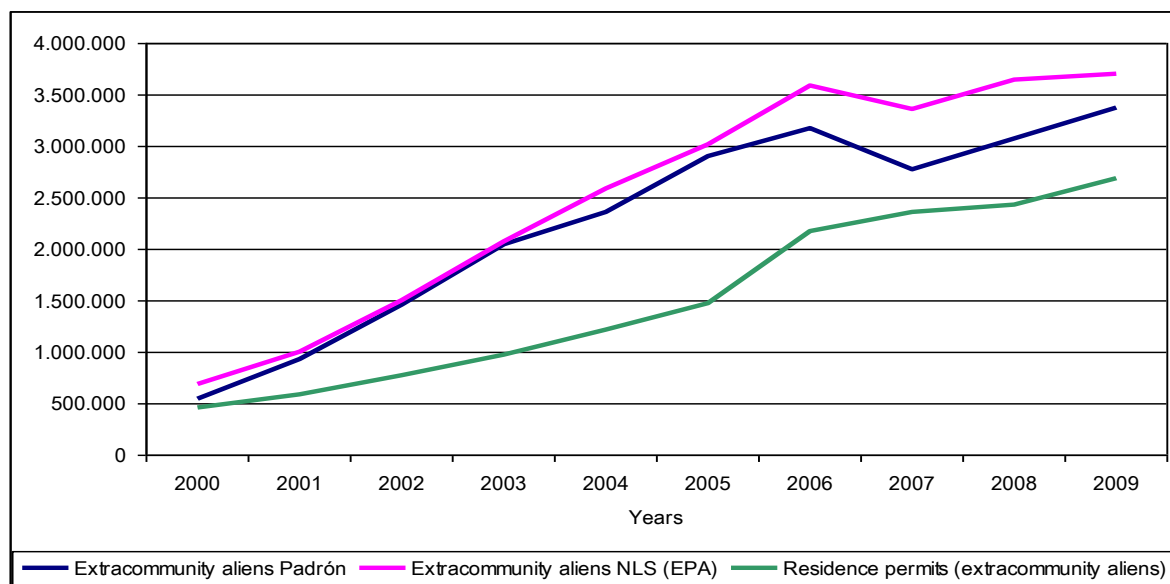


Source: INE, Ministry of Labour and Immigration.

Since the sample in the National Labour Survey is tied to the *Padrón*, it is hardly surprising that the differences between the two are limited in terms of the total foreign population.

Nevertheless, the differences are more pronounced for non-EU foreigners (the graph 8). A comparison of register figures and residence permits reveals greater discrepancies that diminish starting in 2006<sup>2</sup>. We will return later to discuss the causes behind these differences when we proceed to quantify irregular immigration.

**Graph 8. Non-EU foreign nationals in different statistics**



Source: INE, Ministry of Labour and Immigration.

### 3.2 Irregular immigration

Although the most common media image of irregular immigration in Spain is the pictures of rickety boats overloaded with people as they arrive on Spain's shores from the African continent, the reality is that the majority of those residing illegally in Spain entered the country by air or by land and with proper documentation. The main gateway to irregularity is the overstaying of visas, with extraordinary regularizations being the main way out.

The statistical quantification of irregular immigration in Spain enjoys the advantage of having, in the local population registry (*Padrón*), an administrative resource in which practically all immigrants, legal or not, are enrolled. The coverage of the irregular immigrant population provided by the *Padrón* is high because enrolment provides access to essential public services at the place of residency (health care, education, etc.), regardless of administrative status, regular or irregular. This comparison between the non-EU population enrolled in this municipal registry and the residence permits issued to this population can be qualified as a best practice in the

<sup>2</sup> The drop in register figures for non-EU nationals between 2006 and 2007 reflects the steps first taken by the INE during that time period to delete individuals from its register who did not meet residency requirements, and which resulted in the delisting of some 300 000 immigrants no longer living in Spain.

quantification of irregular immigration in Spain, as long as the limitations of this comparison are taken into consideration.

- It is best to limit the comparison to the non-EU population, since EU citizens do not need a residence permit and the coverage of EU registration certificates, obligatory since April 2007<sup>3</sup>, is changing over time. Obviously, this delimitation does not imply that there are no EU citizens, including Spaniards, on Spanish territory who are in an irregular employment status.
- The quantification of the foreign population through the municipal registers suffers from certain limitations. First, not all immigrants may enrol out of fear of being detected by officials which leads to an underestimation of the non-EU population<sup>4</sup>. Second, migrants may change place of residence without informing the municipality, especially when moving abroad, which leads to an overestimation of the non-EU population. Also, various identity documents (national identity card, passport, even utility bills for the primary place of residence) can be used to register which leads to some over-enrolment and duplicate records. It is often in the municipalities' interest to have a large population, since the allotment of economic resources among administrations is conditioned by, among other things, demographic criteria. The tendency toward over-enrolment, therefore, is more likely than that of immigrants not to enrol<sup>5</sup>. Questions about the reliability of register figures have prompted the INE to prepare now-cast estimates. These involve estimating the current population based on updating census populations with information on births, deaths and migrations<sup>6</sup>. This information, however, is only available for the overall population and does allow for a quantification of the foreign population.
- The foreign population enrolled includes groups who do not require residence permits and who are not in an irregular status. This is the case for students, who have specific permits that are not included in the residence permits statistics. According to Carrasco (2008: 21), this group ranges from 30 000 to 40 000 students. Among the enrolled are also those who have requested a permit that is still being processed and who, despite possibly meeting all requirements, are still not part of the population with residence permits. The information available on this group is scarce and subject to rapid change. According to González-

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<sup>3</sup> Royal Decree 240/2007, of 16 February, on the entry, free movement and residency in Spain of citizens of European Union member States and of other States party to agreement on the European Economic Area.

<sup>4</sup> It must be noted that the registration contains all necessary data to locate irregular immigrants.

<sup>5</sup> This statement has to be qualified based on the numbers of arrivals and departures. The current downturn has increased the outflow and it is likely that a large number of people remain on the municipal registers despite having left the country. The mechanisms used by the INE to purge these records are prolonged by administrative procedures before they become official.

<sup>6</sup> The differences between the two sources can be considerable. On 1 January 2009, the population of Spain enrolled in the Padrón exceeded the now-cast estimate by 917 635.

Enríquez (2009: 24), the data provided by the Ministry of the Interior in quantifying this group range from 59 000 in 2001 to 241 000 people in 2008. González-Enríquez subtracts persons with expired permit from her estimate of the irregular immigrant population. To these two groups we can add others, such as cross-border workers, asylum seekers and those who have been granted refugee or stateless status (Carrasco, 2008: 22). The number of asylum seekers is less than 10 000 a year. If these groups were not subtracted from the non-EU population enrolled in the *Padrón*, then the comparison between these sources would tend to slightly over-estimate the figures on irregularity.

Despite the limitations of this comparison, this comparative procedure appears to be more reliable in terms of quantifying the population of immigrants in an irregular administrative status than other options, such as direct estimates that rely on data obtained from the police, from labour inspections or from the issuance of health care cards intended to extend health care coverage to those not paying into Social Security.

The comparison between the *Padrón* and residence permits results in a saw-toothed progression of the estimates of irregular immigrants. From 2000 to 2005 the absolute volume increased, only to drop until 2007. It then increased again to 654 294 immigrants. The percentage of immigrants enrolled in the *Padrón* who were in an irregular administrative status grew until 2003 (51%) before dropping to 14% in 2007. The last two years once again saw a moderate increase, though still far from the highs of 2003, situating the propensity toward administrative irregularity at 19%.

**Table 4. Percentage of irregularity at the beginning of each year (\*)**

	TCNs on the Padrón (A)	TCNs with residence permits ** (B)	TCNs with student permits (C)	TCNs with expired permits (positive silence) (D)	TCNs irregularly staying A-B-C-D= I	% of irregularity I/A x 100
2001	927 978	589 517	28 816	59 000	260 645	27%
2002	1 457 661	777 708	29 402	78 000	572 551	39%
2003	2 042 083	971 446	23 756	97 000	949 881	46%
2004	2 358 040	1 208 755	30 254	121 000	998 031	42%
2005	2 894 712	1 478 416	36 545	148 000	1 231 751	43%
2006	3 164 302	2 169 648	30 640	217 000	747 014	23%
2007***	2 769 664	2 089 305	33 267	209 000	438 092	16%
2008	3 070 484	2 432 705	42 852	241 000	353 927	12%

Source: González-Enríquez (2009:24).

\* Asylum seekers have not been included due to their small number. TCN: Third Country Nationals.

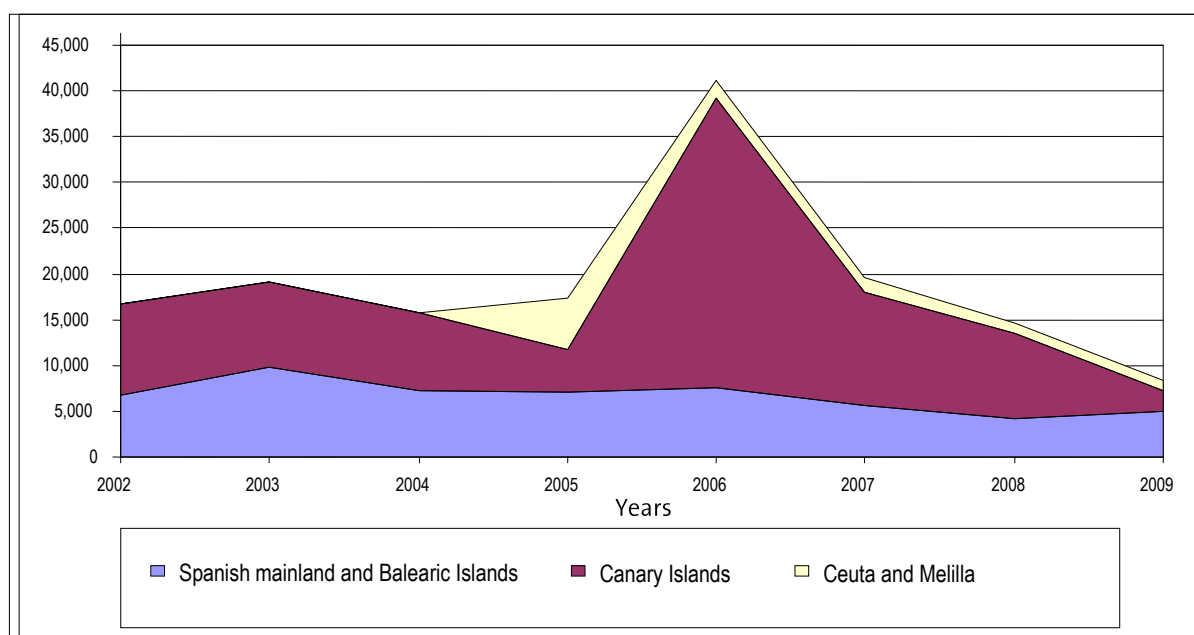
\*\* Number of residence permits refers to 31 December of previous year, i.e. one day earlier than the reference date of Padrón. The number includes both permits obtained through the “general” regime the common way for TCNs and those obtained through the “communitarian” regime applied to those TCNs with familiar links with EU citizens.

\*\*\* Bulgarians and Romanians have been excluded as they became regulars from 1 January 2007.

Extraordinary regularizations in particular the last one in 2005 affect these variations in time. It is obvious that regularisations have reduced the number of irregular migrants in Spain. Whether or not there was a pull-effect attracting migrants into the irregular economy due to the hope of later regularization cannot be said on the basis of this data.

Apart from estimates on the stock of irregular immigrants statistical information is available on a portion of the irregular flows namely on the interception of people arriving by boat to Spain's coasts or who are intercepted before they arrive. Data are also published on entries via Ceuta and Melilla (usually over land). There was a rising trend in these irregular arrivals until 2006 with the so-called "boat crisis" (40 000 arrivals) though subsequently the figures dropped to levels reminiscent of the 1990s with only 8 393 arrivals in 2009. The route via the Canaries surged temporarily due to intensified patrols of the Straits of Gibraltar and then contracted as the surveillance expanded (SIVE FRONTEX repatriation agreements with countries of origin and transit) and from the impact of the economic crisis.

**Graph 9. "Illegal" immigrants intercepted arriving in boats (Ceuta and Melilla include terrestrial crossings)**



Source: Ministry of the Interior.

In this context of a lower influx of new arrivals it should come as no surprise that repatriations decreased 31.8% between 2007 and 2009. Only the number of deportations of immigrants apprehended inside the country has shown an increasing trend.



**Table 5. Repatriations during 2007-2009**

Repatriations	2007	2008	2009	% 2007-2008	% 2008-2009
Returns	24 355	17 317	12 226	-28.9	-29.57
Readmissions	6 248	6 178	5 099	-1.1	-18.82
Deportations	9 467	10 616	13 278	12.1	25.08
Devolutions	15 868	12 315	7 526	-22.4	-39.68
Total	55 938	46 426	38 129	-17.0	-18.41

RETURN (in 2009 called DENIED ENTRY): Entry denied at border control posts normally harbours and airports.

READMISSION: Repatriated according to readmission agreements with Third Countries.

DEPORTATION: Repatriated for legal reasons (Immigration Law) through administrative procedures linked to illegal residence in Spain.

DEVOLUTION: Immigrants who tried to enter Spain through places not recognized as border posts.

Source: Ministry of the Interior.

### 3.3 Economic crisis and irregular immigration

The rapid deterioration of employment opportunities in Spain's economy deters the arrival of new immigrants. As a result of the inertia of a complex social process such as immigration arrivals for non-employment reasons (such as family reunification) will keep encouraging a net positive migration though much more restrained than in previous years. What is the impact of the downturn on irregular immigration? We must once again differentiate between flows and stocks.

In the case of flows the drastic reduction in irregular arrivals in 2008 and 2009 is obvious. While administration officials attribute this reduction preferentially to the effectiveness of border control measures others such as immigrant associations or relevant NGOs tend to explain this contraction by the adverse economic situation<sup>7</sup>. While it is impossible to quantify either aspect which are furthermore mutually compatible it seems more convenient to note that the difficult living conditions in the African countries of origin causing Africans to leave for Europe will not improve substantially in the short term even though migration routes will adapt to the changing permeability profiles of south Europe's borders. As a result this drastic reduction in

<sup>7</sup> For example, the trade union Comisiones Obreras stated that the reduction in immigration from African countries to the Canary Islands is basically due to the economic crisis and that it will recover once the economic outlook improves. (<http://canarias24horas.com/index.php/2009080966035/inmigracion/podrian-llegar-mas-cayucos-a-mitad-de-verano.html>).

arrivals does not seem to represent a medium- or long-term shift in trends but just a temporary interruption.

The relationship between the economic crisis and irregular immigration stocks is ambiguous. On the one hand it can contribute to increased irregularity because the loss of a job can result in the loss of the residence permit (befallen irregularity) and the informal economy can once again become the labour destination for the undocumented jobless. On the other hand the crisis reduces entries and increases departures. The combination of a greater number of departures (selective return of those who do not fulfil their objectives) and a lower number of arrivals for employment reasons can reduce the number of people in an irregular administrative status. The net effect may appear to be a moderate increase in irregularity but it is difficult to separate the impact of the crisis from the temporary effects of the last extraordinary regularization in 2005. While a regularization drastically reduces the number of irregular migrants, there is a tendency for the number of people in an irregular status to increase once more in the years after a regularization. For example, after the regularization of 2000-2001 a rapid increase in irregularity was noted under relatively good economic conditions in terms of job growth. What would have happened to the number of irregular immigrants had the positive economy persisted after the last regularization? It would surely have risen and probably with greater momentum.

## 4 Public discourses

A study of public discourses can encompass different sources of information such as public opinion surveys an analysis of documentary sources (minutes of parliamentary sessions for example) and mentions in the mass media (press, radio, television and internet). An analysis of public discourses on immigration in Spain is often conducted by means of opinion surveys. Examples are provided by the Basque Immigration Observatory (2009: Survey on perceptions and attitudes toward foreign immigration) and the Permanent Andalusian Observatory on Migration (Rinken et al. 2009: Opinions and attitudes of Andalusians toward immigration). Research has also been conducted based on documentary sources as in the analysis of political discourse by Zapata-Barrero et al. (2008). The research by Bañón Hernández (2002) and Lario Bastida (2006) is typical for the analyses centred on the mass media. In his analysis of social debate on immigration reflected in the media Bañón Hernández (2002: 282) distinguishes five basic categories of discourse: compromised, demanding, discriminatory, acquiescent and preventive. Discourse emanating from public administration and political parties is dominant in the press and is characterized by preventive aspects while the demanding discourse of immigrants receives less attention in the mass media. Irregular immigration is associated with the negative aspects of migration and is something to be prevented by politics and administration.

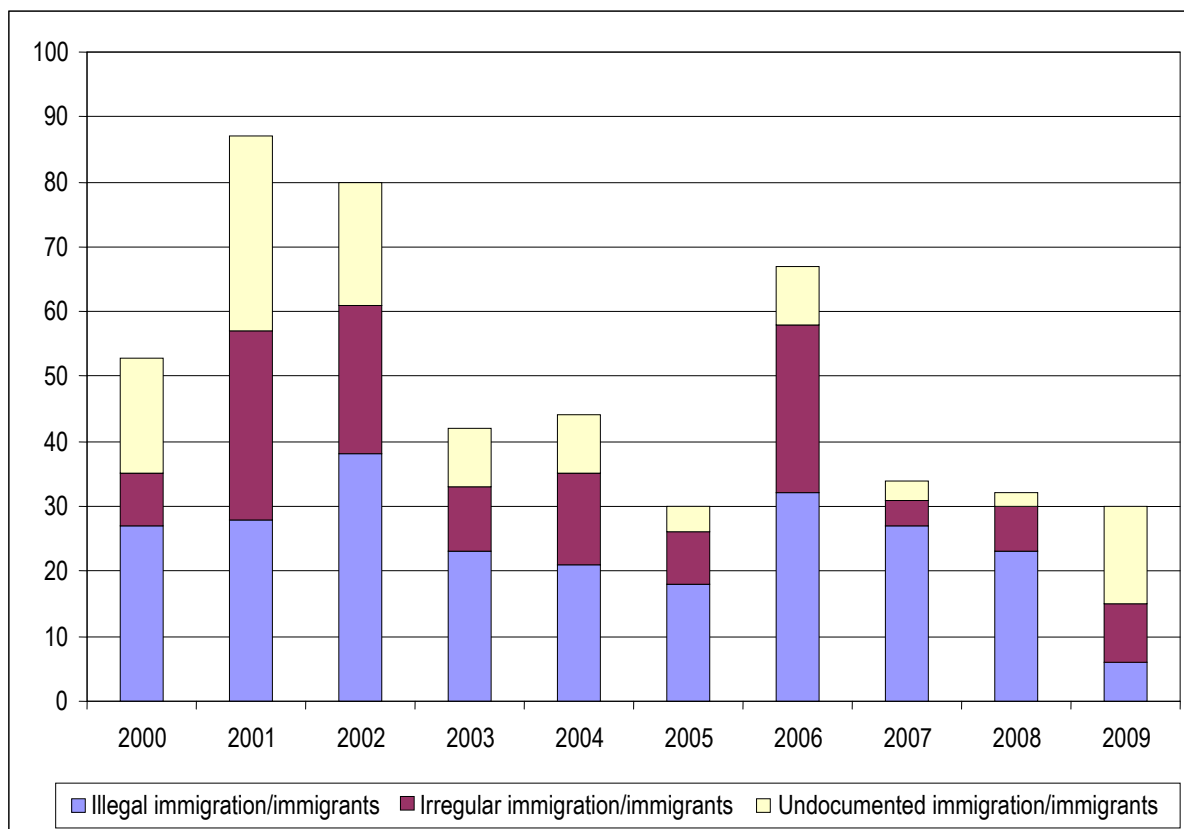
In this case we opted to focus on the newspaper with the largest circulation: El País. González-Enríquez (2009: 29) states for the Spanish case that “all relevant mass media are strongly politicised and are clearly biased and even sectarian”. In the case of El País its political affiliation is characterized by an affinity toward the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE)<sup>8</sup>. The time period covered by the study is divided into an initial stage from 2000 to 2004 during the term of the Popular Party (PP) and a subsequent stage from 2004 to 2009 under the PSOE. The El País articles were accessed through a digital subscription service which allows the contents of the printed version to be saved. Local and Sunday editions were included. The author had no access to a digital database covering several newspapers and allowing for a structured search with combined search terms in different parts of the articles. Therefore the El País archives were searched using fixed combinations of words: irregular immigration/ immigrants, illegal immigration/ immigrants and undocumented immigration/ immigrants. The expression “bogus immigration” is not used in Spanish. After identifying the articles the appearance of the search terms in the headlines was quantified by reading.

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<sup>8</sup> One implication of this affinity is that the discourse found in this newspaper is more susceptible to what Zapata-Barrero (2008) calls “proactive discourse”, in contrast to the “reactive discourse” that is more conspicuous in the Popular Party.

The search yielded a total of 18929 references during 2000-2009 (table 6) with 499 articles containing one or several of the search terms in the headlines. The articles are unevenly distributed over time with higher frequencies in 2001 (extraordinary regularization), 2002 (increased arrival of boat people) and 2006 (“cayuco crisis” in the Canary Islands). In many cases several of the search terms appeared in the same articles using “irregular” “illegal” and “undocumented” as synonyms<sup>9</sup>. No references to irregular migration of Spanish citizens into other countries were found and 5.5% of the articles with one or several of the search terms in any part of the article refer to irregular migration unrelated to Spain or Spanish citizens. Most of these articles are related to legal initiatives in the EU and irregular immigration into countries such as Italy, Malta and the USA.

**Graph 10. Articles published by El País including explicit references to irregular/illegal/undocumented immigration in the headlines (2000-2009)**



Source: El País archive, own compilation.

<sup>9</sup> We only detected a slight relationship between the term “undocumented” and news about other countries such as the USA, probably due to the translation of original information sources where this term is preferably used. The term “illegal” is more frequent when irregular border crossing (flows) is treated, while irregular seems to be more usual in the case of irregular residence (stocks).

Table 6. Number of articles generated by search terms

Search terms	In the headline	Anywhere in the rest of the article	Total
Irregular immigration/immigrants (" <i>inmigración irregular</i> "; " <i>inmigrantes irregulares</i> ")	243	8 694	8 947
Illegal immigration/immigrants (" <i>inmigración ilegal</i> " " <i>inmigrantes ilegales</i> ")	138	6 236	6 608
Undocumented immigration/immigrants (" <i>inmigración indocumentada</i> " " <i>inmigrantes indocumentados</i> ")	118	3 256	3 374
Total	499	18 186	18 929

Source: El País archive, own compilation.

Table 7. Geographical focus of news coverage in Spain

	Verbal/ numerical indication of relevance
<b>Irregular migration of own citizens into other countries</b>	No articles found on irregular migration of Spanish citizens to other countries.
<b>Irregular migration into the own country</b>	Many articles (499 articles with search term in headline 18 929 with search term in any part of the article) mostly concerning the living conditions of irregular migrants policy developments (extraordinary regularizations) and statistics on arrivals (particularly " <i>cayuco crisis</i> " in 2006).
<b>Irregular migration unrelated to own citizens or own country</b>	Relatively few articles (5.5%; 1 039 articles in 10 years [any part of the article]; 517 on illegal immigration/immigrants 306 irregular immigration/immigrants 216 undocumented immigration/immigrants) mostly relating to European Community (legal initiatives) European countries (particularly Italy and Malta) and USA (Mexican immigration).

Source: El País archive, own compilation.

The references obtained through the search term "irregular immigration" were classified by theme (table 8) and the most thorough and structured articles were selected for a more detailed analysis<sup>10</sup>. The following conclusions can be drawn from the quantitative results:

- A large number of articles are devoted to reflecting on the daily political debates held on immigration the focus being on the partisan conflict between the PSOE and the PP in matters of immigration control. Every year at least one-fourth of the references focus on this issue.
- The extraordinary events are well documented. The increased arrival of boat people in 2002 and the so-called "*cayuco crisis*" in 2006 are reflected in the number of articles on this topic. The extraordinary regularizations of 2000/2001 and 2005 and the changes in 2000, 2003 and 2009 to the Immigration Law also received ample press coverage.

<sup>10</sup> This selective procedure is due to the huge number of articles and the selective reading of a sample of the articles produced by other search terms confirmed a similar pattern of the main topics.

- The in-depth reports are often devoted to reflecting on the living conditions of immigrants and on the process of irregular migration. These are categorized by the newspaper itself through its use of subheadings like “the immigration drama” and “the problems facing immigrants”.
- News on detentions and police matters only account for an average of 7.1% of the articles found though we should note the increasing trend in articles on crime to omit details on the origin of those involved and to not mention irregular immigration. One exception is the mention of police efforts to find and dismantle organized networks of human traffickers. In this case it is normal to find references to the ties between prostitution and organized irregular immigration.
- The purpose of articles on statistics is mainly to quantify the irregular immigrant population. Normally they provide comparative data from the *Padrón* and residence permits.
- Living conditions in internment centres and repatriations receive only minor coverage.

**Table 8. Articles published in El País by thematic categories (2000-2009; search term “irregular immigration” in any part of the article)**

Categories	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total	Average	%
Cayucos/pateras	1	12	34	8	8	2	28	9	2	7	111	11	4.7
Politics	48	128	110	60	112	93	187	36	87	16	877	88	37.3
Legal aspects	24	16	17	22	12	2	1	2	10	9	115	12	4.9
Networks/human trafficking	5	10	10	2	11	3	2	2	9	3	57	6	2.4
Detentions/pólíce	12	15	32	16	15	9	18	20	17	12	166	17	7.1
Detention centres	0	1	1	0	1	0	4	1	3	3	14	1	0.6
Statistics	16	6	24	24	15	18	26	13	9	9	160	16	6.8
Repatriation/regularization	9	15	11	3	18	22	17	14	9	2	120	12	5.1
Reports	12	32	32	21	26	36	59	25	43	7	293	29	12.5
Various	24	52	70	31	61	46	75	35	28	15	437	44	18.6
Total	151	287	341	187	279	231	417	157	217	83	2350	235	100.0

Source: El País archive, own compilation.

The qualitative results are based on an analysis of ten selected articles one for each year. A combination of criteria was used to select these articles: a) minimum length and detail of articles included; b) exclusion of articles limited to a mere retelling of events; c) exclusion of local articles (El País has regional editions); d) exclusion of articles about other countries; e) the

relationship to topics that receive most of the attention in the year in question. The resulting selection is as follows:

**Table 9. Selected articles 2000-2009 El País**

Nº	Year	Title
1	2000	Effects without cause: on the "pull effect" (Javier de Lucas 10/06/2000)
2	2001	Against the new Immigration Law (M. Pajares 06/01/2001)
3	2002	Government veto of new regularizations met with opposition from left-wing parties and trade unions (T. Bárbulo J.M Martí Font 31/01/2002)
4	2003	Government will increase maximum penalty for trafficking in immigrants from 3 to 10 years (Pilar Marcos 13/01/2003)
5	2004	"PP tries to get political benefits from immigration" (J.M. Romero 28/11/2004)
6	2005	"This process has been a moral relief for honest people" (J.M. Romero 08/05/2005)
7	2006	Government approves urgent plan against massive influx of undocumented aliens to Canary Islands (L.R. Aizpeolea 16/03/2006)
8	2007	PP embraces xenophobic discourse (M. Noguera 23/05/2007)
9	2008	Are there a million undocumented aliens? (T. Bárbulo 19/02/2008)
10	2009	Slamming the door on immigration (A. Bolaños 07/01/2009)

Source: El País archive.

*Which dominant views of opinion leaders such as leading government officials are quoted?*

The viewpoints detected in the opinion makers are mostly along the lines of the attributes of the reactive and proactive discourses profiled by Zapata-Barrero (2008: 151). The conservative (PP) reactive discourse views the phenomenon as a problem to be tackled through law and order protecting the balance between security and liberty. They approach irregularity as being "their problem" and warn of the risks of instability and crime. The progressives (PSOE) in turn see immigration as both a challenge and an opportunity that must be actively managed with a view toward development and through resources aimed specifically at integration. They warn of the dangers of social inequality and xenophobia that could result if the situation is mismanaged.

The trend in these profiles from 2000 to 2009 can be summarized by the growing generalization in support of the "fight against irregular immigration" also within the proactive discourse this change having been driven in particular by the economic downturn starting in 2008 (Article 10). In turn the conservatives who have been the opposition party since 2004 are tending toward increasingly radical positions at least during elections and blame the government for the supposed failure of policies intended to combat irregularity (Articles 5 and 8; for example Alberto Fernández Díaz PP declared during the election campaign in Catalonia (May 2007 Article 8) that he was willing to restrict access to the Padrón and social services for irregular immigrants).

*Are any theories uncovered on the development of irregular migration?*

The more or less explicit hypotheses in the articles make no clear distinction between the causes of immigration in general and of irregular migration in particular. References to economic factors abound both in the country of origin (push) and of destination (pull). Part of the appeal cited for Spain as a destination for irregular immigrants is the informal economy the *de facto* permeability of the borders the prospective for a subsequent regularization and universal access to health care and education. External control is seen as the main role of immigration policies (Article 4 is a summary of how the Popular Party increased penalties for “mafias trafficking in human beings” and Article 7 explains how the Government started to combat cayuco immigration in 2006 through bilateral agreements for readmission with Mauritania) while references to internal control are less evident. One of the main points of contention between left-wing and right-wing parties is the so-called “pull effect” (Article 9) of extraordinary regularizations and less restrictive legislation attributed by conservatives as serving to explain the influx of irregular immigrants (they accuse the government of espousing a policy of “papers for all”) while the proactive discourse denies the existence of such an effect. Article 1 is an example of the proactive discourse. To Javier de Lucas “it seems a bad joke to assume that the immigrants who travel in pateras do so because they know about their unsurpassable legal status in Spain”. The reactive discourse on the other hand attacked the last extraordinary regularization (2005) by saying that “immigrants who come to Spain know that they will be able to regularize their situation” (María Ángeles Muñoz PP quoted in Article 5). Former minister of Labour and Social Affairs Jesús Caldera (Article 6) when asked if there had been a pull effect in 2005 answered “not only has no pull effect been noted but quite the contrary migration flows to Spain are dropping according to police reports. We expect irregular entries to fall as the legal mechanisms of immigration policy are applied”.

*Which connections between economic developments are implicitly assumed or explicitly explained?*

There was a broad implicit consensus from 2000 to 2007 on the Spanish economy's need for immigrant labour. It was assumed to be in the “national interest” to meet these needs. The flip side of this instrumental discourse on labour immigration is evident in times of crisis (“they are not needed anymore”). In Article 10 the Minister of Labour and Immigration Celestino Corbacho argues that “hiring immigrants in their countries of origin will approximate zero”. Consuelo Rumi, Secretary of State for Immigration also points out the impact of the changing economic context: “During the last legislation we created objective instruments for channelling the needs of the labour market. If they were valid in times of growth they also should work in times of crisis. The reality is that at present there are fewer jobs”. Some references note the relationship between the financial crisis and the expansion of the



underground economy with the associated ties between unplanned irregularity and informal employment. It is assumed that the labour supply of immigrants largely complements the national job market and is centred on the secondary segment though times of crisis boost the “Spaniards first” argument. As for the illegal border crossings by Africans (*cayucos/pateras*) this is assumed to be motivated by the living conditions in the country of origin.

*Which quantified developments are quoted to frame and support arguments?*

Arguments tend to rely on statistical information from the population register and from residence permits as a basis for their quantification of irregular immigration (Article 9) and to reflect the impact of extraordinary regularizations (Articles 3 and 6). The link to the economy is normally made in terms of employment and unemployment statistics for foreigners, which normally rely on data from the National Labour Survey and on the number of immigrants who pay into Social Security.

## 5 Key issues and research perspectives

The main explanatory factors for irregular immigration in Spain are the creation of low-productivity jobs and the widespread informal economy. The downturn has reduced this demand drastically and it is unlikely that the demand will return to 2000-2007 levels in coming years. As a result immigration to Spain will be reduced and will be driven primarily by family reunification. Irregularity therefore will go from being a phenomenon tied to recent arrivals to one in which unplanned irregularity brought on by unstable or lost employment will become more relevant. More stringent and restrictive immigration policies and legislation will only serve to aggravate the problem of labour and social marginalization of immigrants.

The research challenges and opportunities offered by the Spanish case focus on the following issues:

- A study of family strategies for adapting to the crisis through residential mobility both international (return migration or emigration to other countries with better employment outlooks) and inter-regional (between Spanish regions with the corresponding inter-sector mobility: a return from construction to farming for example). A comparison of the strategies used by immigrants versus the reaction of Spanish families. These studies require the production of primary information if the *micro* and *meso* decision-making levels are to be included.
- Identification of political and economic mechanisms through which the induced institutional change is implemented as the economic crisis influences the legal norms and administrative practices associated with immigration and integration policies. Spain's immigration policy is becoming more restrictive at least in its public rhetoric. The reduction in the demand for unskilled labour hints at a transition to another immigration model based more on the selective immigration of qualified individuals. How can this transition be effected?
- The ties between immigration and labour demand set the stage for a prominent instrumental discourse on immigration ("Spain needs immigrants"). The crisis is modifying this perception and the analysis of these changes can give some indication on the polarization of public opinion in times of economic adversity.

Three specific features are highlighted that would be interesting for comparative studies from a Spanish perspective:

- *The clear effect of the production structure and of international economic specialization on the characteristics of labour demand and immigrants.* In Spain's case and despite the rhetoric for border controls it is "market forces" that have given rise to immigration

patterns. To what extent does this link between economy and migration vary among countries? The Spanish case is of particular interest when studying the effects of an undefined immigration model. What are the implications of letting in the words of González-Enríquez (2009: 32) the “liberal market approach” take its course<sup>11</sup>?

- *The special importance of the vicious circle between the informal economy and irregular immigration.* Spain is one of the southern European Union’s economies whose immigration pattern has differed from that of northern Europe. One of the differentiating aspects is the mutual determination between the informal economy and irregular immigration. As a result the fight against irregular immigration necessarily entails a fight against economic informality. To what extent are the north-south differences in this subject persisting? Is there any convergence?
- *Strategies of adapting to the downturn employed by families of different national and socio-cultural origins.* The adaptation of family strategies to the crisis at the country of destination has some shared attributes but certain differences are also evident and related to the country of origin. Romanians, Ecuadorians and Moroccans residing in Spain are not reacting to the crisis in the same way. What determines these differences? What is the role of transnationality and of belonging to a specific family and cultural system at the country of origin?

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<sup>11</sup> Keep in mind that the self-restraint shown by the State in matters of immigration does not imply that the markets are “free”. The Spanish labour market is far from being a “free market”.

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