



C4i. Communication for integration

Rumours identified

Bilbao City Council
Department of Equality, Cooperation and
Citizenship

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



Implemented
by the Council of Europe



The following is a list of rumours and stereotypes identified in the city of Bilbao regarding the foreign population. The second section sets out the arguments corresponding to those myths that are most widespread in society.

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| Myth 1 | We cannot take in any more immigrants; there are too many of them |
| Myth 2 | Immigrants live on benefits and abuse them |
| Myth 3 | Immigrants take our jobs |
| Myth 4 | Immigrants increase chauvinism and gender violence |
| Myth 5 | Immigrants do not want to integrate |
| Myth 6 | Immigrants are abusing the Basque health service and causing hospital emergency departments to collapse |
| Myth 7 | Immigrant pupils lower education standards and create ghettos in schools |
| Myth 8 | Immigrants take up social housing; they have preference and are more likely to get a flat than Basques |
| Myth 9 | Immigrants live in cramped and poor conditions. This drives up rents and pushes down property prices in the areas where they live. |
| Myth 10 | Immigration will put religious issues back on the agenda and halt the path to secularism |
| Myth 11 | Immigrants take up too much public space and make bad use of it |
| Myth 12 | Immigrants do not play by the rules; they are uncivilised |

IMMIGRANTS LIVE ON BENEFITS AND ABUSE THEM



1. In the Basque Country, payment of benefits is regulated: they go not to those who want them, but to those who are eligible and who need them. Of course, no system is perfect. However, it is shortfalls in the legislation that make a mockery of it, not necessarily 'immigrants'. If an immigrant receives benefits to which they are not entitled, just like when a native does, what we have is not 'an immigrant', but an opportunist. In this case, anti-fraud checks should take place.

2. People do not live on benefits; they survive. Nobody, if they can help it, wants to live on benefits because they only give you so much. Currently, the minimum guaranteed income (or basic income support) is 88% of the minimum wage (SMI) for those living alone, which can increase to a maximum of 125% of SMI for those living with at least two other people. In 2014 the SMI is fixed at €645.30 per month. This means that a single person can receive a maximum of €567.86 per month, and a family of three or more, a maximum of €806.62 per month.

3. There are also other types of benefits that complement the above. For example, 8% of immigrants in the Basque Autonomous Community (CAPV) applied for emergency social assistance in 2010.

4. It is quite clear that immigrants do not come to the Basque Country for benefits, but to look for work. In 2013 Bilbao lost 5.5% of its immigrant population, or 1,668 people. Why did they leave? Because although there were still benefits, there were fewer jobs as a result of the economic crisis.

5. So do immigrants live on benefits? No; like natives, they live principally off work. Migration is linked almost exclusively to employment; the opportunity to build, through work, a better life somewhere else. There are only a few cases of tourist migration or people migrating on a whim.

6. Furthermore, every move made by immigrants is dependent on or linked to employment, except for the so-called non-profit residence permit, aimed at those who come to live in this country and have sufficient means to support themselves without working. They must have 2,130 euros per month to obtain this type of permit. Only a minority, a very small

minority, have 2,130 euros per month without working. We are not talking about the typical immigrant.

7. The other permits are also linked to employment:

- employed residence and work permit;
- self-employed residence and work permit;
- cross-border permit;
- temporary residence and research permit;
- residence and work permit for highly qualified professionals;
- residence and work permit for transnational service provision;
- residence and work permit granted in exceptional circumstances.

8. In addition, as if the above were not enough, **renewal of the permits is also linked to employment.** The requirements are a minimum contribution period (as a general rule, 6 months per year), a salary above the minimum wage and that the business owner that issues the contract has sufficient means to meet the obligations derived therefrom; i.e., to pay wages and social security contributions.

9. Family reunification procedures are also linked to employment. To bring their spouse or children into the country, immigrants must prove that they have sufficient livelihoods, obtained through work, and adequate housing.

10. Furthermore, if it were true that they are here for benefits, why are there fewer immigrants in the Basque Country than in other parts of Spain? Comparatively, the Basque Country is the Autonomous Community with the most generous benefits, and here immigration accounts for 6.9% of the population, half the national average (12.2%).

11. Benefits are an investment in that they contribute to social cohesion, as demonstrated in the Nordic countries, to which we are thankfully somewhat similar. In fact, our benefits are admired in other parts of the country and are similar, but not identical, to the more advanced and developed systems in central and northern Europe.

12. Although everybody focuses on benefits, **all serious studies and reports show that the economic contribution made by immigrants by far outweighs the cost.** Just like us, they pay a multitude of indirect taxes every day.

13. At present they receive a significant proportion of benefits, but this is because they are vulnerable, not because they are immigrants. The same is true of our own socially excluded people. Social cohesion means both including our own people and integrating immigrants; they are two sides of the same coin.

14. There is a more sophisticated version of this myth, which is that benefits should be for everyone, but at times of crisis this is not possible, and for that reason it is fair to discriminate in favour of natives. When there are enough benefits for everyone, it is right that they should be shared out, but when there are not, natives should take priority, since we are the ones who have moved the country forward. Recent arrivals should come second. There tends to be a major problem with this way of tackling the issue: where do we draw the line? If we use this criteria, **there will always be somebody who has been here longer and therefore has more rights.**

15. In the Basque Country, it has been very important to consider all those who live and work among us as being from this area. Therefore, everybody is from this area. Furthermore, who is more from this area: the native who lived in Bilbao a hundred years ago; those whose parents are both from this area; those who came here in the first wave of immigration at the end of the 19th century; those who came in the second wave of immigration in the 60s; those who used to live here but left; those who came in the latest wave of immigration?

16. Foreigners using services and benefits has more to do with their smaller social and support networks. Approximately one and a half million families have members who are unemployed throughout the country. If there are still few in desperate situations (mostly eviction), it is because many people have a social and family network to fall back on that enables them to endure their situation. Immigrants do not normally have such a network, or if they do, it is not as strong.

IMMIGRANT PUPILS LOWER EDUCATION STANDARDS AND CREATE GHETTOS IN SCHOOLS



1. **Nobody chooses the school to which they send their children, unless it is a private school and they pay for the freedom to choose.** For state schools and independent but state-funded schools, families send their children to the most suitable school depending on where they live, what year they are in, choice of language, etc. In this sense, immigrants do not decide to which school they send their children, much less with the aim of creating a 'ghetto'. **They send them to the most suitable school, just like everyone else.**
2. We need to keep investing in resources to support the management of diversity in the classroom **because children are the future of our society.**
3. We need to be clever, patient, do things for the right reasons and not make the children pay for this situation; they are, on the one hand, victims of it, and on the other hand, the future of our society. **Diversity in schools is a long-term project.**
4. **The lower average achievement of some schools tends to have much more to do with the class disadvantages of the pupils' families than their place of birth.** Social equality and coexistence are impossible in the long term without educational equality. Ghettos have nothing to do with schools, although they may be the result of not guaranteeing **educational equality.**
5. **In many cases, the education standards of the immigrant population are not much lower than those of the native population,** except perhaps in the case of the African population. But the standards of the Latin American or Eastern European populations are sometimes higher. In fact, we import the best from those countries and efforts are under way in Europe to do the same with our own young people. **This is a global process with a domino or ripple effect.**
6. Furthermore, immigrants are sometimes **very overqualified,** but problems in the standardisation of qualifications and the stigma attached to immigrants makes it difficult for

them to enter the workplace and achieve upward mobility. A quarter of the Spanish population is also employed in a job below their professional capacity.

7. **This 'brain drain' represents a serious threat to the economies of these migrants' home countries.** In fact, more than 50% of university professionals in many Latin American and Caribbean countries have left their countries of origin; the majority go to America, the European Union, Australia and Canada. In Haiti and Jamaica, for example, 8 in 10 university graduates live abroad. This is a brain drain because their countries of origin pay for their education and are then deprived of their contributions as skilled professions.

8. **There can be no quality of teaching without investment.** We need to keep investing in the quantity and quality of resources, classrooms, teacher training, prior work with immigrant pupils to bring them up to the level of the class they are joining, etc. **This is an investment in the future**, since they will be the adults of tomorrow.

9. **Studies have identified several causes of the current educational disadvantage suffered by many immigrants.** Some factors are related to the individual circumstances of immigrant pupils: being uprooted, socioeconomic disadvantage, language, community expectations, etc.

10. However, the data shows that education systems are important and that some countries are better than others at reducing these differences, which demonstrates that **policies can significantly influence school results.** Segregation, grouping and separation is a downward spiral.

11. **Immigration can make a valuable cultural and educational contribution to schools.** Exposure to other points of view and different perspectives can be enriching for both students and teachers. Intercultural skills and the ability to strike up a tolerant and respectful conversation with people from different cultures are traits that can and should be strengthened.

12. **Six in ten Basques welcome multiculturalism in the classroom** and there are examples of schools with a high proportion of pupils of foreign origin with high education standards. It is a question of resources and forward planning.

MANY OF THEM COMMIT CRIME



1. Some do, but the vast majority DO NOT.

Some natives also commit crime, but the vast majority do not.

2. In 2008, a study by the National

Institute of Statistics (INE) showed that for every 100 crimes committed by adults in Spain, 70 were committed by Spanish nationals. For children, this figure was 80 in every 100.

3. In 2010, some of the crimes most frequently committed by Spanish nationals were crimes against personal liberty (illegal detention, kidnapping, threats and coercion), of which 77% were carried out by Spanish nationals; crimes against sexual freedom (prostitution, the corruption of minors, abuse and sexual assault, among others), of which 74% were carried out by Spanish nationals; and theft and robbery, of which 70% were committed by Spanish nationals. Furthermore, Spanish nationals committed 100% of crimes of perversion of justice and corruption, 90% of crimes of catastrophic risk and 80% of frauds.

4. In any case, the point is clear: anybody who commits a crime should pay for it according to the law. **No nationality is essentially or by nature more criminal than any other.** We must not forget that **criminals are made, not born. Immigrants** are not a single group. They are very **heterogeneous**. It is important to emphasise that the overwhelming majority of immigrants respect the law and coexistence, just like Spanish nationals.

5. In a diverse and multicultural society such as our own, we should talk not of local or foreign criminals, but people who do not respect the law. **Foreigners** living in Spain are not, as a result of their origin, born criminals, but **tend to commit crime in the same way as Spanish nationals**, when their situation turns ugly or for other reasons.

6. It is necessary to emphasise the role of stereotypes in this false connection; i.e., the **danger of generalising and labelling the 'other'**, in such a way that the criminal behaviour of the few is often regarded as inseparable from their origin. Like all population groups, there is a percentage of immigrants who commit crime, but to generalise their behaviour and link immigration and crime without further ado is to make an overly simplistic connection that distorts reality.

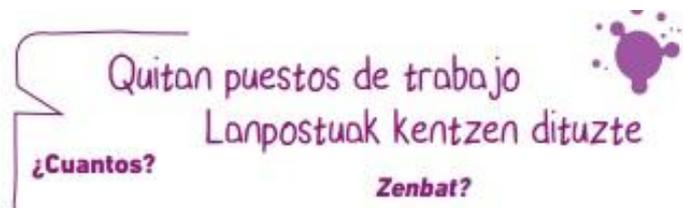
7. **Distortion of the social image.** The reporting and exaggeration in the **media** of some crimes committed by foreigners, as well as the tendency to emphasise the nationality of the criminal. There is no need to include ethnic group, colour, religion or origin unless it is strictly necessary for the reporting of the story. What would we think of Italians, for example, if we were constantly presented with the crimes of the Mafia and this were our only knowledge of that nationality?

8. If, according to all bodies (regional police (Ertzaintza), public prosecutor's office, local police), the **crime rate** has remained very stable or with only small variations while the foreign population has quadrupled, "it cannot be claimed that the presence of immigrants is decisive in explaining crime levels".

9. The degree of integration of the foreign community is important in discouraging criminal behaviour. The more integrated somebody is, the less prone they are to crime. They often refrain from committing crime for fear of losing the social advantages gained. Furthermore, one of the most influential factors in not committing crime is the family. This enables us to understand better the situation of immigrants, who in general have fewer ties and close family support.

IMMIGRANTS TAKE OUR JOBS

1. This myth is based on **four assumptions:**



- a. Immigrants and natives compete in the same sectors of employment;
 - b. Each job taken by an immigrant is a job that doesn't go to a native; i.e., foreign workers are replacing native workers;
 - c. This replacement is based on wilful unfair competition and a lack of solidarity;
 - d. In times of economic crisis, immigrants have a competitive advantage because of their lower aspirations and ability to accept worse working conditions, which destabilises the labour market.
2. Having said that, when our economy was better, immigrants took jobs that we did not want. The crisis has had a much bigger impact on immigrants (30%) than natives (12%). The situation is even worse for those of a certain origin and gender, according to the 2010 Immigrant Population Survey, carried out by the Basque Government.
3. The economic crisis is not causing the replacement of Spanish workers by foreigners; in almost all the occupations in which natives are losing their jobs, foreigners are too. In 2012, according to the PRA (Population in Relation to Activity Survey, Eustat), the **unemployment rate** among foreigners in the Basque Country was 29%, almost 13 points higher than for Spanish nationals.
4. Having said that, we cannot understand the unemployment rate without looking at the **activity** rate; i.e., those aged between 16 and 64 who are working or in a position to do so. The activity rate for native men is 61%, and for foreign men 85%. The activity rate for native women is 48%, and for immigrant women 80%. The higher activity rate is what Lorenzo Cachón characterised with the saying that immigrants “work like Swedes, but are treated and paid like Ecuadorians”.
5. It is the current state of the economy that is taking away jobs from both natives and immigrants.

6. In the native mentality, there is always a **hydraulic view of labour migration**; i.e., we would like for there to be a perfect balance every day, every minute, every second, between supply and demand, but that is impossible, although long-term trends often fit this pattern.
7. This section also tackles the issue of **priority for natives**, which may be presented in a more or less sophisticated way; when jobs are scarce, natives should take priority.
8. Fear and selfishness can wreak havoc, and these are two of the components behind the suggestions and ideas in support of the fairness of discriminating according to national origin. Moreover, we must not forget that there is a sense of **increasing helplessness** among local workers in the most precarious employment sectors.
9. Immigrants do not destabilise employment sectors; unfortunately, there are sectors that are already very precarious.
10. Migrant workers have begun to do the hardest, most unskilled and worst-paid jobs. As a result, they have the highest incidence of unemployment and temporary employment and the most precarious working conditions.
11. In general terms, it is not true that immigrants and natives compete in all sectors of employment. It is true, however, that they compete in certain sectors characterised by insecurity, difficulty and danger. They also compete with other population groups that are **similarly vulnerable**.
12. For example, in 2000, 49.8% of foreign workers had unskilled jobs. This percentage increased to 53% in 2008.
13. Finally, we must take into account that, as the slogan says, “Native or foreign, we are part of the same working class”. Above all, although we need labour, we usually get people.

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