Research Paper

Managing Labour Migration in Times of Crisis –

The Spanish Case

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MANAGING LABOUR MIGRATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS
Recent trends and open issues in selected EU countries

THE SPANISH CASE

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Abstract

Spain has been considered the most successful labour migration model among southern European countries. The economic crisis, however, shed a light on the shortcomings of the Spanish employer-oriented model and its use of labour migration to compensate the low technology level of the Spanish economy. This report analyses the main components of the Spanish labour migration model focusing both on its strengths and on the weaknesses emerged after the economic crisis of 2008. In the first section, the report provides a general overview of the main recruitment mechanisms of the Spanish labour migration model such as the individual recruitment, quota regulations (contingente) and special avenues for high skilled workers. The second part of the analysis compares the relevance of qualitative and quantitative criteria in the Spanish model devoting a special attention to the role played by “shortage lists” to avoid any foregoing labour market check. The third section assesses the capacity of the different types of recruitment instruments to match labour supply and demand devoting a special attention to the relevance of the collaboration between government and employers and of bilateral agreements with sending countries. Finally, the report analyses the relevance of regularisation processes as functional equivalents in the Spanish regime, showing how they provided a posteriori the needed foreign labour force when official admission policies failed. The final part of the report summarizes the characteristics of the Spanish regime arguing that efficient labour migration governance does not only depend on well-designed admission policies, but also on the dysfunctionalities of a given country’s production system.

1. Introduction

The transition of Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece from labour-exporting to labour-importing countries was considered to be one of the most important new developments in the European migration landscape of the 1990s (Arango 2000). In Spain immigration represented, without any doubt, one of the two most important social changes since the end of Franco’s dictatorship and the approval of the Spanish Constitution in 1978. Immigration to Spain already experienced a sensible growth in the 1990s. However, it is only at the beginning of the new century when migration flows to Spain started to increase rapidly and intensively. Between 2000 and 2011, foreign population grew from one million to almost six million foreigners and Spain became one of the major immigration-receiving countries in Europe after having been an emigration country for decades. During the so-called “prodigious decade” of economic and demographic growth (Oliver 2008), the foreign-born population in Spain reached 14.3 per cent of the Spanish population, i.e. very close to the percentages of “older” immigration countries such as Germany (12.9 per cent) or the Netherlands in 2009 (11.1 per cent) (OECD 2011). With respect to the type of migration flows, labour migration certainly plays the lion’s share in the Spanish migration regime. Among the third-country nationals legally residing in Spain at the beginning of 2012, 68 per cent already have a long-term residence permit. Among those with a temporary residence permit, 46 per cent have a permit for work purposes, and 26 per cent have a permit for family reasons. Only a small portion of immigrants to Spain currently consists of asylum-seekers and students.

 Nevertheless, the high number of foreign workers in Spain was not the result of an efficient immigration policy. For almost two decades, Spain lacked adequate entry channels to face a growing demand of foreign low-skilled labour, which could not be fulfilled by natives who preferred to wait for better employment conditions rather than take low-skilled and low-paid jobs (Izquierdo-Escribano 1993; Cachón 2002; Arango 1993). The increasing labour demand in the Spanish labour market was accompanied by the almost complete absence of a political...
debate on how recruitment of foreign workers should be regulated. Similar to other Southern European countries, Spain’s main commitments to the European membership was to strengthen its border controls and to fight against irregular migration.1 With respect to foreign labour, Spanish law allowed foreign workers to be hired only if natives or citizens from ‘privileged’ countries were unavailable for the same job. The so-called “labour market check” was meant to protect the Spanish labour market in times of high unemployment rates. The Spanish law also allowed for the establishment of yearly contingents of foreign workers under the name of the contingente, which offered yearly a certain number of entry slots for a predefined range of occupations in a limited number of economic sectors.

All existing legal channels to recruit labour migrants required a foreign worker to be recruited before his (or her) entry in Spain, which produced slow and cumbersome recruitment procedures. One of the most significant consequences of the lack of efficient recruitment channels was the growth of irregular migration and irregular employment which were favoured by an extended informal economy, very weak labour market controls and a widespread toleration of irregular residence (Baldwin-Edwards 1997; King, Black 1997). In such a context, mass regularisations became the most suitable policy instrument for addressing the challenge represented by irregular migration whereas the contingente was used to regularise immigrants who had already found jobs in the country (Arango 2000).

Only at the beginning of the new century, several Autonomous Communities2 and employers’ associations started to support the introduction of more efficient tools for the recruitment of foreign workers. Both parties had become aware that economic growth in Spain also depended on the creation of efficient recruitment channels for foreign labour. The recruitment of foreign workers was also supported by the two largest country’s trade unions (Unión General de Trabajadores and Comisiones Obreras). However, the unions also claimed for the protection of native workers to avoid salary dumping due to immigration (El País, 13/07/200). Comisiones Obreras, for instance, claimed that policy makers had to analyse very carefully the national employment situation before opening new entry avenues for foreign workers (El País, 22/07/2000).

Despite the increasing requests proceeding from employers’ associations, Autonomous Communities and trade unions the Partito Popular government (1996-2004) still presented immigration as a threat to national security rather than as an opportunity for the country’s labour market. It was only in 2004 when the new Spanish government chaired by the Spanish Socialist Party decided to reform the existing regulation in response to the increasing immigration pressure towards Spain. The government’s aim was to design an immigration model able to combine the management of regular migration flows with the fight against irregular migration, the strengthening of border controls, the relationships with third-world countries and, last but not least, the integration of immigrants. In this respect, the former Secretary of State for Immigration, Consuelo Rumí, explained that the objective of the new regulation was to help prevent irregular migration by enacting efficient recruitment policies “because if immigration management is efficient, if immigration channels work, if entry quotas are flexible and agile and the General Regime can respond to the needs […] if bilateral

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1 As a matter of fact, the first socialist government approved an Asylum and Refugee Law in 1984 and the Foreigners Bill (Ley de Extranjería) n. 7 of 1985, which was more focused on administrative issues regarding the entry and residence of foreigners than on conceiving effective regulation instruments (Arango 2000).

2 The Spanish State is divided into 17 territorial units, the Autonomous Communities, and the two Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla. Since the democratic transition, the Spanish state has transferred a large number of competences to the Autonomous Governments.
agreements work, if the trade unions and the employers’ associations collaborate, migrants will see that they can legally enter our country” (El País, 12/05/2004).

Hence, the new Regulation n. 2393 of 2004, which was based on a large consensus among the trade unions, the employers’ associations and the Socialist government, was conceived as a systematic reform that included different admission channels, including an individual regularisation mechanism (arraigo), and recognised the prominence of labour migration. Thus, the preamble of the Spanish immigration regulation n. 2393 of 30/12/2004 stated, “The architecture of the current migration system and the admission of new immigrants into our country are fundamentally based on the need to fill job vacancies”. Additionally, the Socialist government transferred immigration competences from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs by creating a special Secretary of State for Immigration and Emigration, whereas the Ministry of the Interior maintained its competences in preventing illegal migration and continued to be responsible for the asylum procedure. The creation of the new Secretary of State reflected a clear intention to give certain priorities to the regulation of labour migration by turning immigration more into a matter of labour than of national security. In this respect, a stakeholder of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration stated, “It is important where migration management is located […] Spain has clearly bet, and I think correctly, on the Ministry of Labour and Immigration because migration flows to Spain are predominantly labour migration flows” (MTIN, 5/10/2011).

Clearly, the main objective of the new regulation was to provide the formal tools to readjust the mismatch between labour demand and supply, which is deeply embedded in the structure of the Spanish production system. Many of the key informants interviewed for this report have highlighted the relevance of this point. According to a representative of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration, many young natives prefer to be unemployed rather than to take jobs below their “acceptance threshold” (MTIN, 11/10/2011). Likewise, the interviewed human resources manager of an important Spanish restaurant chain stated the following in reference to Spain: “We do not produce electronic chips. We are a service industry […] However, the social conditions of the restaurant business cause people to not want to work in this sector” (RESTAURANT, 2/11/2011). Foreign labour demand concerns mainly but not only low skilled jobs. According to several observers, Spain is also affected by a worrying lack of native workers with specific medium-level skills, which is embedded in the poor performance of the vocational training provided by the Spanish education system. The human resources manager of a large Spanish energy business stated, “In Spain, vocational training is bad […] There is a very deep mismatch between the market and the education system” (ENERGY, 6/10/2011).

The predominance of labour migration over other types of migration flows during an era of spectacular economic growth turned Spain into one of the major labour importers in the European Union. Things changed suddenly after the big economic crisis of 2008. In fact, in that year, Spain did not only experience the consequences of the global financial crisis but also a “national” economic crisis, which resulted from the bursting of the Spanish construction bubble that had boosted the economy in prior years. The economic downturn in 2008-2009 quickly transformed one of the major labour importers in the European Union into one of the European countries with the highest unemployment rate of natives and foreigners.

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3 “En la arquitectura del sistema migratorio actual la admisión de nuevos inmigrantes en nuestro país está fundamentalmente basada en la necesidad de cobertura de puestos de trabajo”. (Translation of the author).

4 The new Secretary of State had competences that were previously shared by the General Direction for the Organization of Migration Flows, the Institute of Migrations and Social Services and the Government Delegation for Foreigners and Immigration.
(17 and 30 per cent, respectively, in 2010). Strikingly, the recently approved Immigration Law n. 2/2009 followed by Immigration Regulation n. 557 of 30 June 2011 did not change much of the existing labour migration regime. The maintenance of the status quo did not only reinforce the connection between immigration and the labour market, but it also revealed the legislature’s intention “to consolidate a model based on regularity and linked to the labour market”. In other words, and despite the economic crisis, labour migration is still considered to be the main pillar of the Spanish migration regime. The main goal of this report is to analyse the major components of such a model as well as its strengths and weaknesses, especially considering the consequences of the economic crisis of 2008.


The two main recruitment channels in the Spanish labour migration regime are the General Regime (Regimén General) and the contingente.

According to the General Regime, individuals are recruited based on an employer’s nominative and individual application to hire a certain worker. In this case, recruitment depends on the ‘national employment situation’ (Situación Nacional de Empleo) based on a preliminary labour market check. Before hiring a foreign worker, employers have to check with the corresponding office of the Public Employment Service in the Autonomous Community5 whether there are Spanish or EU citizens available for the offered job. In such a case, the employment offer will be publicly made at the national level through all of the channels available to the Public Employment Service. After 25 days, the employer has to communicate the results of the selection procedure to the corresponding Employment Office. If no native or EU foreigner can perform the offered occupation, the office expedites a negative certification, which will include the number of potential workers who applied for the offered position, the number of unemployed people registered in the province who could perform the offered job and all of the workers who could be employed in the offered occupation after being adequately trained. A negative certification with the aforementioned information will be evaluated by the Secretary of State for Immigration, who has the final word on the employers’ applications.

5 Please note that the competences on active labour market policies have been transferred to the Autonomous Communities. Thus, the Autonomous Employment Services are responsible for issuing the negative certification for the employment of foreign workers. Nevertheless, the work and residence permits are issued by the central government. The only exception is currently represented by Catalonia, where the Autonomic Government is entitled to issue initial work permits, as will be explained later in this section.
Figure 1: Individual Recruitment in the Spanish Labour Migration Regime

The labour market check can be avoided only for occupations included in the “Catalogue-of-Hard-to-Find-Occupations” (Catalago de Ocupaciones de Dificil Cobertura). If a vacancy refers to a job type listed in the Catalogue, an employer can immediately start the hiring process undergoing without the labour market check. In this case, an employer presents a formal recruitment offer. Based on this offer, the immigrant has to apply for an entry visa to work in Spain in his or her country of origin. The Catalogue is elaborated jointly by the National Employment Service, the Autonomus Employment Service and the Secretary of State of Immigration. The Autonomous Communities elaborate a pre-catalogue that is then sent to and evaluated by the central office of the National Employment Service. The Catalogue has to fulfil fixed criteria. It will not include those occupations that could be filled by unemployed people who have participated in occupational training sessions organised by the Public Employment Service. In the last stage, the content of the Catalogue has to be approved by the Tripartite Labour Commission of Immigration (Comisión Laboral Tripartita de Inmigración), which is composed of the representatives of the employers’ associations, the trade unions and the Secretary of State of Immigration. The final version of the Catalogue is published every three months as a resolution of the Public Employment Service.6

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6 Please note, that until 2011, the elaboration of the Catalogue was based on a top-down procedure. The central office of the Public Employment Service elaborated a type of pre-catalogue based on the available statistical information that was sent to the Employment Services of the Autonomous Communities. The provisions contained in the pre-catalogue were then negotiated with the employers’ associations and the trade unions. The pre-catalogue was changed according to the labour offers submitted to the offices of the Employment Services in each Autonomous Community and sent back to the central office of the Public Employment Service in Madrid, where the final version of the Catalogue was elaborated.
In contrast to the Catalogue, which regulates individual recruitment, the *contigente* allows Spanish companies to recruit a group of people to be employed in a specific business to perform a specific type of occupation. In this case, foreign workers are not selected based on nominal recruitment but on generic offers in the country of origin. Yearly, the *contigente* also offers entry slots for temporary jobs in the agricultural sector for a maximum of nine months and a certain number of stable occupations. Since 2006, the number of available stable and temporary occupations has been published yearly by the Secretary of State of Immigration.\(^7\)

In general, recruitment is possible only in the countries which have signed bilateral agreements with Spain related to the recruitment of foreign workers (see also point 5 in this report). The selection process occurs in the country of origin after the interested businesses have submitted their formal requests for workers to the Secretary of State. The selection commission is composed of representatives of the Spanish government and delegates of the country of origin. Additionally, the selection commission may include (though it is not obliged so) representatives of the employer and employers’ associations. The selected workers sign a pre-contract in the country of origin, and the real contract is then signed in Spain. The contract must contain the worker’s net salary provisions, which have to respect the minimum salary conditions established by the collective agreements signed between the employers and trade unions of each job category. It is also important to note that the *contigente* also accounts for the possibility of training foreign workers in their countries of origin.

As it can be seen in table 1, the number of stable occupations offered through this channel was relatively low compared with the initial work permits issued between 2006 and 2010:

Table 1: *Contingente* of foreign workers (2006-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Initial Work Permit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>16,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>27,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>15,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mtin

For this reason, the *contingente* is considered a small engine in the overall Spanish recruitment system. A delegate of the Public Employment Service highlighted this secondary role stating, “The only important thing about the *contingente* is the name” (SEPE, 28/11/2011).

In contrast to other Southern European countries, the regular entry channels of the new Spanish admission regime have never been limited to the recruitment of low-skilled foreign workers. As a matter of fact, the *contingente* and the Catalogue can also include high-skilled occupations, such as doctors and engineers. Additionally, since 2007, Spain has used a special migration avenue to hire high-skilled workers, called the “Unit for Large Companies and Strategic Groups” (*Unidad de Grandes Empresas*). The Unit was first introduced by ministerial agreement and allows Spanish businesses to recruit high-skilled workers from non-EU countries under certain conditions without undergoing a labour market check. One of the main reasons for creating this department in 2007 was that the negotiations concerning the European directive on high-skilled workers in Brussels were proceeding more slowly than expected. At the same time, some large Spanish firms needed a rapid supply of high-skilled workers for their businesses. Thus, the government created the Unit to provide large Spanish companies with a faster procedure for recruiting high-skilled workers during a period in which most of the offices of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration were overwhelmed by a high number of applications. As a Spanish state official noted, “The idea behind the *Unidad de Grandes Empresas* is that there are strategic groups which need a more agile recruitment channel. In this respect, the Spanish public administration shows its intention to collaborate in this task. We are talking about strategic groups which include universities, large companies, and artistic collectives” (MTIN, 5/10/2011). In 2009, the Unit was institutionalised as part of the Spanish admission system by the new immigration law n. 2/2009. Two years later, the Spanish government adopted the EU directive on the recruitment of high-skilled foreign workers as part of its national legislation. Under the EU system, however, the employer has to perform a labour market check, which makes the “Blue Card” less attractive for employers than the “Large Companies Unit”, where the absence of a labour market test favours a quick

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8 This regulation is mainly addressed to large companies. Businesses that intend to recruit workers through this Unit must fulfill at least one of the following conditions: i) have more than five hundred workers; ii) have an international business volume of 200 million euros per year in Spain; or iii) not less of one million Euros of foreign investments in the three years preceding the application. Additionally, the businesses have to demonstrate that, in the three years before the application, they benefited from foreign investments of no less than one million euros. In the case of small- and medium-sized companies, the recruitment of foreign workers is limited to the sectors of information technology, renewable energy, the environment, water, health, biopharmacy, biotechnology, aeronautics and aerospace.

9 A detailed list of the interviews conducted with Spanish and Canadian key-informants is provided at the end of this article.
and less bureaucratised micro-matching between labour supply and demand (UGE, 12/07/2011).

Besides the individual or group employment by a Spanish company or employer, the Spanish labour migration regulation also accounts for the self-employment option. In this case, however, labour migrants have to demonstrate that they have: i) the credentials required for the proposed activity; ii) the necessary financial funding to start their business and, since 2011; iii) the capacity to create new jobs through their business. As noted by a Spanish civil servant, the self-employment option does not seem to be very appealing to foreigners willing to come to Spain. The reasons for this do not only lie in the restrictiveness of the entry criteria, but also in the same Spanish production system, which is characterized by a high demand of low-skilled jobs whereas self-employment (especially the creation of business) is often focused on medium- and high-skilled activities (MTIN, 17/11/2011). This makes it difficult “to ground a business in a country in which the majority of the requested occupations are low-skilled occupations” (MTIN, 3/06/2011).

As it was seen, the recruitment of foreign workers in Spain mainly depends on the institutional cooperation between the Secretary of State of Immigration, the National and the Autonomous Employment Services, with the support of employers’ associations and trade unions. Only recently, Autonomous Communities were further involved into what is predominantly a competence of the central state. The Generalitat (the Catalonian Autonomous Government) was given the competence to proceed and issue initial work permits for those foreign workers who will be employed in Catalonia (Art. 138 Estatut de Catalunya). The acquisition of this competence has been described as part of a general process of administrative simplification, in which the immigrant deals with one administration only (GEN1 7/07/2011). In this process, the state and the autonomous administrations are completely independent one from another: the Autonomous Community cannot intervene in the state’s decision to issue a residence permit, whereas the state cannot intervene in the Autonomy Community’s decision to issue a work permit. Certainly, the starting phase of such a competence transfer was not easy. Nevertheless, the interviewed delegates from the autonomous administrations were satisfied with the final result of the process, which was also facilitated by the small volume of requests.

All in all, the Spanish case reflects an effort to establish a rational entry policy which combines individual and collective recruitment for stable workers, temporary recruitment schemes and a fast-track entry channel for high-skilled workers. In the following section, we will analyse whether, to which extent and on which criteria the Spanish regime succeeded in matching labour offer and demand at least before the crisis of 2008.

3. Qualitative versus Quantitative Criteria

The Spanish labour migration regime is based on a mix of quantitative and qualitative criteria. Where quantitative criteria are used, the regime’s regulations show a clear preference for provisional numbers of entry slots instead of caps. The contingente, for instance, determines a yearly number of entry slots for stable and temporary occupations, whose number can be changed depending on the state of the labour market. According to a high-ranking state

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10 For the moment, Catalonia is the sole Autonomous Community that has implemented this new procedure. The Autonomous Community of Andalusia also foresees implementing this competence into its autonomous regulation but has not done so yet.
official of the Spanish General Directorate of Immigration, the existence of provisional entry slots allows for more recruitment flexibility, whereas “the existence of caps forces you to calculate efficiently the caps, which is not always easy.” Thus, caps are seen less as an instrument of efficient recruitment and more as an instrument of control that would stiffen the system as a whole (MTIN, 5/10/2011). However, there have also been state officials who criticised the extreme flexibility of the Spanish *contingente*. For instance, according to a senior advisor of the Public Employment Service, the absence of caps (and therefore the lack of limitations) reflects an unwillingness to pursue any form of planning: “To limit means to plan ahead. In Spain, there has been no planning in this sense […] I would prefer that the key did not lie in the hands of the employers, that there were planning and quotas and that the system was transparent. The point system is better and more democratic” (SEPE 28/11/2011).

The lack of rational planning in the Spanish migration regime was also outlined by the delegate of the Spanish Doctors’ Trade Union: “In 2006, the increase in the number of immigrants together with the increasing number of hospitals built in the Autonomous Communities produced the sensation that more doctors were needed […]. Now that the Ministry has decided to return to the previous situation, the sensation is that there are too many doctors in Spain” (CESM, 17/10/2011).

The Catalogue represents the most relevant qualitative selection criterion because it allows faster employment procedures for certain occupations. As previously noted, the type of occupations included in the Catalogue depended on the estimations based on the national employment situation. However, more than one interviewed state official pointed out that a general policy of *laissez faire*, which favoured the inclusion of as many occupations as possible, existed during the years of the economic boom. Only recently have political criteria clearly predominated in the elaboration of the Catalogue. The length of the Catalogue and the number of professions included in it has been reduced considerably. Currently, most of the professions in the Catalogue are related to the health sector and the shipping industry. For instance, lifeguards and electricians have not been included in the most recent Catalogue, even though the demand for these occupations exists. Including these occupations would have incurred high political costs at a time when Spain is experiencing one of the highest unemployment rates in its history (MTIN, 3/6/2011).

Finally, Spain has never implemented recruitment programs for specific types of occupations. The only example in this respect could be the job search visa which was introduced by regulation n. 2393/2004. Formally, the job search visa allowed foreigners to search actively for jobs in Spain for three months after their arrival. However, this type of visa was only issued for the sectors and occupations in which lack of labour was recognised by the government. Eventually, the use of job search visa was limited to a very limited number of slots in the domestic sector and only used for a couple of years.

The Spanish regime also accounts for qualitative criteria based on the workers’ nationalities. According to the bilateral agreements signed by their governments with Spain, Peruvians and Chilean citizens are allowed to access the Spanish labour market without undergoing a labour market check. Moreover, the children of Spanish citizens living abroad can access the Spanish labour market.

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11 In fact, some rough estimates for nominal recruitments were only provided by the Secretary of State in 2006 and 2007.

12 In this respect, the author was informed about the existence of an agreement between the trade unions and employers of the shipping industry which allows some professions such as boat mechanics and boat cooks, to be included in the Catalogue. The agreement aimed at facilitating the recruiting procedures for those employers who decided to keep their boats under the Spanish flag. However, according to the information obtained, the agreement will be withdrawn in the next future.
labour market without passing through the labour market check. Finally, the limitation of the \textit{contingente} to the third-world countries with which bilateral agreements have been signed can also be considered a qualitative criterion (and positive selection for the citizens of these countries). By contrast, there are no explicit criteria which produce a negative selection, although the new employment stop for Romanian citizens in 2011 could be considered a type of negative selection towards Romanian workers with respect to other European citizens.

The requirement of foreign credentials recognition seems to be particularly relevant in the case of high-skilled occupations in the public health sector. In the case of low-skilled and medium-skilled qualifications, which represent the majority of the occupations demanded by the Spanish labour market, foreign credentials only need to be recognised in those occupations for which a certain degree of monitoring responsibility is required. To conclude, language has never been a selection criterion in Spanish migration policies. Only recently has language become a selection criterion for the recruitment of foreign doctors who want to start their medical training in Spain after finishing their medical degrees in a foreign country. Hence, a doctor from a country whose official language is not Spanish has to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the Spanish language (Level C1 or C2) according to the classification of the Cervantes Institute or the Official Language Institute in the applicant’s country of origin. It is worth noting that the language criterion is not a consequence of the economic crisis. Rather, the requirement resulted from the enforcement of the European directive on the regulated professions. However, this innovation could also be seen as a form of positive discrimination because Latin Americans are implicitly favoured by the language requirement.

4. Matching Labour Offer and Demand

The Spanish migration regime is a demand-oriented regime in which labour market needs predominate. As stated by a high-ranking state official of the Public Employment Service, the national employment situation and the employer’s interests were the driving forces of the Spanish recruitment system (SEPE, 28/11/2011). However, the predominance of the demand factor is confirmed by the general request for a labour market check and the central role played by the employers in the labour recruitment procedure. By contrast, there is no points-based system, whereas the use of channels driven by formal offers, such as the job search visa, was limited to a few years and only possible for certain occupations and geographical regions. A state official of the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Immigration explained, “The job search visa represents a variant of the \textit{contingente} and cannot be compared with the job search visa that exists in other countries in which the migrant looks for a job” (MTIN, 3/06/2011). In sum, it can be argued that, although the Spanish labour regime was more open than those of the other European member states to foreign labour, the regime still adhered closely to the European philosophy, which states that the entry of foreign workers should be closely linked to the employment situation and the market demand. In fact, residence permits for work purposes in Spain have to be renewed two times before becoming long-term residence permits and renewals always depend on the pre-existence of a labour relationship. This procedure reflects certain reluctance to permanent migration schemes in Spain that still characterizes most EU migration regimes. The lack of formal offer-oriented channels has been outlined as one of the system’s weaknesses. A state official of the \textit{Generalitat} stated, “With respect to the Spanish immigration model, what is conditioning us is the inertia of our tradition. Spain has to understand that it is not only the labour market that sets the trend. Spain does not know how to compete for human capital. We still understand immigration as a problem of social services instead of as a resource” (GEN2, 22/06/2011).
Employers’ and employers’ associations played a very important role in the Spanish labour migration regime. As the interviewed member of CECOT, the Catalan employers’ association, explained, “Our participation in the recruitment procedure in the country of origin was related to our role as intermediaries for those businesses that asked us to find workers with a given profile. In particular, we were asked to recruit medium-skilled workers, such as welders, tinkers or bus drivers. We were never asked to recruit high-skilled workers. When we could not find the requested workers in Spain, we checked the Catalogue and went to Eastern European countries to search for workers. When we had a special office for this goal in the country of origin, as we had in Bulgaria, we also used the individual recruitment channel. Otherwise, we resorted to the contingente (I mean, to the ministry)” (CECOT, 21/06/2011).

Despite the significant role played by employers in the overall recruitment procedure, interviewed civil servants outlined that the jobs included into the contingente and the Catalogue did not always reflect the market demand but were much more the outcome of a political negotiation, in which the Autonomous Employment Services played a major role. For instance, almost all of the interviewees from the public administration and the trade unions noted that the first few catalogues were extremely long. This length mainly depended on whether and how the Autonomous Communities intervened in the construction of the Catalogue. According to the representative of the trade union UGT, during the economic outburst, some Autonomous Communities “included an infinite list of occupations in the Catalogue, and nothing was done to stop this practice” (UGT, 27/5/2011). The Catalogue was also criticised for being too specific for the ‘generalised’ needs of the Spanish labour market. In fact, the job categories included in the Catalogue refer to specific types of jobs, even though the greater part of the demand for labour in Southern Europe (including Spain) concerns unspecified, low-skilled activities in agriculture, domestic service and construction. Only in the case of large companies, the application for very specific positions seems allows speeding up recruitment procedures even in case a negative certification is necessary. As the human resources manager of a large communication company stated, “If you want to recruit somebody with a very specific professional background to do a certain job (…) it is not too difficult to demonstrate that we effectively need somebody with a profile that we do not have here in Spain (COMM, 12/11/2012)”. Additionally, the representatives of the Spanish trade unions have reported that the use of the Catalogue is not necessarily exempt from fraud. As a senior Spanish state official has noted, many employers have recruited foreign workers through the Catalogue specifically to avoid the labour market check, and these same workers have then been employed in positions that differed from the positions for which they were originally recruited.

By contrast, more satisfaction was showed with respect to the implementation of the contingente, which “responded to the needs of large and established businesses that demanded special treatment” (SEPE, 28/11/2011). Even though the initial implementation phase was difficult, the contingente is currently considered by the public administration to be a “rapid instrument that goes well and is completely fitted to the needs of the labour market” (MTIN, 3/6/2011), where the public administration and the employers complement each other. On the one hand, the interviewed human resources managers were quite satisfied with the functioning of the contingente, particularly with the role played by the Spanish public administration. The CECOT delegate stated, “At that time, the advantages of the system offered by the Ministry were that it allowed businesses to respond to the problem related to a serious and quite urgent labour demand” (CECOT, 21/06/2011). Several interviews showed that both the public administration and employers agree on this point. The human resources manager of the energy business argued that, without the help of the public administration, recruitment in this
form would not have been possible. Additionally, a delegate of the General Directorate of Immigration stated, “The work performed by the employers’ association is very important, because the employers that search in the countries of origin and create determinate networks” (MTIN, 5/10/2011). In a similar vein, the human resources manager of the restaurant chain highlighted the positive experience of the *contingente*, which, in his opinion, reflected a “model within a legal framework which allowed us to do things in the proper way” (RESTAURANT, 2/11/2011). Satisfaction was also expressed with respect to the *contingente* for temporary workers. Certainly, the recruitment of temporary workers still has weaknesses that are mainly related to the length of the procedure. In addition, the success of these procedures depends primarily on the region in which they are implemented (González-Enriquez, Reynes Ramón 2011). Nonetheless, employers still show quite a high level of satisfaction with regard to this recruitment method, which has been considered to provide a certain degree of security and protection for both the employers and the workers.

5. Regularisation Processes as Functional Equivalents in the Spanish Labour Migration Regime

Regularisation processes deserve special attention in the analysis of the Spanish labour migration regime. Due to the inefficiency of formal recruitment channels during almost 20 years, they became a key tool for readjusting the balance between ineffective state regulations and the large flow of immigrants. Their function as ‘crisis management’ policy tools must be embedded in the dysfunctional mechanisms that have characterised the Spanish migration regime in the past 20 years. During this time period, irregular migration became a structural component of the Spanish migration regime because of the country’s inadequate recruitment procedures, extended informal economy and insufficient internal controls. In fact, the informal labour market is calculated to be approximately 22 per cent of the national GDP, and it is particularly extended in precarious labour sectors, such as domestic work or construction sectors. These sectors have attracted a large number of irregular migrants. Yet, regularisations seemed to be the most useful tool for rebalancing the contradictions of the Spanish migration regime, where irregularity and informality constantly feed each other.

Since 1985, Spain has conducted six regularisation programmes. Each programme was presented as a special “one-off” measure. The first regularisation programme occurred in 1985-1986 and was followed by others in 1991, 1996, 2000, 2001 and 2005. Most of the processes targeted irregular workers. However, the programmes have sometimes been extended to other migrant categories, such as relatives (1996, 2000 and 2001), asylum seekers (2000) and specific nationalities (e.g., Ecuadorians) (2001). The requirements for applying to the programmes were not always clear. A general condition common to all of the regularisation processes was that applicants had to prove they had been living in Spain prior to a certain date (reference date). The lack of a criminal record was another essential condition for most schemes. In some cases, the application requirements included previous employment as a desirable aspect, but the regularisation of 2005 made the residence permit bindingly dependent on the existence of a work contract and the foreign worker’s registration in the Social Security System. In contrast to previous regularisation processes, the employer had to apply for the regularisation of his or her employees. Legalisation only occurred if the worker had registered in the Social Security System and if the first month’s dues had been paid. For these reasons, the regularisation of 2005 has been described by state officials as a “real” regularisation.
In total, Spain regularised almost 1.2 million immigrants from 1986 to 2005. The 2005 scheme was the most successful one, as it allowed for the regularisation of 578,375 applicants. This process considerably increased the size of the legal immigrant population in Spain. In fact, compared with 2004, in 2005, the number of legal non-EU citizens increased by a total of 653,050. In addition, from 2004-2005, the number of foreign workers registered in the Social Security System increased by a total of 616,655 to 1,757,081 (Finotelli, 2011). In general, the residence permits issued after each regularisation process were valid for one year. Thus, like immigrants in Italy during that time period, a regularised immigrant in Spain had a precarious status and was required to renew his or her permit regularly. In addition, the process excluded a sizeable number of eligible applicants because they lacked the necessary documents, such as the official certificates of their registration to the municipal registry. However, the large number of immigrants who participated and obtained residence permits remains striking. Furthermore, data suggest that most of them could also renew their residence permits in the following years (Finotelli, Arango 2011). Certainly, regularised immigrants are often more exposed than other migrants to the risk of losing their regular status. Furthermore, it should also be noted that having a residence permit does not always prevent an immigrant from working illegally if the internal controls are weak, and there is high demand for labour in the informal sector. However, it can be reasonably assumed that regularisations also contributed to the employment stabilisation of a substantial proportion of the regularised immigrants.

Taking into account that most foreigners now living regularly in Spain experienced a more or less lengthy period of irregularity before getting their first residence permit, regularisations are likely to have allowed not only the legal inclusion but also the stabilisation of almost the half of the total foreign population. The stabilisation function of regularisation processes becomes even clearer when we compare the number of regular foreign residents in 2006 in Spain with the number of regularised immigrants between 2000 and 2005 (the year of the last big regularisation).

Table 4: Foreign population and regularised immigrants in Spain (2000-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Regularised Foreigners 2000-2005</th>
<th>Regular non-EU foreigners 31/12/2006</th>
<th>% of residents regularised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,019,997</td>
<td>2,360,804</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>43,197</td>
<td>52,587</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>127,586</td>
<td>211,325</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>199,152</td>
<td>376,233</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>13,965</td>
<td>28,560</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>30,576</td>
<td>52,760</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>18,938</td>
<td>29,669</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>31,469</td>
<td>60,174</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>17,748</td>
<td>36,499</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>101,474</td>
<td>225,504</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>146,610</td>
<td>543,721</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>22,397</td>
<td>99,526</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>5,936</td>
<td>58,126</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>6,250</td>
<td>90,906</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Spanish Ministry of Labour and Immigration.
In sum, regularisations enabled governments to regain control over the presence of irregular foreigners, helped to stabilise foreign populations and enabled unwanted immigrants, the so-called “wanted but not welcome” (Zolberg 1987) immigrants, to become politically integrated into the formal labour market structures. In this vein, regularisations have helped governments to meet the structural needs of their respective national economies by providing a posteriori the needed foreign labour force when official admission policies failed. In this way, regularisations turned out to be one of the most important mechanisms for repairing the inconsistencies of the Spanish migration regime becoming, like what occurs in other Southern European countries, the main functional equivalent for active labour migration policies in the Spanish regime.\textsuperscript{13}

Most recently, the Spanish government recognised the impossibility of completely preventing irregularities and it introduced the arraigo, a new regularisation procedure that ‘corrects’ irregularities on an individual basis. The arraigo can be obtained by demonstrating either the pre-existence of a work relationship for at least one year in Spain or social integration (essentially in the form of family relationships) for at least three years. After one year, the arraigo can be renewed as any other residence permit under the conditions established by law. The connection of the arraigo to a pre-existing labour relationship turns this tool into a ‘third way’ (Perez Infante 2009: 16) of obtaining a Spanish work permit. However, few work permits have been issued in connection with the arraigo laboral, and this number is much lower than the number of applications. Certainly, the volume of the individual regularisations cannot be compared with the mass regularisation processes of the past. However, the yearly stocks of residence permits always include a remarkable volume of permits for arraigo.\textsuperscript{14} That is why the arraigo as an individual regularisation form can still be considered a major functional equivalent of the formal labour recruitment schemes in the Spanish regime.

6. The External Dimension of Labour Migration Policies

The European Union certainly played a major role in the external dimension of labour migration policies in Spain. As Spanish state officials have noted, the relevance of the European Union can be observed both in the recent transposition of a large number of directives into Spanish law as well as in the recent boost given to high-skilled migration through the creation of the Large Companies Unit (MTIN, 05/10/2011). However, the Spanish government was also able to develop an own, very specific external dimension of migration policies based on the signature of bilateral agreements with third countries to regulate foreign workers recruitment. As can be seen in table 3, to date Spain has signed four different types of bilateral agreements with non-EU countries: 1) The Agreements on the Readmission of Irregular Migrants; 2) The Agreements on the Regulation of Migration Flows; 3) The Framework Agreements on the Cooperation on Immigration Issues (“new generation agreements”) and; 4) The Agreements on Operative Cooperation.

\textsuperscript{13} The number of asylum seekers and family migrants in Spain is still to low to be really considered functional equivalents to the Spanish regime. As far as intra-European mobility is concerned, most of the Spanish migrants who live in Spain are retirees, while labour migration from Romania has been interrupted in 2011 after the Spanish government decided to re-introduce the recruitment stop for Romanian citizens. It must be noted that European citizenship can be of advantage in the case of double citizenship. As stated by a Human Resources manager of a Spanish communication business, hiring high-skilled Latin American citizens to work in Spain is much easier if they also have either the Spanish or another EU citizenship (COMM, 12/11/2012).

\textsuperscript{14} According to the most recent data of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration, the yearly stocks of permits issued for arraigo increased from approximately from 7,200 in 2006 to 76,433 at the end of 2011.
Table 3: Agreement signed by the Spanish government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readmission</th>
<th>Agreements on the regulation of migration flows</th>
<th>Framework Cooperation Agreements in Immigration Matters (&quot;new generation agreements&quot;)</th>
<th>Agreements on Cooperative Cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romania (2006)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Source: Ministry of Labour and Immigration

The first bilateral agreements which Spain signed with non-EU countries focused on fight against irregular migration. By contrast, the first agreements directly addressing the regulation of migration flows were signed in 2001. However, the so-called Plan Africa (Africa Plan) for 2006-2009 marked “a before and afterwards” with respect to the conception of bilateral agreements (Asín Cabrera, 2008: 171). The Plan Africa was part of a new diplomatic effort to foster positive collaborations with African countries. The plan was a political reaction to the clandestine migration movement from Africa to Spain, which peaked from 2005 to 2006. The plan addressed two different groups of countries. The first was the group of countries of ‘priority interest’ and included countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Senegal, Mali, Nigeria and Mauritania. These countries were of strategic importance, because of the relevance of their migration systems, their economic pre-eminence and their cultural links with Spain. The second group was represented by the countries of specific interest which needed a special cooperation scheme with Spain. These countries were “either the origin or transit for irregular immigration,” had “fishing or tourism potential” or carried “intense historic, cultural or [cooperative] relations” with Spain. (http://www.maec.es/es/Home/Paginas/20060605_planafricaingles.aspx).

In order to foster cooperation schemes with African countries, the Spanish government opened new embassies in Mali, Sudan, and Cabo Verde as well as new offices focusing on technical cooperation in Cabo Verde, Ethiopia and Senegal. In this respect, it is worth mentioning the creation of a new Labour Office in Dakar, which received the support of the ILO and was involved in the pilot project with Senegal. In the framework of the Plan Africa, Spain signed “new generation agreements” specifically aimed at combating irregular migration with the help of effective labour migration policies. The aim of these new agreements was not only to respond to the labour needs of the receiving country but also to limit the brain drain phenomena and the loss of human capital (Ferrero-Turrión, Lopez-Sala 2009). Spain signed the ‘new generation agreements’ with Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania Mali, Cabo Verde and Niger.
These agreements included training options in the country of origin in order to ensure the adequate participation of the workers in the Spanish labour market.\footnote{At this stage, it should also be noted that the increasing cooperation with selected countries also had effects on the visa supply trend. Due to the increasing cooperation on immigration issues between Spain and Morocco, for instance, the number of tourist visa supplied by Spanish consulates in Morocco has been increasing considerably since 2004.}

Bilateral agreements reflect a new ‘global perspective’ on immigration, which for the first time explicitly linked the need to combat irregular migration with the imperative to pursue a positive regulation of labour migration flows. Additionally, for this reason, bilateral agreements were considered to be win-win deals for all of the parties involved. A highly ranked state official of the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Immigration stated: “The signing of bilateral agreements always entails political compensation for the country of origin. Sometimes, this compensation does not need to be explicit. Sometimes, it is simply good for some countries to show their own citizens that they have signed these types of contracts with Spain” (MTIN, 5/10/2011). Another state official of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration highlighted the relevance of political and business relations between two countries: “The success and the feasibility of bilateral agreements depend on the compatibility of the two regimes involved. It also depends on the political relations between the countries and those between the two countries’ business sectors. Moreover, bilateral relations allow for more permanent relations. For instance, we are currently creating a joint system with some Latin American countries for recognising work experience. For this reason, I think that coordination between the Employment Services of two countries is an important factor” (MTIN, 5/10/2011). Finally, the relevance of good bilateral relations was also highlighted by the business managers interviewed for this report: “It is only possible to implement recruitment policies with countries which have good relationships with Spain. We have tried to do something with Mali, but the Ministry of Labour and Immigration told us to give up” (ENERGY, 6/10/2011).

To sum up, the change in the conception of international cooperation though bilateral agreements reflected the transformation of Spanish immigration policies from a security-dominated idea of immigration into a view of immigration as a labour resource. However, the economic crisis decreased the intensity of Spain’s cooperation with non-EU countries, considerably weakening the external dimension of its immigration policies. No additional bilateral agreements have been signed since the crisis, which might not only affect the efficiency of recruitment but also of the struggle against irregular migration in the times to come.

7. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Spanish Labour Migration Regime

For almost a decade, the Spanish labour migration regime seemed to have achieved an almost perfect match between labour supply and demand. Its success was embedded in a period of political stability and intense economic growth which was highly dependent on the availability of a cheap labour force to compensate for the low level of technological capital in the Spanish economy (Aja et al. 2010). Especially after 2004, the government’s openness towards a reform of the immigration policy which strengthened active labour governance helped to create a model in which the employers’ interests clearly prevailed. The ‘philosophy’ of the new labour migration governance approach was based on a wide institutional consensus. In fact, the immigration regulation of 2004 strengthened the institutional dialogue by reinforcing
the Higher Council of Immigration and creating the Tripartite Labour Commission of Immigration in 2005. Most of the stakeholders interviewed for this report agreed that one of the main pillars of the Spanish migration regime was the high degree of consensus among the government, the employers’ associations and the trade unions: “The Spanish migration regime is unique, and its uniqueness lies in the consensus among the stakeholders” (SEPE, 28/11/2011).^16^ Apart from a high degree of institutional consensus, the implementation of the Spanish labour migration model could also count on an efficient state bureaucracy and, particularly, on a high degree of coordination between the national and autonomous administrative machine through the different employment services (Finotelli, 2012). Furthermore, the effort concentrated on signing bilateral agreements should be mentioned. In fact, the Spanish government’s diplomatic contacts with third countries have proven to be a fundamental step in the correct implementation of the *contigente*. All of the interviewed stakeholders and business managers have confirmed that good diplomatic relations with third countries are highly relevant to effective labour migration governance, especially if active immigration policies are combined with joint efforts in the struggle against irregular migration.

Overall, the new Spanish labour migration regime represented a praiseworthy example of efficient labour migration governance in Southern Europe. During a certain period of time, the combination of different recruitment tools was considered more efficient than more obscure recruitment systems such as the Italian one (Finotelli, 2012). The Spanish experiment has also shown that feasible labour migration governance is a cross-sectorial policy which involves other types of policies, such as foreign policy or labour market policy, and different types of actors. It was the economic crisis which eventually showed the shortcomings of the Spanish labour migration regime. In a very short period of time, Spain became a prime example of the effects of an economic downturn on a strong employer-oriented labour migration model which emphasised the recruitment of foreign low-skilled workers. The reasons lie in the same structure of the Spanish economic system. As experts have explained, one of the main characteristics of the Spanish economy is its elasticity and the close dependence between employment and GDP. There is, therefore, a higher potential both to create and destroy a large number of occupations in a short period of time in the Spanish economy than in other economies. In other words, the spectacular increase in unemployment was mainly due to the breakdown of the construction sector and the elasticity of the Spanish labour market, which boosts unemployment during economic downturns.

[^16^: It remains to be seen whether the creation of the Large Companies Unit in 2007 was the only unilateral policy measure taken ‘outside’ the institutional consensus, as the trade unions were excluded from the decision.]
The increase in the unemployment rate was considered the final proof of Spain’s failure to properly assess and admit the appropriate number and types of foreign workers over the long term. As a Spanish civil servant explained, “the system has failed because it was excessively focused on the need for employment and on the employers’ needs. Employers were happy because they could simply pay the minimum salary established by the collective agreements” (SEPE, 28/11/2011). Moreover, several stakeholders and interviewed persons have referred to the poor estimation capacity (or will) of the governments or the tendency to estimate based on “sensations” (CESM, 17/10/2011). As previously noted, the booming economy, the withdrawal of rigid estimation criteria and the high degree of consensus among the government, the employers and the trade unions favoured a flexible interpretation of the contingente and a generous elaboration of the Catalogue. It is also worth noting that little attention has been devoted to human capital. In fact, most of the jobs offered in Spain were low-skilled occupations in the construction and service industries. Although this selection approach has great advantages if employers need a rapid supply of labour, it can also turn into a heavy burden in times of economic crisis. Currently, unemployment is particularly high among less educated migrants, who are less flexible in times of economic change and experience greater difficulties than other migrants in finding new occupations. The challenge in re-employing unemployed foreign workers supported the arguments of those espousing an immigration model oriented more towards human capital, in which recruitment depends on immigrants’ skills rather than on the national employment situation.

However, it is important to observe that labour migration governance depends not only on well-designed admission policies, but also on the structural conditions of the production system in a given country. The Spanish one is characterized mainly by small- and medium-sized enterprises and families have more difficulties than larger firms in recruiting foreign workers through the official recruitment schemes. Some 51 per cent of the firms on the Central Register of Companies do not have more than one registered employee. In addition, 53 per cent of the registered firms are active in the food and restaurant business (mainly small restaurants) as well as transport and personal services. This ‘molecular’ production structure
does not only hinder official recruitment schemes based on a foregoing estimation of labour market needs, but it clearly favours informal employment strategies. As a matter of fact, informal employment is particularly attractive for occupations which require a higher degree of flexibility and are located in sectors particularly difficult to control. Examples of these activities include domestic service or renovation of interiors, which are more protected from controls because of their ‘private’ character.

Currently, it is still too early to tell how long the current crisis will last, and what its effects on immigration regulation will be. For the time being, the new government has relegated labour migration governance into a secondary position. In fact, one of the first decisions taken by the new Spanish Prime Minister was to change the name of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration into the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, in which immigration issues have a secondary importance. Moreover, it does not seem that the present government has the intention to break the close relationship between the demand for labour and immigration which has characterised the Spanish regime to date. However, it would be a mistake to face the crisis with the short-term perspective which was used to exploit the economic boom. It is out of question that Spain urgently needs to undergo structural changes to increase its technology level and to diversify its economic structure, which was too focused on construction and services for a long time. If these changes are to occur, the structural need of low-skilled workers should be combined with increasing attention for human capital development in order to respond more effectively to the needs of a more diversified and demanding economy. A possible strategy could be the creation of a “hybrid selection system” (Papademetriou et al. 2010) of labour migration, able to select both low-skilled and high-skilled workers or to mix employer-led and offer-led elements.

Certainly, changes will have to be negotiated with social actors which still have significant influence on the design of labour migration policies. This is, for instance, the case of Spanish trade unions which strongly defend a demand-oriented model since a worker’s security is granted only “when he or she can enter the country with a contract in his or her hand” (UGT, 27/05/2011). Finally, the struggle against irregular migration and informal employment must not be abandoned. Otherwise, individual regularisations may become consolidated as functional equivalents to formal admission policies.

All in all, the consequences of the economic crisis pose challenges which require political elites who are willing to assess the real impact of immigration on a domestic labour market not only in the short and medium term, but also in the long term. Time will show whether the Spanish crisis provided the chance to seriously think about a more efficient model of labour migration governance or whether it simply put the word “end” after a spectacular and (almost) unique decade of demographic and economic growth.
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<table>
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<th>No.</th>
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<th>Quoted as</th>
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