



Committed to effective integration

The author argues that progressives must get involved and play an active role in defending the benefits of immigration for our country as well as avoiding outbreaks of xenophobia.

We progressives must be vigilant to not allow xenophobic messages to spread and work to value both immigration and the way it has been dealt with by socialist governments.

As we have seen for months, many are trying to profit electorally from relating immigration to negative issues that can win them votes, even if this means manipulating reality and even destabilizing coexistence. Thus, little by little these untrue and wrong ideas which are difficult to argue when taken out of context gain currency. These messages manipulate citizens and we socialists should never stop refuting them. A widespread prejudice against the foreign-born population that stigmatizes them is about immigration and crime. This statement creates a sense of insecurity which causes repulse and breaks down social cohesion; but with the data in hand, we can see that it is an idea that has nothing to do with reality. The greatest number of immigrants came to our country during the last decade of the 20th century and the first of the 21st century and it is precisely in those last 10 years when the crime rate in Spain began to decrease, put another way, the number of immigrants increased while crime declined. According to the Balance on the Evolution of Crime in Spain published by the Ministry of Interior in 2010, in our country, the rate is 45.1 crimes per 1,000 people, the lowest since 2000 and much lower than the European average. Despite this data, some people find misinformation and demagoguery more profitable, while they manipulate the reality to make momentary facts seem usual.

In this sense, the Popular Party is trying to provoke fear and rejection of immigrants, with populist messages that manipulate reality. Let's just remember that pamphlet which identified Romanians in Badalona as offenders or the video game in which they were busy getting rid of immigrants, these are two examples which show that the right does not mind breaking down the coexistence achieved as long as they manage to get some votes. The unhealthy wind that is blowing in Europe is reaching Spain, with populist and xenophobic discourses from an extreme right and an ultra right that has settled in countries like Hungary, Finland, France and Italy.

Therefore we must make an effort to value the positive aspects and news which exist and are many, against those who just want to emphasize the negative ones. For example, a few weeks ago we learned





of the extraordinary entrepreneurship of the foreign population in Spain. According to the National Federation of Independent Workers and the Union of Professional and Self-Employed, 30% of the self-employed registered with the Social Security in March were immigrants. We have heard many times that our country needs entrepreneurs and based on this information, self-employed foreigners grow at a rate five times higher than the native population. This news is not only about immigration in Spain, but about the fact that we have the immigration we need, what we needed during the good times and what we need in these times of crisis. These are people who seek new opportunities and choose innovative ways to face difficult times while helping to improve the economy and the situation in the country where they live. An integration which, as we understand it, is a two way process and therefore must also be promoted by the host society. In this regard, the Zapatero government has been fulfilling its commitment to work for a more cohesive and just society. This has been demonstrated by the results obtained by our country in the Migration Integration Index (MIPEX), a study which in its third edition compares these policies in 31 European and American countries, placing Spain in the eighth position, two positions ahead of the one we held in 2006, and in a much better position than countries like the USA, Germany, United Kingdom, Denmark and France.

The policies the socialists have implemented related to access to the labour market or family reunification place us ahead of the European average. Having obtained the highest rating among the major countries of Europe proves that our integration model based on equality of rights, responsibilities and opportunities, is valid and is an example to follow. Contrary to what some people are trying to implement, the socialists have developed policies that aim to promote coexistence and social integration and employment. This path taken in social policy and civil rights will go further with the Comprehensive Law for Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination, a rule that is absolutely necessary to enforce anti-discrimination policies so closely related to social integration.

Unfortunately not all political parties are interested in committing to integration policies. They are not interested because they rather get the supposed electoral yield but not the social benefit the development of these policies entails. The fact is that the impact of integration policies goes far beyond the electoral process because their scope is superior because they act positively on people's life, the life of all people living and coexisting in our society. We must seek and work for common welfare, building a society in which all of us fit irrespective of our origin, nationality or any other personal or social circumstance.

