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The social perception of immigration in the Metropolitan Area of Valencia after more than a decade of integration policies

Mónica Ortega Roig

Prof. Asociada, Dpto. Derecho Constitucional, Ciencia Política y de la Administración,
Universidad de Valencia (Valencia, España)

Monica.Oterga@uv.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4730-7232>

Joaquín Martín Cubas

Prof. Titular, Dpto. Derecho Constitucional, Ciencia Política y de la Administración,
Universidad de Valencia (Valencia, España)

Joaquin.Martin@uv.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8467-6993>



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SECCIÓN ARTÍCULOS

The social perception of immigration in the Metropolitan Area of Valencia after more than a decade of integration policies

Abstract: This article aims to outline, through an empirical methodology based on surveys, the performance of integration policies in the Metropolitan Area of València. To this end, the strategic lines of integration policy planning have been described in the first place; next, the evolution of the foreign population during the last two decades has been detailed; and, finally, the data obtained from the surveys carried out is analyzed. The results of the investigation show that the metropolitan area has a similar pattern of response, in terms of tolerance and acceptance towards immigration, to that of other territorial areas in our country and also makes evident the existing tensions and problems. It is clear from this article the need to continue implementing awareness actions towards the population.

Key words: Immigration, foreign population, Public Administration.

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IDEAS CLAVE / HIGHLIGHTS / IDEES CLAU

1. La eliminación de diferencias injustificadas en la consideración social de autóctonos y extranjeros requiere la adopción de medidas adecuadas y consensuadas de integración de la inmigración.
2. La existencia de desigualdad social entre estos dos colectivos pone en entredicho los valores que fundamentan todo orden democrático.
3. La colaboración, en políticas de integración, entre las Administraciones públicas, sindicatos y empresas es clave.
4. Se requiere la creación/ampliación de espacios de diálogo que promuevan el respeto y la tolerancia.

1. The elimination of unjustified differences in the social status of natives and foreigners requires the adoption of appropriate and consensual measures for the integration of immigration.
2. The existence of social inequality between these two groups calls into question the values that underpin any democratic order.
3. The collaboration, in integration policies, between public administrations, trade unions and companies are key.
4. The creation / expansion of spaces for dialogue that promote respect and tolerance is required.

1. L'eliminació de diferències injustificades en la consideració social d'autòctons i estrangers requereix l'adopció de mesures adequades i consensuades d'integració de la immigració.
2. L'existència de desigualtat social entre aquests dos col·lectius posa en dubte els valors que fonamenten tot ordre democràtic.
3. La col·laboració, en polítiques d'integració, entre les Administracions públiques, sindicats i empreses és clau.
4. Es requereix la creació/ampliació d'espais de diàleg que promoguen el respecte i la tolerància.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT¹

The importance of the phenomenon of immigration and the challenges it has meant for Spain over the past three decades has resulted in the intensification of inclusion and integration policies and, with them, of the planning of these policies. This article analyzes the planning of integration policies at the state, regional and local levels; the figures of the foreign population in the Metropolitan Area of Valencia in the years 2000, 2007 and 2017; and shows the opinion of the citizens of the Metropolitan Area of Valencia in relation to the foreign population and its integration into the host society.

This article aims to outline, through an empirical methodology based on surveys, the performance of integration policies in the Metropolitan Area of Valencia in terms of the social perception of immigration. To this end, firstly, the strategic lines of the planning of integration policies have been described; then, the evolution of the foreign population during the last two decades has been detailed using the statistics of the continuous census of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística; and, finally, the data obtained from the telephone surveys carried out in thirteen municipalities of the Metropolitan Area are analyzed.

With regard to the collection of own data, telephone surveys have been carried out in thirteen municipalities in the Metropolitan Area, including the capital Valencia. The calls were made to landlines numbers in these municipalities, chosen at random, and the interlocutors, after confirming that they were Spanish citizens, were asked a questionnaire composed of ten questions, in order to find out their view of the foreign population living in their locality and their integration. The sample collected in the selected municipalities was: Alboraya (20); Aldaia (20); Almàssera (20); Burjassot (20); Catarroja (20); Godella (20); Manises (20); Mislata (20); Paterna (20); Picassent (20); Torrent (20); València (100); and Xirivella (20). 340 people were consulted. The field work and the exploitation of the statistical data was carried out by our own means and we had the disinterested help of 15 collaborators, all of them students from the degrees in Political Science and Sociology of the University of Valencia. The opinion of people with Spanish nationality, of legal age and of both sexes, resident in the related municipalities, were collected and chosen by a draw from among the forty-five that form part of the Metropolitan Area of Valencia, with the exception of the capital, which was included in any case as it is the municipality with the highest number and percentage of foreign residents in the entire area under study.

In total, as noted, 340 telephone interviews were properly completed, although over a thousand calls had to be made to achieve this. The surveys were grouped in blocks of 20 interviews for each of the municipalities and 100 interviews for the city of Valencia, as it is much more populated than the rest of the locations included in the study. The sample design was random in terms of the selection of fixed telephone numbers. A margin of error of 2,99 % was taken into account for a confidence interval of 95,5 %. The survey was carried out between February 1st and April 30th, 2018, Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The importance of the phenomenon of immigration and the challenges it has meant for Spain in recent decades has resulted in the intensification of inclusion and integration policies and, with them, their planning. This article analyzes the planning of integration policies at a state, autonomous and local level; the figures of the foreign population in the Metropolitan Area of Valencia in the years 2000, 2007 and 2017; and shows the opinion

¹ Traducción exclusiva de los autores / Authors' exclusive translation.

of the citizens of the Metropolitan Area of Valencia in relation to the foreign population and its integration into the host society. The evidence obtained confirms the results of other studies with a wider territorial scope according to which the host society, in general, is respectful of differences. Nevertheless, rejections or critical elements on certain dimensions and aspects of immigration are detected in some sectors of the population. This finding makes it necessary to persevere with the integration policies that have been developed, even improving those aspects that contribute to correcting these dysfunctions in the social perception of immigration.

Various studies, analyses and papers show that work and economic reasons and the development and opportunities of a particular territory are factors that push people to settle in it, either permanently or temporarily, but all with a clear objective: to lead a dignified life. This has been confirmed by the study carried out by the Department of Studies and Research of the CeiMigra Foundation (Buades et al., 2010). This research concluded that the factors that Valencians understand as determinants for immigrants and foreigners to come to Spain are poverty and difficulties for a dignified life, the possibilities of work in Spain and the desire to enjoy the quality of life that exists in Spain and Europe. In the same way, the survey carried out by the SM Foundation and the Valencian Immigration Observatory showed that immigrants living in the Valencian Community had come to Spain mainly for two reasons: the possibility of working (33 %) and the poverty and difficulties to lead a dignified life in their country of origin (26 %) (SM Foundation and Valencian Immigration Observatory, 2011).

Well, precisely one of the main areas of concentration of nationals from other countries in Spain has been the Metropolitan Area of Valencia. This is a developed area with an economic structure based on industry and services and in which more than one and a half million people reside. For this reason, this paper analyses the evolution of the immigrant and foreign population in this territory.

The foreign population is a relevant part of the Metropolitan Area of Valencia. If in 2000 they only represented 1,2 % of the population, in 2007 and 2017 they represent approximately 10 % of the total population of the area (10,08 % in 2007 and 9,4 % in 2017).

The importance of the phenomenon of immigration and the challenges it has meant for Spain over the past three decades has resulted in the intensification of inclusion and integration policies and, with them, planning. Thus, it can be said that these integration or inclusion policies in Spain are performing favorably, at least in comparative terms, with regard to the social perception of immigration by the inhabitants of the Valencia Metropolitan Area.

In fact, the results obtained from the study carried out in the Metropolitan Area of Valencia coincide with the information provided by the Report on the Social Perception of Migrations in Spain, prepared by Cea D'Ancona for the FUNCAS Panorama Social Magazine. This research concludes that Spanish society is moving towards greater tolerance and acceptance of immigration and one of the reasons for this is greater empathy and mutual knowledge, after years of coexistence between Spaniards and foreigners (Cea D'Ancona, 2016).

With regard to the future orientations of integration policies, the need to maintain and strengthen a governance structure for integration, generating resources, mobilizing people, building partnerships and establishing relationships of trust, should be stressed. All these aspects are essential for the fulfilment of integration objectives. Likewise, the necessary creation/expansion of spaces for citizen dialogue that promote respect and

tolerance, inter-religious dialogue, the participation of social agents and dynamic social integration must continue to be emphasized.

Within this framework, the strong and visible leadership of municipal leaders on integration issues is essential to achieve a coherent approach to integration in the political, economic, social and cultural life of our municipalities. To this end, municipalities must implement measures that promote intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and that encourage the interrelation of the various groups that make up our society.