

Immigration and Foreign Population in the Southern European Countries: a Comparative Analysis of Trends and Policies

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(Abstract)

Grounding on a careful examination of statistical information drawn from the most reliable official sources available we intend to propose a framework of last 15 years evolution of immigration and foreign presence in the new receiving countries of Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal). A particular attention will be devoted to the recent changes, whether relating to the considerable number of flows and the rapid increase in the presence of immigrants or to the rise and the prevail of new sending areas of migration streams. As a matter of fact in only 12 years the foreign presence in the region considered is at least quadruplicated (from around 1,300 thousands in 1992 to up than 5,500 foreigners in 2004) and it assumed characteristics partly different from the ones of previous years, as a consequence, on one hand, of the relevance of new ethnic communities and nationalities and, on the other hand, of stabilization of long stay foreign immigrants.

The specific objective of this contribution is trying to lay emphasis on the phenomenon complexity, focusing on these two elements: a consistent recent immigration – mostly irregular – deducible first of all through the results of last regularisation programmes (1998 and 2002 for Italy; 2000, 2001 and 2005 for Spain; 2001-03 for Portugal; 1998 and 2002 for Greece); a stable foreign population – as a consequence of family reunions, formation of new families and existence of an increasing second generation of immigrants (their children born in receiving country or arrived there from earliest youth) – whose characteristics are partly drawn from the data of 2001 population censuses). Furthermore, these two elements will be analysed in a comparative way in order to show similarities and differences both between the chosen four countries and the different migrant sending areas. Thus it will possible to underline the increasing role played by the east-west migrations, also due to the well known political and economic events that characterised the Nineties.

Flows strong dynamism and meanwhile advanced stabilization process of a part of immigrant populations are elements easy to find in the very recent history of all four countries considered. These characteristics need a legislative framework where it is important to develop migration policies as much as possible convenient and at the same time able to manage as best they can such a complex phenomenon and in rapid evolution. The last part of the work is devoted to examine the migration legislation today in force in the four countries with a special attention to the general European framework. In order to highlight common aspects and elements of originality, in the light of migratory past and present migration peculiarity, the two different dimensions of migratory policies will be considered: immigration policies (entry and stay, asylum and border controls) and immigrant policies (integration process).

Index

1. Introduction
2. The compass to not get lost: definitions, migratory categories and collecting systems
3. Migration flows' evolution, foreign population dimension and weight
4. The chance of the sending areas: the growing importance of east-west migrations
5. Subsequent migratory flows' stratification and presence stabilisation signs
6. Legislative framework and migration policies: a current challenge