



Project Summary

Access to Rights and Civil Dialogue for All

PARTICIPATION
DEMOCRACY
ELECTIONS INNOVATION
EUROPEAN UNION POLITICS

Access to Rights and Civil Dialogue for All

This project, funded by the European Union in the framework of the “Fundamental Rights & Citizenship” call (2011), has the aim of examining the low civic and political participation of EU citizens living in different countries from their own one.

This project is being developed in 5 different countries, examining the living conditions of the larger EU migrant’s communities in each country. In Spain, as a result, the project had been developed with citizens coming from Romania.

What we have done

In our aim for understanding the reality of the Romanian citizen's living in Spain, different information sources had been used:

- Secondary quantitative data analysis: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración, Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes
- Primary qualitative data analysis obtained by group discussion techniques
- Primary qualitative data analysis obtained by interviews

Contextual data

Different phases followed by the Romanian migration process before the country's accession to the European Union in 2007:

- In the first phase (1990-1995), when entry to various Western European countries was severely limited, Romanian workers headed mainly to Israel, Turkey, Hungary (mostly ethnic Hungarians) and Germany.
- In the second period (1996-2002), westward migration prevailed, with large numbers of workers going to Italy and, increasingly, Spain.
- The third phase of labour migration was symbolically inaugurated on 1st January 2002 when countries included in the Schengen space removed visa requirements for Romanian citizens, making a valid passport sufficient for entry. Major destinations since then have included Italy, Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

Basic factors that can help to understand the recent Romanian migrant flows to Spain:

- a) Factors related to Romania: need of economic growth and differences related to life-style between Romania and Western European countries, the latter ones providing broader (economic) possibilities
- b) Factors related to Spain: the economical growth experienced between 1992 and 2008 and its position as a country of destination for international migration recently (the switch from emigration to immigration country is recent and marked the attitude of the state and society regarding migrants).
- c) Factors related to the international context: Establishment of the Schengen Area and regulations concerning the free movement of persons.

Main characteristics of the current migration

As citizens, we all are individuals that live our life in constant interaction with each other, assuming the existence of social rules, some consolidated by legal status, others just written in our social conscience, and that are subject of permanent revision according to the changing reality. In addition, one of the main characteristics of postmodernity is linked with the speed in which the changes are taking place in our reality, and the increasing interconnections (economical and social) between different territories. As a result of that process, the international inequality of economical situation acts as an incentive for individual migration, changing the configuration of societies in host and origin countries and helping the renegotiation of social rules.

According to that situation, Castles (Castles, 2004) characterizes present migration processes as it follows:

- Diversity: Current migration is more diverse, adding difficulties to the implementation of general policies for migrants' integration
- Temporary, repetitive and circulatory, linked with the mobility of job opportunities
- Transnational: Generation of dual cultures due to the socialisation and resocialisation process lived by migrants.

Political participation

Under political participation we understand all kind of actions that individual citizens develop in order to have influence in the configuration of collective life (González et al. 2011):

- Participation in elections
- Implication in participatory democracy or governance policies
- Participation in collectives aiming to have public incidence
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The most remarkable fact related to Romanian migrants, according to the first two ways of political participation and to the analysis done, is their no-participation and lack of interest for local political life, as can be seen in their low percents of electoral participation.

Three hypothesis might be useful for trying to understand that fact:

- It is a matter of time: Romanian migration is quite recent, and there has been not enough time to develop political interest. In case the Romanians establish permanent communities in Spain, second generation migrants will have similar political attitudes than local inhabitants (Alarcón et. al, op. cit)

- It is a matter of cultural status: The fact of being migrant or not, has influences in the first stages of the migration process, but when being consolidated in the host country, the electoral behaviour is determined by socialisation or

resocialisation processes (Alarcón et. al, op. cit.)

- It's a matter of efficiency: General social transformation leads towards a society of indifference, in which the ideology loses power in front of the management and its efficiency, and the role of the politicians is related to management, being the electoral participation an exam to evaluate their previous work (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007). As a result, migrant electors would only vote in case they feel the necessity of judging the politician.

Other elements appear as relevant in influencing the political participation of Romanian citizens:

- The perception of local authorities as institutions to avoid to “not cause problems” (Ciornei, 2009)
- The low success of the policies developed by institutions and technicians to reduce the stereotypes surrounding migration, and their lack of effectivity to reduce the Welfare Chauvinism
- Their relation with the spoken languages
- Their lack of sense of membership in their community, derived from the importance given to private sphere in communist time (Cosescu, 2008)
- The structural dependence to their supporting networks, fact that distance them from local institutions and citizens, while bring them closer to their connationals.

Social integration means political integration?

We stated a difference in perception towards the concept of integration if its seen from the hosting country perspective (oriented to becoming a “good Catalan or Spaniard” having job, acquiring local habits and languages and participating in local events) or if it’s seen from the migrant perspective (oriented to achieving enough levels of economical welfare –job, housing- and social (but economically oriented) –language-)

In this context, local policies integration is just demanded by locals, while newcomers are not worried by this topic, as political integration is usually linked to a collective need of facing some collective menace that, up to this moment, must have not happened or, at least, is not identified with local policy. Consequently, one can state that the lack of interest in local policy must not be confused with the lack of interest in political participation or interest in general policy (Makarovic, 2007).

On the other hand, European political integration can be linked with the creation of a sense of membership towards Europe. In this case this hasn’t happened yet or, at least, it had not been internalized by Romanian migrants (being different from what happens in Northern Europe). This leads us to think that the membership sense with Europe is more linked with their origins’ national conditions that with the fact that they are individuals benefiting from European migratory laws.

The role of associations

Associations represent a secondary stage of political participation in which individuals get involved in a collective project to satisfy some demands or interests, that can be related to very different topics, the political influence of the community being just one of them.

Regarding to the internal operations of associations, we found some differences between the institutional expectancies (oriented to favour the local integration of migrants, trying to develop skills and spaces to integration and helping to establish “bridges” between migrants and local authorities or citizens) and the own expectancies of the association managers or leaders (oriented, generally, to restore the migrant’s perception by local citizens, trying to break myths or stereotypes, and to develop cultural maintenance practices and “bonding” activities between themselves).

The role of political parties: Migrant parties or Parties with Migrants?

Finally, the integration in political parties supposes a way of political participation that can be considered to be a half way between individual participation and collective configuration of migrant reality. In the Spanish state we can find examples of both realities: 586 no-Spanish nationals stood for the Socialist Party and around 500 for the Popular Party in the last local elections, while the PIRUM (Iberian Party of the Romanians) stood for the first time.

Beyond the analysis of PIRUM’s experience, it is interesting to open a debate surrounding the expected future relation between migrants and their political participation in the host countries:

- Will they follow the right-left political pattern of the host countries?
- Will they follow the nationalistic patterns existing in some parts of the host countries?
- Will they follow the PIRUM pattern, creating identitary parties?

Even we assume that the resulting electoral participation patterns will probably consist in a mixture of all of them, it’s, at least, interesting to add to the traditional political patterns the example proposed by PIRUM to take it in account into the future possibilities.

Social participation

Social participation must be understood in a wider way than political participation, assuming that social participation includes, not only political participation, but also those aspects related to individual linkages with other individuals that, finally, help to configure social relations.

On this topic, we consider the hypothesis proposed by Ritchey, trying to explain the relation between kinship and friendship and the decision to migrate, as important ideas to understand how the Romanian migrant population underwent a fast adaptation process conforming to their new migrational reality.

The role of networks in migration

If we analyse the Romanian migration in the paradigm of institutionalized networks, the migrants who left the country in the beginning of the 90ies and successfully integrating to the job market of their host country, played a key role in the evolution of Romanian immigration to Spain. As Arango argues, “social networks help to strengthen already existing concentrations and are a key element in the composition and channelling of flows” (Arango 2006 in Bernat & Viruela, 2011).

According to our observations, those who followed or still rely upon these formerly built migration networks, are the ones who still belong to a certain micro-community that is able to exercise some control over them and implement its own norms among its members. On the other hand, these networks and the concentration around these networks make it possible to remain closed in ones own community, applying for kinship ties and family relations and this way excluding the idea of contacting with locals or authorities of the host country (especially when talking about Roma communities).

Women and citizenship

The labour market offers different job opportunities to Romanian men and women, being women most conducted to personal care and housework sectors, what fits with international division of labour perspective. Local women transfer their previous visible inequalities related to reproductive work to migrant women (Parella, 2003), establishing hierarchical relations between women of local societies and migrant ones.

In addition, the network-based strategy of job search constructs a trap for most of migrant women, making them unavailable to escape the job sectors that are traditionally meant to be theirs (family care, agriculture). Network migration, then, can be useful for the community or in economical terms, but it does not contribute to women empowerment.

Considering the recent situation of Romanian migrants living in Spain, who experienced job losses that mainly affected men (Castelló, 2009), it would be interesting to examine how this leads to the (non)reconstruction of traditional roles within the family. As the demand of family care remains being high, women who were able to preserve their jobs, were transformed to the main sustainers of their families. Although that situation could lead to a renegotiation of roles within the family, our question remains, if this is going to happen in reality or will just put a new burden on women's shoulders, meanwhile maintaining hierarchies.

If we take into consideration their family-based pattern of integration it would be interesting to analyse whether this model equally contributes to the development of life projects of all the family members or just promotes the maintenance of traditional patriarchal relations. Suarez and Crespo (Suarez & Crespo, op cit.) distinguished between four types of migration related to the family and to the role of women in migration decision taking:

- individual migration: Migration understood as a free choice of an individual women.
- presumed individual migration: Migration understood as a choice motivated by the economical necessities of the family
- presumed family migration: Migration understood as ones try to escape from unequal situation between partners
- family migration: Migration understood as a collective choice of all the family members.

This categorization sets out certain family realities that remain hidden when analysing statistical data. The role that women might play in migration decision taking seems to be different than the one described by quantitative data. As shown, occasionally their decision to migrate can be seen as a way for escaping from patriarchal family structures and renegotiating women's position in the society. In contrast, market labour opportunities and patriarchal tradition of migrant networks make their transition to equality almost impossible