TOURISM, EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION IN SPAIN. AN ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IN THE COMMUNITIES OF MURCIA, THE CANARY ISLANDS, VALENCIA AND ANDALUSIA

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades the tourism sector in Spain has been consolidated. In 2008, Spain was still the second biggest tourist destination in the world, both in terms of international tourist arrivals and in terms of the income generated (59.2 million tourists received in 2007, with an inter-annual variation of 1.7% with respect to 2006, and $57.8 million generated (WTO, 2008), behind neighbouring France and the United States respectively). There can be no doubting the Spanish boom is derived, in part, from the frenzied movement of tourist activity, for this is the State's main source of income, representing in terms of GNP, 106,347 million euros in 2006 (INE, 2008).

The millions of tourists that are attracted to Spain each year by sun, sea and sand, cultural heritage and cuisine expect to be properly looked after and this has led to the tourism sector in Spain employing 13% of the active population (INE, 2008). The recent and increasing phenomenon of the immigrant population working in the tourist sector is well known, and there is therefore a need to analyse the closely interdependent relationship between the tourism sector and immigration.

The phenomenon of immigration is nothing new to Spain, and it is well known that there was an influx of immigration in the now distant 1980s and 1990s. But the small numbers of immigrants in those times meant their representativeness in the public sphere was viewed with certain indifference. However, since the turn of the century, we have witnessed unprecedented population shifts, which have led to an increasingly more intense political debate about both the negative and positive consequences that this could have for the Spanish population.

I. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION

This is a relation that we could undoubtedly qualify as being one of interdependence, for immigrants are net contributors to the economy and have a highly satisfactory influence on the coffers of Social Security. According to EPA estimates for the fourth trimester of 2007 and the first trimester of 2008, the number of employed foreigners is about 2,900,000, which represents a little more than 14% of the employed population (Pajares, 2008).

The President of the Government's Economic Office provides excellent data that indicates a very positive balance between immigration and the economy. Approximately four million foreigners residing in Spain have contributed to the creation of half of the increase in GNP of recent years. At the same time, foreigners in January 2008 made up 10.5% of the total number of Social Security contributors, while, according to the EPA, they form 14.4% of the employed workforce. This figure increased gradually as 2008 went by, with 45,655 more foreign contributors in May 2008 (Ministry of Employment and Immigration, 2008). Despite differences in the methodology used, this difference seems to indicate that foreigners suffer a greater amount of employment in the informal sector (Pajares, 2008). Foreign Social Security contributors in 2006 provided 8,000 million euros in contributions. (Caldera, 2005).

Nevertheless, in late 2007 a certain slowdown was detected in the increase in the number of working foreigners with respect to what had happened in previous years. The reduction in growth occurred, as shown in Figure 7, for the whole employed population, therefore it also affected people of Spanish nationality. Meanwhile, when comparing the increases in employed Spaniards and foreigners, it is noted that the same trend noted in 2006 was maintained, whereby in terms of the overall growth in employees, there were more immigrants than nationals.

Tourism and immigration: an interdependent relationship?

If we observe the EPA data for the service sector, we should note that the evolution in the number of foreigners employed in the Tourism Industry has increased likewise, for it increased by 4.8 % in 2006 with respect to the previous year, to reach a total of 2,345,415 employees, of which 371,009 were of foreign nationalities.

So, immigration evidently forms an important part of the workforce and is a major source of State income, and the tourism and hotel sector have made this patently clear: the Federación Española de Hostelería (FEHR), which represents around 325,000 companies in the sector, claims foreign labour to be a determinant factor and has stated that such workers are needed in the country, given the problems that have made this sector an unattractive one for Spanish workers: low salaries, long hours, having to work on holidays, vacations outside of the summer season, etc. This has ultimately become a means of escape for thousands of immigrants, who consider the tourism sector to be a springboard to other sectors; whether that might be to get the required documentation or to finally get a better job and be able to stay in Spain. In relation to this, we find that Spain has a serious problem due to the major competitiveness in the tourism sector for attracting tourists. This obliges business owners to offer high quality services, but there is a lack of training and qualifications among foreign workers. Therefore, business owners involved in the tourism sector, along with trade unions and the Government, are now working to train foreign workers in their countries of origin. The Federación Española de Hostelería is organising a recruitment campaign whereby between 10,000 and 20,000 foreigners are being trained in their home countries to work in bars, restaurants and hotels.

In Spain, there is also a veritable lack of resources for the training of workers in this sector. Such is the extent of the problem that in Madrid, in 2004, only 1,050 places were offered, though there was a demand for 13,000. This lack of training has increased the problem. In addition, some of the main geographical focuses of tourism in Spain, such as the Community of Valencia and Catalonia, are still confronted by a major lack of workers, for despite the increase in the contracting of immigrant workers; still more are needed in the hotel and catering sector. An analysis of this situation on a regional level will help us to understand some interesting differences.

II. REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IN THE REGION OF MURCIA, THE CANARY ISLANDS, THE COMMUNITY OF VALENCIA AND ANDALUSIA

1. The Region of Murcia

The Region of Murcia is an autonomous Spanish community located in the southeast of the Iberian Peninsula, between Andalusia and the Community of Valencia. In July 2008 it had an approximate population of 1-4 million inhabitants in an area of 11,313 Km^2. Its capital is the city of Murcia. The community has traditionally been one of fruit and vegetable farming; however, following the droughts suffered in the 1990s, the tourism and construction sectors have become more important parts of the Murcian economy. Nevertheless, the primary sector remains a major force in the region, to the extent that this community is still nicknamed «the Orchard of Europe».

Immigration to the Region of Murcia, as in the rest of Spain, is a relatively new phenomenon. From the late 19th century to the mid 1970s there were major migratory flows, both in terms of movements to other parts of Spain, especially Catalonia, and to overseas destinations, mainly to Latin America and Europe, always to the detriment of the Murcian population. However, the reversal of these migratory flows is well known, for from the 1980s foreigners started appearing in the most populated areas of the Region, and also in the coastal regions: in the 1990s there was a notable increase in the number of immigrants, especially from Eastern Europe and Latin America. It was in the late 20th century that there was an even more remarkable growth, multiplying by more than ten, in just one decade, the number of foreign residents (Martínez Medina, 2008). As a result of this intense immigration process, Murcia has become one of the autonomous communities with the biggest foreign population, for in 2008 there was a total of 224,098 foreign residents in the region, making up a noteworthy 15.6% of the total population of Murcia (INE, 2008).

In terms of Murcian immigration, two major groups can be discerned, one of which could be called «residential immigration» while the other could be called «working immigration» (Gómez Espín, 2002). The first mainly involves citizens from Western Europe, who are generally qualified professionals of more than 55 years of age, and who move to the region in search of a better climate and purchase homes in the coastal areas to take advantage of the excellent climatic conditions offered by the region. The second group is that which comes in search of employment. As expected, the distribution of the immigrant population in the Region of Murcia is decidedly determined by the geographic location of the production sectors. However, the municipalities with the largest proportions of foreigners are those located along the region's Mediterranean coast. The main reasons for this are the intense development of the phenomenon of residential tourism, and also horticulture, which offers low qualified jobs. The result is a dual attraction, for job opportunities are divided between agriculture and the tourism sectors, which in many cases enables foreigners to complement the two options, given that both are of such a markedly seasonal nature.

2. The Canary Islands

The Canary Islands are an Atlantic archipelago made up 7 large islands and 6 smaller ones off the northwest coast of Africa, and make up one of the 17 Autonomous Communities of Spain. The islands are Hierro, Gomera, Palma, Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, while the smaller ones are Alegranza, Isla de Lobos, La Graciosa, Montaña Clara, Roque del Este and Roque del Oeste. The total surface area of the archipelago is 7,446 Km^2 and in July 2008 it had a population of 2,061,419 inhabitants, which makes it one of the most densely populated Autonomous Communities of Spain with a population density of 276 inhab./Km^2, only behind Ceuta, Melilla, Madrid and the Basque Country. In this respect, immigration has been a major factor in the revitalisation of the demography of the islands, and also of the economy, which is so highly determined by the service sector.

In the Canaries, although immigration has played an outstanding role throughout local history, it has taken on a new dimension since the 1990s. It is currently a highly important factor, for not only has it been an impulse for a native population of scarce growth, but has also provided a source of labour in an economy that is so dependent on the tertiary sector, and which in turn has helped develop the construction sector. Over the last 20 years, migration has undergone major changes, and at present there are two main types of immigrant: people coming in search of work and others that come to the islands to retire, enjoy the lovely climate and the high quality of life. The Canaries have traditionally been qualified as a place of «tricontinental reach»[1], as they are located in between three major geographical regions, namely Europe, Africa and Latin America, which has made them a place of interchange and major movement of both merchandise and people. The result has been intense trading, which is the main engine behind the development of the islands.

Within the tertiary sector, the weight of the tourism sector should be highlighted as the core of the modern day Canary economy. This sector has revitalised coastal towns that have gone to major efforts to create installations and infrastructures to attract visitors in search of sun, sea and sand. The most tourist based islands are Gran Canaria, Tenerife, Lanzarote and Fuerteventura. In 2007, the number of foreign tourists was 9 and a half million (which was a drop of 1.6% with respect to 2006 (IET, 2008)). Given its economic structure, the sectors that employ the most foreigners are the same as they are for residents, of which the service

1 Colectivo Ioé, 2005.

sector is of particular importance. These include foreigners from Europe (51%), mainly from countries like Romania, followed close behind by the countries of Latin America (48%) and Africa in third (INE, 2008). Those coming from the European Union are older, with a larger presence of women and higher qualifications; however, the immigrants from outside of Europe are younger, and depending on their origins there are higher or lower numbers of women and levels of qualification, whereby the Latin Americans have a notably higher level of education and a greater proportion of women, while Africans have lower levels of education and are largely male.

3. The Community of Valencia

The Community of Valencia, on the Mediterranean shore and made up of the provinces of Castellón, Valencia and Alicante, has an approximate population of 4.7 million inhabitants in an area of 23.255 Km^2, which represent 10.6 % of the Spanish population. Its capital and most populous city is Valencia, which is home to more than 800,000 people.

Generally speaking, with respect to the economy, in 2007 the Community of Valencia produced 9.8% of the state GNP, assimilating its structure to that of the Spanish economy as a whole. In 2008, the service sector was the most highly represented with 66 %, followed by the industrial and construction sectors. The tourism sector in the Community is currently very well structured, which benefits its competitiveness. In 2006 turnover reached €7,043,072, representing 9.2% of the state level and a share in terms of employed people of 10.2%, which shows how important this sector is for job creation and the generation of wealth. The high demand for tourism in the Community is reflected by a highly positive return, with 9 million travellers in 2007, the main countries of origin being the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany and Belgium, in that order.

It is one of the regions that has seen the largest increase in its foreign population in recent years, with 16.7% of the total population being foreign according to INE figures for 2008, distributed unequally among the three provinces: Alicante has the highest number, 48.1% of the community's total foreign population, while Valencia, despite being the regional capital, has only 37.1%; and Castellón has just 14.7% (IEV, 2008). Immigrants are not homogenous either, for they too differ between provinces. In Alicante there is a predominance of people from the European Union, a massive 55.3% (mainly British subjects), followed by foreigners from Latin American with 23%; meanwhile in Valencia it is Romanian citizens that are in the majority, with 40.6%, followed close behind by the Latin American collective, with 35% (IVE, 2008). In the case of Castellón we find the same structure, as it is Europeans from countries like Romania that are once again the majority with 45.2%, followed by a community that is not so widespread in other regions, namely those from North Africa, with 24.5 %, leaving the South American population in third place, with 14.9% (IVE, 2008).

In terms of employment, since 2005 there has been a higher percentage of foreign contributors signing up for Social Security than there has been on average for Spain as a whole. The number of legally resident foreigners has multiplied by more than three over the last five years; however, the increase in the number of legal residents has still failed to absorb all of the high number of foreign arrivals, which has led to a large informal sector, even following the series of extraordinary procedures to regulate the employment situation since

1998. It is well known that it is not easy to calculate the extent of unregulated immigration; however, in 2005 it was estimated that there were some 258,344 unregulated immigrants living in the Community of Valencia, of which 117,757 were in Alicante, 107,787 in Valencia and 32,800 in Castellón (Gómez Gil, 2005).

4. Andalusia

The Autonomous Community of Andalusia is the most south-westerly region of Europe, and is also the most populated community in Spain, with 8,202,220 inhabitants in early 2008. It is also the second largest in terms of size after Castile and Leon, and is divided into 8 provinces: Cadiz, Almería, Huelva, Sevilla, Cordoba, Jaen, Malaga and Granada. The capital, Seville, is the most populous city in Andalusia with almost 700,000 inhabitants (INE, 2008).

The Andalusian economy, for the 2000-2005 period, underwent significant growth, which was considerably more intense than the national average, and featured overdependence on the construction sector, although the service sector was still by far the most important sector, with a massive 62% of GVA, where the tourism subsector is of particular note. Between January and November of 2008, Andalusia welcomed 7.8 million tourists. Although this was 3% less than in 2007, mainly due to the drop in the numbers of British and Portuguese tourists, Andalusia holds an outstanding share of the tourist activity in Spain, with 14.3% of the state total, making it the third most visited community by tourists, only coming behind the Canaries and Catalonia. The tourist sector in Andalusia is mainly fed by Spanish tourists, with 27.88 million resident tourists in 2007, making it the favourite destination for them, Andalusia having 21% of the quota of Spanish national tourists (Frontur, 2008).

With respect to the binomial of the foreign population residing and working in Andalusia, the region is similar to what was observed for the previously analysed Autonomous Communities. The territory offers a major attraction for foreign residents, mainly retired people, and also for immigrants, who up until late 2008 found it easy to find work in the construction sector, the service sector and to a lesser extent in agriculture.

III. CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen along general lines, immigration and the tourism sector in Spain are closely associated. The regions that attract the most tourism are also those have traditionally offered the most work to immigrants, whether in the tourism sector itself or in construction. Both sectors make extensive use of foreign labour because Spanish workers find better jobs in other sectors. The parallel between immigration and agriculture also arises, given that in regions where agriculture plays an important role, such as Murcia, Valencia and Andalusia, the two job seasons can be complemented. One of the main problems is the lack of training, which in the case of the service sector has repercussions on customer care. In this sense, Spain cannot afford to offer low quality tourism, which, given the major competitiveness with other destinations, could harm the sector's good results. Therefore there is an essential need to invest in training the workforce, if possible in the country of origin. The contribution made by immigrants to the national economy is unquestionable given the figures supplied by Social Security; however, these good results can only be achieved via legal emigration, which therefore means regulating the situations of foreigners. Pockets of the population in unregulated situations only lead to precariousness, low salaries, a lack of professionalism and social and economic instability. It is therefore vital to have a well trained workforce in tourist services in order to compete with new products and emerging markets. In Spain, the tourism of the future has to opt for quality and a good product, and to do that it is essential for its workers, whether national or immigrant, to be properly trained.

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