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**Workshop: FROM THE ECONOMIC CRISIS TO AN INTEGRATION CRISIS?  
Assessing evidence and policy responses in Southern Europe and beyond**

***Is the economic crisis seriously impairing integration?  
The case of Spain***

*Claudia Finotelli  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid*

**Introduction**

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the democratisation process, European membership, and improving living conditions have favoured Spain's gradual transition to an immigration country. Foreign workers filled a structural demand for low-skilled jobs, which had become increasingly unappealing to natives. The volume of immigrants, however, remained modest initially. It is for this reason that, in contrast to other 'late-comers' in Europe, Spain appeared to be following a 'low-intensity' and 'low-tension' model, in which immigration did not really represent a relevant public issue (Arango 2000). Like other Southern European immigration countries, Spain was considered particularly tolerant of the entry and stays of irregular migrants, and incapable of organising the legal entry of migrants (Brochmann 1993; Freemann: 1995; Baldwin-Edwards 1997). Regularisations rapidly became the hallmark of the Spanish migration regime while marginalisation, rather than integration, was often considered the final outcome of ineffective policies and a generalised *laissez-faire* attitude (Calavita 2005).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, immigration to Spain underwent a spectacular upsurge. Within a very short space of time, Spain came to have one of the highest net immigration rates in Europe, receiving almost 50 per cent of net immigration in the EU.

The foreign population came to represent more than 10 per cent of the total population. Such population growth occurred in an era of economic prosperity, during which immigration caused a steady increase in national GDP. The rapidity of both economic and demographic growth transformed Spain into an exceptional case in Southern Europe. Spain became a 'high-intensity' immigration model, where immigration turned into a social and political issue that ranked highly on the public agenda. Such a change also affected Spain's migration regime. The Spanish government sensibly improved the struggle against irregular migration while putting increasing effort into achieving a more effective regulation of legal entries. Within the space of a few years, Spain came to be considered as more advanced than other

Southern European countries in terms of the development of efficient labour migration policies (Peixoto et al. 2012). Quite satisfactory MIPEX indicators together with the high employment rate of foreigners suggested that the country had also considerably improved its integration potential with respect to the 1990s. It seemed that a new type of Mediterranean migration state had emerged that was willing to create “a regulatory and legal environment in which migrants could pursue their strategies of accumulation” (Hollifield, 2004: 885).

It was only the economic crisis of 2008 that stopped what has been called the ‘prodigious decade of immigration’ (Oliver 2008). After being one of the major European labour importers for ten years, Spain rapidly became the country with the highest employment rate in the European Union. As occurred after the oil crisis of 1973, the crisis of 2008 was also expected to trigger a restrictive turn, which would not only affect the entry avenues but also the integration paths for immigrants. Has such a restrictionist turn occurred? What are the consequences of the crisis on immigrants’ integration? Is it producing a return to irregularity and to immigrants’ marginalisation? The present article seeks to answer these questions by i) outlining the evolution of the Spanish migration and ii) sketching a provisional evaluation of the impact the crisis on migration and integration policies. Its final objective is to determine the extent to which the economic crisis is seriously impairing integration and challenging Spain’s transformation to a ‘mature’ immigration country.

### **The Spanish Migration State before the Crisis**

Weak migration regulation and insufficient migration programmes characterised Spain as an emerging immigration country (Arango 2000). The weakness of these policies lied in a neo-corporatist policy approach, according to which the recruitment of a foreign worker had to take place before his (or her) entry into the country of destination. The inadequacy of entry channels coupled with high demand for foreign labour reinforced in Spain the ‘liberal paradox’ between Market and State (Hollifield 1992). The main consequence of this mismatch was that irregular migration turned into a structural feature of the Spanish migration regime and one of the most important challenges for Spanish governments.

However, instead of developing a sound immigration policy, Spanish governments often preferred *a posteriori* regulations. Spain carried out six regularisation programs starting in 1985.

**Table 1: Outcomes of regularisation processes in Spain**

| <b>Regularisation</b> | <b>Applications</b> | <b>Issued</b> | <b>Admitted / Applied</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1985                  | 38,181              | 34,832        | 91%                       |
| 1991                  | 130,406             | 109,135       | 84%                       |
| 1996                  | 17,676              | 21,382        | 85%                       |
| 2000                  | 247,598             | 199,926       | 81%                       |
| 2001                  | 351,269             | 232,674       | 66%                       |
| 2005                  | 691,655             | 578,375       | 82%                       |

Source: Finotelli, Arango 2011.

In total, about 1.2 million foreigners have been regularised in Spain since 1985, with half of these regularisations occurring after 2005. The frequency and outcomes of

regularisation processes demonstrate that these processes soon became a fundamental ex post regulation tool (Finotelli, Arango 2011).

Only in more recent years has the Spanish government recognised that fighting against irregular migration is almost impossible without seriously improving the quality of migration policies. One of the first goals was to make the recruitment procedure for labor migrants more flexible. Reform came through the immigration regulation no. 2393/2004. The new regulation maintained the nominal employment of a foreign worker, which formally still depended on a previous labour market check. However, to expedite the recruitment procedure, the representatives of the regional administrations, along with the trade unions and employer associations, had to publish a Catalogue of Hard-to-Find-Occupations (*Catalogo de trabajos de difícil cobertura*) every three months with a list of jobs for which there were no available candidates. If an employer was looking to fill a vacancy listed in the catalogue, he or she did not need to obtain the negative certification, but rather could immediately begin the recruitment procedure. The new Regulation also improved the quality of labour recruitment based on quota regulations (*contingente*) available to companies with more than 10 employees. Interestingly, the Spanish government also reinforced entry avenues for high skilled migrants by introducing a special avenue for the hiring of high-skilled workers, called the 'Unit for Large Companies and Strategic Groups' (*Unidad de Grandes Empresas*). Finally, the Regulation introduced the *arraigo* (meaning something close to *rootedness*), which is essentially an individual regularisation type. It is based either on the pre-existence of a labour relationship in Spain or on the social integration of irregular migrants (basically in the form of family relationships). The *arraigo*, which was conceived as an on-going regularisation system for individuals, was intended to obviate the need for mass regularisation processes in the future.

The improvement of recruitment tools for foreign workers went along with efforts to increase the effectiveness of border controls by reinforcing border technology through the constitution of the so-called SIVE, SIVE, Integrated System of Exterior Vigilance (*Sistema integrado de vigilancia exterior*, and establishing new forms of cooperation with both other EU member states and the immigrants' countries of origin. The measures that were implemented had a certain effect on the smuggling routes: the number of the immigrants detected at the continental borders (mainly around the Strait of Gibraltar) has clearly decreased since 1998, while there has been a relevant increase in immigrants detected on the Canary route (Carling 2007). This evolution was a product not only of high-tech border controls, but also of increased bilateral cooperation between the countries of immigrant origin, primarily Morocco.<sup>1</sup> Bilateral agreements, in general, offered privileged entry quotas as compensation for the repatriations of clandestine immigrants, which have been increasing considerably between 2000 and 2006 (Ministry of Interior 2006).

Overall, the reforms have certainly contributed to the diversification of the recruitment procedures for foreign workers, making it more suitable to the demands of the Spanish labour market at least during the time of the economic boom. Notably, the reform twist also affected integration policies. During the 1990s, the lack of institutional infrastructure and the imperatives of European membership relegated integration questions to a secondary role (Arango 2000). In this first stage of Spain's

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<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Spain has signed readmission agreements with Gambia, Guinea-Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Mauritania, Argelia, and Nigeria. Agreements with Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Cameroon, and Ivory Coast are in preparation. This information has been provided by the Secretary of State for Immigration in the Final Report on the 7<sup>th</sup> legislature.

immigration history, integration policies relied essentially on the support of NGOs and dealt mostly with first reception measures and providing social services. Some Autonomous Communities, such as Catalonia, tried to overcome these shortcomings by approving “Plans for the Social Integration of Immigrants”, which were into the Autonomous Laws of Social Services. However, these efforts did not compensate for the failure of the national government to provide a general integration plan.<sup>2</sup> Integration policies were created more as reactions on the spot than as the result of careful planning.

Certainly, the process of incorporating immigrants through residence stabilisation and family reunion was more successful than one might expect, given the long-lasting *vacuum legi* on integration.<sup>3</sup> However, it was only near the end of the ‘prodigious decade of immigration’ (Oliver 2008) that discussion on the need for a coordinated integration plan was revived. In 2006, the government approved a Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration. The Plan’s objective was to promote social cohesion at different levels of Spanish society. The total budget of two billion euros for the period 2007-2010 was distributed among the sectors of education (42 percent), employment (11 percent), first reception (23 percent) and others (24 percent). The Plan assigned the Autonomous Communities a very important role in the conception and execution of integration programs, which is not surprising, since social services such as education, health services, and housing, belong to the autonomous competencies, which makes the Autonomous Communities the most important service providers for immigrants.<sup>4</sup> In 2004 the *Fundación para el Pluralismo e la Convivenza* (*Fundación para el Pluralismo e la Convivencia*) was created with the goal to promote religious liberty and cooperation between the state and associations of minority religions. Certainly, measures adopted towards religious minorities, especially those related to the issue of cultural rights, still have a fragmented and heterogeneous character.

This notwithstanding, it cannot be denied that both the PECE and *Fundación Para el Pluralismo y la Convivencia* have contributed to promote good integration practices aimed at increasing the cohesion between natives and immigrants. In sum, it can be argued that the Spanish government did substantial efforts in the last decade to improve the integration conditions of immigrants not only by designing adequate legislation and policy frames, but also by providing sufficient budgetary allocations. For about ten years, Spain seemed to have been able to absorb an exceptionally large number of immigrants in a very short space of time. In this regard, it was not only considered to represent a praiseworthy example of efficient labour migration governance in Southern Europe, but also an interesting case of successful immigrant integration, despite the long-lasting absence of a state integration concept

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<sup>2</sup> In 1998, a Parliamentary Committee suggested, among other things, the drafting of an integration bill. Two years later, Law No. 4/2000, which was the product of major consensus between the two largest Spanish political parties, stressed the necessity of developing integration measures. None was successful.

<sup>3</sup> In this respect, it is worth noting that the Spanish public school system has been also able to incorporate a large number of foreign children, whose number rose from 63,044 in 1996 to 695,190 in 2007.

<sup>4</sup> The Autonomous Communities are supported by municipalities, with the exception of Madrid and Barcelona, and lack a legal framework to regulates their competences, including those that relate to integration issues. Presently, however, the proposal of a basic law on local government and administration is being discussed by the Spanish *Cortes Generales*. See Work Sheet of 5.7.2006 available at: [http://www.map.es/iniciativas/nueva\\_agenda\\_territorial/reforma\\_gobierno\\_local/parrafo/03/document\\_es/ANTEPROYECTO\\_DE\\_LEY\\_BASICA\\_DEL.pdf](http://www.map.es/iniciativas/nueva_agenda_territorial/reforma_gobierno_local/parrafo/03/document_es/ANTEPROYECTO_DE_LEY_BASICA_DEL.pdf).

(Cebolla, Finotelli forthcoming). The global financial crisis and the burst of the construction bubble abruptly interrupted Spain's prodigious decade of economic and demographic growth.

### **Immigration and integration legislation after the crisis**

The economic crisis represented a major shock for Spanish society with devastating effects on the labour market and a spectacular increase in the unemployment rate of the whole population. In a very short period of time, Spain became the European country with the highest unemployment rate in Europe after having been the most important labour importer for almost ten years. Unemployment affected particularly immigrants, whose unemployment rate reached the peak of 35 per cent in 2013, which was almost 10 points higher than the unemployment rate of natives. Such figures are particularly striking if we take into account that in 2007 the unemployment rate of immigrants was only 12.5 percent. The reasons for such a high unemployment rate among immigrants are related to the same mechanisms that fuelled the 'prodigious decade of immigration'. Immigrants comprised the low-skilled labour force that was required in the face of the rapid economic growth of the last ten years. In a period of crisis, however, low-skilled workers are most exposed to the fluctuations of the economy and, thus, the most likely to become unemployed. As a consequence, almost 750,000 immigrant jobs got lost between 2009 and 2013, more than the half of them between 2011 and 2013 (Oliver 2014).

Not surprisingly, the Spanish government decided to promote a 'natural' reduction of annual flows through more restrictive policy measures. It first reduced to zero the annual entry quotas based on the *contingente* and cut almost all the occupations listed in the Catalogue. As declared by minister of Labour and Immigration in 2009, Celestino Corbacho, these measures were necessary because of the high unemployment rate among immigrants and the bad performance of the Spanish economy. However, as high official of the largest Spanish trade union, UGT, stated, such measures did not eliminate the established entry channels but simply adapted them to the new economic situation proving the flexibility of the Spanish model.<sup>5</sup> Further restrictions regarded family reunion. According to the immigration law n. 2/2009, only long-term residents are allowed to apply for family reunion with their parents. Family reunion in this case is only allowed for parents older than 65 and without sufficient income to support themselves. The impact of the law was likely to remain irrelevant, since most of the entries through the family channel affected the children and, most of all, the spouses of immigrants (Cebolla, González 2008). Interestingly, some entry channels have not been affected at all by the crisis. The Large Companies Unit for the recruitment of high skilled workers, for instance, is still working even though interviewees reported a slowing down of the recruitment activity in the last two years (Finotelli 2014).

The Spanish government, with the collaboration of the International Organization of Migration, also designed and implemented a programme of voluntary return for unemployed immigrants showing a clear political preference for the short-term option of favouring return instead of thinking about the possibility of adopting 'reskilling' measures (Parella, Petroff 2014). Quite strikingly, the restrictive turn triggered by the crisis did not initially include norms on immigrants' integration. On the contrary, integration played a very important role in the recently approved

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<sup>5</sup> Interview conducted by the authors in June 2009.

immigration law and regulation. The law on immigration n. 2/2009 defines integration measures as 'transversal' policies affecting all public policies and sectors. One of the most relevant novelties proposed by the new law concerns political participation and, in particular, the granting of municipal voting rights to immigrants (Art. 6, BOCG 30/10/2009). This measure, aimed to reinforce the sense of belonging of immigrants, makes Spain one of the few EU Members States to grant voting rights to immigrants in municipal elections (Mipex 2010).<sup>6</sup> Its relevance is certainly enhanced by the fact that it was approved after Spain was hit by the economic crisis. Moreover, new measures were approved aimed at promoting the integration of ethnic and religious minorities on the territory, and in particular of the Muslim minority. In this respect, the principle of interculturality was declared as one of the basic principles of the 'Strategic Plan for Integration' while Catalonia approved a the law n. 16/2009 on the regulation of holy places (*Ley de Lugares de Culto*) that forces municipalities to devote part of their public soil to religious issues.

It was only after the government change in 2011 that austere integration policies were put in place. The new government elected in 2011 suspended the National Integration Fund for budgetary reasons and abolished the "Report on Integration Efforts" that could have been useful to support the renewals of residence permits in the case of the unemployment of immigrants. However, the most relevant crisis-related measure has certainly been the exclusion of irregular migrants from the National Health System (law no. 16/2012) while resorting to administrative courts has become too expensive for many immigrants after the approval of the law that increases the amount of court fees (Arango et al. 2014). At the institutional level, scholars also observed a progressive weakening of the cooperation between the Autonomous Communities and the central government while the goals of second "Strategic Programme for Immigrants' Integration" (2011-2014) have remained a purpose on paper.

However, the "hibernation" of integration policies was only a side of the coin in the post-crisis immigration approach. In fact, restrictive measures against irregular migrants went along with certain generosity towards rich foreigners that were granted residence permits if they decide to invest in Spanish debt or in the Spanish real estate market for not less than a half a million of euros (Arango et al. 2014). Furthermore, the years after the crisis were characterised by an increasing number of naturalizations.. According to the current legislation, Latin Americans can apply for Spanish citizenship after two years of legal residence, while citizens of other countries (including EU-citizens) have to wait ten years. The Spanish legislation is clearly out of step of reality in a country where 12.5 per cent of the population is foreign born. Moreover, its implementation currently produces a 'two-speed' inclusion process in favour of Latin Americans that may have a discriminatory effect on immigrant population in Spain. However, the existing two-speed citizenship regime has never been publicly debated or questioned. On the contrary, the attitude of the Spanish governments, including the present one, is characterised by a long-lasting 'inertia' (Moreno-Fuentes 2012), which is probably aimed at avoiding the diplomatic consequences of increasing the minimum residence requirement for the naturalization of Latin American citizens. Interestingly, however, such 'inertia' has been recently accompanied by the approval of a law proposal to strengthen the ethnic component of the Spanish citizenship regime by promoting the naturalisation of the descendents of Sephardic Jews that left Spain after 1492. In such a case,

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<sup>6</sup> The others are Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Hungary.

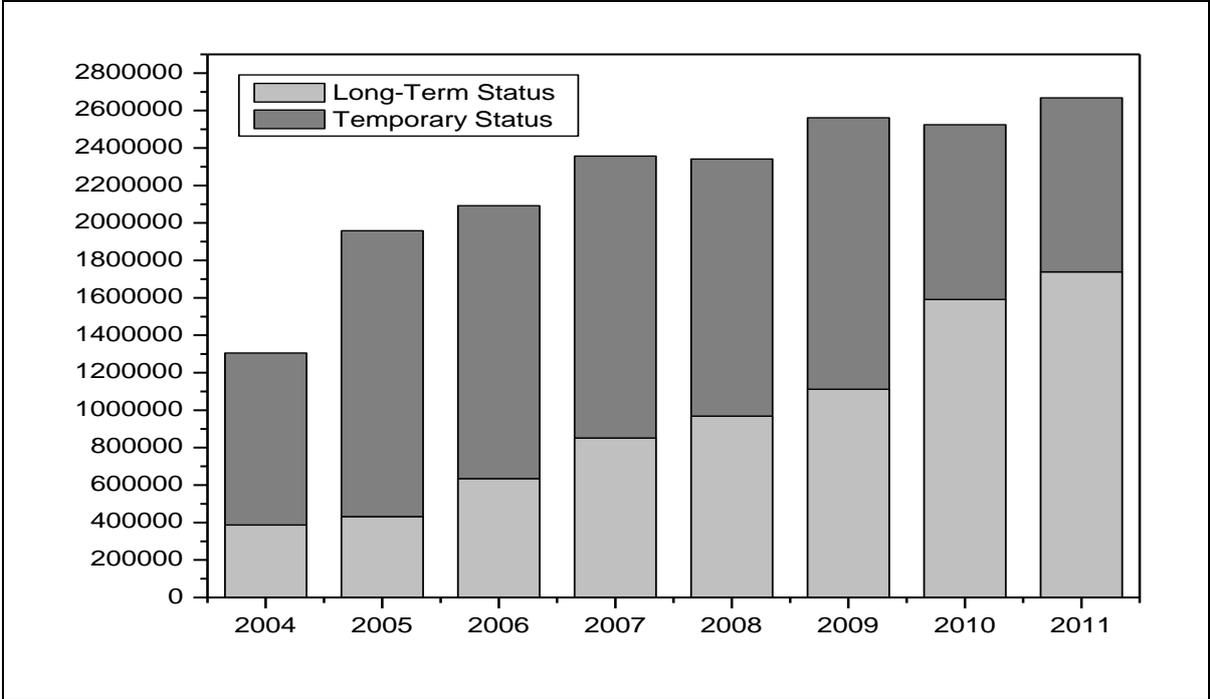
those descendents of Jews obtaining the Spanish citizenship would not be obliged to give up their own nationality as it occurred in the past years (El País, 6 June 2014). The approval of the new nationality plan, which is supposed to contribute to the naturalization of about 90,000 people in four years (ibidem), will certainly have important consequences at the international level since obtaining the Spanish nationality also means freedom of movement within the Schengen space.

To sum up, immigration legislation has experienced a progressive restrictive turn after the outburst of the crisis with few exceptions related to norms favouring foreign investors or the peculiar inertia regarding the naturalization processes. The next section shows how the crisis affected immigrants' integration in terms of access to social rights and welfare.

**De facto integration after the crisis**

Immigrant integration means first of all access to rights and access to rights is closely related to residence status and citizenship (Hammar 1985). At a first glance, the crisis does not seem to have worsened residence stabilisation of migrants in the form that many observers expected. Figure 2 shows that the percentage of long-term residents has been increasing steadily since 2002. In 2012, 74 per cent of foreigners with a regular residence permit were long-term residents, while 26 per cent had a temporary permit (figure 1).

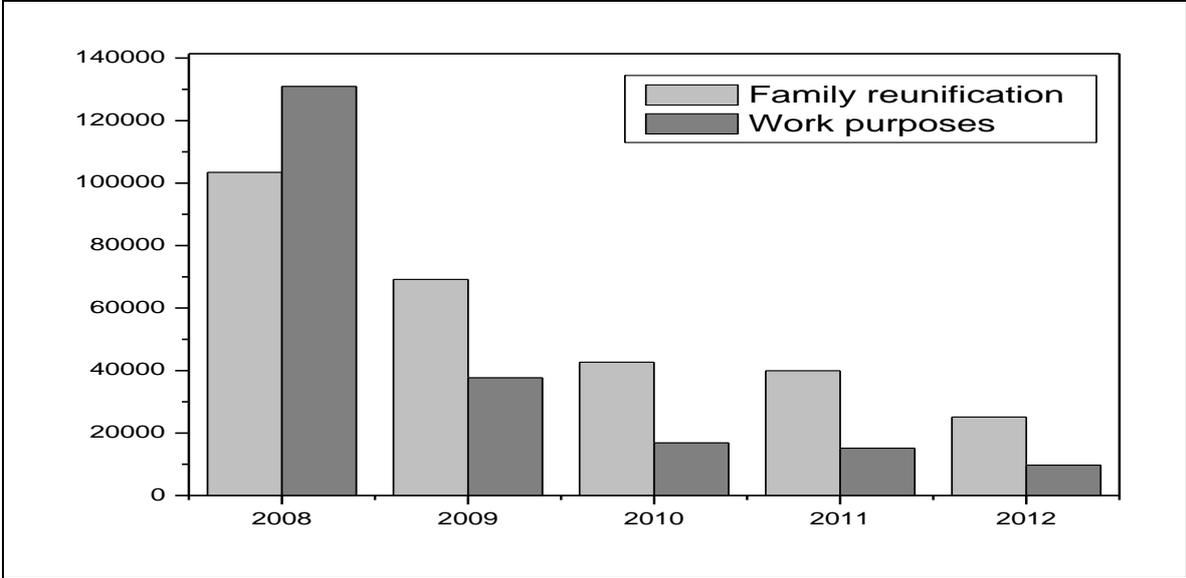
**Figure 1: Evolution of long-term residence permits**



Source: Secretary of State of Immigration and Emigration

Furthermore, family reunion still seems to represent an important (even though weaker) pillar of residence stabilisation. Yet, the decrease in residence visa for work purposes is less remarkable than the decrease of permits issued for family reunion (figure 2).

**Figure 2: Evolution of Visa issued for family reunification**



Source: Secretary of State of Immigration and Emigration

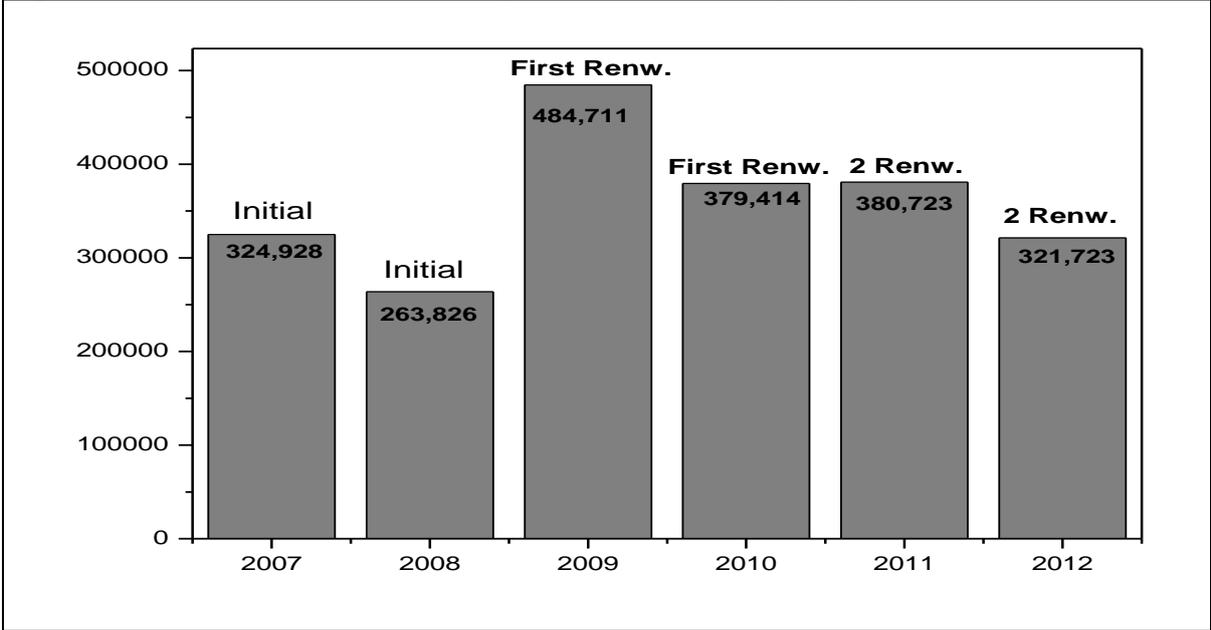
As a matter of fact, the family migration channel currently represents the most demanded entry channel to Spain with more than the half of initial permits issued for this purpose in 2012. On the one hand, the lower figures of family reunifications may indicate a more restrictive attitude of the consular authorities towards family migration or the tightening of entry requirements. On the other, scholars suggest that the uncertain economic situation may prevent many immigrants to bring their family members to Spain (Gonzalez-Ferrer 2014). However, scholars have also observed that the most important decrease regards family members of non -EU immigrants whereas the number of family reunifications of EU-immigrants (most of the Spanish nationals by birth or acquisition) has remained stable (Gonzalez-Ferrer 2014).

Quite strikingly, residence stabilisation through individual regularisations has been weakened but not stopped after the crisis. Statistics about the *arraigo* indicate that this regularisation channel was still very active after (and despite) the outburst of the crisis. As a matter of fact, the Spanish ministry of Immigration issued about 350,000 permits for *arraigo* between 2006 and 2012, the half of them between 2010 and 2012.<sup>7</sup> Hence, it seems that individual regularisations are still being used as correction mechanisms for irregular migrants despite the restrictive turn experienced by other types of legal entry channels. Nonetheless, residence permits issued for *arraigo*, as any other type of temporary permit in Spain, have limited validity and their renewal depends on the fulfilment of requirements and the discretionary nature of bureaucracies. In this respect, scholars have observed that there is, indeed, certain

<sup>7</sup> Please note that the indicated total does not include residence permits issued in 2007 since these figures have not been provided by the ministry of Labour. As far as the rest of the years is concerned, the ministry has issued 7,200 permits in 2006, 56,225 in 2008, 79,433 in 2009, 65,676 in 2010, 76,499 in 2011 and 56,303 in 2012 respectively.

evidence for the fact that public officials are requiring additional documents to slow down bureaucratic procedures such as permits renewals or foreign workers' recruitment (Arango et al. 2014). As a matter of fact, not all foreigners seem to have managed to renew their temporary residence permit since 2008.<sup>8</sup> The evolution of second renewals since 2009, as indicated by figure 3, suggests that the number of foreigners who renewed their residence permits for the second time in 2012 is lower than the number of foreigners who renewed them for the first time between 2009 and 2010.

**Figure 3: Evolution of residence permits renewals (total)**

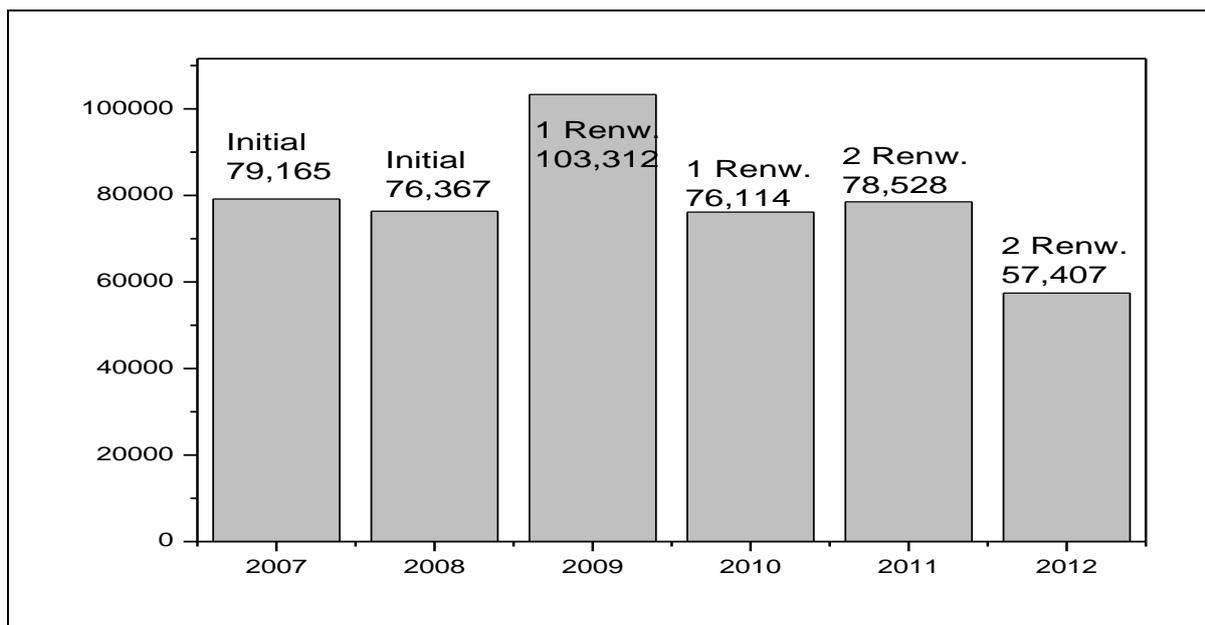


Source: Secretary of State of Immigration and Emigration.

Such an evolution of the residence permits may have several (and not necessarily exclusive) explanations. The first one may be clearly related to the lack of sustenance means or the employment contract required to renewing initial residence permits. Migrants in such a situation may have been pushed into irregularity. In this respect, it is interesting to observe that those immigrant communities mostly hit by unemployment (Pajares 2009), such as Moroccans or Pakistani, also seem to be the most affected by the decrease in renewals (figure 4).

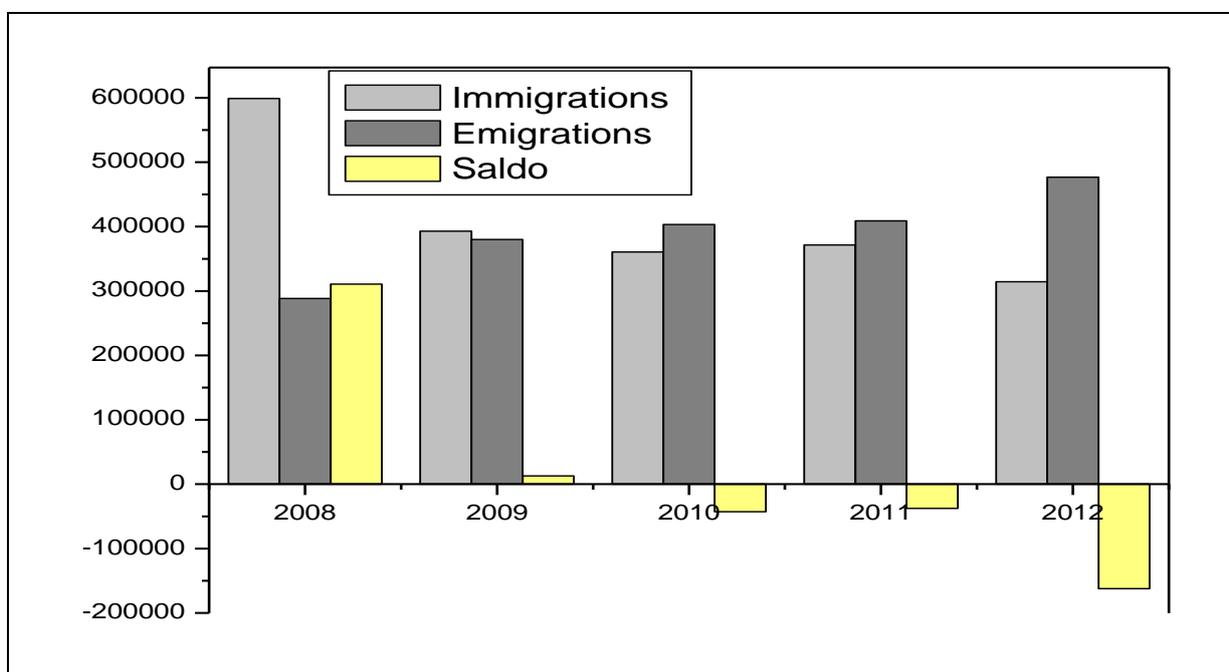
**Figure 4: Evolution of residence permits renewals of Moroccan citizens**

<sup>8</sup> Recall that foreign residents have to renew their residence permit twice before obtaining long-term residence status.



Some of the “lost” permits may also concern immigrants who left Spain in search of a better life and better working opportunities in other countries. As a matter of fact, Spain currently has a negative migration rate, since the number of people leaving Spain is higher than the number of people entering it (figure 5).<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 5: Net Migration to Spain**



Source: INE

<sup>9</sup> Despite this, a precise assessment of this new migration phenomenon remains particularly difficult. Researchers often point out that a precise assessment of how many immigrants have left the country since the crisis began is difficult because migrants rarely notify the municipal registry that they are leaving Spain (Gonzalez-Ferrer 2014).

Even though return and emigration are a phenomenon difficult to measure, scholars agree on the fact that a good deal of immigrants may have returned to their countries of origin and, consequently, have not renewed their residence permit. According to the most recent data, about 350,000 immigrants have been deleted from the lists of the municipal registry in 2012 (Parella, Petroff 2014). Certainly, these figures may not only necessarily correspond to returning migrants but be also the product of a statistical depuration. However, they also seem to provide certain empirical evidence for the fact that immigrant return and emigration are a Spanish reality. They also show that, once again, spontaneous return has been more successful than voluntary return programs, which only involved 9,000 immigrants, most of them Latin Americans, since their introduction (Parella, Petroff 2014).

Finally, the “lost” permits, however, may also be related to the increasing number of naturalisations processed over the last ten years. Naturalisations based on the two-year requirement currently represent 75 per cent of the total number of naturalisations and almost exclusively concern Latin American citizens, that in 2012 represented 76 per cent of the naturalised immigrants while Africans, the oldest immigrant community in Spain, only represent 17 per cent. As can be seen in table 2, the number of naturalisations rose from 21,810 in 2002 and to 115,557 in 2012 with a peak of 123.721 in 2010. The same data also show that naturalisation figures are much higher for Latin Americans than for Africans, particularly Moroccans, owing to the discriminatory character of the Spanish naturalisation procedure (Finotelli, La Barbera 2013).

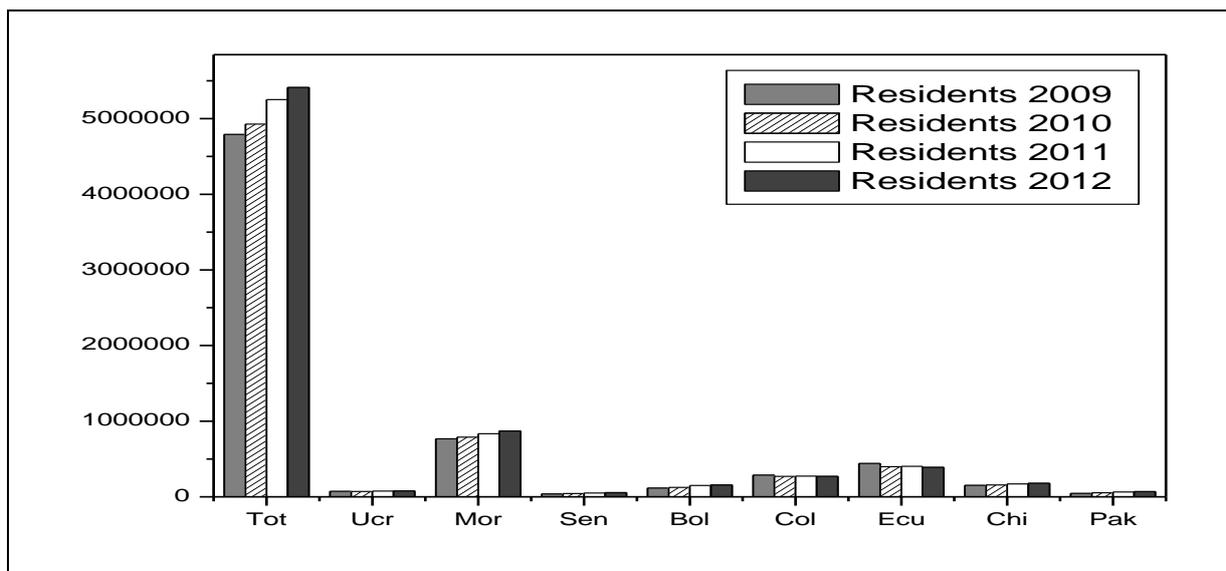
**Table 2: Naturalizations in Spain**

|                      | 2002   | 2003   | 2004   | 2005   | 2006   | 2007   | 2008   | 2009   | 2010    | 2011    | 2012    |
|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Total</b>         | 21.810 | 26.556 | 38.375 | 42.829 | 62.339 | 71.810 | 84.170 | 79.578 | 123.721 | 114.599 | 115.557 |
| <b>UE</b>            | 1.255  | 1.306  | 1.163  | 911    | 795    | 1.157  | 1.424  | 1.062  | 1.062   | 2.086   | 1.052   |
| <b>Rest Europe</b>   | 278    | 267    | 695    | 696    | 864    | 639    | 756    | 648    | 667     | 945     |         |
| <b>Africa</b>        | 4.325  | 8.522  | 9.991  | 7.346  | 7.618  | 7.618  | 11.201 | 8.816  | 13.828  | 18.333  | 20.352  |
| <b>South America</b> | 13.738 | 14.298 | 24.264 | 31.727 | 50.821 | 57.334 | 68.206 | 67.243 | 103.971 | 89.698  | 87.951  |
| <b>North America</b> | 145    | 145    | 113    | 103    | 125    | 132    | 149    | 77     | 1.022   | 960     | 981     |
| <b>Asia</b>          | 2.014  | 1.994  | 2.061  | 2.010  | 2.078  | 2.202  | 2.398  | 1.692  | 2.294   | 2.536   | 3.044   |
| <b>Oceania</b>       | 5      | 5      | 7      | 7      | 15     | 9      | 16     | 15     | 8       | 9       | 19      |
| <b>Other</b>         | 50     | 51     | 72     | 27     | 23     | 25     | 20     | 25     | 27      | 32      | 10      |

Source: Secretary of State of Immigration and Emigration

The possible effect of naturalizations on status stabilization can be observed in figure 6, where Ecuadorians and Colombians are the only nationalities that experienced a decrease in residence permits since 2012 probably because of their new status as Spanish citizens (figure 6). In addition, the number of these ‘new’ citizens is bound to grow in the next couple of years. In addition, the Spanish government decided to expedite naturalization procedures by starting the so-called “Nationality Plan” to reduce the backlog of 400,000 naturalization applications in Spain in the last three years. (Arango et al. 2014). In a relatively short period of time, successful applicants will have access to full social and political rights despite the crisis and the “hibernation” of integration policies.

**Figure 6: Evolution of foreign residents according to the nationality**



Source: Secretary of State of Immigration and Emigration

Progressive residence stabilisation and family reunion together with a widespread benign attitude of Spanish society seem to have favoured a relatively successful integration progress of second generations, whose members feel more and more integrated into Spanish society (Aparicio, Tornos 2014). Finally, certain resilience in accepting restrictions for irregular migrants should be mentioned. Some Autonomous Communities such as Catalonia, Basque Country, Andalusia and Asturias have decided to keep providing health assistance to this category of migrants after a series of court decisions against this measure.

All in all, the integration of foreign population in Spanish society does not seem to have been affected by the crisis in terms of residence stabilisation and the therewith related access to social rights. This may also explain the positive attitude of second generations of foreigners in comparison to other European countries. However, data about the economic and employment situation of immigrants do not allow to cry victory at this stage. On the one hand, the available economic data on the evolution of the crisis seem to suggest that the worse is over. In terms of employment, scholars describe 2013 as a 'year of transition' with the slowdown of the strong decrease in foreign employment and a slight contraction of underemployment, which may point to a slow but possible improvement of the labour market for immigrants (Oliver 2014). On the other, it is out of question that the current unemployment rate of about 30 per cent may seriously affect structural integration in the long term. Actually, it is currently immigrant poverty rather than immigrant unemployment the major source of scholarly concern. After the crisis, the number of people at risk of poverty in Spain has increased to 12.5 millions, which corresponds to 21 per cent of the overall population. As recent analyses show, the situation is particularly worrying in the case of immigrants, whose income is 40 per cent lower than the income of natives, which also means that most of them serious difficulties to face little expenses for daily survival (Mahia, de Arce 2014: 159). Specific characteristics of the immigrant population may enhance the effects of poverty since immigrants are more vulnerable on the labour market, have often limited access to the welfare benefits and can seldom rely on the support of family members as it is the case of natives (ibidem). Furthermore, a recent report by Human Rights Watch on the crisis and housing in Spain indicates that immigrants represent 1/3 of those that experienced eviction since the beginning of the crisis (HRW 2014). All in all, the

worrisome dimension of poverty among immigrants may not only imply status precariousness for those that still have to renew their residence permits but also precariousness for those migrants that already have a stable residence status. In this respect, immigrant marginalization in Spain would not only apply to the limited number of irregular migrants, as it was in the past, but could also become a reality for regular and stable foreign residents.

## Final remarks

After a period of low-intensity immigration growth, Spain turned into an attractive immigration country. Larger and more intensive flows at the beginning of the twenty-first century required more efficient regulations to be placed at the top of the political agenda. The beginning of the new century was thus characterised not only by a spectacular increase in flows, but also by a major change in the Spanish migration regime. In general, the new Spanish model has been welcomed as a successful step towards more efficient immigration regulations. Spain was an exceptional case in Europe not only because of its prodigious increase in immigration, but also because of the country's capacity to 'absorb' its newcomers (Arango 2011). Measures such as the Catalogue or bilateral labour migrant programs have been praised by Spanish and foreign policy-makers and academics, who highlight Spain's recent progress in light of the rigid nature of past regulation frames.

The economic crisis, however, put an end to the Spain's prodigious decade. As was seen, the government reacted to the economic crisis with a restrictive policy turn, considerably restricting access to Spanish territory by labour migrants. Restrictions also concerned integration policies for migrants, for whom there currently are fewer political instruments and resources available. This notwithstanding, figures show a constant growth of long-term residents and naturalized foreigners as well as moderate a moderate decrease of renewals. In addition, the Spanish state still implements individual regularisation mechanisms while courts' sentences have contributed to strengthen civil and political resistance towards the exclusion of irregular migrants from the health care sector. Such an evolution highlights once again the relevance of the daily practice of bureaucracies and nation states' embedded liberalism in supporting integration processes in times of crisis and restrictiveness.

In view of this, it could be argued that the post-crisis pattern followed by Spain shows interesting commonalities with the situation of 'old' immigration countries after the 'oil crisis' of 1973. As for other 'old' immigration countries, Spanish government promoted return and restricted entry avenues for work purposes. This notwithstanding, the crisis has weakened but not impaired the family reunion channel and has not stopped the process of residence stabilisation and therewith related access to rights. Spain, like 'old' immigration countries in the past decades is experiencing how former temporary labour migrants are becoming permanent residents.

Nonetheless, the Spanish situation also shows important differences to the past experience of 'old' immigration countries. The current intention to dismantle the already weak Spanish welfare state may impair its capacity to protect vulnerable citizens such as migrants. As was seen, poverty is an increasingly widespread phenomenon among the immigrant population which may contribute to increase vulnerability and precariousness in the long term. In this respect it is not the

economic crisis itself, but rather the consequences of increasing poverty that might impair immigrant integration in the long term.

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