



# **Civic Participation and Voting Rights of Immigrants: The Case of Catalonia.**

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# **POLITIS – a European research project**

## **Project information**

Populations of immigrant origin are growing and changing in Europe. POLITIS explores the potential of immigrants for the development of a civically active European society, starting with foreign students' perceptions of Europe and focusing on sustained social and political activities of immigrants. POLITIS is the short title for the research project 'Building Europe with New Citizens? An Inquiry into the Civic Participation of Naturalised Citizens and Foreign Residents in 25 Countries.'

The study is divided into 3 parts:

- Part I: A comparative literature review on immigrant civic participation in 25 member states
- Part II: A comparative analysis of foreign students' perceptions of Europe, exploring the potential of their ideas about Europe with the help of essays and focus group discussions
- Part III: A comparative analysis of more than 150 qualitative interviews with civic activists of immigrant origin in the EU to identify favourable and unfavourable biographical and national conditions for active participation

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## **Foreword**

The author is a PhD candidate at the Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona. This paper is based on documental sources as well as personal interviews with academics, politicians and representatives of immigrant associations<sup>1</sup>.

The author has participated as an interviewer in the POLITIS project, conducting, translating and transcribing three interviews with civically active immigrants in Portugal. He took part in the two POLITIS summer school, receiving training and contributing to the research process during discussions.

The POLITIS team welcomes his contribution in the POLITIS working paper series as his research on Catalonia becomes available for discussion in the POLITIS-network and the broader research community. The project's policy includes project-related contributions by all project partners and encouraging the discussion of results that are preliminary or limited in scope.

Anna Triandafyllidou, April 2007

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for the comments and the material provided by Dr. Ricard Zapata-Barrero and the time and patience of Mr. Javier García Bonomi, president of the Federation of Latin American Associations (FEDELATINA).

## **Abstract**

Immigration in Spain is a new reality to which the society as well as the public institutions must react, sometimes intuitively, sometimes reactively, but rarely proactively. In addition to the newness of the phenomenon, we have the particular geographical and political composition of Spain, which makes it a *country of nations* with different autonomous communities claiming their own national identity, apart from the Spanish state. This paper seeks to clarify the current situation of immigrants in Catalonia, one of the most prosperous and politically relevant regions of Spain. It intends to establish the linkage between national identity, citizenship, nationality and immigrant civic participation, by considering the right to vote as one of the most basic goals of this participation. The paper also notes that the nationalist left seeks to establish a bond with the immigrant community of belonging to a *national minority*. Finally, it analyses the local authorities' position and measures toward immigrants and the immediate challenges that all parties – i.e. society, government and immigrants – are to face in the next years.

**Key Concepts:** civic participation, voting rights, immigrants, Catalonia

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## 1. Introduction

After the United States, Spain receives the greatest immigrant flow in the world.<sup>2</sup> This new and unexpected situation has stretched the capacities of governmental and non-governmental institutions to their limits. A new scenario is taking shape in Spain and most actors have been reactive instead of proactive. Only in recent years can we see a change in the approach towards analysis of the immigration phenomenon. González-Enríquez<sup>3</sup> refers to the immigrants' needs to cover essentials such as housing, food and health. Now, these basic needs have been covered and attention is refocusing on community/societal issues. We now see not only ethnic/nationality related associations but also trans-cultural associations that promote migrant participation in general or that serve a specific sector of the immigrant population (e.g. homosexuals) regardless of their country of origin.

The case of Catalonia is particularly worth analysing for several reasons. Catalonia is one of the regions<sup>4</sup> that most contributes to Spain's GDP. It also absorbs most of the immigrants and has developed associations that are unique in the country. Catalan nationalism may act as a bonding element for these new *citizens* and help them integrate faster into the host society. Furthermore, there have been some concrete efforts from both sides; the immigrants' associations and the authorities to deepen the degree of involvement of immigrants into society. One of the most important forms of involvement is the right to vote; if not at a national level, at least at a regional one. Spain's central government has signed a new agreement known as *Estatut* that provides the Catalan government, *La Generalitat*, with competencies in matters of immigration such as the co-participation in setting *quotas* for immigrant labour. Finally, Catalonia has traditionally had a vanguard position towards the rest of Spain, so it may serve as a sort of *social laboratory* for projects that might be later implemented in other parts of Spain or even other regions in Europe.

In the present paper, we first explain the particular character of Spain that makes it a country of nations, each one with its own history, culture, identity and in some cases its own language. These distinct languages may constitute a double-edged sword: On one side, it may act as a bonding element for people coming from other part of Spain or from other countries; on the other side, the language may serve as a deterrent to the integration of newcomers and may foster fears of losing the *national identity*. In this paper, we then analyse briefly the main trends in immigration movements in Catalonia, as well as who and where immigrants settle and what they do for a living. Then we proceed with the particular issue of civic participation: How does it present itself? What patterns, if any can be identified? What is the official position or response to this issue? Later, we analyse the governmental actions to respond to the phenomenon of immigration. And, finally, we analyse two issues we consider fundamental: nationalism and citizenship. This is particularly interesting here since it is normally taken for granted that they always come together; however, this is not the case of Catalonia, where we have an intense, non-discriminatory, leftwing nationalism, and a citizenship that provides rights (such as voting)

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<sup>2</sup> El Universal on Line. *Ocupa España segundo lugar en recepción de inmigrantes*. [http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/vi\\_413715.html](http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/vi_413715.html) [retrieved April 2, 2007]

<sup>3</sup> Carmen Gonzalez Enriquez. 'Spain'. In A. Triandafyllidou and R. Gropas (eds.) *European Immigration: A Sourcebook*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007 in press

<sup>4</sup> Spain is divided into 17 'Autonomous Communities' (*Comunidades Autonomas*). In the next section, we will explain this in detail.

whose administration is reserved to the Spanish state. We analyse how this relates to the issue of voting and what is to be expected in the years to come.

## 2. Spain: A Country of Nations

The territorial status in Spain might seem complicated and contradictory; at first impression, words such as nation, nationalism, citizenship, country and state can and are used in numerous ways, so most people accept the existence of a Catalan Country or the formal name of the Basque region is Basque Country (*País Vasco*)<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, with nationalism, if a Castilian claims to be a nationalist, the meaning is wholly different then if a Catalan makes the same claim.

This problem is far from new and can be traced to the Catholic King or even farther to the last King of Catalonia, *Pere el Cerimoniòs*. Spain was a composition of different kingdoms united by war, marriage or alliances. Catalonia was traditionally segregated from the rest of Spain, was not allowed to take part in the commerce with the *New World* and, even physically, Barcelona was forced to remain constrained within a *defensive wall* whose main purpose was not to protect the city but to prevent an expansion that could endanger the position of other important ports such as Seville and Cadiz.<sup>6</sup>

When Franco came to power, he considered these divisions a source of weakness and political instability to his regime and to Spain<sup>7</sup>. Franco banned the use of the local languages such as Basque, Galician and Catalan, and deprived the communities of any autonomy. Everything was directed from Madrid and the communities were treated as *provinces*. The famous slogan *España: Una, Grande y Libre* (Spain: One, Great and Free) summarized the ideology of that time.<sup>8</sup> As with any dictatorial regime, there was a lack of freedom in all aspects of life but Catalans and Basques were among the most flagrant *victims* of the Franco regime, maybe in part due to these two provinces loyalty to the republican government until the very end of the civil war.

After Franco's death, the territorial issue proved to be one of the most delicate aspects of the transition, as Aguilar Fernández puts it:

Todo aquello relacionado con la estructura territorial del Estado fue larga e intensamente debatido. Se trataba del asunto que más polémica iba a suscitar, del mayor problema con el que habría de enfrentarse la transición, e incluso la democracia una vez consolidada. (Everything related with the territorial structure of the state was long and intensely debated. It was the most polemical issue, the biggest problem the transition would face and even democracy, once consolidated.)<sup>9</sup>

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5 During Franco's regime, *Provincias Vascongadas* was used instead of Basque Country.

6 An interesting discussion about how the walls limited the expansionist ambitions of the city can be found at: Antonio Brusi Ferrer 'Barcelona. 1854-1856: Chronicles Of Barcelona's Enlargement: Reflections' can be found at <http://www-cpsv.upc.es/ace/Articles-n1/2-Mangiagalli-ART2.pdf> [retrieved on January 8, 2007].

7 One must not forget that in 1934, autonomous president Lluís Companys declared the Catalan Republican State. This and other actions put him as a direct enemy of the Franco regime and he was shot in Barcelona in 1940.

8 Curiously the slogan was not an invention of Franco. It appeared four years before the civil war in a fascist magazine *Libertad* (Freedom).

9 Paloma Aguilar Fernández. *Memoria y olvido de la Guerra Civil española* España: Alianza, 1996. p.252.

In effect, one of the most complicated aspects when drafting the post-Franco constitution was the redefinition of the state; some wanted to return to the pre-war *Estatutos* but there was still a large conservative segment of the public that considered these *Estatutos* as the first step to dismembering the Spanish state. Another important issue was the determination of nationalities and identities; whereas for Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia this was more or less clear, at least in terms of a common language and a common cultural heritage, for some other provinces such as Andalusia and Valencia the distinction was not clear.<sup>10</sup> Also, the degree of autonomy varied greatly. The Basques were more prone to an almost full independency, most of them by democratic means but with a visible minority constituted by E.T.A.; while the Catalans wanted to remain within the Spanish state but with sovereignty over their own issues. There was no intention of making differences between the different communities; so by 1978 most of the provinces had a sort of *pre-estatuto*.<sup>11</sup>

Article. 137 of the Spanish constitution states that:

The State is organised territorially into municipalities, provinces and the self-governing communities that may be constituted. All these bodies shall enjoy self-government for the management of their respective interests.<sup>12</sup>

However, the Constitution fell into a series of contradictions. On one side, proclaiming the indivisibility of the Spanish state; but at the same time, acknowledging the existence of different nationalities. Nowhere can one find an exact definition of nationality or which communities are considered *nations*.<sup>13</sup> These contradictions and ambiguities were, at least in part, deliberately left in; the idea was that with time, the different communities would decide how far (or close) they wanted to be to the central authority in Madrid. This has been done by means of the different *Estatutos* that the communities have negotiated with the central government in Madrid. Now, Spain is divided into 17 *Autonomous Communities*; some of them as tiny as the African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, or mere administrative ones such as Madrid or seriously committed to independence and preservation of the national identity such as Catalonia and Basque Country.

The particular case of Catalonia is of special importance not only because it is one of the richest and more industrialized regions of Spain, but because it exercises an important influence in the decisions taken in Madrid for the whole Spanish state.<sup>14</sup> Recently a new *Estatuto* was approved to great joy of some sectors of the Catalan population but also to great sorrow of others that wanted even greater autonomy from the central government<sup>15</sup>. This new *Estatuto* redefined the relations of the Catalan government with the central authorities in Madrid.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Alfredo Alvar Ezquerro *Historia política de España, 1939 – 2000*. España: Istmo, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Cf, Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Cortes Generales del Estado. *Constitution* October the 31st 1978. Can be viewed at: [http://www.congreso.es/ingles/funciones/constitucion/const\\_espa\\_texto.pdf](http://www.congreso.es/ingles/funciones/constitucion/const_espa_texto.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Obviously this concept was first addressed to Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia but other communities such as Andalusia, Valencia and Aragon have also shown interest in some kind of recognition of their national condition.

<sup>14</sup> The Catalan Center-Right formation: CiU has had a pivotal role in the formation of coalition governments, either under the socialists of PSOE or the conservatives of PP.

<sup>15</sup> For the nationalists of ERC the *Statut* lacked the fundamental principles to give Catalonia the status of a free nation. For ERC's detailed reasons of rejecting the *statut* see: <http://www.esquerra.cat/aratocano/?seccio=raons> (Catalan only) [retrieved on November 11, 2006]

### 3. Catalonia: A Country within a Country

In contrast to the rest of Spain, immigration is not a new phenomenon in Catalonia. Recolons<sup>16</sup> points out that Catalonia has traditionally had three sources of immigration; first from the rural areas of the country, second from the *extra Catalan* Spanish immigration and a third immigration from outside Catalonia that now focuses our attention. In the same way, Solé<sup>17</sup> agrees that Catalonia has long experience in receiving people from outside, but what has changed is the origin. In the 50s, 60s and 70s, the immigrants came from other parts of Spain and from the 80s until now immigration is coming from extra-communitarian, less developed countries

When the new *Estatut*<sup>18</sup> was approved by the president of Catalonia, Mr. Pasqual Maragall declared, 'Thanks to the new *Estatut* the [Spanish] state plays only a residual role.'<sup>19</sup> Maybe the fact that the town where he made this statement had only 29 inhabitants encouraged Mr. Maragall to make such a statement. The truth is that the central government in Madrid still has a lot to say in immigration and immigrant's related topics but we must admit that the autonomous government is having a greater role in recent times, not only on the *formal* (legal) side, but also on the *informal* (socio-cultural) side.

Catalonia has been traditionally separated from the rest of Spain, the government model is similar to the German *Länder*, and as a result some of the issues concerning immigration are regulated by the local government (*Generalitat*). Moreover, with the new *Estatut* the local government will have even more autonomy in relation to social and political issues.

According to the new *Estatut*, the local government has co-decision faculties in subjects related to immigration issues within Catalonia that includes regulation and promotion of immigrants' integration in social life; protection of immigrants' human rights; regulation of residence permits and, together with the Spanish state, determination of the quotas of foreign workers in Catalonia.<sup>20</sup>

### 4. Main Trends of Immigration in Catalonia

As noted previously, Catalonia is to be considered a nation, therefore *sensu stricto* immigrants are all residents in Catalonia born outside Catalonia's political boundaries. Recolon<sup>21</sup> states that 32.2 per cent of the population meet this criterion, from them 25.9 per cent were born in other territories of Spain and the remaining 6.3 per cent were from other countries. Solé<sup>22</sup> points out that from this 34.6 per cent were not EU citizens and almost half (45 per cent) are women. Meanwhile, African women tend to find jobs in the agriculture harvesting areas, Latin American

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lluís Recolons i Arquer 'Enquadrament demogràfic de la immigració a Catalunya'. *Qüestions de Vida Cristiana*, Barcelona, 211:7-46, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Carlota Solé (Coord.). 'Sociologia de l'immigració' Internal paper prepared for the coloquia about immigration organized by the 'Associació Catalana de Sociologia' October 26, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> The Catalan form of *Estatuto* is *Estatut*.

<sup>19</sup> Maragall: 'El Estado tiene un carácter meramente residual gracias al nuevo Estatut' 20 Minutos. August 10, 2006. [www.20minutos.es](http://www.20minutos.es) [retrieved on October 10, 2006]

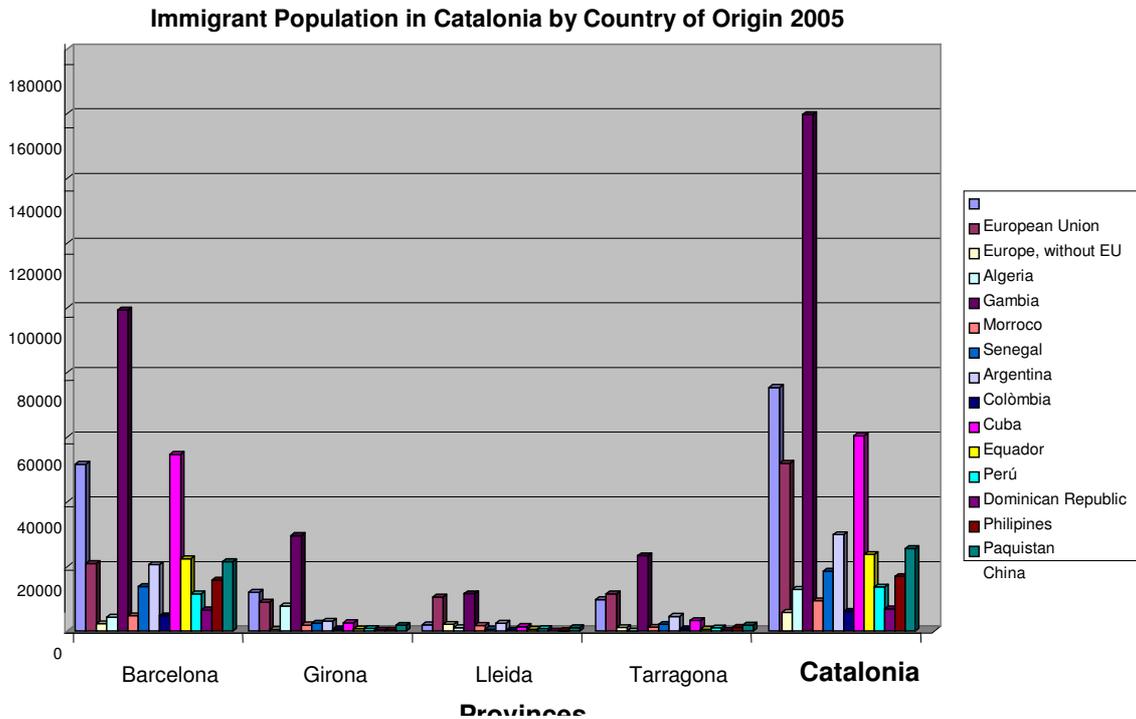
<sup>20</sup> The full text of the *Estatut*, including an English language version can be viewed at <http://www.gencat.net/generalitat/eng/estatut/index.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Op. cit. Recolon

<sup>22</sup> Op cit. Solé

women are found more in domestic jobs such as maids, nannies, etc. This may also relate to the linguistic, cultural issues; Spanish women share more cultural practices with Latin American women than Africans, especially concerning housekeeping and childcare.

**Figure 1**



Source: author’s elaboration with data of the ‘*Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales*’

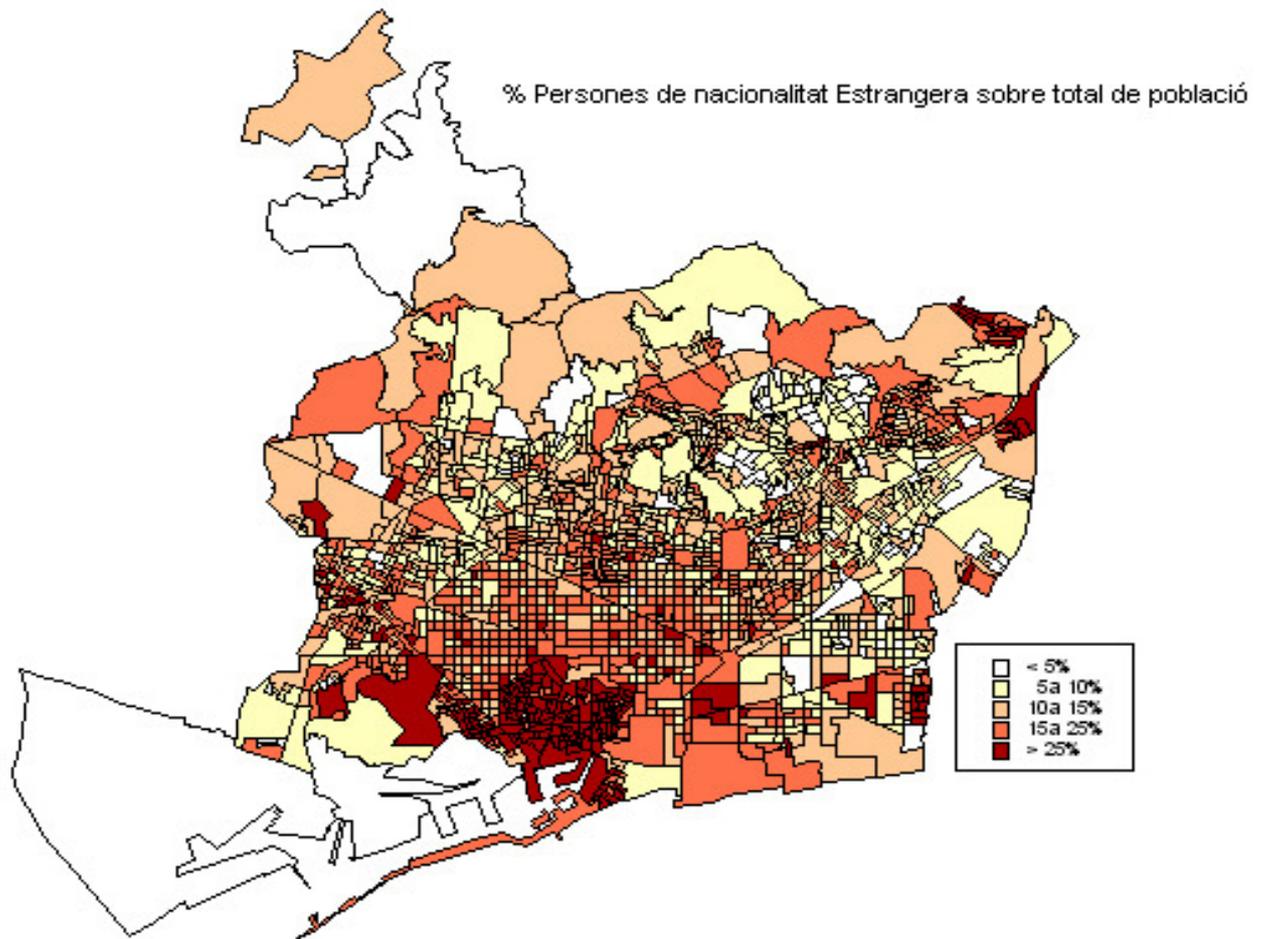
As we may see from Figure 1, characteristics that clearly appear as patterns of immigration include the concentration of most immigrants in the Barcelona province. Some reasons for this could include: Firstly, Barcelona City is Spain’s second largest city and may be an easier place for immigrants to find jobs and accommodation than in smaller cities. Secondly, most of the industry is concentrated in the Barcelona province and is a major source of employment. Thirdly, the service industry is also concentrated in Barcelona due to the tourist appeal of the city.

Another reason could be found in the language, especially among Latin Americans. In contrast with Barcelona, the other provinces of Catalonia and especially small towns and villages tend to favour or even encourage the use of Catalan which may pose an additional burden to immigrants, particularly those who want to work in the service sector.

Another interesting aspect is that, at least in Barcelona, immigrants locate in great numbers in the central part of the city in contrast to the French *banlieues*. If we look at the map in Figure 2, we

may see that there are areas with high levels of immigrant population (the ones marked with a darker colour).

**Figure 2: Distribution of Immigrants in Barcelona's Metropolitan Area**



Source: Departament d'Estadística, Ajuntament de Barcelona. *Informes Estadistics, la població estrangera a Barcelona Gener 2006.*

With regard to the country of origin, Moroccans are the most numerous immigrants with over 163,000 persons, followed by Ecuadorians with 61,000 and Columbians with over 30,000 nationals (see Fig. 3). However in relative terms, the Ecuadorian community represents the largest growth followed by Peruvians and Moroccans<sup>23</sup>. As previously noted, most of the immigrants prefer to settle in Barcelona or its surroundings over other provinces. This tendency is confirmed in the case of South Americans; 80 per cent of the migrants live in Barcelona, while for Moroccans the figure falls to 60 per cent. In part, this can be explained by South Americans favouring jobs in the service industry, while Moroccans find better opportunities in agriculture or construction.

**Figure 3**

Ranking of nationalities in Catalonia		
Arrivals in 2006		
1	Ecuador	31,423
2	Peru	16,115
3	Morocco	15,522
4	Colombia	14,616
6	Italy	14,447
7	Pakistan	14,251
8	Argentina	13,265
9	China	11,632
10	Bolivia	11,495
11	France	9,061
12	Dominican Republic	7,697

Source: Departament d'Estadística, Ajuntament de Barcelona. 'Informes Estadístics, la població estrangera a Barcelona Gener 2006'

Finally, as previously noted, Catalonia has traditionally been an immigrant destination, first from different areas of Spain and now from other countries. It is not unrealistic to predict that immigration will continue with South Americans providing most immigrants.

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<sup>23</sup> In ten years Ecuadorians went from 202 arrivals in 1996 to 31,223 in 2006.

## 5. Civic Participation in Catalonia

In regards to civic participation, we use Vogel and Triandafyllidou's definition:

As we speak of 'active' civic participation, active implies a level of activity that goes substantially beyond voting. In our study, we are not interested in active citizenship as such, but in the persons who participate. Starting from the broad definition of active citizenship, we define actively participating immigrants (immigrant activists) for the purpose of our comparative study as people that give a voice to societal concerns, e.g. by engaging in political parties, local committees, parent associations or migrant lobby organizations; and/or organize solidarity and self-help, e.g. by taking leadership functions in religious associations, ethnic associations or informal self-help networks.<sup>24</sup>

We may first divide civic participation of immigrants in Catalonia into two basic areas:

- Political
- Non-political

### 5.1. Political Participation

By political participation, we mean immigrants that are either actively participating in political parties, labour unions or NGOs that advocate general political goals and immigrant voting rights. Some nationalized immigrants have responsibility either in political party administrations or serve in elected positions. For example, Pedro Zerolo, born in Venezuela, holds a seat in Madrid's City Council and is a member of the Spanish Workers' Socialist Party (PSOE); Esquerra Republicana has one deputy of Maghrebian origin in the local parliament and even the conservative, right wing *Partido Popular* (Popular Party) has foreigners among its ranks.

Some NGOs have political objectives, though not exclusive of other social or humanitarian goals. The most important of these NGOs is the *Federación de Entidades Latinoamericanas: FEDELATINA* (Federation of Latin American Entities) whose president Mr. Javier García Bonomi stated in a personal interview, 'Right now our most important goal is to gain immigrant voting rights.'<sup>25</sup> FEDELATINA has even organized *parallel* elections, which of course have no legal value but that still help to reinforce its point of immigrant interest in voting. Other associations include *S.O.S. Racisme*, an NGO that stands for equal rights and avoidance of discrimination. Among their proposals are the recognition of the immigrant vote and the accessibility to residence permits for all immigrants.<sup>26</sup> Finally, unions, including the two most important U.G.T. and CCOO, have clearly supported political parties that acknowledge equality of opportunities for immigrants and have immigrants in their leadership.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Dita Vogel & Anna Triandafyllidou. 'Civic activation of immigrants - An introduction to conceptual and theoretical issues' University of Oldenburg. POLITIS-Working paper No.1 [retrieved January 6, 2007] [www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe/webpublications](http://www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe/webpublications)

<sup>25</sup> May 2006 author's interview with Mr. Javier García Bonomi, president of FEDELATINA.

<sup>26</sup> On January 2007, SOS Racisme made a formal request to the newly elected Catalan government asking for more opportunities for immigrants and increased consideration of anti-racist politics. The document can be viewed (Catalan only) at <http://www.sosracisme.org/reflexions/pdfs/propostesgovern2006.pdf> [retrieved January 20th 2007]

<sup>27</sup> For a detailed view of the unions' immigrant members see [www.ugt.es](http://www.ugt.es) and [www.ccoo.es](http://www.ccoo.es).

## 5.2. Non-political Associations

Non-political associations are organizations pursuing goals that deal more with cultural affairs or problems that affect a particular community or ethnic group. One particular case is the *Asociación Catalana de Inmigrantes Homosexuales* (Catalan Association of Homosexual Immigrants). This association seeks to inform homosexual immigrants about their rights, provide information about medical assistance for HIV-infected immigrants and also provide psychological support to those immigrants that come from very homophobic environments.

Another type of association, *Casals* (Fraternities) of different nationalities, focus primarily on the dissemination of their national culture, the preservation of their traditions among the diaspora and information about legal procedures upon arrival.

Nevertheless, we could not establish a sharp division between political and non-political associations, since most, if not all, look for some kind of support from the authorities or changes in legislation, which of course implies a political content.

Finally, we may say that the Catalan tradition of associations (*Associacionism*) rooted in the historical exclusion of Catalonia in the decision-making processes in Madrid has also helped foster immigrant participation.<sup>28</sup>

## 6. Active Participation of Immigrants in Catalonia

Catalonians have a strong sense of cultural identity and unity. According to Zapata-Barrero<sup>29</sup>, the two elements that identify and distinguish the Catalan nationality – language and history – are both open to immigrants, regardless of their place of birth. For Zapata-Barrero, the main problem with migrant integration into Catalan society is that it has been done according to Spanish models and does not take into consideration the peculiarities of *Catalan reality*. Zapata-Barrero argues that Catalans are themselves an ethnic minority<sup>30</sup> and as such they place high value to immigration. In regards this Zapata-Barrero, says:

En aquest marc, parlar d'immigració obliga a tenir un discurs sobre els drets i la no-discriminació, sobre els principis democràtics i ètics, com els que tenen altres Estats. Però, a més, en el cas Català, obliga especialment a tenir un discurs sobre el llenguatge d'identitat, a disposar d'eines pròpies, d'uns instruments polítics i administratius coherents amb l'autogovern, i a atendre una dimensió de gestió de política lingüística que s'ha de valorar. Aquestes són les premisses sobre les quals s'han de construir els arguments referents al vincle entre immigració i autogovern a Catalunya. (Zapata- Barrero 2006: 74)

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<sup>28</sup> For a historical view of Catalonia's *Associacionism* see: Pere. Solà I Gussinyer, 'Història de l'associacionisme català contemporani: Barcelona i les comarques de la seva demarcació'. *Departament de Justícia de la Generalitat de Catalunya*. Planeta, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Ricard Zapata – Barrero (2006). 'Immigració i Govern en Nacions Minoritàries: Flandes, el Quebec i Catalunya en perspectiva'. *Quaderns de Pensament Spain*. Fundació Trias Fargas March 2006 Can be viewed at: [http://www.fdtriasfargas.cat/download.php?sPath=\\_doc/quaderns/8378417\\_QUADERNS\\_21\\_web.pdf](http://www.fdtriasfargas.cat/download.php?sPath=_doc/quaderns/8378417_QUADERNS_21_web.pdf) [retrieved, September 26, 2006]

<sup>30</sup> This could be highly questionable according to ethnic parameters since there are no particular and unique traces in Catalan society that could make them appear as an ethnicity. Neither is the concept of a community in the sense of *Gemeinschaft*. What is more, it could be conceived as an 'imagined community' as defined by Benedict Anderson; they are different to the rest of Spain only in the sense they think they are.

(In this respect, to speak about immigration makes one have a discourse about the [Human] rights and non-discrimination, about democratic and ethic principles, the way other states have. Nevertheless, in the Catalan case, we must have a discourse about the language of identity, to make use of own tools, to use political and administrative instruments that are coherent with self-government and to achieve a dimension of language management policy that has to be treasured. These are the premises under which the arguments regarding the link between immigration and self-government in Catalonia must be made.)

From the previous statement, one can infer that civic participation of immigrants in Catalonia must fulfil two conditions in order to be taken seriously by the public and the media and also to qualify for any kind of governmental support. The language and the cultural context of Catalonia must be present in the association's discourse, at least a formal way. According to Zapata-Barrero<sup>31</sup>: 'Immigrant *associacionism* has been treated in Catalonia in terms of Spanish national standards, without taking into account the distinctive national cultural reality in Catalonia.' This idea of a *Catalan way of associacionism* sometimes produces curious results; most of the Latin American immigrant associations have the word *Catalan* in their title (e.g. *Federación Catalana de Entidades Latinoamericanas* – Catalan Federation of Latin American Entities; *Casal Argentí a Barcelona* – Argentinian House in Barcelona; in some cases, the name is written originally in Catalan *Asociación Catalana de Inmigrantes Homosexuales* – Catalan association of Immigrant Homosexuals) The irony becomes evident when we realize that in South American immigrant associations the use of Catalan language is almost inexistent.<sup>32</sup>

Despite this, we agree with Zapata-Barrero<sup>33</sup> that immigrant associations may lose their discursive independence i.e. their autonomous position on political and social issues, in two ways; either through grants of the administrations or through political parties. The first one may explain this insistence on the use of Catalan in the association's name; Catalan is, after all, the official language for the region. The second issue has a lot more implications and is also directly related with immigrant voting.

Although no immigrant association is formally connected with any political party or labour union, there are many informal connections. In fact, *Comisiones Obreras* (Workers' Commissions), Catalonia's most important labour union has a specific administrative unit for relations with immigrant workers.<sup>34</sup> This union is directly connected with most immigrant associations, particularly those concentrated in providing assistance to newcomers, but also has its own agenda namely, to advocate immigrants' voting rights and to promote unionisation of foreign workers.

The political parties, in a similar vein, have particular areas that deal with immigration issues. The position varies greatly from party to party; as one would expect, leftwing parties are most prone to advocate for the immigrant cause. Something quite particular of Catalonia is the fact that the most radical leftwing nationalist party, the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, ERC (Republican Left of Catalonia), is the most active in advocating voting rights to immigrants. An

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<sup>31</sup> Ricard Zapata Barrero (2006 b). 'The Space for Immigrant Associations in a Multinational Context: the Case of Catalonia'. Working paper presented at the conference: Ethnic Mobilization in the New, April 21 & 22 2006. Belgium, University of Leuven.  
<http://soc.kuleuven.be/iieb/ethnicmobilization/docs/proc-ZapataBarrero.pdf> (retrieved, September 26, 2006)

<sup>32</sup> This might not be the case for other non-Spanish speaking associations such as Moroccans, for whom either Catalan or Spanish are foreign languages.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. op cit. Zapata – Barrero (2006b)

<sup>34</sup> It has also its own website <http://www.ccoo.cat/immigracio/>

immigrant from the Maghreb, an elected representative of the ERC, is the most active in advocating immigrant voting rights.

## 7. The government of Catalonia and the Immigrants

The action of the Catalan Government (*Generalitat*) may be summarized in three *Plans*:

- *Pla Interdepartamental d'Immigració* (1993–2000) (Interdepartmental plan of Immigration 1993–2000)
- *Pla Interdepartamental d'Immigració* (2001–2004) (Interdepartmental plan of Immigration 2001–2004)
- *Pla de Ciutadania i Immigració* (2005–2008) (Plan of Citizenship and Immigration 2005–2008)

And also three governmental bodies:

- *Secretaria per a la immigració* (Secretary for Immigration)
- *Comissió Interdepartamental d'Immigració* (Interdepartmental Commission for Immigration)
- *Consell Assessor de la Immigració a Catalunya* (Advisor Board for Immigration in Catalonia)

The first two have been action plans designed to deal with the consequences of immigration; only the most recent one (*Pla de ciutadania i immigració* 2005–2008) has a more proactive character. It acknowledges some important aspects that may constitute the cornerstone for a future immigrant vote. The first aspect is the recognition of a difference between nationality, citizen and resident and that they are not to be merged into one entity. For nationality and citizen, the definitions are somehow clear; whereas for legal resident, there is a legal as well as a practical gap that needs to be clarified. The plan acknowledges the necessity for immigrants to be taken into consideration in the decision-making process that affects their everyday life. The concept of residency depends more on the immigrant's will to settle legally somewhere; by registering as a resident of a certain community, the person expresses the wish to become an active part of that community.

The second aspect the plan recognizes is the need to integrate the immigrant into the society on a bi-directional basis: Not only must the newcomer adapt to the new environment, learn the language, the customs, etc.; but also, the receiving community must be aware of the cultural differences and integrate them as a part of an enriched cultural baggage which will become part of the Catalan culture. The plan also recognizes and guarantees the universality and inviolability of human rights and the obligation of the government to protect them.

## 8. Leftwing Nationalism and Immigrants

Inclusive nationalism in Catalonia is a phenomenon worth analysing both in its ideology as well as its main advocate, the ERC political party.

As we noted previously, Catalonia considers itself as a minority nation whose only truly binding elements are language and history;<sup>35</sup> immigrants are part of their history and identity.<sup>36</sup> Even before nineteenth-century migration of Andalusian labourers into Catalonia, back to the times of the Catholic Kings, there was a continuous inflow of people. The reasons for these migrations varied greatly from wars, epidemics, economic recessions to persecutions of the *Holy Office*<sup>37</sup>. Catalonia has never been a closed inward-looking country. Because of trade restraints with Spanish colonies, Catalonia opened to its Mediterranean neighbours and gained a position as another competitor in the area. These events together with the migrations that took place in the nineteenth and early twentieth century gave Catalonian nationalism a distinctive character over traditional state-based nationalisms.

However, the first challenge is to answer the question: Who is an immigrant? As Zapata-Barrero puts it:

Fins que no es tingui, amb criteris propis, una definició d'immigrant, el debat sobre la ciutadania pot servir més per alimentar discursos retòrics que per omplir una funció política pràctica des d'una perspectiva d'autogovern.<sup>38</sup>

(Not until there is a definition, with self-criteria, about immigrants, the debate about citizenship may act more to feed rhetorical speeches than to fulfil a practical policy from a self-government perspective.)

By supporting the rights of the immigrant population, some assume that there will be a process of integration into Catalan national values, thus reinforcing Catalan identity. This may appear contradictory to the concept of ethnicity stated previously, but as Zapata-Barrero acknowledges, there is no clear definition of immigration.

In the Catalan political environment, the ERC depicts itself as the main and in some cases unique legitimate defender of the Catalan nation and its pursuit for an independent state. Though not openly separatist, the ERC presents a very radical view on Catalonia's ideal future, which centres on the language and the history.<sup>39</sup> It is precisely this party that has made civic participation of immigrants and their voting rights two of their main campaign issues. The ERC demands from the central government in Madrid full authority for the Catalan government, *The Generalitat*, on issues of immigration. The ERC policy positions are summarized in the manifesto known as *Pacte del Tinel*; this manifesto stipulates that a Catalan leftist government's goal on the immigration issue should be to provide the necessary means for the fast and

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<sup>35</sup> Territory could be the third element, though not as distinct as the other two since it spreads over four Spanish communities; Catalunya, Valencia, Aragón and Balears and two countries; Spain and France

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Zapata-Barrero 2006

<sup>37</sup> During this period, many Jews expelled from other parts of the peninsula found accommodation in Catalonia; especially in Barcelona, because of the city's traditional trade and investment activities.

<sup>38</sup> Idem, p.88

<sup>39</sup> The views and perspectives of ERC are summarized in the 'Agreement for a *Catalinista* leftwing government to the Municipality of Catalonia' (Accord per a un govern catalanista i d'esquerres a la generalitat de catalunya), Commonly known as 'Pacte del Tinel' (Tinel Pact') Can be viewed at [www.erc.cat](http://www.erc.cat)

successful integration of immigrants into Catalan society, culture and labour market.<sup>40</sup> Until now the ERC is the only party with a representative of immigrant origin in the local parliament.

## 9. Citizenship and Residence: The cornerstone for immigrant vote

We have so far analysed the issues related to the integration of immigrants, the current situation of immigration in Catalonia, and the degree of involvement of the immigrants into the societal concerns of their fellowmen and of the society in general. Deliberately, we have left aside the issue of citizenship, nationality and residence as well as the implications of each one of these concepts in the political and social context of Catalonia. As we mentioned previously, Spain is a collection of different nationalities, all integrated under the Spanish state. The relationship between nationality and citizenship is, in some cases, not as explicit as would normally be the case in other countries, a person may feel Catalan but hold a Spanish passport.<sup>41</sup> Not even the fact of being born in Spain grants an individual Spanish citizenship;<sup>42</sup> a mixture of *jus solis* and *jus sanguinis* means that the children of Spaniards born abroad are granted automatically citizenship, whereas children of foreign parents born in Spain have to fulfil a series of requirements. Also, Spain recognizes certain historical bonds and people from ex-colonies have easier access to nationality than other immigrants.

In any case, the model applied in Catalonia includes some innovative aspects. The local government has established programs targeted to newcomers to learn the language (Catalan) and also to integrate into the society as *New Catalans* regardless of their migratory status –which again is regulated by the central government’s immigration laws. Basic services such as sanitary assistance and schooling are provided free of charge to everyone. Of course, when applying for a job or registering at the social security office; a person must hold a residence permit, but even in these cases, there is a certain degree of tolerance since most people are aware of the bureaucracy’s slowness. When discussing voting rights, most immigrant associations take as a model the EU citizens and their voting rights; i.e. every citizen of an EU country is granted EU citizenship, though there is no *EU passport*, and entitled to voting rights at regional and European level. The main claim of immigrant activists is that residence and not citizenship or nationality must define the persons’ rights and duties. The main argument is that immigrants are excluded from decision-making processes that more directly affect them, e.g. electing district and local politicians or participating in district councils. If we look back at Figure 2 on page 6, we see that this might be of special relevance in some areas that are densely populated by immigrants.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya ‘Accord per a un govern catalanista i d’esquerres a la Generalitat de Catalunya’. Barcelona, Spain. 14 Dec. 2003

<sup>41</sup> There has been an attempt by the Basque government of issuing its own personal ID’s but this has been considered illegal by the central government in Madrid and the documents were declared void.

<sup>42</sup> For an analysis of the concept of citizenship in Spain see: Carmen Gonzales-Enrriquez op. cit. p.15

<sup>43</sup> According to the figures of the *Institut d’Estadística de Barcelona* 44.2 per cent of non-EU immigrant population concentrates in three districts: Ciutat Vella, Eixample, Sants-Montjuic. For further information see: <http://www.bcn.es/estadistica/castella/dades/inf/pobest/pobest07/part1/index.htm> [retrieved April 4, 2007]

In the proposals, the length of time before residents become eligible for voting varies from one to three years; but there is no request, as is the case with EU citizens, for a voting right that would be granted together with the residency.

Furthermore, there is almost no debate about how to motivate people to vote. The assumption is that once migrants are granted voting rights, they will exercise the right almost instinctually. That might be true for some migrants from South American countries such as Peru and Ecuador where vote is compulsory (you might not be able to get a passport or will be fined if failed to vote) but for migrants from non-democratic environments in African and Asian countries who don't even speak the language, the issue of voting may be complicated. In some leaders' opinion, the different immigrants' associations would have the responsibility to make their compatriots aware of the importance of voting; but as with Spanish citizens, the ultimate decision to vote resides on the person not on an authority.

As we have seen, residence not citizenship or nationality is sought as the determining factor to grant immigrants voting rights.

In addition, political parties are not exercising a leading role on this issue. Socialists have made modest attempts to approach immigrants as potential electors, but there are no serious efforts from the right or from the left.<sup>44</sup> Some feel that once granted with voting rights people would *instinctively* vote left/progressive positions; however, this is debatable. For example, in France, an important electoral base of the ultra-nationalist *Front National*, is formed by second-generation immigrants<sup>45</sup> in an attempt to prevent the arrival of even more immigrant that might compete for the same positions or scarce resources.

There is still a long way to go in terms of granting the vote to immigrants, it does not seem likely to be an important issue for the general elections in 2008. We may, nevertheless expect some kind of participation of immigrants in decision-making processes, mostly in areas where they constitute an important minority, otherwise there will be a democratic gap that may be a source of social instability in the near future.

## 10. Conclusions

As we have seen, Spain presents a series of particular characteristics that allows new approaches in the study of the immigration processes as well as their integration into the society. The multiculturalism of the country itself acts as a reference for the integration of the newcomers into the society. Also, the phantom of fascism not even a generation ago, prevents the rise of ultranationalist, anti-immigration movements as in other countries. In the particular case of Catalonia, its long tradition of immigration and adaptation to the local culture also encourages integration. The cornerstone of Catalan nationalism; language and history makes it not exclusive and thus open to those who arrive from outside.

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<sup>44</sup> During the last regional elections, the Partido Popular campaigned for the *emigrant* vote, candidates went to Argentina and Mexico in search of the vote of the *diaspora*.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Daniel Boy and Nonna Mayer (eds). *The French Voter Decides* U.S.: Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 1993

The Catalan government, the different immigrant associations, labour unions, political parties and other interest groups are taking positions on the different issues that relate to immigration; e.g. the legal rights that shall be granted to the access to the health system and anti-racism and discrimination.

So far, Spain has not had any serious conflicts between immigrants and locals such as those in France or Germany. The public tends to be in generally quite receptive to the presence of the *newcomers* as they are officially termed in the public administration. The image of Africans and Asians arriving everyday to the Canary Islands' coasts generates more a feeling of surprise than of rejection. It is also acknowledged that with the elimination of the intra-EU borders, Spain becomes the natural entry door to people from Africa and Asia.

The next years will show how effectively Spain, in general, and Catalonia, in particular, have dealt with this phenomenon. Catalonia has traditionally been the forerunner in Spain so what is done here will no doubt influence the decisions taken elsewhere.

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