

Political attitudes towards immigration in Andalusia

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This essay is part of a broader and interdisciplinary research¹ being carried out by three members of the *Immigration and Ageing in Europe* research group (EurI&E, as in Spanish). Integration is one of the main topics and concerns regarding both institutional and academic analysis on immigration. Political integration, however, uses to be missing. Social, economic, and labour-market inclusions are crucial. No doubt on that point. We think political integration is no less important. It deserves attention. After all, democracy is an inclusive regime no matter aspects such as gender, social status, religion or race. Does origin matter? Democracy also deals with accountability and responsiveness on the part of the representatives. Are they accountable and responsive before the immigrants, even if only long-term immigrants? Whatever the subject, either (national) citizen or (non-national) immigrant, such questions are (and ought to be) at the core of the quality and well functioning of any democratic regime.

According to Putnam, the more interested the people are in politics, the more they vote, and the more they associate, the more successful their democracy is. In other words, the more inclusive the regime is and the more participatory the people are, the better. Riots in France last November should seriously be taken into account on that regards. They have mostly been explained with respect to the dismantling of the Welfare State vis-à-vis globalization. If disruptive behaviour has to do with disrespect of law and order, that disruptive behaviour in France could be explained as disrespect of *their* law and order on the part of those who (immigrants and/or their descendants) do not feel part of *we the people*. Political (non)integration is at stake.

Southern European Andalusia is one of the Spanish regions experiencing the highest levels of immigration in the country. This essay aims at analysing public opinion and attitude towards immigration. The specific focus is the way such opinion and attitude are determined by Andalusians' own political involvement. The empirical research rests upon the *Andalusian Social Survey*, which was administered in late 2002 and early 2003 to residents in the region² paralleling the *European Social Survey*. In so far as data show statistical relation between the level of political involvement and good predisposition toward immigration, political integration of immigrants may be a reasonable wishful thinking. Before the opportunity becomes a threat, society is mostly favourable

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² Spaniards are 98'4% of the sample.

by now (see table 1), and the aim could be accomplished through more democracy – doing democracy more inclusive by doing it more participatory.

Table 1. Opinion on the statement “If Andalusia wants to reduce tensions it should stop immigration”

Agree strongly	5%
Agree	20%
Neither agree nor disagree	24%
Disagree	35%
Disagree strongly	11%
Don't know	5%

Source: *Andalusian Social Survey*.

To sum up, the probability to disagree, either strongly or not, with the statement shown in table 1 is higher the higher is the declared interest in politics and the more often people discuss politics or policies and current affairs. Thirdly, but to a lesser extent (we cannot distinguish among the different media), the more often people use to expose to the media news or programmes about, again, politics and current affairs. With regard to voting, the first significant conclusion is that there is no statistically significant relation between voting and non-voting. Whatever the reason for non-voting, ideology appears as an explaining factor of attitude towards immigration – if voters are more favourable to immigration the more leftist the parliamentary parties they vote, both voters and non-voters are even more favourable the more on the left they place themselves on the ideological scale 0-10. Finally, as well party members disagree more with the statement the more leftist is the parliamentary party they are registered with.

In contrast with the dichotomy voting versus non-voting, a favourable predisposition towards immigration is more probable between people with some kind of formal associative relation than if they do not at all. Besides, citizens disagree more with the statement the more they participate in the associations – doing voluntary work rates the highest probability of disagreement, followed by money donation, as this by participation, and this by membership. Finally, the most favourable predisposition towards immigration is found between those who has some relation with organizations for human aid, human rights, minorities, o immigrants, with organizations for cultural or hobby activities, with sports clubs or clubs for outdoor activities, and with organizations for science education, or teachers and parents.

Paradoxically, trade unions do not appear as organizations favouring the integration of immigrants. Is social justice and solidarity nationally restricted, and then exclusive? The *Andalusian Social Survey* does not provide data to deal with this and other questions relating inclusion and the quality of democracy, but the conclusions come to reinforce Olivier Masclet's argument in *Le Monde diplomatique* (no.99, January 2004, Spanish version) that both State institutions and mostly leftist organizations have failed to politically integrate those who, more than one year after Masclet's article, have rebelled against the system from within, namely, by being members of *we the people*.