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Mabel Segú

Transnational networks of Ecuadorian immigrants



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2011
University of Deusto
Bilbao

International Migrations, no. 8

UD Research Unit
on International Migrations

Board of Directors

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© University of Deusto
P. O. Box 1 - 48080 Bilbao
e-mail: publicaciones@deusto.es
ISBN: 978-84-9830-311-7

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1

Introduction

1.1. **Social networks. Characteristics and functions**

The use of the concept of network in the Social Sciences goes back to the 1950s, when John Barnes (1954) and Elizabeth Bott (1957) first used the term 'network' in their research. The former in studying informal relations of kinship, friendship, and neighbourhood in Norway; and the latter in demonstrating the interrelation between the internal articulation of the family and its external relations. This led to studies based on qualitative approaches and focused on explaining and interpreting the life histories of social actors (Devoto, 1991; Pedone 2003). From then on, social network analysis began to be very useful and play a bigger role in the study of societies, since it is able to give an integrated and coherent vision of the whole system in which their actors move (Requena, 1996), as well as of the different interactions that take place between them.

The importance of the study of networks has been recognised by many authors in recent years. Among others, Dabas (1995) considers that the study of social networks helps us to know who we can count on, from whom we can expect help, who we are likely to work with to solve a difficult situation, etc. In this line, Moch (1992) recognizes the key role of informal support networks for migrants because they can provide resources, serve as mediators when integrating in the host community and its culture, help reduce the uncertainty associated with stressful situations, be a source of information and, generally, serve as a shock absorber for the negative effects of the migratory process.

Abello and others (1997) show, by using various research sources, that social networks are a means of providing support, whether moral, economic or social. These networks require certain conditions to appear: physical proximity (which facilitates the continuous exchanges),

similarity (on an economic or cultural level) and trust (which reflects the desire or disposition to establish or maintain a relation of mutual exchanges). In addition, networks are dynamic in nature, since they change and evolve depending on the specific situations and historical moments in which they develop. Both Dabas (1993) and Navarro (2004) agree in conceiving that the social network implies a process of permanent construction that is both individual and collective. These authors understand the network as an open system, based on a dynamic exchange between its members and others belonging to different social groups, that allows its members to make the most of their resources, and which is enriched by the multiple relations between its different members. Aparicio and Tornos (2005) observe that this type of network often includes the necessary routes for access to different resources, which are especially activated in situations of great urgency. Sluzki (1996) goes even further and indicates that there is evidence that a personal social network which is stable, responsive, active and reliable protects the individual from disease, accelerates the process of healing and increases life expectancy.

Social networks are the fabric which offers the social support necessary to satisfy the needs of individuals and families. This support is two-fold: the giving and receiving of aid. It is thus a continuous mutual exchange which constitutes a broad system of rights and obligations for the members of the group. Personal relations thus perform an essential role of support in the adaptation of individuals to their living environment and the attainment of their personal goals and projects.

Although social support and mutual aid usually arise spontaneously between relatives, friends, neighbours and even the members of a community, this support can also be provided by different initiatives, whether formal or informal, and through different social, political or governmental programs. This is so in cases where the informal primary network is scarce, non-existent or dysfunctional, as well as in situations where this type of network needs reinforcement. The formula is the following: create an alternative support network —let us call it a secondary formal network—, which also covers different needs of the people.

We observe, then, that the main argument supporting the theory of social networks is that the structure of social relations affects the context of the relationships that can be produced in them. Likewise, the structure of social relations affects the content of those relations. Thus, a relatively stable structure will be able to support the individual in his/her tasks and functions, protecting him/her from external forces and meeting his/her needs, as well as giving its members a sense of belonging.

It is difficult to speak of some general functions of social networks, since they act differently depending on their structure, the personal characteristics of their members, as well as the role that they each perform (De Miguel, Solana and others, 2007). However, it is evident that one of the most important functions fulfilled by networks is the social support that they provide for their members. Barrón and Chacón (1990) point out that beginning with the work of Caplan, Cassell and Cobb, social support was seen as a key factor in social research because it was believed to provide the indispensable elements for the individual to achieve a suitable level of adaptation to his/her environment. In the 1960s, several studies demonstrated that a common denominator in social problems was the absence of suitable social links or support, or the breakdown of the subject's personal social networks.

The type of transactions that occur in social support can be monetary, in kind, symbolic or affective. Thus, we can observe how social support shows two different dimensions: emotional support and instrumental support. Emotional support refers to the type of support offered at the affective level and which is conveyed in intangible ways such as feeling understood, respected, valued and wanted. Instrumental support, on the other hand, refers to aspects related to providing those instruments that help in the acquisition of other resources, such as, for example, providing money, services, information, etc.

Barrón and Chacón (1990) refer to the existence of two main perspectives in the study of social networks: the structural perspective and the functional perspective. From the first perspective —the structural one—, the social space in which the subject is located is analysed, using the analysis of social networks as a means of social support. The dimensions most often considered from this perspective are usually size, density, reciprocity and homogeneity. The functional perspective underlines the qualitative aspects of support and the functions that they fulfil, focusing their interest on informal support systems.

Antonia Sanchez (1991) adds a third perspective that complements the aforementioned ones: content. This term refers to the nature of the relations around which the links of the network form: family, economic, political, leisure...

According to Abello and Madariaga (1999), we could say that the social network covers the general function of satisfying basic needs, improving the quality of life of its members and creating and maintaining social bonds. But social networks, as Navarro (2004) notes, can perform both positive and negative functions. Networks also have a sanctioning capacity that can be exerted through social control. According to De Miguel and others (2007), there are networks that form endogamous com-

munities which practice hermetism and deprive their members of freedom, resulting in cultural isolation. On the other hand, within a network, there may be a series of rules that prevent the attainment of individual goals; or a form of competitiveness between the actors which reduces social support. All this creates a weak and dysfunctional support network, with the consequent negative repercussions that this entails.

On the other hand, Barnes (1954) argues that social networks have quantitative and qualitative characteristics. The former have to do with the number of members in a network, its size, the frequency of the contacts between the members, homogeneity as regards sex, age, race and the degree of equal treatment between members, etc. The qualitative characteristics, on the other hand, have to do more with aspects related to intimacy of the friendship, privacy, the intensity of the relation, tolerance and the quality of the contributions the members offer.

In the field of migration studies, social networks have also gained great importance since the end of 1990s (Massey, 1990; Gurak and Caces, 1992).

Compared to the rather static and passive view of the migrant in the push/pull models, the introduction of the concepts of migration networks and chains meant a significant change in the analysis of international migrations, since the individual subject acquires an active role in this process (Martínez, García and Maya, 2001). On this point it seems important to clarify the concept of "chain" as opposed to the term "network". The "chain" idea is understood as the linear connection of known individuals who influence the migratory process between origin and destination (Pedone, 2007). According to Maya and De la Vega (2004), the fact of migration leads to social structures of the place of origin to be replicated in some way in the destination country. When family members, neighbours or compatriots move to another country, they tend to reproduce the fabric of personal communications that they had before moving. So, family reunification, the reconfiguration of neighbourhood spaces and socialisation with compatriots are aspects in the end of the role of social networks in international displacement. The concept of "network" is not only to be understood as the social bonds between people born in the same place, but, essentially, to the role that these people fulfil in the process of integration in the host society: on arrival, during the process of setting and during the integration of the subject. In addition, the concept of "network" involves not only compatriots located in the same context, but includes other forms of support, both personal and institutional, which provides the subject with the necessary tools to satisfy the needs that can arise during this process.

Thus, we see how these personal communications acquire a central role, both when making the decision to emigrate and choosing the destination, and when adapting to the host society (Sycip and Fawcet, 1998). In the host country, the migrant encounters a series of legal, professional, social and cultural barriers that inhibit the integration process. The fact of having a solid network will cushion and diminish the consequences of this change. During the whole process of migration and geographic relocation, the needs of individuals vary and may even increase, as their social support network fractures, reforms and is reshaped. According to Navarro (2004), the personal social network of the emigrant is a dynamic system that evolves over time and depending on the circumstances. Throughout the process the networks are transformed, progressively generating a new map which, according to Sluzki (1995), contains transnational remnants (people from the previous network), other members of the network who are also relocated, as well as new links that will be created during establishment and integration in the receiving country.

There are diverse functions attributed to the social support system that the networks of migrants fulfil throughout the migratory process (Lynam, 1985; Berry, 1997; Clarke and Jensen, 1997; Martínez, García and Maya, 1999; Sluzki, 1995):

- Emotional support: creating a climate of understanding and stimulation, favouring the occurrence of positive events and helping to confront the negative.
- Promoting the adaptation skills and favouring social integration: material aid and services; specific collaboration based on expert knowledge.
- Access to new contacts: creating possibility of opening the doors for connection with other networks.
- Social companionship: carrying out activities together or in the same company.
- Cognitive guidance and advice: providing role models, clarifying expectations
- Social regulation: reaffirming responsibilities and roles, as well as neutralising behavioural deviations.

These functions develop depending on which stage the subject is in the migratory process. Thus, during the first, “arrival” stage, contacts are established with the primary support networks constituted by people of the same origin. A social support network in the receiving country diminishes the costs of international displacement. As has been said, there are usually pre-existing relations of kinship, friend-

ship or neighbourhood from the place of origin. This type of network will cover the needs that initially arise during the setting stage, such as accommodation, sustenance and looking for work. Initially, this new network will tend to be smaller, less dense and with less diverse in its functions, less multidimensional, more reciprocal and intense. All these features suggest a generally insufficient network, which tends to be overloaded (because of more expectations being centred on fewer relations) and decompensation (Sluzki, 1996), confirming the hypothesis of Comas and Pujadas (1991) that these links are more salient and essential when the circumstances of the people involved are difficult.

In a second, "staying" phase, the family tends towards family reunification in an attempt to rebuild the previous network and to continue relating to people of the same origin, although little by little opening its circle of contacts towards more natives. For example, people who arrive via family reunification processes face an easier situation than the pioneers of the group. The latter are characterised as being audacious and enterprising people, who have sufficient personal and social information, resources and abilities to start life over in an unknown context. Nevertheless, this incorporation into a community, which makes things easier for those who have just arrived, can turn in the medium term into an ethnic and/or cultural segregation.

The last phase, "settling", is where the relational networks of the immigrants are strengthened in a bidirectional way, thus improving their social and personal situation in every way. In this line, Portes and Böröcz (1989) especially emphasise the social character of migratory dynamics, since the persistence of immigration over time will be directly related to the creation of networks of contact and communication within the migrant community. Therefore, it is the integration of individuals in those networks of contact and communication which guarantees the durability and success of the migratory phenomenon.

Social networks can be classified into informal primary networks and formal secondary networks:

- Informal primary networks are those networks that include family, friends and, in many cases, neighbours. According to Di Carlo (1998), the nature of relationships within these networks, where the members are known to each other, are based on reciprocity, and exchanges between members are usually non-monetary, as well as being asymmetric in intensity and content. In this type of network, the members are connected by affective bonds, and are characterised by not having precise and stable boundaries in their structure.

— Formal secondary networks, on the other hand, are legally instituted social constructs, structured in a precise way to carry out a series of specific missions and functions that are socially recognised as pertaining to them (Di Carlo, 1998). Within these formal secondary networks, we can distinguish between public and private. First are those secondary social networks that derive from the social policies of a welfare state. In the case of Spain, the state is supposed to guarantee material security to the citizens. The state, in addition, must guarantee the rights inherent to the tradition of the liberal state and the rule of law, linked with the public provision of a series of social services. These services are a privileged instrument to approach social needs, based on the creation of different programs and services which, in a standard way, must respond to the social problems of diverse groups.

According to Lopez and Giol (2004), no direct link can be established between immigration and situations of need. Migrants do not necessarily face situations of need, although the social and economic vulnerability that some migrants may suffer from puts them at risk of experiencing this type of situations. This social vulnerability which these people can experience is not always solely the result of the dismantling of their personal network, but the result of a situation of economic uncertainty, social misalignment and affective deficiencies which are often temporary. In these cases, it is necessary to provide the appropriate services to respond to these needs from the public administration, both to individuals and to their support networks, indirectly facilitating their integration in the host country. In order to do so, it is necessary to offer tools for the best development of the migratory process, optimising the opportunities that this offers and diminishing the negative effects associated with emigration.

On the other hand, we also read to consider non-profit private secondary networks. The management of social policies varies, based on changes in the systems of social protection, as a result of the crisis of the welfare state in the 1970s and 1980s. Lately, the traditional model of a benevolent state has met with difficulties in covering all the needs that arise in reality. While the state struggles with the problems derived from these changes in a rather slow, bureaucratic way, organisations in civil society are learning to improve their abilities to negotiate and to better handle their resources in a more agile way, so as to fortify their participation in the political process.

In this context, so-called non-profit organisations have the important role of covering those needs and difficulties confronted by various

groups (immigrants, people who are marginalised or at risk of marginalisation, prostitutes, drug addicts, etc.). Their goal is to improve their standard of life through their intervention in social policies and their support for common processes. These organisations arise from private initiatives in civil society, generally due to the failure of the public sector to effectively meet certain needs and demands, leaving gaps in the system (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2004). Their most basic characteristic is the absence of a profit motive. Organisations belonging to this non-profit sector, whose primary purpose is the improvement of social welfare and the quality of life of citizens, are very diverse. They include foundations, trade unions, political parties, professional associations, co-operatives, cultural organisations, religious congregations and associations, consumer unions, sports associations, non-governmental organisations, etc.

Immigration from Ecuador—which since the turn of the millennium has become one of most numerous ones in Spain—, has been the object of different studies during recent years, carried out from diverse perspectives. Thus, some of these publications have focused on Spain as the host country of these population movements (IOÉ Collective, 2001; Gómez Ciriano, Tornos, IOÉ Collective, 2007; Carrillo and Cortés, 2008), whereas others have concentrated on the country of origin, Ecuador (Herrera, Carrillo and Torres, 2005, Acosta, López and Villamar, 2006).

On the other hand, the growing number of publications on Ecuadorian immigration to Spain is now becoming more diverse in focus. There are authors who have mainly considered the economic aspects of these population movements, paying special attention to the topic of remittances (Acosta, A.; López, S. and Villamar, D., 2004; Parella and Cavalcanti, 2006; Solé, 2007). Other studies, however, have concentrated more closely on the emigration of Ecuadorian women (Prieto, 2005; Meñaca, 2005), on the impact of migration on the children of Ecuadorian migrants (Carillo, 2005), on transnational families and networks (Herrera, 2004; Pedone, 2003 and 2007) or on social representations of migration (Goycochea and Ramírez, 2002; Pedone, 2002; Montero, 2006)

In this book, our research focus has been on transnational social networks and on the role they play at different moments of the migratory process of Ecuadorian people resident in the Basque Country: before leaving Ecuador, at the time of departure, on arrival to the destination and during the process of settlement. In this sense, although we know that not all emigrants are necessarily transnational actors, we have used an approach that considers simultaneously the context of origin and destination when interpreting the functions carried out by

the social networks of immigrants resident in the Basque Country —a territory where no studies centred on the population of Ecuadorian origin had been carried out until now.

In our study, in order to understand the characteristics and influence of social networks on the interpersonal relations and on the family frameworks of Ecuadorians, we have considered the opinions of the protagonists themselves. Thus, the research has introduced as a central pillar the personal opinions, since we reached our knowledge of transnational generational practices and relations through direct testimonies gathered by means of in-depth interviews.

We generally start from the general context of migrations and, in particular, of the Ecuadorian migration to Spain and the Basque Country, as a basis from which to understand the development of migratory movements and transnational networks, especially in what concerns family dynamics and their situation at the present moment.

Since the 1990s there has been a radical change in the scope of international migration, and Spain has changed from being a sending country to a country of immigration. Political, social and economic changes in Spain have had an important influence on this change in the migratory patterns, including: the transition from dictatorship to democracy, with the passing of the Constitution of 1978, the accession of Spain to the European Union in 1986, the quick fall of the birth rate and the consequent ageing of the population, the need for workers as a result of economic growth (which did not stop until the beginning of the crisis in 2008) and the importance of the informal economy in some sectors, especially in the area of domestic service and caring. While in 1991 the foreign population only represented 0.9% of the total population in Spain, by 2007 it represented 10% of the total population.

Apart from this growth in the immigrant population at state level, there has also been an increase in the Ecuadorian group, both in absolute and relative terms, going from 0.7% of the foreign population resident in Spain in 1998 to comprise, ten years later, one tenth of the foreign contingent, with a total of 462,770 people. This phenomenon is the result of the conditions that we have just indicated in the host country, and also of the economic crisis in Ecuador from beginning of 2000, with the dollarisation of its economy, a situation which provoked the emigration of a large number of people in search of a better life.

This same increasing pattern can be observed among Ecuadorians resident in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (Euskadi), where they already comprise the third largest foreign group,

with a total of 7,489 people. It is in the Basque Country, in fact, that the study whose results are presented in the following pages was carried out.

1.2. Objectives and methodology

In this context of migratory growth, complexity and diversification, we have proposed this research project, trying to combine two fundamental dimensions: on the one hand, the “macro-scale” social, political, and economic context of migrations generally and the Ecuadorian migration in particular, in Spain and, more specifically, in the Basque Country; and, on the other hand, the “micro-scale” scope, concerning the context of the family and social networks of Ecuadorians living in Euskadi.

Therefore, the main objective of the research is to analyse, basing on the testimonies of informants, different aspects related to the social support networks of Ecuadorian transnational families in the Basque Country. Likewise, the mechanisms that they articulate in different contexts will be studied: in the places of destination and origin; their role in the development of the migratory processes, the importance of migrants’ relations of kinship, friendship or associationism and the roles played by primary and secondary networks in the different stages of the migratory process.

With these objectives in mind, the study will explore the practices and the subjective experiences of the migratory processes of Ecuadorian people resident in the Basque Country, analysing their points of view by means of in-depth interviews. We believe that the investigation fills an important lacuna in existing knowledge and that it complements existing knowledge on the migratory reality of the group.

This research is based on a qualitative methodology, via semi-structured in-depth interviews, through which the protagonists could express their views of their reality and their analysis of it. This direct contact with the informants has allowed us to know their experiences first hand and, in addition, has offered us the opportunity to obtain a greater understanding of their migratory experience, since, besides obtaining data on their support networks, the main theme of our analysis, it has made it possible for us to know, in greater depth, the characteristics of their migratory projects, as well as other aspects related to their aspirations and social realities.

For the selection of interviewees we have followed a non-probabilistic sampling, since we considered that this is the most convenient methods for the objectives proposed. Specifically, the “snowball” method

has been used. Based on the premise of the existence of networks of contacts between Ecuadorian immigrants, we consider that this method best facilitates the search for and selection of interviewees. To this end, we have chosen what are known, in methodological jargon, as “departure points” from which to roll the “snowball”: Associations of Ecuadorian immigrants, associations of Latin American immigrants, associations of support for immigrants and also Ecuadorians known to us, resident in different Basque municipalities, who have agreed to collaborate, either through their personal participation, relating their own experience, or by helping us to find other migrants of the same origin.

The research population consists of people of Ecuadorian origin, 18 years or over; men and women of different profiles, who have arrived at different points in time, dedicated to diverse professional occupations, belonging to different social strata, with different migratory projects and different legal status. Altogether, fifteen in-depth interviews were carried out with Ecuadorian immigrants resident in the three Basque provinces (Gipuzkoa, Alava and Bizkaia). These informants correspond to the aforementioned selection criteria, and whose fundamental characteristics are given in detail in the list of credits in Annex I of the present publication.

All the interviews were carried out during the Spring of 2009. With each of the Ecuadorian informants in this study, we held a conversation lasting approximately an hour and a half, in locations that they themselves chose. All the interviews were recorded, for which authorisation was previously obtained from each interviewee, with the intention of later transcribing them literally, so as to facilitate a deep and more rigorous analysis of these stories by the researchers. For the purpose of assuring confidentiality and anonymity to the interviewees, the names of places or people which could lead to their identification, but which did not contribute essential information for the topic of research, have been modified in the analysis.

The interviewers were the authors of the book themselves, an aspect which we consider an added value, since the collection of information has been made with a profound knowledge of the object of the research as a whole.

In order to achieve the previously mapped objectives, the opinion of the Ecuadorian participants on the different dimensions included was successfully obtained in each interview. Each of these dimensions is organised in a series of aspects or sections that allow us to collect detailed information on it. In table 1, we summarise the main dimensions considered and the sections included in each, as a summary of the script followed in the interviews carried out with the Ecuadorians.

Table 1

Main dimensions touched upon in the interviews

Dimensions	Aspects included
1. <i>Process of mobility</i> : Knowledge of their life in Ecuador before leaving; reasons that impelled them to leave their country, as well as help, both emotional and economic, which they received and analysis of the "migratory route" followed until reaching the destination country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Life in Ecuador: Type of family and relations of kinship, friendships, education, type of employment... — How and why they decided to migrate, and information available when they did so. — If they received help, from whom, and what kind of support was given. — Reasons for choosing the destination city. — Knowledge of other migratory experiences outside Ecuador.
2. <i>Myths and reality of the destination society</i> : Knowledge of the role played by the stories of other relatives who had migrated earlier, the mass media and other social agents, in the construction of images that favoured the decision to leave. Analysis of whether these previously held ideas corresponded with the real experience in the destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — How they imagined life here when they were in Ecuador — Information that they had and its source. — Correspondence between actual life in the destination country and their prior expectations. — Most significant differences between the way of life of people in Ecuador and the Basque Country.
3. <i>Setting in destination country</i> : Knowledge of the means and the conditions of arrival, and present situation with respect to accommodation, employment, economic situation and use and enjoyment of leisure time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — On arrival: Where they lived and who provided them with accommodation or helped them to find it; if they found a job, what kind and who helped them to find it; their economic situation, whether they needed help and who they obtained it from. — Present situation: Where they live and with whom. Do they rent or own the dwelling. Type of work, characteristics and conditions. Economic situation, whether they receive any assistance and who provides it. — With whom do they spend their free time and in what type of activities they participate.

4. *Changes in family relations and roles as a result of the migratory project:* Analysis of how family dynamics and interactions have changed as a result of the emigration of some members; types of contacts between the origin and the destination: journeys, telephone, economic and material remittances...
- Whether they have come on their own and how the separation from their family in Ecuador has affected them.
 - If they have children and whether they are with them in the destination country or remain in Ecuador and, if so, with whom.
 - Whether they keep in touch with the family of origin, what type of relations they have and how do they communicate.
 - Whether, and how, they consider that their previous role in the family has changed.
 - Intention to pursue family reunification.
 - Evaluation of the model of the family in the destination country.
 - Remittances of money and other articles between the destination country and that of origin: reasons, frequency, purpose, media used for remittance.
 - Contact with relatives through: journeys, telephone, and other technological media.
5. *Social networks:* Influence of informal networks, including family and friends, as well as the help received from formal organisations during migration, on arrival at destination and in the process of setting there.
- Whether they have relatives in the destination country and what relations they have with them.
 - What help they receive from their family and friends, both in Ecuador and in the destination country.
 - Relations with friends, both Ecuadorian and non-Ecuadorian, and activities that they do together.
 - People with whom they would contact in time of need for economic or emotional help.
 - Whether they belong to any Ecuadorian association.
 - Knowledge of NGOs offering help to immigrants.
 - Knowledge and use of assistance from public administration.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 6. <i>Future family project</i> : Knowledge of future projects as regards staying on, definitive return or temporary return. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — If they plan to continue living in the destination, remaining in the same city or definitively moving. — If they intend to stay, whether they plan to return temporarily to Ecuador or not. — Reasons for the different decisions: family situations, education, work... |
| 7. <i>Profiles of interviewees</i> : Knowledge of their main socio-demographic characteristics. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The last section of this study is intended to present the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, with the aim of drawing up their profiles: age, sex, civil status, etc. |

1.3. Structure of the work

This publication is divided into nine chapters, in addition to the present introduction, the bibliographical references and the Annex which contains the profile of the interviewees.

In chapter two, entitled: "Spain, as model of change in migration patterns: from sending to receiving country", we describe the present reality of Spain as a host country of immigrants, explaining the economic, political and social changes that have taken place during the 20th century and which have contributed to this change in migratory patterns. We also analyse the characteristics of the foreign population resident in Spain as regards their socio-demographic profile, socio-professional status, and settlement in different geographical areas. We close this chapter by presenting some fundamental characteristics of the policies that are being applied in the entrance and regulation of migration flows in this country.

In chapter three, "The Ecuadorian population in Spain and the Basque Country", we examine the migratory processes that lead people to migrate from Ecuador to Spain and, more specifically, to the Basque region. Beginning with the evolution of the size of the Ecuadorian population in this country, especially since the year 2000, we look into the main socio-demographic characteristics of this population group, as well as their main sectors of employment, are analysed. A second section of the chapter is devoted to the evolution and present situation of Ecuadorian migration in the Basque Country, where this

study concentrates, analysing their geographical distribution, explaining the profiles of Ecuadorians living in the Basque Country, the main occupations where they work, as well as their legal situation, to conclude with an analysis of the attitudes of Basque citizens toward the Ecuadorians resident in this territory

In chapter four, "Immigrants and their families in the country of origin: the activation of transnational networks for emigration", we undertake an analysis of the information provided by the Ecuadorians interviewed, beginning with the analysis of the family, economic and social situations that they had in Ecuador and, subsequently, explaining the role of transnational social networks in the planning and design of the migratory journey, from the moment of organising the move from the country of origin to the arrival in the destination country.

Chapters five and six, "Setting in the destination country" and "Labor situation and leisure time", are broadly aimed at explaining the living conditions of Ecuadorians who reside in the Basque Country. These chapters consider different aspects of the daily life of these people, such as work, home and free time, always paying special attention to the role played by the different formal and informal networks in the pursuit of greater well-being in this group.

Chapter seven, "Migrants and their support networks in the destination country", centers on studying the support networks of Ecuadorians resident in the Basque Country, regardless of whether these networks are located in the destination place or in the country of origin (that is to say, in Ecuador), or in both places, simultaneously. Using this network approach, we study, on the one hand, the informal primary networks constituted solely among Ecuadorians, and those created between Ecuadorians and natives of the Basque Country. And, on the other hand, we consider the role played by secondary formal networks, among which we highlight private non-profit institutions and public services. In addition, in this chapter we also present the main types of assistance offered, such as economic aid, aid in housing, in job-seeking or employment guidance and/or emotional support, received from both informal and formal networks.

In chapter eight, "Complexity and diversity of transnational family relations", we explain the different, complex family realities of Ecuadorians living in the Basque Country, as well as their relationships with family members who are still living in the country of origin. We show the changes that have occurred between family members, related to the migratory process. Thus, emotional relations between the members of the families in the origin and destination societies are analysed, relations within couples, relations with children and concerns derived from

their education; we also consider transnational strategies and practices developed by Ecuadorians to maintain permanent links between the two places, origin and destination. On this point, we show the role played by the different media through which this transnational contact occurs: telephone communications, new technologies, journeys and remittances of money and material goods

Finally, Chapter Nine, "The future projects of immigrants", is devoted to what Ecuadorian people say about how and where they wish to live in the near future, their individual and family plans and projects. We show the different options that they consider with respect to their future, identifying several options: settling for good in the Basque Country, combining periods in the Basque region with periods in the country of origin, or returning to stay in country of origin definitively. The options considered depend, of course, on the economic, employment and family situation of the immigrants, a situation which is evaluated from the perspective of both the destination society and that of the country of origin.

Finally, we draw some conclusions regarding the transnational networks in which the Ecuadorian informants participate, and their influence at different stages of their migratory process.

We would not want to finish this introduction without showing our gratitude for their disinterested collaboration to the individuals who have agreed to participate in the project and have shared with us their experiences, feelings and evaluations. Their testimonies constitute, without a doubt, the cornerstone of the book. We hope we have been able to interpret their reflections properly and that this work helps us to learn about and get a little closer to this community of Ecuadorians living among us.

2

Spain as a model of change in migration patterns: from sending to receiving country

Introduction

Until recently, Spain has been a country of emigrants. Its recent history speaks of massive emigrations abroad, but also of internal population movements, from the countryside to the city or, in other words, from agricultural zones to urban areas. Until very recently, Spanish emigrant workers, spread around the world, faced the same problems of legalisation, obtaining documentation, finding work and integration that the Latino, African or Asian workers that live in Spain now face. And the fact is that until the 1980s Spanish emigrants moved primarily towards Europe and the Americas. Likewise, until that decade, numerous Spaniards emigrated from the agricultural zones of the country to the areas with industrial and service economies, first towards Catalonia and the Basque Country, and later towards Madrid and some cities in the Levant (south-east of Spain).

From the turn of the 21st century and particularly in the first decade of the 21st century, population movements in Spain changed direction. The international emigration of Spanish natives and the process of internal migration from country to city ceased, while large numbers of foreigners began to settle in the Spanish territory. The phenomenon has been reversed: the emigrant movement has become an immigrant movement.

This chapter looks into, in the first place, this change in population that has taken place in Spain; and also characterises the socio-economic situation of the country according to several indicators. This different

socio-economic context, has led to the massive influx of people, mainly from Africa, Central and South America and Asia, a fact which has led in its turn to the fact that, in just a decade, the foreign population in Spain has increased by five million people, of which Ecuadorians represent a significant portion.

2.1. The migratory movements of Spaniards

The great migratory movements from Europe towards North, Central and South America took place at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Between 1880 and 1914, almost 34 million people left Europe, their main destinations being Brazil, Argentina and the United States. These countries had non-restrictive, which favoured the establishment of populations arriving from other countries.

The initial emigration of Spaniards took place between the 16th and 17th centuries, when Spain was an empire and the population migrated to the colonies overseas (Alted y Asenjo, 2006). Almost half a million Spaniards settled in the Americas. During the 19th century and, in particular, between 1825 and 1881, almost 600,000 people went to the Americas.

But the period of most intense emigration took place between 1880 and 1930. In the second part of the 19th century, the Spanish government changed the migration policies and began to recognise the right to migrate, so between 1882 and 1936 more than 4,000,000 Spaniards emigrated to America. Their favoured destinations were Brazil, Cuba and Argentina. Argentina enjoyed at this time a fast economic growth and a high per capita income. The regions of origin of the Spanish migrants were Galicia, Asturias, Castile, Leon, Catalonia and the Canary Islands. A less numerous group of people also left the Basque Country and Andalusia. Normally the average emigrant was a young man, aged between 20 and 40, single and from a low social class, but with some education, that is to say, able to read and write, and working in agriculture. Almost 70% of emigrants travelled without their family.

The reasons for this great migration were economic and social in nature. The first cause was the demographic change in the country: the constant growth in population produced an imbalance between Spain's resources and population. In any case, it is not right to assume that the emigration took place among those who were in misery, because normally people had the means for survival, and the trip was fairly costly. People emigrated to improve their economic conditions, to

climb in the social hierarchy or, for example, to avoid the compulsory military service. In addition the American countries to which the Spaniards migrated were only very scarcely populated and needed urgently manpower. Another factor that influenced the Spanish emigration was the so-called “efecto llamada” that we also know today: friends or relatives who already lived in the Americas attracted other new emigrants.

Another period of emigration took place in the 20th century, between 1937 and 1988, as a result of the Spanish Civil War, and its economic and political consequences. In this more recent period, the emigration was towards other European countries. France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom were the countries in which approximately 3,000,000 Spaniards settled, who with their work, savings and the remittances that they sent back, contributed to Spain’s economic growth starting in the 1960s. In that same period, internal mobility was also very intense. Regions such as Catalonia and the Basque Country received large numbers of workers from Andalusia, Galicia, Extremadura or Castile. Later Madrid and the Levant also became areas receiving internal immigration.

The 1980s saw the return of many Spanish emigrants to their homeland, the majority already retired, others because they lost their jobs as a result of the world-wide economic crisis that occurred between the mid-1970s and the 1980s.

2.2. The change: from emigration to immigration

The change in the external migratory balance, with the emergence of the phenomenon of immigration to Spain, is quite recent, since it dates from the 1990s. Normally, the great immigration of recent decades is explained by the inequality between the “developed” countries of the Northern hemisphere and the “underdeveloped” countries of the South. That is certainly one reason, but it is necessary to consider other factors. In particular, in the case of Spain it is necessary to bear in mind the political, social and economic changes that have transformed the country and have turned it into a country of immigration. Among these changes we could mention the entrance into the EU, the welfare state, the rapid decline in the birth rate and the resulting ageing of the population and the need for an active labour force (Alted and Asenjo, 2006).

The fast economic growth of recent years, the stabilization of the labour market, the importance of the informal economy in some sec-

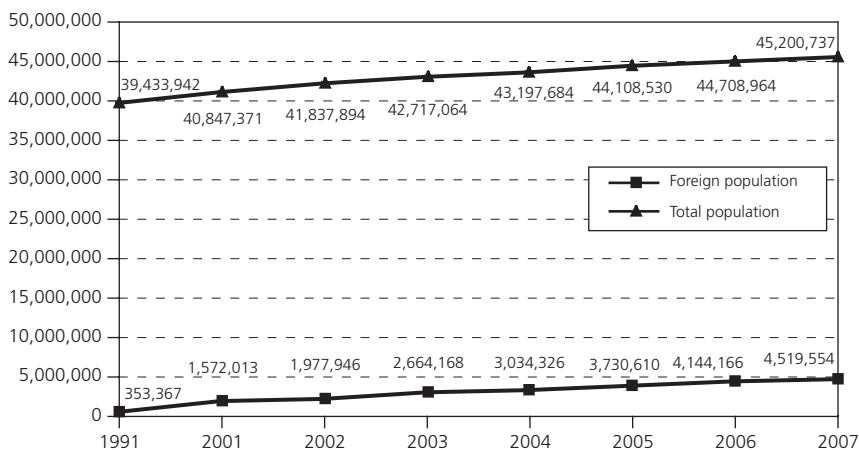
tors, the geographic proximity of some countries that are senders of population and the historical bonds with certain countries that are potential senders of migrants, are some factors that have favoured the transformation of the countries of southern Europe into receiving societies.

It is a fact that Spain is, at present, the country of the European Union that receives most foreign immigrants and, on a global level, it ranks only second, behind the USA. This position in the ranking of in-coming migrants is so recent that it is difficult to assimilate such a drastic change in the migratory balance. The phrase that "Spain has gone from being a country of emigrants to a country of immigrants" expresses very well what has happened in the last 15 to 20 years. If in 1991 there were 353,367 foreigners residing in Spain, by 2007 that number had reached 4.519.554 foreigners (Figure 1). An increase of 4,166,177 people in just 17 years, a growth of 1,179% and an average annual growth rate of 69%. In 1991, the foreign population represented 0.9% of the total population, whereas in 2007 the proportion of foreigners reached 10% of the total population in Spain.

As regards the origin of the foreign population living in Spain, there has been, from the beginning of this century, a constant growth

Figure 1

Evolution of the total and foreign population. Spain.
Years 1991 to 2007



Source: National Institute of Statistics. Data for 1 January.

in the presence of people coming from four of the five continents (Table 2 and Figure 2). Nevertheless, the greatest growth has taken place among the population coming from America—and more specifically from South America—which increased their numbers between 2001 and 2007 by 256%, so that at the moment they represent 35% of the foreign population in Spain. People from other European countries, however, continue to lead this ranking by continents, representing 42% of the total foreign population. On this point, we should also emphasise the greater weight of people coming from a country of the European Union in comparison with the rest of European countries, as a result of the different enlargement processes of the Union¹, and especially the recent incorporation of Bulgaria and Rumania. In fact, Rumanians are the second nationality in the ranking of foreign population living in Spain, outnumbered only by Moroccans (Setién and Vicente, 2007).

Table 2
Areas of origin of the resident foreign population. Spain.
Years 2001 to 2007

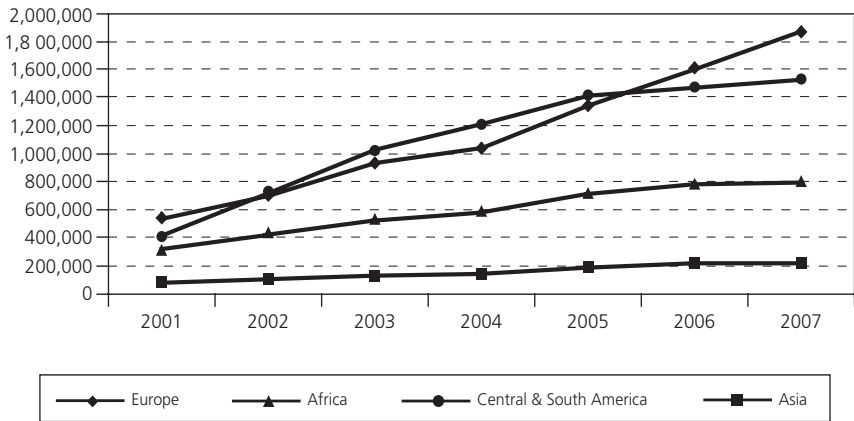
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Europe	533,405	701,063	936,271	1,047,206	1,352,253	1,609,856	1,887,920
European Union	(15)	(15)	(15)	(25)	(25)	(25)	(27)
Rest of Europe	417,311	489,814	587,686	636,037	774,953	918,886	1,702,613
America	116,094	211,249	348,585	411,169	577,300	690,970	185,307
North America	442,888	752,563	1,073,527	1,262,419	1,474,493	1,528,077	1,577,478
Central and South America	26,764	32,351	41,398	42,726	51,619	51,149	45,075
Africa	416,124	720,212	1,032,129	1,219,693	1,422,874	1,476,928	1,532,403
North Africa	317,242	423,045	522,682	579,372	713,974	785,279	797,592
Sub-Saharan Africa	256,552	343,250	424,160	469,500	571,250	624,088	634,804
Asia	60,690	79,795	98,522	109,872	142,724	161,191	162,788
Australian Continent/ Stateless	75,141	98,942	128,952	142,828	186,848	217,918	216,769
Total	1,981	2,333	2,736	2,501	3,042	3,036	2,809
	1,370,657	1,977,946	2,664,168	3,034,326	3,730,610	4,144,166	4,482,568

Source: National Institute of Statistics. Data for 1 January.

¹ Recall that in the period 2001-2003 we are considering a European Union composed of 15 countries, which were extended to 25 as of 2004 and 27 countries as from 1 January 2007.

Figure 2

Main areas of origin of the foreign population resident in Spain.
Years 2001 to 2007



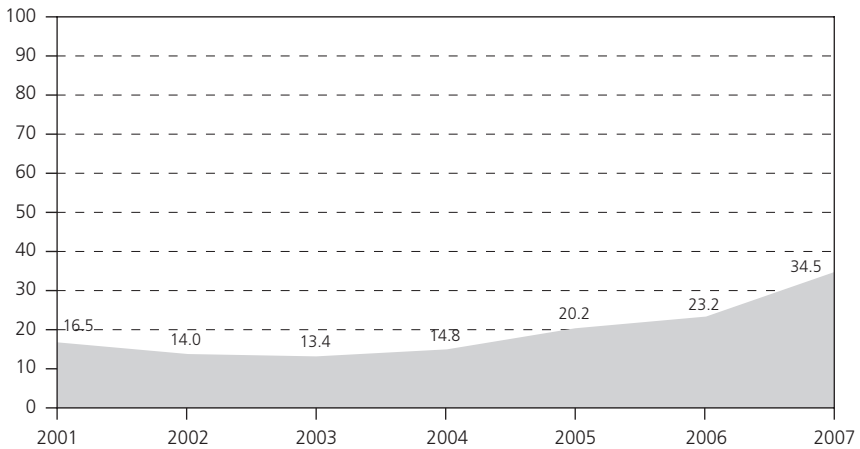
Source: National Institute of Statistics. Data for 1 January.

The African population remains in the third place in the ranking by continents, with a growth over the whole period of 151%, although their relative weight has fallen from 23% in 2001 to 18% at the beginning of 2007, due to the more intense growth in the number of residents with European or American passport. On the other hand, in spite of the increase and the diversification of origins of the African population living in Spain, there is a clear majority of people of North African origin. The Asian population, on the other hand, in spite of having tripled its presence in Spain, remains in the last place of this ranking, since its growth has been less intense than that of the other groups considered.

This rapid growth in immigration has influenced the opinions and attitudes of the Spanish population regarding the migratory phenomenon. Whereas in the 1990s the citizens never thought that immigration could become a problem for the country, in the 21st century this attitude has been changing. Surveys show that, little by little, the proportion of individuals who believe that immigration is the main problem Spain faces has increased (Figure 3). While in January 2003 only one in every seven Spaniards thought that immigration was a problem, we have gone to a situation in which more than one in three think so in January 2007.

Figure 3

Spanish population that consider immigration to be the main problem in Spain at present. January 2001 - January 2007. Percentages



Source: Sociological Research Centre. Barometer.

2.3. Factors of the change

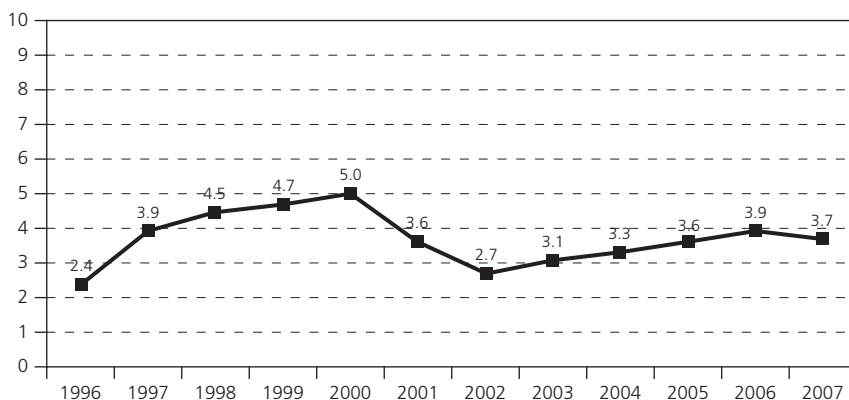
For the aforementioned change of tendency to take place, a dramatic political, economic, social and cultural transformation has been necessary in Spanish society. The political transformation came first, in the sense that it dates from the time of the transition to democracy in the late 1970s. This change took shape in the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and in the restoration of a Western-style democracy. The economic transformation began mainly with the entrance of Spain in the European Union, in 1986. Beginning then, and especially since Spain joined the Euro-zone, which began in 2000, the Spanish economy has experienced a long process of growth, which did not stop until 2008. The social and cultural transformations during this period have come hand-in-hand with those just mentioned and have raised the standard of living to become ever closer to that of the traditionally wealthier European countries. All this has, on the one hand, brought to an end the emigration of Spanish citizens and, on the other hand, has also increase the country's attractiveness as a destination for foreigners. Using several socio-economic indicators, we will now draw a picture of these changes during the recent past.

2.3.1. *The creation of wealth and employment*

Starting in the mid 1990s, the constant increase in production and, therefore, the wealth of the country as a whole has been a trend that has been continued during the beginning of the 21st century. The annual increases in GDP reflect this trend (Figure 4).

Figure 4

GDP, annual growth rate (at 2000 prices). Spain.
Years 1996 to 2007. Percentages



Source: NSI.

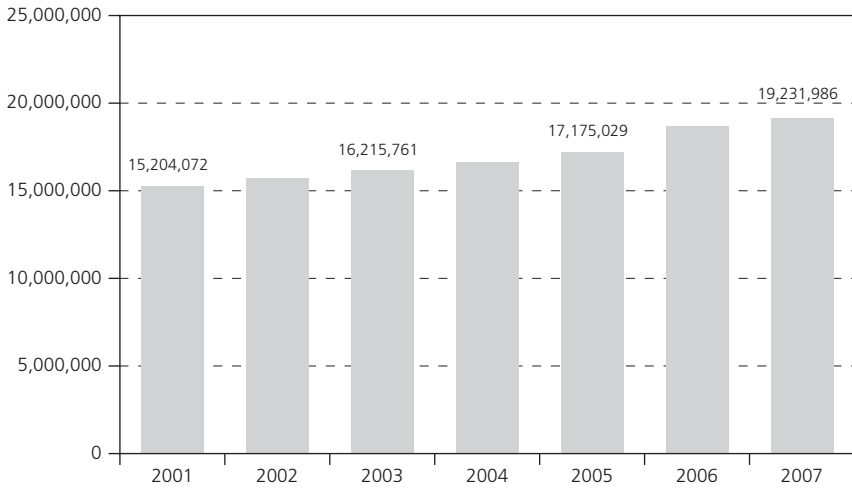
During the first decade of the 2000s, the number of jobs has increased greatly in Spain. In parallel, although the active population has grown substantially, the number of unemployed workers has stopped growing and the unemployment rates have shrunk, so that, for the first time in many years, characteristic unemployment rates are no longer in double, but single figures.

Affiliation to Social Security, which indicates jobs existing in the regular economy, has been growing constantly (Figure 5). If in 2001 the number of workers affiliated over the year was 15,204,072, in 2007 there were 4 million more workers affiliated, a total of 19,231,986. This spectacular growth of workers with Social Security encourages those who wish to settle in the country, originating from other places where the work situation is not so dynamic.

The bonanza employment situation is also appreciated in the analysis of unemployment rates, which fell by 8.26% in 2007 (Figure 6), although later, with the crisis, this favourable development was halted.

Figure 5

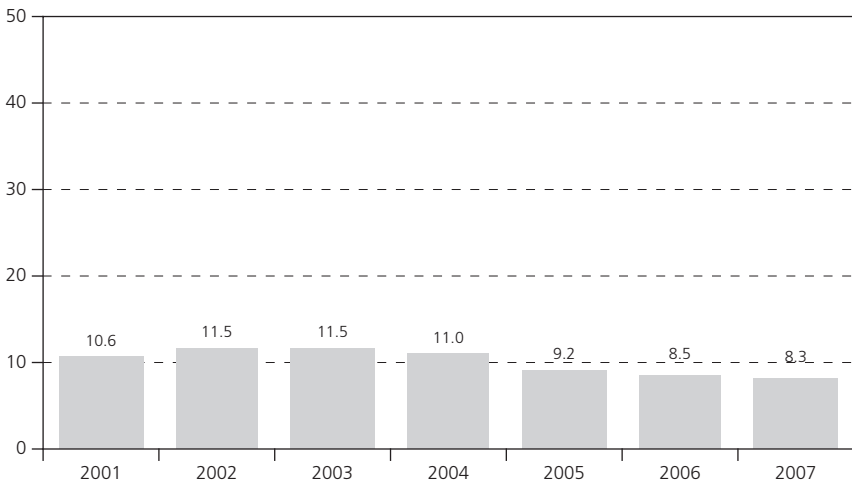
Workers affiliated with Social Security. Spain. Years 2001 to 2007.
Annual averages



Source: Social Security.

Figure 6

Unemployment rates. Spain. Years 2001 to 2007.
Annual averages. Percentages



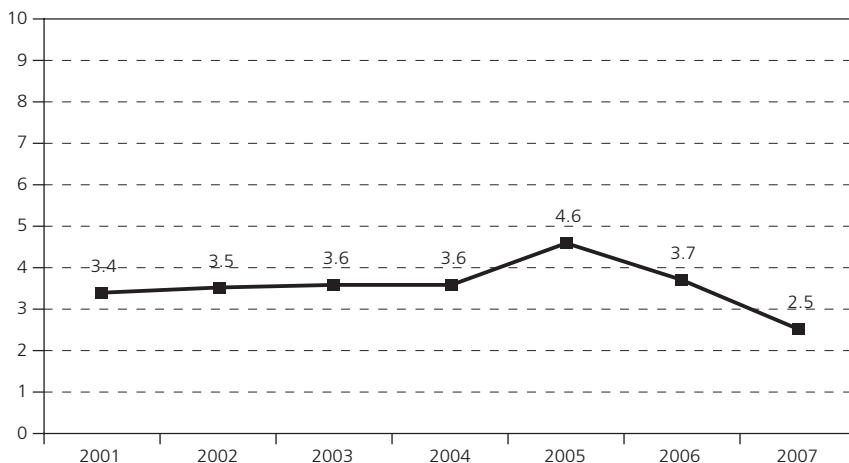
Source: EPA. NSI.

There is no doubt that this favourable employment situation attracts immigrants whose economic motivation, exclusively or in combination with other motivations, is always present when making decisions on mobility. The increase in production, together with the creation of employment, have created a situation of year-on-year increase of the available family income (Figure 7).

In fact, the available income in purchasing power parity (PPP) per inhabitant has grown from 19,100 Euros in 2001 to 25,900 in 2007 (Table 3). In 2001 these figures represented 78.8% of the average of

Figure 7

Rate of annual variation of the family income available. Spain.
Years 2001 to 2007. Percentages



Source: BBVA. Service of Economic Studies.

Table 3

Income per inhabitant at market prices, in Euros, and percentage with respect to EU-25 total. Spain. Years 2001 to 2007

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Family income available per inhabitant	19,100	20,300	20,700	21,600	22,800	24,300	25,900
% with respect to total UE-25	78.8	80.7	84.4	85.0	87.1	88.1	87.7

Source: EUROSTAT.

the 25 European Union states, which, at the end of that period, in 2007, had risen to represent 87.7% of the average of the EU-25.

2.3.2. *Living conditions*

TOTAL EXPENDITURE AND EXPENDITURE ON LEISURE

In Spain, the average expenditure per household—which expresses people’s material standard of living— has been growing constantly. In agreement with the data of table 4, the average expenditure per household between 2001 and 2007 has grown by 53.27%, which represents an annual average of 9%. In a socially, economically and culturally developed society, there are some groups of expenses which reflect this evolution better; one is expenses in leisure or expenses in on restaurants and hotels. Taking the data from the Survey of Family Budgets of the NSI, the sections “leisure, entertainment and culture” and “hotels, cafeterias and restaurants” are two important sections of expenditure where society has leftover resources after covering the basic needs of food, health, education or housing. The sum of both in Spain, in 2001, came to 3,089.25 Euros, which had risen to 5,502.31 in 2007, which represents a growth of 78.13% over the period, with an annual average of 13%. Comparing the average expenditure with the expenditure on leisure and hostelry, the latter has increased more, which indicates that these expenses have come to play a more and more important part in the budget of Spanish households.

Table 4

Average household expenditure and expenditure on leisure activities.
Spain. Years 2001 to 2007. In Euros

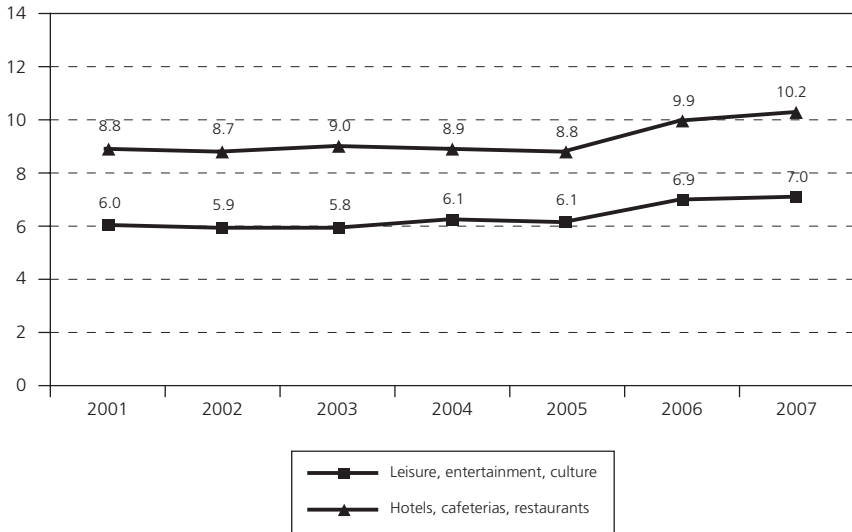
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Average household expenditure	20,879	21,320	22,072	23,341	25,086	30,562	32,001
Expenditure on leisure, entertainment and culture	1,254	1,248	1,289	1,431	1,527	2,117	2,247
Expenditure on hotels, cafeterias and restaurants	1,836	1,853	1,979	2,073	2,194	3,027	3,255

Source: NSI. Survey of family budgets.

Figure 8 shows that the percentage of expenditure on leisure, entertainment and culture is tower than that directed to hostelry, nevertheless, both types of expenditure have followed the same trend, in both cases the percentage of cost increasing in the period 2001-2007.

Figure 8

Part of the household budget spent on "Leisure, entertainment and culture" and "Hotels, cafeterias and restaurants". Spain.
Years 2001 to 2007. Percentages



Source: NSI. Survey of Family Budgets.

HOUSEHOLD EQUIPMENT

Spanish homes are well equipped, since almost 100% of families have a telephone, washing machine and colour television; and in addition, more than three quarters have a car (table 5). These numbers show the improvement in standard of living of the citizens.

Table 5

Homes enjoying certain appliances. Spain.
Years 2004 to 2007. Percentages

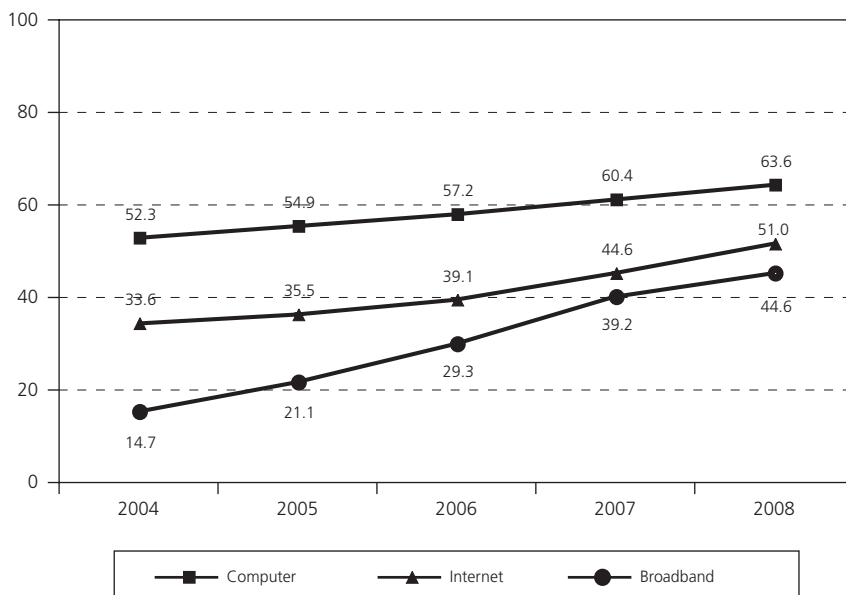
	2004	2005	2006	2007
Colour television	99.1	99.3	97.7	97.9
Washing machine	98.5	98.5	98.6	99.0
Car	74.2	75.4	76.4	77.3
Telephone (fixed or mobile)	96.3	97.4	97.7	97.9

Source: NSI. Survey of living conditions.

Also information and communication technologies have increased their presence in Spanish households. After 5 years more than half of families have at least a computer with broadband Internet. This situation in 2004 did not reach more than 20-30% (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Households that have different types of ITC and Communications equipment. Spain. Years 2004 to 2008. Percentages



Source: NSI. Survey on Equipment and Use of Information and Communication Technologies in homes.

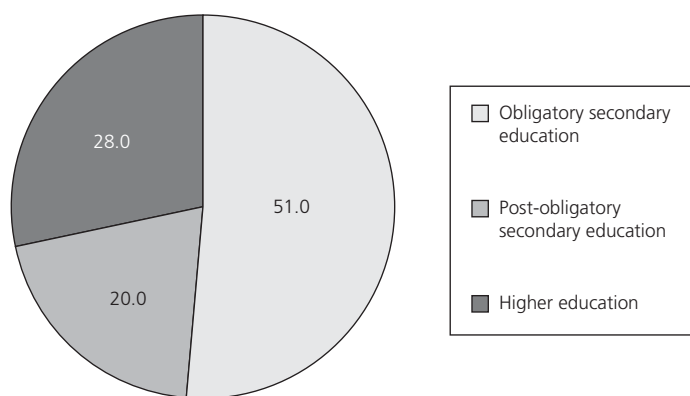
2.3.3. The educational situation

The educational level of the Spanish population is not high, since half (51%) of the adult population (25-64 years) had no more than obligatory secondary education in 2005, according to data of the Ministry of Education and Science (Figure 10). At the same time, in the EU, this figure was 29% of the population, therefore, the level of educational qualifications in Spain was lower than that in Europe as a whole. Nevertheless, recent development shows that the percentage of people

who complete higher studies is growing. In 2005, 28% of adults between 25 and 64 years old had completed this level of studies, but in the youngest group of 25 to 34 years, the number reached 40%.

Figure 10

Distribution of educational level in adults (25-64 years). Spain.
Year 2005. Percentages



Source: Ministry of Education and Science (2007). Panorama of OECD education indicators, 2007. Spanish report.

All these factors of change have led to a modern country, with a quite acceptable standard of living and with opportunities for work. This panorama has influenced the desire of many migrants to live in Spain, as has been seen in the first part of this chapter. Faced with this panorama of increase in migrants, legal aspects related to migratory policies have been developing in Spain. The following point develops this topic.

2.4. Legal aspects in migration policies²

2.4.1. *The acquisition of citizenship*

Spanish nationality is granted automatically to people whose father or mother is Spanish. On the other hand, people born to foreign parents in Spanish territory are in principle considered as foreigners. In

² We wish to acknowledge the valuable contribution of Eduardo J. Ruiz to the editing of this section.

the Spanish case, the regulations related to nationality are included in the Civil Code. Spanish nationality can be obtained by four different routes, according to the Civil Code: by birth (nationality of origin), by choice, by attribution and by residence. As a general principle, when a person is born in Spanish territory, but to foreign parents, their nationality of origin is recognised as being the same as that of the parents. This fact is important with respect to migratory policy, since the legal systems of some foreign nationalities with the greatest presence in Spain do not recognise the citizenship of children born abroad, as is the case of Ecuador and other countries. In these cases, the new-born children are given Spanish nationality, and the parents find themselves in a situation assimilated to that of Spanish natives, which greatly facilitates their possibilities of securing work permits or residence, according to the immigration laws.

In order to obtain nationality via residence, in general a period of ten years of legal and permanent residence is needed, together with good civic conduct and a sufficient degree of integration in Spanish society. For people who are in the condition of refugees, the time of residence required is reduced to 5 years. For citizens of Latin American countries, Andorra, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea, Portugal and Sefardic Jews, the necessary period is reduced to two years. This shows the importance that Spanish Law grants to the historical, cultural and linguistic links that exist with certain foreign communities. In order to gain Spanish nationality, there are no special requirements such as language examinations or citizenship tests.

2.4.2. *Immigration policy*

Spain had no immigration policy until very recently, since until 1985 there no specific legislation on foreign residents. Nevertheless, the Constitution of 1978 includes both a principle of equality of rights between nationals and foreigners (article 13) and a principle of unity in the management of immigration, so that, in accordance with Article 149 of the Constitution, all questions related to immigration, asylum, nationality, passports, borders and foreigners are under the responsibility of the central State institutions.

What can be considered the Spanish Law of Immigration dates from the mid-1980s. The first generation of immigration laws included principally the first Law of Immigration of 1985³, with its

³ Statutory law 7/1985, of 7 July.

corresponding legislative development carried out in 1986⁴. In parallel, the first Law of Asylum was approved in 1984⁵ and its legislative development in 1985. It is also important to mention two resolutions of the Constitutional Court: 107/1984, related to the fundamental rights of foreigners in Spain, and 115/1987, which resolved the appeal of unconstitutionality raised by the Defender of the People on certain articles of the Law of Immigration. This first set of laws on the topic represented the basic principles of government which have substantially remained in force, placing special emphasis on the control of migratory flows and the regulation of the requirements (needs) created by the presence of foreigners in state territory. The subjects of integration were absent from legislation in this first period. An important change took place in first half of the 1990s. In 1991 the new basic lines of the policy of immigration and integration of immigrants in Spain were designed. From that moment, the Law of Asylum was modified substantially in 1994⁶ and its legislative development in 1995⁷, as well as the legislative development of the Law of Immigration of 1996⁸. The modification of this last made clear the great interest in regulating aspects related to the integration of immigrants in society, without changing the basically controlling nature of the regulation. At the same time, the socialist government developed some initiatives in parallel, like the first Plan for Social Integration of Immigrants (1994) and the creation of a Permanent Observatory of Immigration and a Forum for the Social Integration of Immigrants, as a participating and consultative body of the central government on immigration.

In January 2000 the first reform of the Law of Immigration of 1985 took place, showing a clear desire for integrating that was not found in previous regulation. Nevertheless the change of government through the General Elections of 2000 led to a restrictive reform of the new law⁹. Since then, the perception of immigration on the part of Spanish society has changed, due to the great increase in the number of new arrivals, mainly from the Latin American countries. Thus, in the year 2000, the legal status of irregularity became hardened; the penal regime became more severe and the power granted to the Execu-

⁴ Royal Decree 1919/1986, of 26 May.

⁵ Law 5/1984, of 26 March.

⁶ Law 9/1994, of 19 May.

⁷ Royal Decree 205/1995, of 10 February.

⁸ Royal Decree 155/1996, of 2 February.

⁹ Statutory law 8/2000, of 22 December.

tive to develop the content of the law was increased importantly. From this base, the government proceeded to approve in 2001 a new and extensive reform of the regulation's development¹⁰. Nevertheless, the process of legislation did not cease then, since in 2003 the law of Immigration was reformed again¹¹. The return of the Socialist Party to the Madrid government led to a new legislative development in 2004¹².

The European citizens of the Member States of the European Union and some others, such as Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, benefit from a privileged legal position.

During the past few years some new laws and decrees have been introduced for certain specific groups. Thus new decrees have been drawn up for asylum-seekers and refugees¹³, stateless persons¹⁴ and displaced persons¹⁵.

The whole immigration policy contained in these regulations can be summarised in two basic principles. On one hand the principle of authorization establishes that a foreigner cannot remain in Spanish territory without corresponding administrative or legal authorization. From the breach of this basic principle is directly derived the existence of the legal category of irregularity. On the other, there is the principle of viability, which implies that authorisation is granted to those foreigners who can demonstrate the economic and social viability of their life project in Spain. This viability is accredited essentially by a stable income, which can come from a work contract, self-employment or the availability of sufficient economic resources to stay. As we have mentioned previously, the Constitution also indicates a limited principle of equality of rights. Thus, foreigners enjoy most civil, cultural and social rights on an equal basis, at least in theory.

One of the main characteristics of the development of Spanish immigration policy during the last 30 years has been the so-called processes of stabilisation in order to document foreigners who are in an irregular situation. Indeed, starting with the approval of the first law of Immigration of 1985, 6 "extraordinary" processes of regulation of foreigners have taken place (1985, 1991, 1996, 2000, 2001 and 2005), which have involved the resolution of more than a million cases.

¹⁰ Royal Decree 864/2001, of 20 July.

¹¹ Statutory law 11/2003, of 29 September and Statutory law 14/2003, of 20 November.

¹² Royal Decree 2393/2004, of 30 December.

¹³ Royal Decree 864/2001, of 20 July and Royal Decree 2393/2004, of 30 December.

¹⁴ Royal Decree 865/2001, of 20 July.

¹⁵ Royal Decree 1353/2003, of 24 October.

2.4.3. *The integration policy*

The first result of the integration policy was the adoption by the central government on 2 December 1994 of the first Plan for the Social Integration of Immigrants. In fact, the autonomous community of Catalonia was the first to develop its own plan for integration of immigrants. With the arrival of immigrants the autonomous communities took care of the social integration of recent arrivals, although powers related to immigration flows have always been in the hands of the state. This situation has created numerous problems of lack of co-ordination between the central and regional authorities.

In parallel with the institutional initiatives, associative movements were developed during the 1990s with the aim of promoting the social integration of immigrants in Spain. A complex panorama of organizations exists today, working wholly or partially in this area, like welfare unions, organizations, associations for the promotion of human rights or associations of immigrants. Many of them collaborate with the public administrations in the development and implementation of social policies.

The central government after the design of the first plan of 1994 did not present a second document until 2001 (when the Popular Party was in power; the so-called GRECO Plan¹⁶). After the last change in the central government which took place in 2004, new phases have taken place. Thus in 2005, a specific fund for social and education integration of immigrants was included for the first time in the annual budget. Two years later this fund was included within the Strategic Plan of Citizenship and Integration¹⁷, which at present constitutes the main attempt developed by the central institutions to create a model of integration in Spain. Although it has an assimilationist background in rhetorical terms, it assumes the principle of interculturality as the best model of integration between new and old citizens. And with regard to the autonomous communities, the majority have developed their own plans for integration of immigrants. During the first years of this decade, most of the autonomous communities established plans for integration or for immigration. This is the case of the Balearics (2001), Navarre (2001), Murcia (2002 and 2005), the Canary Islands (2002), the Basque Country (2003 and 2007), Valencia (2004), La Rioja (2004), Cantabria (2005), Castile-Leon (2005) and Castile-

¹⁶ Global Program of Regulation and Coordination of Foreigners in Spain, whose application covers the period 2000-2004.

¹⁷ Approved by the cabinet on 16 February 2007.

La Mancha (2006). Most of the autonomous communities have prioritised initial reception and have assigned the management of integration to the corresponding Departments of Social Security. The plans normally assure foreigners the social and cultural rights that are provided in the state legislation. In cultural and identity topics, interculturality is the formal guiding principle, although there is an assimilationist undercurrent in the majority of policies in this matter. In any case the cultural or identity topics seem not to be considered a priority with respect to work and socioeconomic welfare.

These legal, economic and social characteristics are those that have formed in Spain a context of a typical Welfare State, which has attracted millions of people from other countries and continents in the short space of approximately ten years. Among these almost five million new residents, the population originating from Ecuador has been one of most numerous and fast-growing. We have dedicated the following chapter to analysing the process of settlement of Ecuadorians in Spain and also in the Basque Country, which is the territorial space from which we have taken the sample of Ecuadorian people to carry out our research.

3

The Ecuadorian population in Spain and the Basque Country

3.1. The Ecuadorian population in Spain

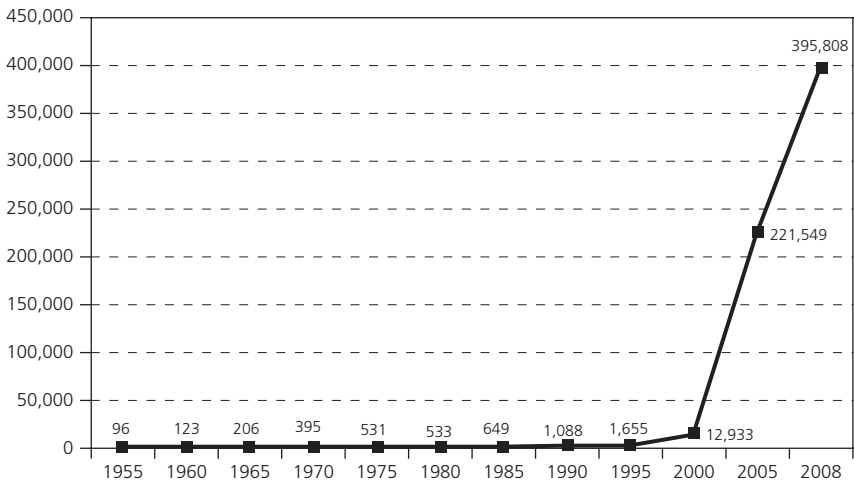
3.1.1. *Evolution of the Ecuadorian population*

At the beginning of 2008, a total of 395,808 foreigners of Ecuadorian origin lived in Spain with a residence card or permit, showing the same clear rising trend as for the foreign population of this country as a whole. In fact, if the migratory flow into Spain was accelerated during the Nineties, and mainly since the second half of the decade, this trend was shown even more intensely by the Ecuadorian population. Thus, between 1998 and 2008, the population of foreigners with a residence permit has grown by a factor of more than six, from 609,813 to 3,979,014 people. In this same period, on the other hand, the Ecuadorian population legally established in Spain grew even more spectacularly, growing by more than 96 times, from 4,112 people registered in 1998 to 395,808 ten years later, at the beginning of 2008.

But throughout the decade 1998-2008, the arrival of Ecuadorian population has not only undergone growth in absolute terms —already outstanding— but in relative terms, from representing a miniscule 0.7% of the foreign population resident in this country in 1998 to comprising one-tenth of this group ten years later; although in this new host country, the migratory flows and stocks are characterised by an increasing diversification in their national origins, together with a constant increase in each of them in absolute terms.

Figure 11

Evolution of the Ecuadorian population with residence permit in Spain.
Absolute values. Years 1955 to 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

If together with the Ecuadorian population that has a valid registration certificate or residence card we consider, in addition, those living irregularly in Spain, this group is considerably larger for every year considered, as is reflected in figure 12. At the beginning of 2008, there were already 420,110 people of this nationality registered with municipalities in Spain as a whole, a group that represents 8% of the foreign population and 0.9% of the total population¹⁸ of the country at the same date.

The evolution of Ecuadorian irregular immigrants shows some remarkable characteristics: in 2001¹⁹ a mere 22% of the foreign Ecuadorian

¹⁸ In second half of this decade, irregularity appears less often among Ecuadorians than in other more recently arrived groups, such as Bolivians, Argentines or Rumanians.

¹⁹ Since 2000 the municipal registration of foreigners in an irregular situation has been still more important, since access to certain social rights of the welfare state became linked to this registration, such as the right to free medical assistance, the right to obligatory schooling and the right to basic social benefits. In addition, as from that date the city councils' obligation to register the foreign population was reinforced. For these reasons, municipal registers acquired great importance in calculating the number of

Table 6

Foreign population resident in Spain, with residence permit.
Years 1970 to 2008

Year	Total foreign population	Ecuadorian population	% foreign Ecuadorian population /total
1970	139,347	395	0.3
1975	166,067	531	0.3
1980	173,733	533	0.3
1985	226,470	649	0.3
1990	398,148	1,088	0.3
1995	461,364	1,655	0.4
1996	499,773	1,963	0.4
1997	538,984	2,913	0.5
1998	609,813	4,112	0.7
1999	719,647	7,046	1.0
2000	801,329	12,933	1.6
2001	895,720	30,878	3.4
2002	1,109,060	84,699	7.6
2003	1,324,001	115,301	8.7
2004	1,647,011	174,289	10.6
2005	1,977,291	221,549	11.2
2006	2,738,932	357,065	13.0
2007	3,021,808	376,233	12.5
2008	3,979,014	395,808	9.9

Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

population resident in Spain had a residence permit²⁰, a percentage which during these last seven years has been increasing until it has reached 94% of the population of this national origin at the beginning of 2008. At the latter date, however, almost 6% (24,302 people) remain in an irregular situation, with practically no legal channels to regularise their situation in Spain, with the social implications that this entails.

people foreign resident in Spain, since, in counting irregular immigrants (who are very numerous, as shown by the successive extraordinary processes of stabilisation), they offer a more trustworthy number than that gathered by the Statistical Yearbooks of Immigration, that concentrate solely on the foreign population with mandatory residence permit.

²⁰ Between 1998 and 2001 there was a great increase in the arrival of the Ecuadorian population in Spain. Nevertheless, in the statistics this is reflected mainly from 2001, after the aforementioned modification in the implications of registration with the corresponding municipal register.

Despite this, the great volume of Ecuadorian irregular immigrants was especially important in the first half of the present decade, because during this period occurred the greatest increase in people of this origin who decided to settle in Spain. Thus, although at the beginning of 2005 there were 190,671 more Ecuadorians with residence permits than in 2001, the number of Ecuadorians registered municipally grew almost twice as fast (by 358,777 people) in this same period. And this despite the processes of regularisation²¹ carried out during 2000²² and 2001²³, which gave access to the sought-after residence and work permits to almost 75,000 Ecuadorian people living irregularly in Spain²⁴.

The migration of the Ecuadorian population to Spain, nevertheless, found an increasing number of obstacles with the change of century. Starting in the year 2000, the date when the Ecuadorian economy switched to using the US dollar, the double nationality agreement in force since 1964 was also modified; so that the Ecuadorian population saw their privileges in obtaining access to the Spanish

²¹ In Spain processes of stabilisation have taken place in 1986, 1991, 1996, 2000, 2001 and 2005. In 1986 one took place as a result of the first Law of Immigration, Law 7/85, of 1 July, on the rights and liberties of foreigners in Spain. The process of stabilisation of foreign workers of 1991 was authorised by an agreement of the Council of Ministers faced with the proliferation of irregular immigrants. The third process of stabilisation took place as a result of new legislative measures, specifically the development regulation of 1996 (RD 155/96 of 2 February), which modified that of 1986. The following one took place in 2000-2001, as a result of the approval of the law 4/2000, and was later prorogued after the reform of that latter through law 8/2000. The last process of stabilisation in Spain took place between February and April in 2005, after the entrance into force of Royal Decree 2393/2004, of approval of the Regulation of statutory law 4/2000, of 11 January, on rights and liberties of foreigners in Spain and their social integration.

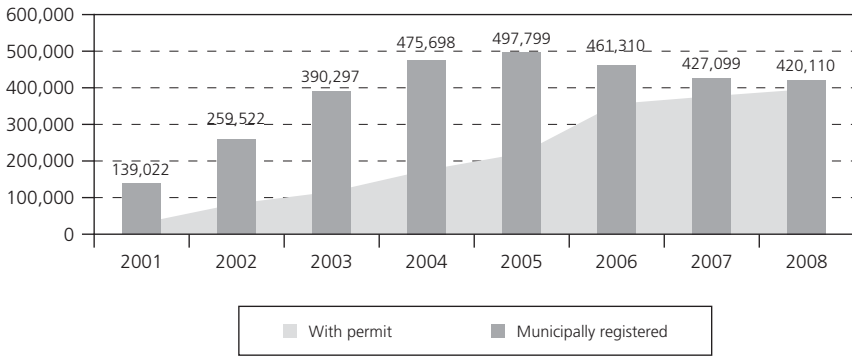
²² Aimed at the foreign population that could show that they had been in Spain since at least June 1999 and were in sufficiently stable employment.

²³ This process proceeded to review the application of foreigners who, though meeting the other requirements demanded by the previous process of stabilisation, could not show that they had been in Spain since at least 1 June 1999. This review was approved by the Government on 16 February 2001, after an accident took place in Lorca (Murcia) in which twelve Ecuadorian irregular workers were killed when the van crashed in which they were travelling to their work place, a fruit and vegetable company.

²⁴ Specifically, the important increase in the foreign irregular population generally (and Ecuadorians in particular) was what brought about the last process of stabilisation which took place in 2005. Under the name "Process of normalisation of foreign workers 2005" a term of three months was opened for foreigners without criminal records in their country of origin nor in Spain who could show that they had a work contract, and document their presence in Spain prior to 8 August 2004.

Figure 12

Evolution of the Ecuadorian population, municipally registered and with residence permit, in Spain. Absolute values. Years 2001 to 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the NSI and the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

labour market disappear²⁵. Until then Ecuadorians with a mandatory work permit and the necessary training could work in Spain without restrictions, in equal conditions with the Spanish population, starting in 2000 were in a new situation in which the principle of the national employment situation would be applied to them. That is to say, starting in 2000 access to the labour market for the Ecuadorian population in their first year of residence would depend on the demand not covered by the native population or the legally resident foreign population.

On the other hand, starting in 2001, the system of contingents or quotas²⁶ was modified²⁷ so that, as of that date, access to it would only be open to foreigners who were selected in their country of ori-

²⁵ See the Dual Nationality Treaty with Ecuador. It contains the modification put into effect by the Protocol modifying the Dual Nationality Agreement between the Republic of Ecuador and the Kingdom of Spain of 4 March 1964, signed in Quito on 25 August 1995. (B.O.E. 16-8-2000).

²⁶ These constitute a labour market in which, after consulting the business and union organizations and the competent administrative authorities regarding foreign affairs, the jobs offered to the foreign population coming from non-EU countries are determined, together with their geographic location and the necessary qualifications to carry them out.

²⁷ After the entrance in force of Statutory Law 8/2008, of 22 December, developed by Royal Decree 864/2001, of 20 July 2001.

gin and who, therefore, were not in Spain at the time of their recruitment. Thus, the annual contingents or quotas, which until then had served as a route of regularisation for undocumented foreigners resident in Spain, became considered more as an entrance route for those who were waiting in the country of origin to get a permit before initiating the migratory project. Against this background, nevertheless, in the same year, 2001, an agreement was signed between Spain and Ecuador regarding the regulation of migratory flows²⁸, with the aim of giving priority to the hiring of Ecuadorians through these quotas or contingents²⁹. And, on the other hand, in 2003, specifically in August, Ecuadorians began to need a visa, which made it difficult for them to enter as tourists (until then this was only controlled by the border patrol) in order to later attempt family reunification through a procedure of visa exemption or the search for irregular work while waiting for a route towards stabilisation.

This increasing number of difficulties in conditions of entrance to Spain, together with improvement in the economic situation of Ecuador (although more for temporary than structural reasons), meant that in the final stage of this half-decade the Ecuadorian population stopped growing, beginning a period of stabilisation, marked by the last process of regularisation carried out in Spain, in 2005. Thus, as of this date, a clear change in trend is observed: the number of residence permits granted to the Ecuadorian population continued to rise, but a slight reduction in the number of Ecuadorian people registered municipally is in fact observed, which is translated into a clear reduction in the proportion of irregularity among this group.

In addition, we can also appreciate a remarkable increase in the number of naturalisations³⁰ among the Ecuadorian population living in

²⁸ *Agreement between the Kingdom of Spain and the Republic of Ecuador regarding the regulation and arrangement of migratory flows*, signed in Madrid, 29 May 2001, whose provisional application was published in the BOE n.º 164, of 10 July 2001.

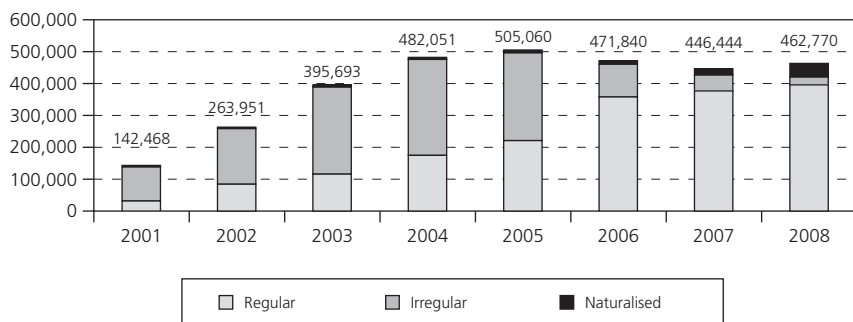
²⁹ As well as Ecuador, Spain has signed agreements with other countries like Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Rumania and Morocco, giving preference to the hiring in the country of origin to people with these nationalities. For a deeper analysis of bilateral migratory agreements concluded by Spain, see Trinidad (2002).

³⁰ It is important to remember that for the concession of nationality by residence in Spain this must have taken ten years, except where the condition of refugee has been obtained (in this case five years of residence will be sufficient), or for nationals of Andorra, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea, Portugal, Sephardic Jews or those of Latin American countries (in which the residence for two years will be sufficient). In addition, the Ecuadorian population, like that from other Latin American nationalities, does not have to give up its nationality of origin on becoming naturalized as a Spanish citizen, thanks to the dual nationality agreements.

Spain. In this sense we can emphasise that at the beginning of 2008 there were 42,660 people who, though born in Latin America, held Spanish nationality, showing a trend that may become very important in the future, since over the past year the number of naturalisations among this population has increased by an outstanding 120% (see Figures 13 and 14).

Figure 13

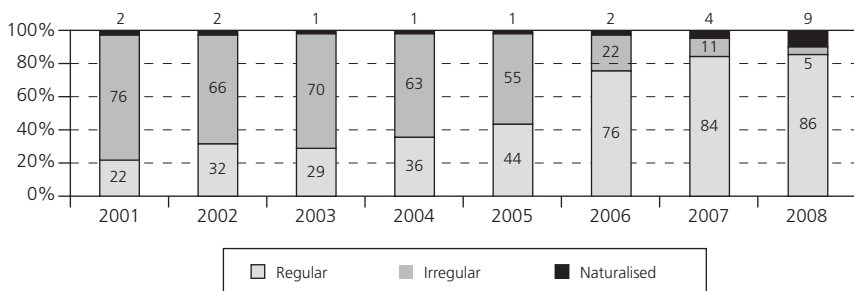
Evolution of the population of Ecuadorian origin in Spain, by legal status.
Absolute values. Years 2001 to 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the NSI and the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

Figure 14

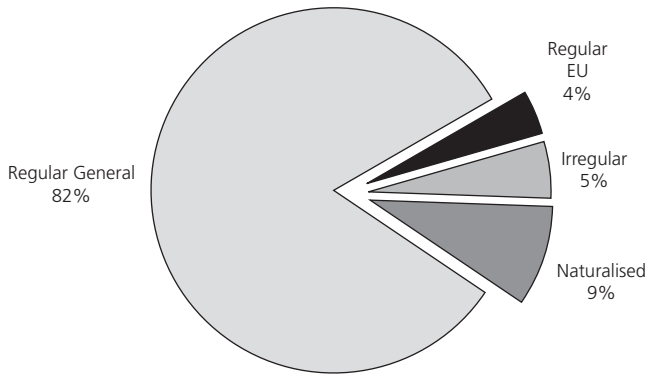
Evolution of the population of Ecuadorian origin in Spain, by legal status.
Relative values. Years 2001 to 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the NSI and the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

Figure 15

Legal status of the Ecuadorian population in Spain.
Relative values. Year 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from the data provided by the NSI and from the Statistical Yearbook of Immigration of the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

In conclusion, according to the latest data available, at the beginning of 2008 there were already 462,770 people of Ecuadorian origin living in Spain. Of these, 86% have a valid mandatory residence card or permit, whether general³¹ —82%— or European Community³² —4%. A little over 5% of the total group is in an irregular situation, that is to say, 24,302 people lack the necessary documentation to work and/or live legally in this country. And, finally, a little over 9% of people born in Ecuador resident in Spain have already secured Spanish nationality, so that they are considered as full citizens, at least in legal terms.

Among Ecuadorian people included in the general regime, half (51%) have a temporary residence permit with work authorisation (in almost all the cases as employees, there being a very small group

³¹ That is to say, a permit to work solely in those sectors not covered by national manpower.

³² This type of authorization for residence is obtained by the Ecuadorian population for being a family member of a person of Spanish nationality or a national of one of the countries of the European Union. Those who have an EU residence permit have unrestricted access to the labour market (they are not limited to seeking work, according to the national employment situation, in those sectors not covered by Spanish manpower), but rather can do so in the same conditions as the native population.

which has a work permit for self-employment –0.4%). Just over a fifth (23%) holds a temporary residence permit, which does not authorise them to earn money as an employee nor through self-employment. And another quarter (26%) is authorised to live and work indefinitely in Spanish territory under equal conditions with the native population.

3.1.2. Sociodemographic characterization of the Ecuadorian population

The population of Ecuadorian origin in Spain has undergone remarkable growth during recent years, as described in the previous section. Thus, although the data of the municipal registers corresponding to the year 2000 did not identify this population specifically in its breakdown by nationalities, due to the small numbers, a year later, not only was it already counted separately but it had become the second foreign nationality in this country by numbers of residents, exceeded only by the population of Moroccan origin (Table 7). The Ecuadorian population stayed in second place in 2002, and rose to first place in this ranking during 2003 and 2004. During 2005 and 2006 they returned to second place, being passed again by the Moroccan population in Spain, and during 2007 and 2008 they were in third place in this ranking, after people of Moroccan and Rumanian origin resident in Spain.

On the other hand, as regards breakdown by sex, it is remarkable that the Ecuadorian population shows a continuous tendency to balance, with a slight predominance of women from the beginning of

Table 7

Top foreign nationalities present in Spain.
Years 2001 to 2008

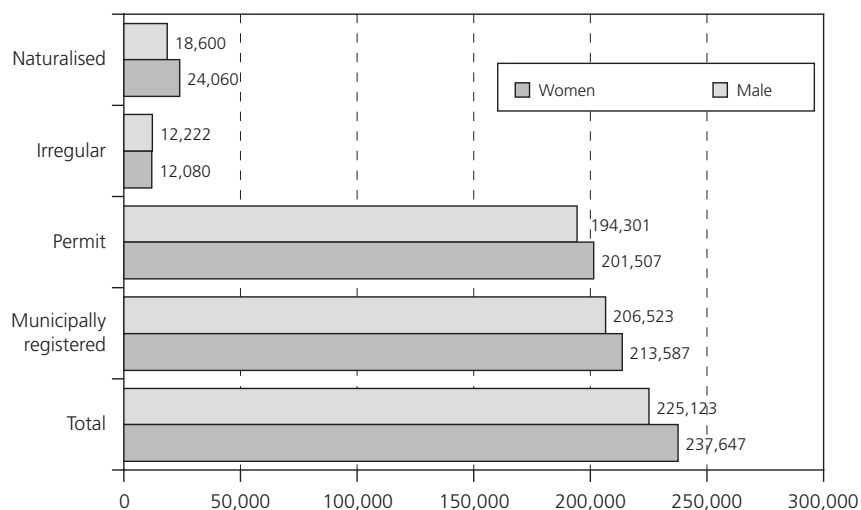
Year	Main nationalities		
	1. st Place	2. nd Place	3. rd Place
2001	Morocco	Ecuador	UK
2002	Morocco	Ecuador	Colombia
2003	Ecuador	Morocco	Colombia
2004	Ecuador	Morocco	Colombia
2005	Morocco	Ecuador	Rumania
2006	Morocco	Ecuador	Rumania
2007	Morocco	Rumania	Ecuador
2008	Rumania	Morocco	Ecuador

Source: Prepared by the authors from the data provided by the NSI. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

the decade (Figure 16). At present women comprise a slightly higher percentage than men (51 and 49% respectively) both among the municipally registered population of this nationality (420,110 people) and among the population with residence permit (395,808). Levels of irregularity, a situation that affected 24,302 people at the beginning of 2008, are still more similar between sexes (women represent 49.7% of the Ecuadorian population in these conditions, and men the remaining 50.3%). Major differences by sex are observed, however, in access to nationality (56% of people with Spanish nationality born in Ecuador are women, whereas men form 44% of this group) or in the patterns of marriage shown by the Ecuadorian population (only one Ecuadorian man gets married with a Spanish woman for every three Ecuadorian women who choose a Spanish husband) (Setién and Vicente, 2007). This last fact, without a doubt, largely explains the greater number of European Community residence permits (18,305 altogether) among female Ecuadorians (63%) compared with males (37%), since they will only benefit from this legal status if they are the family member of a Spaniard or a native of some other country in the European Economic Area.

Figure 16

Ecuadorian population, according to legal regime and sex.
Absolute values. Year 2008



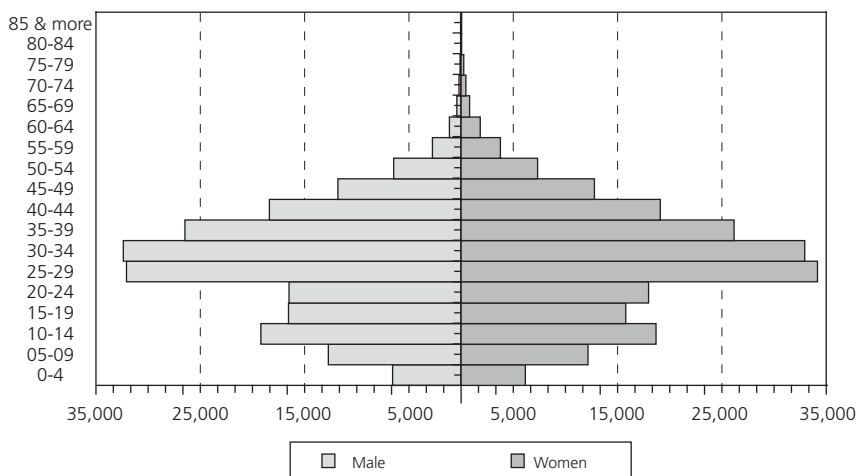
Source: Prepared by the authors from the data provided by the NSI and the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

Considering now the age of the Ecuadorian population, with an average age of 30, their youth is notable in comparison with the average age of Spanish residents (see Figures 17 and 18). Practically three of every four residents of Ecuadorian origin in Spanish territory (74%) are of working age (between 20 and 64 years old), as against 64% of the Spanish population. Another 26% of the Ecuadorian group are less than 19 years old (a group relatively larger than among the Spanish population, where it represents 19% of the total), and are therefore largely studying at the different educational levels, although some of their members will be already taking their first steps in the labour market. And, finally, the population from Ecuador living in Spain of retirement age does not even reach 1%, far less than the 17% that this age group comprises among the Spanish population.

This age structure of people from Ecuador registered in Spanish territory reflects the recent arrival of this migratory flow, although some signs of greater establishment can already be appreciated. In this line, since the beginning of the present decade a greater diversification of ages is observed: where in 2001 the age interval between 20 and 39 years represented 70% of the Ecuadorian population in Spain,

Figure 17

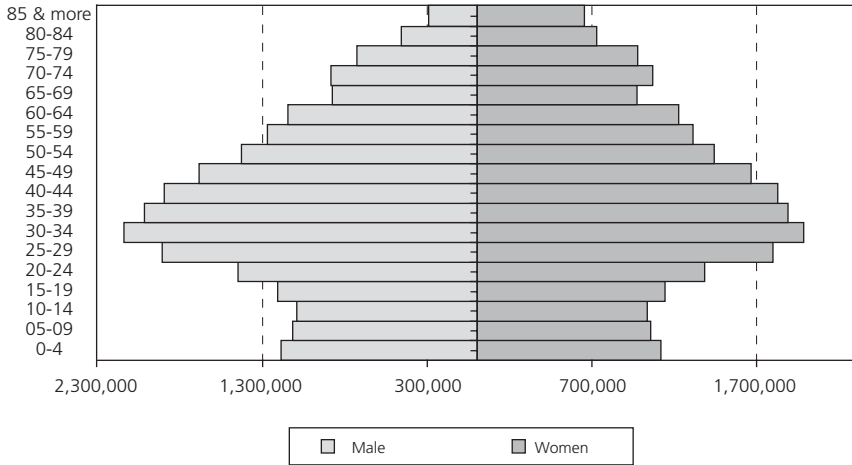
Structure by age and sex of the Ecuadorian population in Spain. Year 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from the data provided by the NSI.
Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

Figure 18

Structure by age and sex of the Spanish population. Year 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the NSI.
Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

this percentage was reduced to 53% in 2008, while the group of people aged between 40 and 65 years increased both in absolute and relative terms (going from 15% to 21% over this period of eight years) or the group of under-19s (which has gone from 15% to 26%), a result of family reunification or new births on Spanish soil.

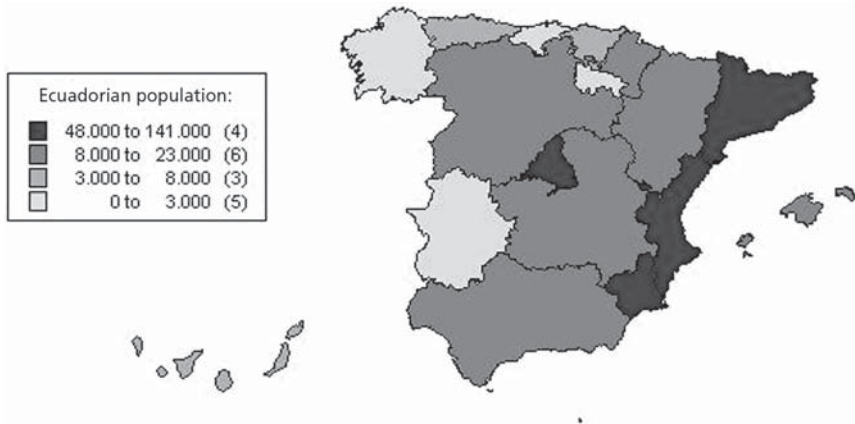
The five-year age groups with greatest weight among the population of Ecuadorian origin, however, remain those from 25 to 29 years and from 30 to 34 years (both 16%), and 35 to 39 years (9%). On the other hand, significant differences in the distribution of ages of Ecuadorian people resident in Spain based on sex are not seen.

3.1.3. Geographical location of the Ecuadorian population

People coming from Ecuador have been increasing their presence all over Spain, although they are not going distributed homogenously all over the Spanish territory. As is reflected in Figure 19, this population shows a clear predilection to locate in the Community of Madrid and throughout the Mediterranean, specifically in Catalonia, the Valencian Community and the Region of Murcia. Practically three out of four Ecuadorian people municipally registered in Spain live in one of these four

Figure 19

Distribution of the foreign population of Ecuadorian origin in Spain, by Autonomous Community. Year 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from the data provided by the NSI.
Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

Autonomous Communities, with Madrid being the one with the greatest number: a third of the total.

Considering these data, it comes as no surprise that when we compare the Ecuadorian population with the total population—surely a more interesting reference—it turns out that one of the Autonomous Communities with the greatest proportion of Ecuadorian population is Madrid, although in this case it is surpassed by the Region of Murcia (which is in fourth place in absolute numbers of Ecuadorian people municipally registered). The Community of Navarre and the Balearic Islands are next in order (although they only have 2.7% and 1.3% of the total number of Ecuadorian people in Spain), with Catalonia (with 19% of the total) in fifth place and the Valencian Community (with 12%) in sixth.

As regards distribution by sex of the municipally registered Ecuadorian population in the different Autonomous Communities we can highlight that only four of them (Murcia, Navarre, the Valencian Community and Castilla-La Mancha) have more men than women, although by a small margin that ranges from 50.8% of in Castilla-La Mancha to 54.3% in Murcia. Women, on the other hand, are more numerous in the rest of the communities, with percentages that vary from 51.4% in the Balears to 59.5% in Extremadura.

Table 8

Municipally registered Ecuadorian population in Spain,
by Autonomous Community. Year 2008

	Ecuadorian population	% of total Ecuadorian population	% of total foreign population of the A.C.	% of total population of the A.C.
Andalusia	22,854	5.4	3.7	0.3
Aragón	11,429	2.7	7.4	0.9
Asturias (Principality of)	3,834	0.9	9.5	0.4
Balears (Isles)	13,441	3.2	6.0	1.3
The Canary Islands	5,968	1.4	2.1	0.3
Cantabria	2,064	0.5	6.2	0.4
Castile & Leon	8,829	2.1	5.8	0.3
Castilla-La Mancha	13,642	3.4	6.7	0.7
Catalonia	80,350	19.1	7.3	1.1
Valencia (Community of)	51,402	12.2	6.1	1.0
Extremadura	875	0.2	2.5	0.1
Galicia	1,447	0.3	1.5	0.1
Madrid (Community of)	135,465	32.2	13.7	2.2
Murcia (Region of)	46,878	11.2	20.9	3.3
Navarre (Foral C. of)	11,262	2.7	17.5	1.8
Basque Country	7,489	1.8	6.4	0.3
Rioja (La)	2,843	0.7	6.5	0.9
Ceuta	13	0.0	0.4	0.0
Melilla	25	0.0	0.4	0.0
Total	420,110	100.0	8.1	0.9

Source: Prepared by the authors from the data provided by the NSI.

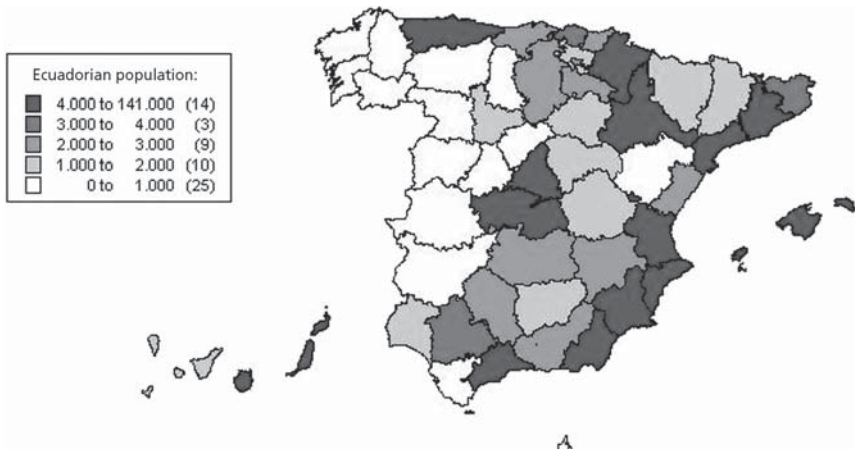
Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

We will now look at the distribution of the Ecuadorian population at provincial level. Among the provinces with the greatest number of people of this nationality are, in order, Madrid (with 135,465 people), followed by Barcelona (71,033), Murcia (46,878), Valencia (26,134), Alicante (22,983), the Baleares (13,441), Navarre (11,262) and Zaragoza (10,042). These provinces, which contain less than half the Spanish population, nonetheless are home to eight out of ten Ecuadorian residents. (See figure 20).

But considering the Ecuadorian population with respect to the total number of people who live in each of the Spanish provinces, as a clearer indicator than their mere presence in absolute terms, we again see some changes in the provincial ranking previously highlighted. As

Figure 20

Distribution of the foreign population of Ecuadorian origin in Spain, by province. Year 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the NSI.
Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

we might expect, this classification is headed by some Autonomous Communities consisting of a single province, like Murcia (where they represent 3.3% of the total population), Madrid (with 2.2%) and Navarre (with 1.8%), followed by other provinces like Soria (1.4%), Barcelona (1.3%), the Balears and Alicante (1.2%), and Zaragoza, Valencia or Almeria (with a 1%). Two other provinces, Guadalajara and La Rioja, have the average percentage of Ecuadorian people with respect to the total population of Spain (0.9%), whereas the remaining provinces have a lower percentage than the state average.

Also the predominance of feminine Ecuadorian presence is more frequent at provincial level, although by a small margin. Despite this, in some provinces the proportion of women is remarkably higher than the average, as in the case of Valladolid, Jaén and Cadiz (54%), Asturias, Sevilla and Gipuzkoa (55%), Cantabria, Ourense, Cáceres and Alava (56%), Cordoba and Lugo (58%), A Coruña (59%), Pontevedra and Palencia (60%) and, especially, Badajoz (62%). The male Ecuadorian population, on the other hand, exceeds the female outstandingly in only eight provinces: Murcia (54%), Almeria, Huelva, Ciudad Real, Alicante and Soria (53%), Teruel (56%) and, especially, Zamora, where more than two-thirds of the Ecuadorian population are men (to be precise, 68%).

3.1.4. *The Ecuadorian population in the Spanish labour market*

According to the Permanent Observatory of Immigration, at the beginning of 2008 the number of Ecuadorian people in employment registered with Social Security was 256,697. This figure places Ecuadorian workers, whose average age is 34 years, in second place in the ranking of foreign populations affiliated to Social Security according to nationality, behind only Moroccans (with only 643 people less). At the moment, the Ecuadorian employed population represents 12% of the total of foreign workers, and 1.6% of the total employed population registered with Social Security in Spain.

Table 9

Evolution of the number of Ecuadorian workers registered with Social Security. Years 2000 to 2008

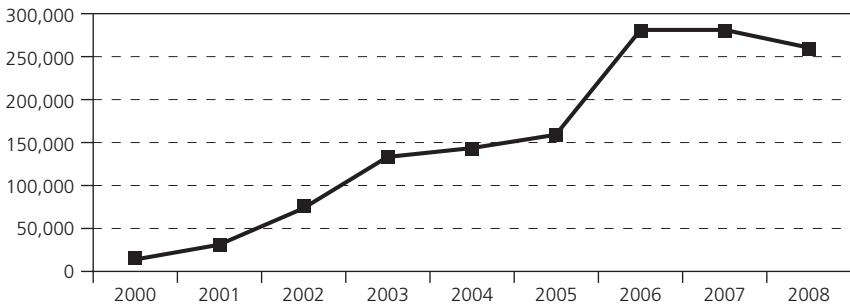
Year	Total foreign working population	Ecuadorian working population	% increase Ecuadorian working population	% women Ecuadorian working population
2000	118,538	8,396	40.8	66.2
2001	454,571	25,729	206.4	51.6
2002	627,795	68,476	166.1	42.4
2003	868,288	128,580	87.8	45.3
2004	982,365	139,317	8.4	44.5
2005	1,140,426	154,547	10.9	46.1
2006	1,757,081	277,666	79.7	50.8
2007	1,930,266	277,675	0.0	49.5
2008	1,981,104	256,697	-3.8	51.0

Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data to January of the year indicated.

Ecuadorian remains the second most important nationality as regards the number of foreign workers in Spain, but recent years show a change of trend (Figure 21). In this sense the continuous increase undergone by the Ecuadorian population registered with Social Security from the beginning of the decade until 2006 is notable, a level of growth that is especially intense in accordance with the different processes of stabilisation which took place during 2000, 2001 and 2005. However, for the first time in the decade studied, the Ecuadorian working population did not grow during 2006—in fact, it experienced a negative growth of 3.8% during 2007 (a reduction of 20,978 working people of this nationality). During that year, the total foreign working population slowed down its

Figure 21

Evolution of Ecuadorian people registered with Social Security.
Absolute values. Years 2000 to 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

rate of growth with respect to the previous year in relative terms (it grew by 8.5%, a percentage somewhat less than that seen during 2006, which was 9.9%); but it is also important to note that during 2007, in absolute terms, all of the nationalities increased their working population, except the Ecuadorian population, which is the only one which showed a decrease in the number of people registered with Social Security.

Ecuadorian women comprise 51% of the working population of this nationality, a very similar percentage to the total population of this nationality resident in Spain (50.8%). This female group, however, comprised 66% of the Ecuadorian working population in 2000. Since then, its relative weight was reduced during the following years, even being passed by the male population from 2002 to 2005. With the process of stabilisation carried out in that year, the Ecuadorian feminine population regained part of its percentage weight, returning and remaining at the same relative value as in the whole foreign population of this nationality. All of this seems to indicate the greater difficulty of these women, often at the head of their families' migratory projects, to gain work permits aside from the extraordinary processes of stabilisation, because their employment is concentrated in sectors very affected by the black economy. Ecuadorian women, however, clearly lead the ranking of foreign workers affiliated to social security, with 48,724 women workers more than the second-place nationality, which is Rumanian.

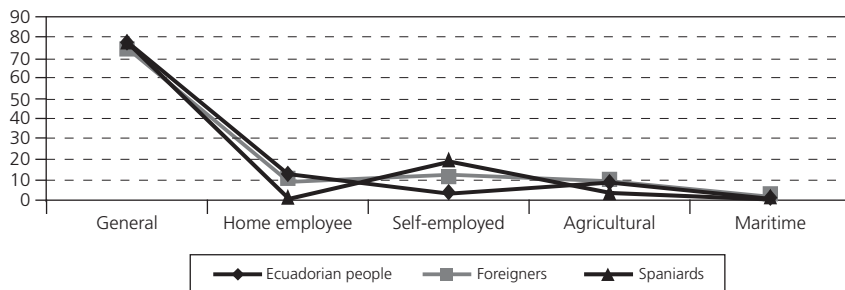
According to the Yearbook of labour Statistics and Social Affairs, by regime of Social Security, which depends on the type of economic activity and the employment category of workers, the Ecuadorian po-

population at the beginning of year 2008 was 77% included in the general regime (that is to say, 197,903 employees in industry or services); 12% in the regime of domestic employees (31,516 people), 8% in the agricultural regime (20,692 people) and the other 2.5% (6,538 people) in the special regime of self-employment. The special regime of maritime workers, on the other hand, contains only 48 Ecuadorian people.

The Ecuadorian population shows the same relative weight in the general regime as the Spanish population (77%), and somewhat higher than that of the whole of the foreign population in this social security regime (73%) (see figure 22). But the differences in the percentage of the regime of domestic employment are clearly more notable: 12% of the Ecuadorian population are in this regime, against 8% of the foreign population considered as a whole or a mere 1% of the Spanish working population in this employment regime. Also, the contrasts in the special regime of self-employment are worth mentioning: this regime is not very important among working Ecuadorians (2.5%), but has greater weight (11%) in the foreign working population as a whole (due to its greater relevance among some groups like Rumanians or Chinese), although not reaching the level that this regime has among Spanish workers (19%). Finally, the relative weight of the agrarian regime among the Ecuadorian population is very similar to the foreign population as a whole (8%), and far beyond that in the Spanish population (3%). Despite this, we should point out that Ecuadorians, after Moroccans and Rumanians, are the most important in absolute numbers in this agrarian regime, which is frequently used in a transitory way as a first stage, to later move on to the general regime.

Figure 22

Working population, by origin and regime of Social Security.
Relative values. Year 2008



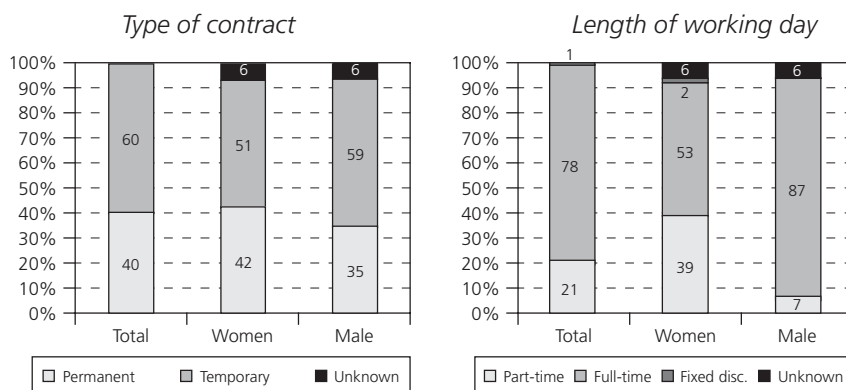
Source: Prepared by the authors from the data taken from Pajares (2008: 53).
Data to January of the year indicated.

According to sex and regime of Social Security, Ecuadorian men are more concentrated than women of the same nationality in the general regime, whereas the latter are hold a monopoly on the special regime of domestic employment. There are smaller differences, however, in both the special self-employment regime and the agrarian one.

On the other hand, Ecuadorian workers are overwhelmingly employed by others (204,803 people registered as against 15,894 self-employed), with the relative weight of this group (94%) being higher than that among the foreign population as a whole (86%) or the total of working people in the Spanish labour market (82%). By sexes, the relative weight of self-employed Ecuadorian women (8%), is double that of self-employed men of this nationality (4%), a fact that is surely explained by their greater location in domestic service. In fact, although domestic workers can be employees, they are frequently self-employed (since it is they, not their employers, who are responsible for paying Social Security³³).

Figure 23

Ecuadorian working population in the general regime,
according to type of contract and length of working day.
Totals and by sex. Relative values. Year 2007



Source: Prepared by the authors from the data of the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data to January of the year indicated.

³³ Domestic employment in Spain, regulated by RD 1424/85 of 1 August, has special Social Security conditions, according to which the employer only has the obligation to register with social security and pay at least 50% of their employee's quota if the latter works at least half-time in their house. To see more details about the regulation of domestic service in Spain, see Vicente (2006: 221-224).

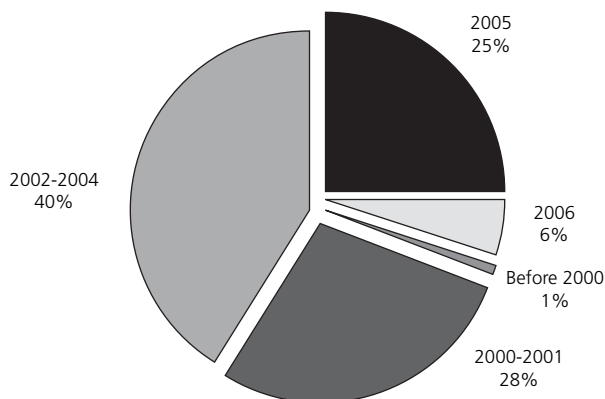
In addition we should emphasize that, at the beginning of 2007, the majority of the Ecuadorian population paying social security in the general regime have a temporary contract (60%) and are employed full time (78%)³⁴.

Despite this, the differences by sex in these two indicators are clear: Ecuadorian women show a greater relative weight of indefinite contracts than men of the same nationality, but at the same time are more prominent, both in absolute and relative terms, among those who are in part-time employment.

Frequently the economic profile of Ecuadorian immigration in Spain is emphasised. For that reason we have considered it opportune to consider original moment at which this population group registers with the Social Security, because it indicates the moment at which their members join the regular labour market. The results obtained once again show the recent incorporation of Ecuadorian immigrants in the Spanish labour market: only 1% of the total number of workers of this origin affiliated with Social Security at the beginning of 2007 signed up initially

Figure 24

Ecuadorian working people registered with Social Security, according to period of initial registration. Relative values. Year 2007



Source: Prepared by the authors from data of the Ministry of Work and Immigration.

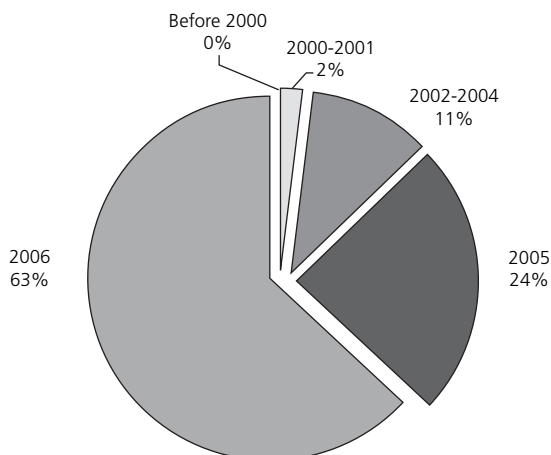
Data for January of the year indicated.

³⁴ At the moment of writing this chapter, these data still have not been published corresponding to the 1 January 2008.

before the beginning of the decade. A little more than a quarter (28%) signed up during 2000 or 2001; 41% between 2002 and 2004 inclusive. 25% were initially registered during the year of the last process of stabilisation, that is to say, 2005, and only 5% during 2006 (reflecting the slowing down of the arrival of the Ecuadorian population, as well as the concession of residence permits and work to this group). In this area no remarkable differences by sex are observed.

Figure 25

Ecuadorian working people registered with Social Security, according to the date when they started their present job. Relative values. Year 2007



Source: Prepared by the authors from the data of the Ministry of Work and Immigration.

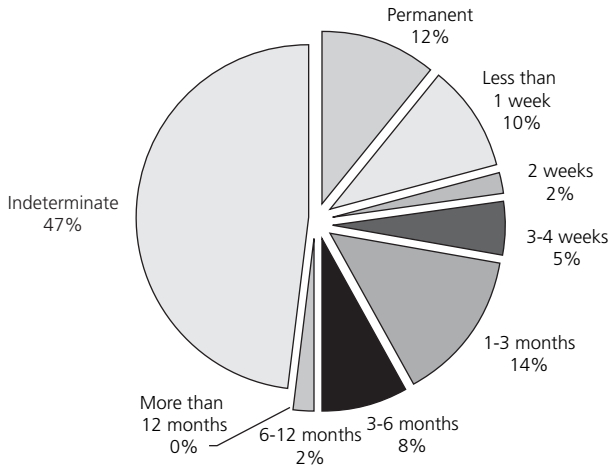
Data for January of the year indicated.

This recent incorporation to the labour market seems to be combined with a high labour mobility among this group: almost nine out of ten Ecuadorian people registered at the beginning of 2007 have spent very little time in their current jobs, since they began only some months back, during 2006 (63%) or else during 2005 (another 24%). Another 6% took their present job in 2004, and only 7% have it since 2003 or previously. On this point there are no notable differences based on sex.

Nor does this tendency to labour mobility seem likely to change in the near future, in view of the duration of the 545,269 labour contracts

Figure 26

Contracts signed by the Ecuadorian population in 2006, according to duration of the contract. Relative values



Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the Ministry of Work and Immigration.

signed by the Ecuadorian population³⁵ during 2006: 48% of these contracts were of unspecified duration, 31% show a duration of less than three months, 10% from three months to one year, and only 11% of these contracts are permanent. At the beginning of 2007, in addition, there were 28,771 people of Ecuadorian nationality seeking work in Spain, 27% more than the number for the previous year.

3.2. The Ecuadorian population in the Basque Country

3.2.1. Evolution of the Ecuadorian population

As previously mentioned, at the beginning of 2008 year, the number of municipally registered people of Ecuadorian origin in this Autonomous Community was 7,489, representing 8% of the foreign

³⁵ These contracts represent 15% of contracts signed by foreigners and 2.9% of the total of contracts signed in Spain for that annual period. We must not forget, in addition, that the same person can have signed more than one contract in the annual period considered.

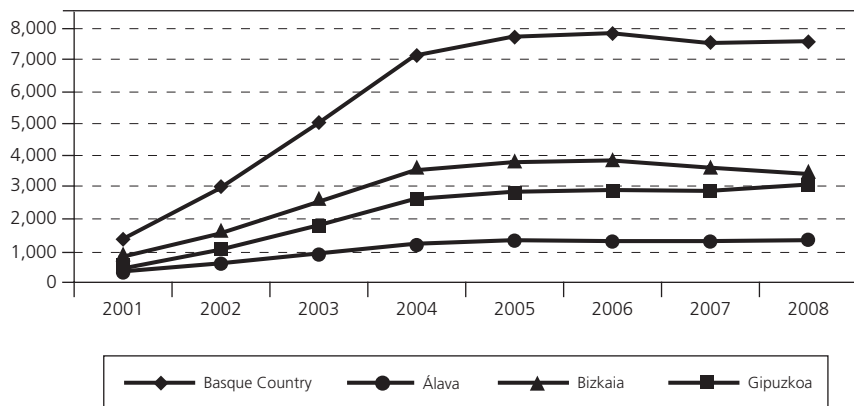
population and 0.3% of the total population in this territory. The relative weight of the Ecuadorian group in the whole population of the Basque Country is, therefore, below the relative weight in Spain as a whole (0.9%), although its rate of growth in recent years seems to be more intense: since 2001 the population of this nationality municipally registered in Euskadi has grown by a factor of six (from 1,219 to 7,489), while in the whole of Spain it has increased by a factor of three (from 139,022 to 420,110 people).

Bizkaia is the Historical Territory which hosts the highest Ecuadorian population (3,294 people, that is to say, 44%), followed closely by Gipuzkoa (2,972, that is to say, 40%) and much further behind, by Alava (with 1,223, i.e. 16% of the total). Despite this, the Ecuadorian population with respect to the inhabitants as a whole has a higher relative weight in Alava or Gipuzkoa (0.4%) than in Bizkaia (0.3%).

The Ecuadorian population in the Basque Country shows, on the other hand, patterns of arrival and establishment in this territory very similar to those for Spain, with a sustained growth from beginning of this decade until 2006, the date at which a downward trend in the number of municipally registered people of this nationality seems to begin. This reduction is more notable in Bizkaia, whereas in Gipuzkoa and Alava, however, a certain recovery is already seen during 2007.

Figure 27

Evolution of the municipally registered Ecuadorian population in the Basque Country and its three Historical Territories. Absolute values. Years 2001 to 2008

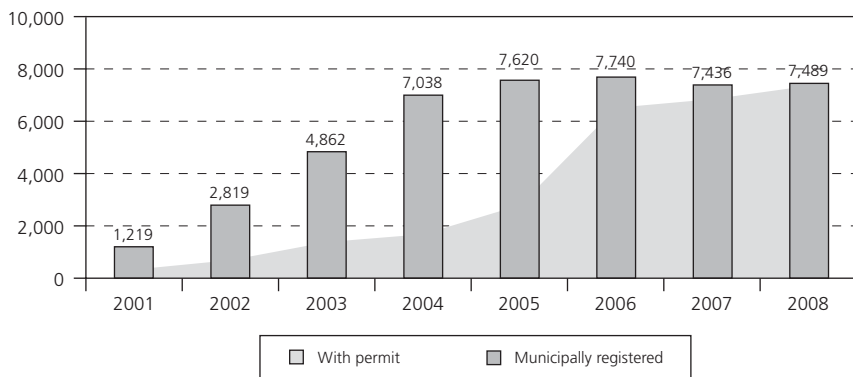


Source: Prepared by the authors from the data of the NSI. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

Also following the pattern noted for the rest of Spain, the population of Ecuadorian origin established on Basque soil which has a residence card or permit in force is more and more important, comprising 92% of the total population, whereas 8% are in an irregular situation (a radically different panorama, however, to that seen in 2001, a date at which only 28% of this group had a residence permit). Although there are no great differences, a somewhat higher incidence of irregularity is seen in Gipuzkoa than in Bizkaia or Alava.

Figure 28

Evolution of the municipally registered Ecuadorian population with residence permit in the Basque Country. Absolute values. Years 2001 to 2008



Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the NSI and the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

The recent arrival of the Ecuadorian population in Euskadi is not only shown by the preceding data, but, in addition, it has been stated by the population of this nationality in their responses to a survey carried out by the Basque Observatory of Immigration, Ikuspegi (2008). Thus, when asked about the moment in which they arrived in this Autonomous Community, only 9% state that it was more than six years ago, that is to say, at the beginning of the decade; a much more numerous group is those who arrived more than two years ago but less than six, that is to say, between 2001 and 2005 (79%). Another 12% state that they have arrived during the last two years.

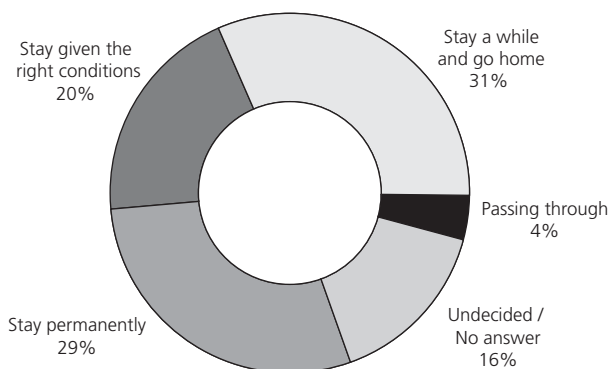
According to this same study, less than 8% of the resident Ecuadorian population in Euskadi arrived with a residence permit (4%) or with

a permit for residence and work (4%). A quarter entered without authorization (26%) and the other 52% as tourists.

Approximately half of Ecuadorians indicated their intention to remain definitely (29%) or depending on suitable conditions (20%). Approximately three out of ten people of this nationality (31%) have indicated that they want to remain only for a while, later to return. 4% indicate that they are just passing through and the other 15% have either not decided or simply did not answer.

Figure 29

Intention of the Ecuadorian population to remain in the Basque Country.
Year 2007



Source: Basque observatory of Immigration, Ikuspegi (2008: 39).

3.2.2. Sociodemographic characterization of the Ecuadorian population

Ecuadorian immigration towards different areas of the Basque country went from the sixth place that it occupied at the beginning of 2001 in the ranking by foreign nationalities in this territory, to second place in only two years, a position that it was able to maintain during the next four years (from 2003 to 2006). In 2007, however, its relative weight clearly fell, this nationality again being displaced to the position it held in 2001, that is to say, sixth place, due to the small reduction in absolute terms, while other nationalities—such as Bolivians or Rumanians—underwent a clear increase in both absolute and relative values.

In Alava, the Ecuadorian population is in fifth place in the ranking by foreign nationalities resident in this territory (after Colombia, Morocco, Portugal and Algeria); in Bizkaia it is in fourth place (after Bolivia, Colombia and Rumania), and in Gipuzkoa second, behind only Portugal.

Table 10

Main foreign nationalities present in the Basque Country.
Years 2001 to 2007

Year	Main nationalities					
	1. st Place	2. nd Place	3. rd Place	4. th Place	5. th Place	6. th Place
2001	Portugal	Colombia	Morocco	Brazil	France	Ecuador
2002	Colombia	Portugal	Morocco	Ecuador	Brazil	Francia
2003	Colombia	Ecuador	Portugal	Morocco	Brazil	Argentina
2004	Colombia	Ecuador	Morocco	Portugal	Rumania	Argentina
2005	Colombia	Ecuador	Morocco	Portugal	Rumania	Bolivia
2006	Colombia	Ecuador	Morocco	Portugal	Rumania	Bolivia
2007	Colombia	Bolivia	Rumania	Morocco	Portugal	Ecuador

Source: Prepared by the authors from the data provided by the NSI. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

By sex, the presence of female Ecuadorians also exceeds that of males in this Autonomous Community, and with even greater intensity than in the rest of the country, representing 54% of the total of this group. Alava is the territory with the greatest relative weight of females among people of Ecuadorian origin (57%), followed by Gipuzkoa (56%) and Bizkaia (52%). On the other hand, it is remarkable that, in the Basque Country, women from this Latin American country are in a higher position than their male companions in the ranking of foreign population by nationality and sex: they occupy fourth place (behind women from Colombia, Bolivia and Rumania), whereas the Ecuadorian men are in sixth place (behind those from Morocco, Portugal, Colombia, Rumania and Bolivia).

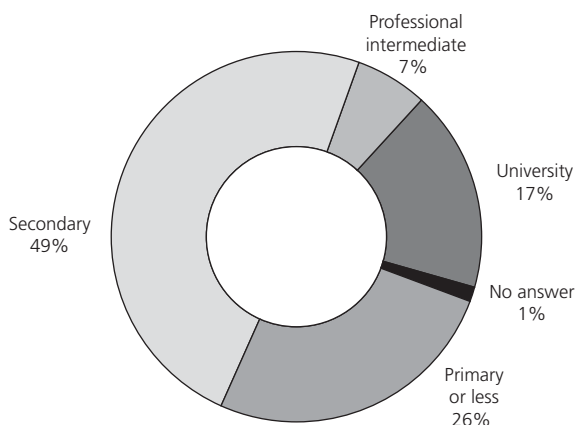
By age, in this context the pattern is confirmed which reflects the recent arrival of these immigrants: Practically three out of four people of Ecuadorian origin living on Basque soil (74%) are of working age (between 20 and 64 years), as against 65% of the Basque population which shares the same situation. Another 25% of the Ecuadorian group are of school age or just beginning their working life, since they have less than 19 years (a group with a relatively higher weight than

among the total of residents in Euskadi, where they represent 17% of the total). And, finally, the population coming from Ecuador in retirement age represents less than 1% (far from the 17% that this age group represents among the Basque population as a whole).

As regards their level of studies, reached in their place of origin, before leaving Ecuador, according to data from Ikuspegi, the Basque Observatory of Immigration, a little more than a quarter of the Ecuadorian population (26%) has primary education or less, 55% have secondary or professional education and 17% have university education.

Figure 30

Level of education of the Ecuadorian population in the Basque Country. Relative values. Year 2007



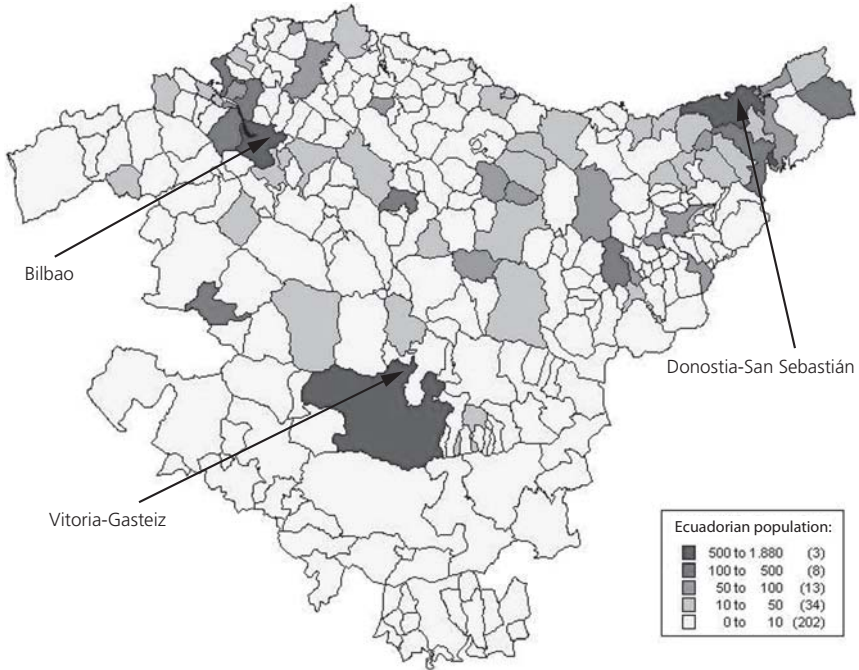
Source: Basque Observatory of Immigration, Ikuspegi (2008: 17).

3.2.3. Geographical location of the Ecuadorian population

The three Basque capitals (Bilbao, Donostia-Saint Sebastián and Victoria-Gasteiz) are, without a doubt, the main nuclei of residence of the Ecuadorian population living in the Basque Autonomous Community. In these three cities alone are concentrated more than half the people of this nationality (55%). If to them we add another five municipalities in Bizkaia (Getxo, Barakaldo, Erandio, Durango and Orduña) and three municipalities in Gipuzkoa (Irún, Hernani and Beasain) we have the location of three-quarters of the Ecuadorians resident in Euskadi.

Figure 31

Ecuadorian population in the Basque Country, by municipality.
Year 2007



Source: Prepared by the authors from the data provided by the NSI. Data for 1 January of the year indicated.

3.2.4. *The Ecuadorian population in the Basque labour market*

According to the latest data available, the number of Ecuadorian people registered as employed with Social Security in the Basque Country at the beginning of 2007 was 4,292, equal to 10% of the foreign working population in that situation and the third biggest population of foreign workers, behind Portuguese and Colombians.

In Alava and Gipuzkoa the number of Ecuadorian people in work has not stopped growing since the beginning of the decade, a trend that has also been seen in Bizkaia until the last year considered, 2007.

In Alava the Ecuadorian nationality is one of those with the greatest number of people in work registered with Social Security, exceeded only by Portuguese, Colombians and Moroccans. In Gipuzkoa, this

working population is in second place, behind also, in this case, the Portuguese population and, finally, in Bizkaia, it is in third place, behind Colombians and Portuguese.

Generally the Ecuadorian population shows an acceptable level of satisfaction with their household economy, giving them an average score of 6.13 on a scale of 1 (totally unsatisfied) to 10 (totally satisfied) (Ikuspegi, 2008:164).

Table 11

Evolution of the number of Ecuadorian workers, registered with Social Security. Absolute values. Years 2003 to 2007

Year	Total foreign working population	Ecuadorian working population	Ecuadorian working population in Alava	Ecuadorian working population in Gipuzkoa	Ecuadorian working population in Bizkaia
2003	16,510	1,490	262	535	693
2004	21,016	1,702	336	572	794
2005	24,272	2,080	455	745	880
2006	37,332	4,356	723	1,697	1,936
2007	41,934	4,292	747	1,734	1,811

Source: Prepared by the authors from data provided by the Ministry of Work and Immigration. Data for January of the year indicated.

3.2.5. *Attitudes of the Basque population towards Ecuadorian immigration*

Immigration into Spain generally and the Basque Autonomous Community in particular has grown significantly in recent years and it is perceived as such by the majority of Basque society: already in 2004, 85% of the population thought that immigration had increased a lot or quite a lot (Ikuspegi, 2004) and since then this figure has not stopped growing.

According to the same survey carried out in 2004 by the Basque Observatory of Immigration, in general terms Basque citizens tend to value the effects of the arrival of people from other countries on the economy and on culture in slightly positive terms (with a score of 5.65 and 6.28 respectively in a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "very negative" and 10 "very positive"). There is a greater consensus, however, about the affirmation that "people who come to live and to work make it possible to fill jobs that are not filled by people from here",

which was agreed with by 80% of those surveyed. Another subject frequently mentioned is that immigrants benefit excessively from the social welfare system, or at least that they are the ones that most benefit from it, an affirmation which is supported by more than half the Basque population (Ikuspegi, 2008). Despite this, the majority of the population resident in Euskadi state that they do not have any problem with having foreign neighbours or co-workers, although some nationalities such as Ecuadorians or Colombians are more accepted than others (such as Africans, Rumanians or Moroccans), although still less than those from the EU or North America.

The majority of Basque society (60%) believes that the Ecuadorian population is quite interested or very interested in relating and integrating, although just over a third (34%) think the opposite, that is to say, that they have little or no interest in this. However, after the EU, Ecuadorians are one of the most highly valued foreign nationalities in general terms; in fact as Ikuspegi indicates (2008: 49): "Whether because of proximity or cultural similarity with these groups or because of their more acceptable ethnic appearance, Basque society prefers this type of foreign immigration and, therefore, ascribed to them greater interest in integrating, compared to the rest of the national groups. Given that immigration is an unstoppable process, it is preferred for it to be Latin Americans and, among these, Ecuadorians, who immigrate to the Basque country. This is an implicit demonstration of preference, consisting of ascribing an interest in integration to the favoured groups—selected by the natives".

The Ecuadorian population, on the other hand, thinks that Basque citizens have a rather more positive than negative valuation towards people of their same origin, with an average score of 3.5 on a scale where 0 is "very negative" and 5 "very positive". On the other hand, they show an average degree of satisfaction with their present life of 7.5 on a scale where 1 is "totally unsatisfied" and 10 "totally satisfied" (Ikuspegi, 2008). On this point Ecuadorian men consider themselves slightly more satisfied than the women of the same origin.

4

Immigrants and their families in the country of origin: the activation of transnational networks for emigration

Introduction

Emigration activates a process of mobility that is supported by the existence of social networks to which the migrants belong and which help them and collaborate in taking the decision to travel. These transnational networks also play an important role when migrants are seeking the necessary resources to emigrate and establish themselves in the host country. In addition, the migratory process can also be understood by studying the family environment and socio-economic context of the people who leave their countries. This habitat consists of families and their resources, people's profession and type of work, and is what provides the means to confront their vital needs in a precarious or satisfactory manner. The set of variables that form people's social and economic environment can be an explanatory factor of emigration. This chapter is dedicated to dealing with both aspects. On the one hand, it will analyse the family, economic and social means in Ecuador of the emigrants who are at the moment in the Basque Country and, on the other hand, will deal with the role of transnational social networks in the migratory process of leaving the country of origin for the destination country. To complete the chapter, we will take into account the time passed since the immigrants left their country of origin, Ecuador.

4.1. The family and socioeconomic environment of the immigrants in Ecuador

The Ecuadorian people who are now in Spain had their life in Ecuador before emigrating, had a family, friends and neighbours. They moved in environments of leisure, work, study... They belonged to a certain socioeconomic group. Some still lived with their parents, others had already formed their own family; some had children, others were unmarried... In short, to consider these situations helps us to better understand migratory processes and mobility decisions, as well as to debunk stereotypes about migrants. For this reason, we will begin by reflecting on the socioeconomic, family and personal environment of the Ecuadorians that we have studied.

4.1.1. *The family situations of the migrants*

The people who at some time have decided to come to the Basque Country do not belong to a uniform group. Their family environments are diverse, but nonetheless certain regularities exist which come to share certain common characteristics and which we are going to examine.

4.1.1.1. THE SIZE OF THE FAMILIES OF ORIGIN

They are numerous families. The people interviewed have grown up and lived in large family groups, which range from families with four children, to in some cases up to ten or eleven children (Figure 32). However the new families formed by the people interviewed are smaller; none has more than three children and several people have only one or two children (Figure 33).

The drastic diminution of the birth rates reflected by this discrepancy between the families of origin and families of the Ecuadorian immigrants themselves is more pronounced than that which has taken place in the host countries. That is to say, in Western European societies, a similar reduction in family size has happened during a longer period of time, from the generations of the grandmothers to those of the granddaughters. Among immigrants, this change has taken place in a generation, from mothers to daughters. While it is true that the age of some of the immigrants could, perhaps, predict a possible increase in the number of children, since many of them are at the height of their reproductive period and some of these are single women. The distribution of ages of the group shows that among them there are numerous

Figure 32

Size of the families of origin. Number of siblings

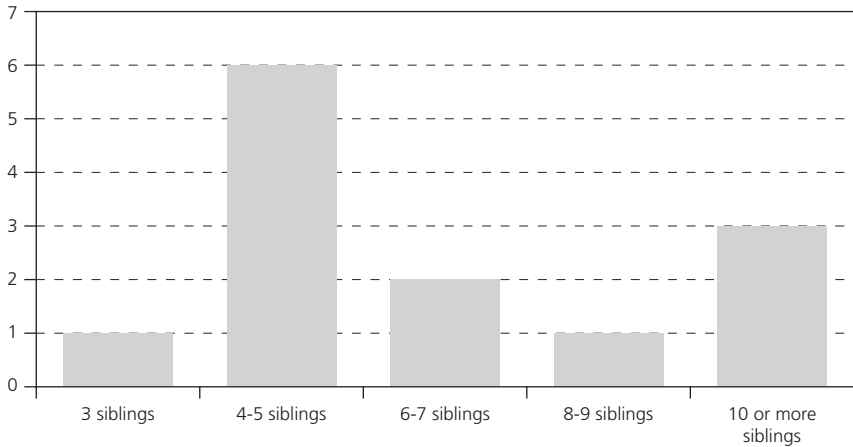
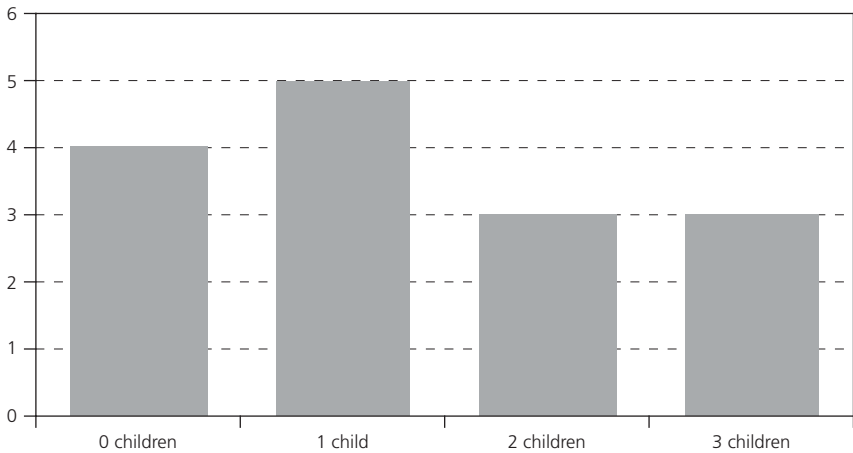


Figure 33

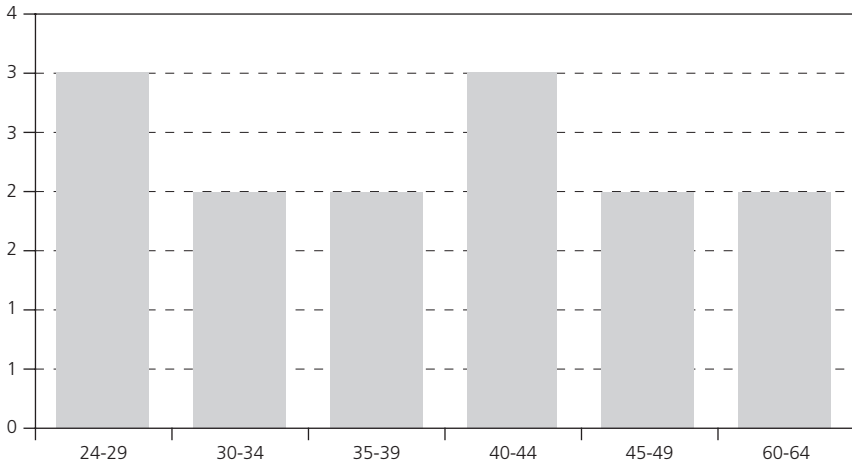
Number of children of the immigrants



young people (Figure 34). These do not have children, because they have not yet formed a family and they will have children in the future. Nevertheless, it is most likely that they follow the general rule, which shows a predominance of families with one child, sometimes two.

Figure 34

Distribution by age of the immigrants interviewed



4.1.1.2. MARITAL BREAKUP

Both in the families of origin and in those formed by migrants we find a large incidence of marital breakup. In families where the Ecuadorian immigrants grew up there are numerous broken marriages. And half of the people who we have interviewed are themselves separated, divorced or have gone through some previous process of divorce. Several of the women attribute these separations to cheating by the husbands, who have been with other women, or to the fact that, sometimes, the men have maintained another, parallel family. Rebuilt families also appear, following widowhood or a divorce.

In relation to breakup in the families of origin, the people interviewed also speak of the abandonment of their mothers by their fathers, and also of the new families constructed after the divorce. In other cases, after the separations one-parent families are formed, headed by a woman, with the children in her charge. The immigrants reflect the same variety of family types as in the host societies: single person, couples living together, marriages without children or with a few children, one-parent families and families rebuilt after a breakup.

The story begins when my father left my mother. When I was 8 my mother made a new commitment, well, she divorced my father.

And when I was 12 years my father passed away, but he was already separated from us; and it affected me less than if he had lived with us. The role of father was played by my step-father who is an excellent person. (Interview 1)

My mother was separated from my father, divorced and remarried, but widowed in the second marriage. (Interview 3)

I lived with my parents and my siblings, we were seven brothers and sisters and we lived all together, but a younger brother came here and the others are in Ecuador. (...) My parents separated and we all stayed with my mother. (Interview 7)

Also in the families which the immigrants interviewed have formed, the history of divorces and abandonments is repeated. Infidelity is most frequently cited as the cause of these marital breakups.

I married very young, but now I am separated. (...) I got separated long before coming here. You already know, love stories don't always work out. I got separated sixteen years ago. I had heard that he was seeing other women, but at first I didn't say anything. Then after people told me several times, I told him and he denied it. And I'm not lying to you when I tell you that he swore to me that it wasn't true, that it was a lie, that people said it because they envied us because we loved each other. But it wasn't like that, (...) because one day he left and that was it. He didn't say anything to me and has never said anything to me since then. (...) One day he disappears and that was it. Good, and I don't want to know anything about him any more. Thank heavens that I have always managed well by working and selling my merchandise. That I have been able to make it alone and bring my children up, and well, all three have finished their studies. (Interview 15)

My husband left with another woman. We lived together for 30 years, we worked a lot, we had things and then when we separated I went to Quito, I left with the three children. I was 45 years old. Then two of them got married, they went away and I stayed with the little one. I was in Quito for about 10 years until I decided to leave the country. (Interview 10)

My partner and I were sharing a flat for three years and then I got pregnant and, good, well, we got married, although it didn't go well, because he didn't play fair and, the truth is that it was hard... But as soon as I got pregnant and we got married, he went back to Ecuador because he had to organise some work papers. I stayed on my own and hoped that he would come back straight away, but his mother called me and told me that he had another woman with whom he

was also expecting a family. And then, the lady of one of the houses where I worked told me that she would help me bring my mother so that she could help me when the baby was born and, the day before my son was born, was my mother already with me. (Interview 8)

4.1.1.3. THE WOMAN, CENTRE OF THE FAMILY

The frequent marital breakups, the deaths of some husbands at premature ages with the resulting widowhood, the reconstruction of families with new partners, together with the fact of the existence of children, make the women the keystones of these families. The mother is the one who fights so the family economy will stay afloat, the one who makes the children study, the one who maintains the links with the children and, in most cases, the one who takes the initiative for migration. This central female role is a constant in developing countries and, for this reason, many development plans emphasise supporting women in their work, with the aim of making sure that development is sustainable.

My parents separated and we all stayed with my mother. (...) I finished basic studies at school and helped my mother with the chickens. I had a small chicken farm (Interview 7)

My mother is from a village and she left my sister and me in the village and we went to wash in the river, dipped our feet in there; we would have been 7 years old. It's very hard. It was a village in the mountains, 6 hours from Quito. My mother left us there because she couldn't take care of us, because she worked from morning till night, worked all day in the hospital and at night she went to the clinic to work shifts to keep us, because she was single with four children. That is something to admire! Me, with two kids, thank God, I've never been alone, but even with two it would be a problem for me, so with four.... We have always admired her, all us brothers and sisters, having been separated from us, how hard it would be for her, because without my daughters I couldn't live. (Interview 2)

My mother was self-employed; that is, she had her own business. My mother sold cattle skins. (...) Everything my mother acquired was with a lot of effort, by hard work. My father left my mother; then we were only with my mother. (Interview 13)

Sometimes, some of the daughters "inherit" this role of being the person in charge of the family, in the absence of the mother who has emigrated. In other cases the daughter can take on the family responsibility if her mother suffers some disease or has some serious operation that does not allow her to fulfil her role of taking care of the chil-

dren. Generally, it is a daughter who leaves her tasks to undertake this care role, or combines her previous activities with those of temporary housewife.

I was a minor, 17 years old, and was studying in the school (...). My life was normal, calm, and I lived with my parents, with my father and my little brother, because my mother came here first two years before and my two brothers went with her. (...) From one day to the next I got up and said: Hey, they've all gone away! and so I started to think, that I have a responsibility and all that... My father got up at 6 in the morning to work and I couldn't leave him without breakfast, and my brother, 5 years old, I had to take him to the garden, which is what they call the day-care centre there, and I had to get up early, but with the help of my father and my brother it was manageable for me. We were like that for two years from when my mother and my brothers came here. I took more responsibilities. (Interview 5)

This central role of the women is recognised even by the male immigrants themselves, who observe the existence of this female power to fight for their children and family in difficult times.

The women, compared with the men who emigrate, have a capacity for work and endurance. We all work, but in them one can see what they do. I don't know if it is love for the children, the family, or the responsibility that they take on in this situation with the children, whom they do not abandon. We men forget. But these women that I knew, with their pros and their cons, did not forget. (Interview 9)

4.1.2. *The socioeconomic position of the immigrants in Ecuador*

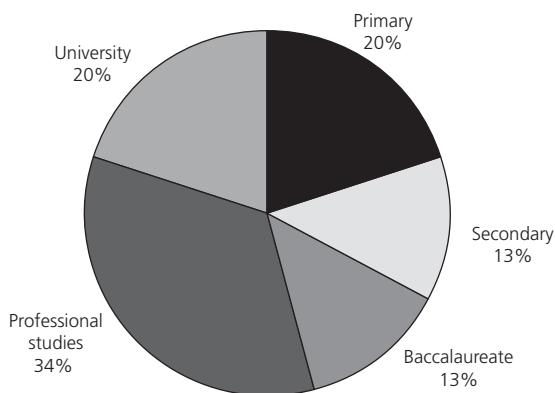
When studying the socioeconomic condition of the Ecuadorian people who live in Spain, social differences appear between them, although they have all undertaken the route of emigration. You see people from an average social position and others from a low position. Both the profession of the people, and their level of education, serves to depict this socioeconomic condition. It is true that in the place of origin of the immigrant, in Ecuador in this case, their profession and their level of studies are more closely related than when the same person is living in Spain. In the western countries, the work of immigrants, in many cases, does not correspond to their level of studies, with important rates of underemployment being found, in the sense that the employment undertaken often does not require the educational level that the person has.

4.1.2.1. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

In many cases it has been found that it is difficult to compare the educational levels of immigrants with those of the inhabitants of the countries of destination. One of the reasons is due to the fact that foreign people coming from poor countries often abandon their education because of the demands of work or relatives, without managing to finish their studies. This situation is found among the Ecuadorian people interviewed and, for this reason, their educational levels—which are shown in Figure 35—do not in most cases correspond to a finished level, but to the fact that they have taken some courses. For example, none of the people interviewed has a university degree, except for a diploma acquired in Spain, although two of the people have studied some courses at university. Another three have attended some years of studies equivalent to professional training, or have acquired experience equivalent to the training modules, others have taken all or part of a baccalaureate, or of secondary education; and as regards primary studies, this means a basic education. It is not a representative sample; what we observe in all the cases considered is simply the fact that the studies are not finished, are abandoned, either to start work in the home country, or to migrate to Spain, before obtaining the corresponding diploma. This situation represents a disadvantage for people who, after migrating and if they wish to improve in their work, need to demonstrate their knowledge, since

Figure 35

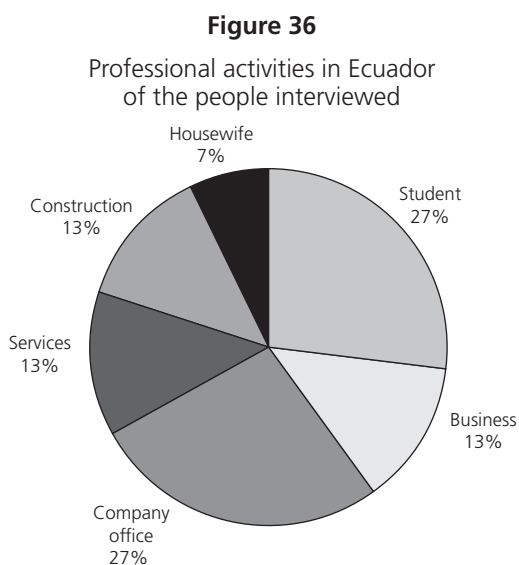
Educational level of the Ecuadorian people interviewed



diplomas are necessary and required to show evidence of the different levels of studies attended. This is regardless of whether the titles are validated in Spain or not.

4.1.2.2. PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

In Ecuador, the different professions practiced by the people interviewed provide evidence of the variety of social and economic positions of immigrants (Figure 5). Several of these people were still students before coming to Spain, because they were young and their emigration came from a process of family reunification, but others were working in different companies, in marketing departments, administration, publicity or public relations.



These are professions that can be described as “good”, in the sense that in the host countries they provide sufficient income to satisfy the family needs and to lead a life without economic worries.

I worked for five years as a teacher and then after that they opened one of best resorts in Ecuador, (...) and I knew the owner. (...) This gentleman was telling me, why don't you come and work

with me. (...) I did the interview and I left the school. Also, when the school had a computer centre, my parents helped me to set it up. In the morning I gave classes in the school and in afternoon I gave computer science courses. I was doing well, but this perspective of changing my job and what I was going to do made me think. I changed jobs and I was working in this resort, until I came here. (Interview 10)

In Ecuador I worked in a company that works with stationery and office provisions, in the marketing department, (Interview 12)

Other activities, in the commerce and services, and also in the construction, correspond to auxiliary professions with low wages that more clearly justify the decision to migrate for economic reasons. None of the people interviewed was unemployed in Ecuador before leaving for Spain.

We lived near a volcano that erupted and we had to leave and find whatever work we could. We had to move a long way (...) the State relocated us and I had nowhere to work and I left my father to go to Cuenca, the city, to look for work. (...) I worked in Cuenca in construction with some friends from the same village. (Interview 6)

4.1.2.3. SOCIAL POSITION

There is a close relationship between the professional activities that we have reflected and the social background that the emigrants describe of their life in Ecuador. Thus, in the personal experiences of some of the immigrants a social position is portrayed which can be described as middle or lower middle. If in the societies of origin of the migrants, in this case in Ecuador, we can speak of the existence of a middle class, most of our cases correspond to this social group.

My family does not have a lot of resources, but we all have a very stable situation economically, with strong family bonds, we always go on holiday together. The whole family goes to the beach in August. (...) I went to study in the capital (...) During my studies, for me to be safer, for me to have food, for everything, my mother sent me to boarding school. I went to study and then I began to work. (...) I had a very good job there. (...) I had my work, my car, my stability. (...) I ended up marrying him and we began a small watch business. I left my work where I was earning perhaps a little less, but something stable, When we had the business started earning very well, but it didn't do any good because we spent it and then we went bankrupt. (Interview 1)

We lived well; we had an average economic condition. Yes, yes! What's more, my mother made us go to school. I went as far as the baccalaureate in physics and mathematics. And when I started at university my mother fell sick, and as it was very expensive I had to leave. When this all happened already (...) I saw that my mother's situation... that is, the economic situation of the whole family was becoming more and more precarious. (...) I took care of the business with my mother, but clearly, it was not the same. (...) When the people who ran the business with my mother knew that my mother was in very delicate health, then they did not want to do the same amount of business with me as with her. (Interview 13)

My father worked and so did my mother. My father worked in the Amazon, in an oil refinery. He is a technologist and that's what he did: he worked there in the jungle with his machines and his instruments. (...). And my mother worked as a secretary for a company called PetroEcuador, which has always been a point of reference among oil companies. (...) In spite of living in a rather poor area, our house had two stories, and that was... was almost like a luxury there. And we lived well. That is, we had a TV, we had a washing machine, we had a patio, we had a garage, we even had a car... (Interview 14)

Some refer to the fact that they had domestic service in their own houses and that, now, in the host country, it is they themselves who must do that work for others.

My mother had a servant in the house and that affected me a lot, because I didn't even know how to cook and here I had to learn through hunger and now I can cook well. (...) Because he left for his mother's and I stayed at home by myself and I was hungry and I had to eat, even if it was burned, lumpy, smoked... just imagine. From not doing anything in my house, I had to come here to clean other people's houses. (Interview 1)

The indigenous people generally come to our houses to work as live-in servants. In my house since we were children there was always a girl who helped in the house and was a live-in servant. (Interview 9)

More precarious economic situations also appear, with people who occupy a lower social position and with greater difficulties to meet their basic needs. Belonging to a lower social stratum is more likely to favour emigration, given the shortage of resources provided by jobs and the professional activities carried out, as well as the instability of the living conditions of many of the inhabitants who are in poverty.

We had a business, and that was where I started. (...) It was a shop, (...) it only sold bread, milk, little things like that. A little kiosk, no more. Well, then it went very badly for me because I was alone with my two daughters. My husband travelled and he couldn't go to the distributors who brought me the things. Soon I went away to work in the hospital and in the hospital it has gone very well. I started in cleaning and then, little by little I trained, doing courses (...) to train the personnel and (...) I was a pharmacist's assistant. (Interview 2)

My family was a normal family, my parents and my two brothers, one older than me and one younger. My father worked for the public administration in business management; he didn't have an education, but he had worked there since he was very young and he stayed there. My mother took care of us and the house. (...) I studied at the nuns' school until I finished obligatory education and started higher education. I didn't know what I wanted to study, but since at home they couldn't help me with my studies, I decided to work at sewing which I always did very well. (Interview 8)

In principle, the great emigration of Ecuadorians to Spain, given the middle-class socioeconomic condition of many of those who emigrated, is explained by the economic recession that Ecuador experienced at the end of the 1990s and which led to the economy switching over to the dollar, in 2000. This process led to many families to bankruptcy, or into heavy debt which they could not pay off, and also closed businesses, with the consequent loss of employment. The departure of one, several or all the members of the family as emigrants, to the USA where many went, or to Spain, helped to pay the debts thanks to the payment of remittances. This need to emigrate found a favourable outlet in Spain, since Ecuadorians were allowed to enter without a visa. They had free entry as tourists, as long as they could give an address to which they were to go and had a certain amount of money which demonstrated that they could survive by themselves. Until August 2003 there was no obligatory visa for Ecuadorians to enter Spain. In that intermediate period thousands of people from Ecuador, from different social strata, settled in Spain, registered with the municipal register and began to work.

4.2. The role of transnational networks in the migration process

One might think that when someone leaves their country and moves to a new one, to settle in the destination and to work, they begin to create a social network which united through space and time,

the people whom they leave behind: family, friends and colleagues whom they leave in their country of origin. Nothing could be more wrong. Transnational networks already exist, they are already woven. The people who leave a country for the first time merely activate these networks and, with their emigration, contribute to weaving the transnational networks ever denser. In fact migration is already so old—that is to say, mobility between countries has been developing for so long—that there has been enough time and opportunity to create, develop and consolidate these transnational social networks. The new emigrants connect with some member of their network and follow the process initiated by others who previously did the same.

Thus, focussing on the case of the Ecuador-Spain migration, and on the process of departure, the analysis tries to respond to various questions that can shed light on the role which transnational networks play in this process of departure: How is the decision to emigrate taken? Who takes it? What are the reasons that make people emigrate? Once the decision to leave has been made, how is the necessary money for the trip obtained? How do people decide where to go, to what distant place will the emigrant head? How do you navigate to a place you don't know, and how do you find a place to stay when you are not going as a tourist, but plan to stay? These are the questions which we try to answer in this second half of the chapter.

4.2.1. *On the decision to emigrate*

Transnational networks influence and sometimes precipitate the decision to leave. In fact, people do not leave blindly, without knowing where to go, what to do. The departure is always made when somebody calls you, shows you a way, mentions a job to you... And the bridge that is built between the countries of origin and destination are designed and built by transnational networks. And, in addition, on almost every occasion, it is some relative who acts as the catalyst. It is a member of the family who has previously emigrated who smoothes the way, who opens the window of the migration, encouraging his or her son or daughter, brother, sister-in-law... telling them that there is work, that you earn more, that you live better....

The transnational network acts as bait, because its position in destination country makes it into an "authority", someone who "knows", an "expert" on the subject, due to the fact of having left before and stayed in the destination. Sometimes there are whole or almost whole families in which the adult members depart one by one and it ends up with more members living in the host country than in that of origin.

My mother came to Spain 10 years ago and it happened that a friend of hers had said (...) "Maria, I have a job [for you] in Bilbao, why don't you come?". Then my mother came here and worked as a live-in helper. (...) Time passed, my mother had already been here about 2 years, told my brothers, two boys, that if they wanted to come here, there were sources of income, work in construction and all that. Then my brothers came. (...) Time passed and my older brother, who was here, says to me: Sister, do you want to come here? Forget it!, you're crazy, I told him. I have my job. I worked in a hospital, in the pharmacy, I was a pharmacist's assistant. Then he says, but your husband... listen sister, what you earn there and what your husband earns is very little. Here at least you would get to the end of the month, although you may not have anything left to save, you have money for the month, because I see that you're in money troubles. (Interview 2)

My two brothers already lived in Vitoria, my two elder brothers came and the sister of my sister-in-law in a family regrouping. Then (...) they proposed that option to me. Look, what if you come with the children so they don't come on their own. (...) And that was how it happened. (Interview 10)

In addition, the person who is going to make the decision to emigrate, generally, already wants to do it, considers it, weighs the pros and cons. Because there are other people who also have the same relative in the destination country, who is also a mother, son or daughter, brother or sister and who, nevertheless, stay in their country, their home, in their habitual activities, without deciding to move. Therefore, the person who listens, who is alert to the offers, is one who already has a restlessness, a desire to try, if the opportunity arises.

I have always had the desire to become independent, to live alone, because I was a girl who liked to find out about things and to feel many emotions, and my brother asked my mother whether any of us wanted to come and, since there was that opportunity, so I said: well, that way I'll help my mother a little, because she has sacrificed enough for us, hasn't she. And that was my way of becoming independent, it was a very good idea to become free and to help my mother a little. (Interview 4)

I was unmarried and without commitments, Shall I go to Europe? OK, let's go. Since I had a brother and an uncle in Murcia and they said "come" (...) I have read a lot, I knew a lot about Europe and it didn't frighten me. (Interview 7).

Once the decision to emigrate is taken, it even happens that if the migrant is stopped at the border and deported, he or she tries again

on another occasion. It seems that after overcoming the fear of the unknown, after overcoming the difficulties represented by obtaining the money to travel, and after making the trip, the frustration of not obtaining what you wanted is very strong. After the deportation the person stays with a feeling of dissatisfaction which means that, as soon as another opportunity appears, they repeat the attempt and reinitiate the migratory process.

I was an aerobics instructor. Then a student came and said to me: "Teacher, you should go to Spain!" (...) In 1996 I think it was. She had already been here and she went back to Ecuador for a visit, during the holidays (...) and that was when she said to me: "Teacher, you should go there... that what you can earn there is a lot of money for here. Because what you earn in a year here, there we earn in a month". And seeing the situation of my family as it was, I said: "Well, I'll do it". I made the decision. I came in 1997. (...) My cousin came, myself and her sister-in-law. We came via Frankfurt, on Lufthansa. And in Frankfurt they took our passports and made us go through the X-ray machine, (...) and they undressed us (...). And they made us go from one office to another. And when the Civil Guard interviewed us individually, (...) and since I went with my cousin and with the other girl, with her sister-in-law, what happened is that the sister-in-law got nervous and they asked her trick questions and she fell into the trap and, clearly, since we all came together, that gave all three of us away. (...) And deportation. They sent me back to Ecuador. (...) Well, and then the "El Niño" phenomenon came and devastated everything. "I have to go, mama, (...) I am going because I do not want it to see you suffer and nor do I want my little brothers to go hungry. I'm leaving". And again I began to plan... to do the thing. So again I bought the ticket. And then, when I arrived here, I communicated with my cousin [the cousin with whom she tried to come the first time, and who made her second, successful, attempt, before her]. (Interview 13)

On other occasions the person who emigrates does not decide by themselves. They are the wife, daughter or son of a man who has previously emigrated and who regroups them, or sometimes both parents make the decision to travel and the children, adolescents or young people must follow them. Situations also take place in which others decide that a third person must emigrate. That happens more to young women, when their parents, facing a situation of need, look for a way for some of their son or daughters to go to another country so that then, with their shipments of money, they can become a source of family income. But it also occurs that there are young people who are

sent to another country so as to act like a springboard for the rest of the family members to make the leap. Once in the host country, they represent the closest network to support to the rest of which they are going to travel.

It was my husband who made me decide. He said to me: stay or come. If you stay, it's divorce and if you come with my daughters, then whatever happens, happens. And obviously my daughters were sad. So I said, all right then. I handed in my notice at the hospital, because I was on a permanent contract, I resigned and I came. (Interview 2)

My mother came here first, two years before, and my two sisters went with her. (...) Then my father got the passport out and I told him that I didn't want to travel. Leave me here at the university and I'll take care of the house for you. And my father said to me: "no, I am not going to leave you alone. Come and we will have the family together". (...) And well, until the end I said no, and in the end I had to come here. Because they pressured you (...) and then you start to think that perhaps because of you the family isn't together ... (Interview 5)

It was my parents who decided that my brother should travel. My parents took that decision and they will have told him: "Look! You must go because you are not doing anything productive". (...) And well, the final decision to send him, to Spain, was because we had... he already had a friend who was in Murcia, in Totana. And at that time, in the 98, the migratory flows had just begun to come here. (...) Later my father came. He also arrived at Totana after some months and he also stayed in the same flat with my brother, where he lived with his friend. A cousin of ours also was already living with them, and they all worked in the fields. (Interview 14)

4.2.1.1. REASONS FOR LEAVING

Although economic reasons are always mentioned, such as the fact that in the destination societies you earn more or that in this way money can be sent to the family, the fact is that a great variety of reasons are mentioned that influence the decision to emigrate. The motivations are diverse that lead people to leave their country, their work, part of their family, their security, perhaps precarious, but important because, as the popular saying has it: "better the devil you know...". In this case, the devil you know is Ecuador and the unknown is Spain. For this reason, to make the decision to choose the unknown, there must be powerful reasons that impel us. We are going to analyse those

reasons, with the responses given by the different people interviewed, which bring to the surface the diversity of motivations behind an action that absolutely changes people's lives.

- Economic reasons are always present and are the most often mentioned by people when they wish to justify or explain the beginning of their migratory process. Therefore, bankruptcies in businesses, family debts, the fact of not being able to make your way, not seeing a way ahead, push people to decide to leave the country and emigrate to another to be able to repay debts. Sometimes underlying these economic motivations is a situation of poverty, with the consequences of not being getting to the end of the month and not being able to meet the most basic needs.

There we already had debts, because we had a business and so much treatment [for a disease], then we were taking money out of the capital of the business and we went broke. Many debts, many debts, we came here super indebted. My idea was to come, work, pay the debts and return, because the telephone was oppressing me, they kept calling me and I had never gone through that before. My mother, a shopkeeper all her life, although she hasn't studied, but she always sold leather articles and made them and nobody ever came and said "the term for payment is up...". (Interview 1)

There came a time when if we had coffee, we didn't eat lunch; or if we ate lunch there was no tea. And my little brothers they said they wanted rice... And my mother saw that and cried. And I said: "Ay! No! I have to go". (Interview 13)

- Obligation. The responsibility of being a wife, husband, daughter or son and having to obey your parents or having to go where the family goes is one of the reasons that, following economic reasons, is most frequently mentioned by the emigrants. Generally it is to support the family and that obligation is mixed with the responsibility taken on by the person who migrates.

I had finished my studies when they decided to send me to Spain to the house of my uncle's mother-in-law who lived here in San Sebastián. It was an opportunity to come to Spain and be able to send to money home for everyone, well, so I couldn't stay, and I remember that I cried and cried because I was afraid to separate from everyone and I didn't want to go, but I knew that my family needed me and it was an opportunity for everyone. (Interview 8)

- Love is a powerful reason to change your life, country and family environment. Several of the people interviewed have mentioned this aspect of affection towards another person, often to form a new marriage or a new mixed partnership with somebody from the destination country, as a powerful reason to decide to leave.

I met Iciar [his wife] and it was love that made me move. (...) I came on a mission and I met her and she returned to Ecuador and we got married and we came here. That's it! My father and my grandfather told me that we could live there, but for Iciar, to know this place, I wanted to learn so as to know and the idea was to come here. (Interview 6)

- Health. The loss of health, mental and/or physical, with the consequent need for recovery, can drive people to a “change of air”, to move to a new place, to leave the place, or the job, or the circumstance that has caused the loss of health.

What happened is that I fell ill and did not recover and the work in a resort is very hard, you earn well and all the rest. You know when you start work, but not when you finish. It was a frenetic rhythm, very hard for me. Bad luck, I got some bacterium in my stomach's flora, it was very problematic and the rhythm that I was following, I had to stop. Then I spoke with the owner of the resort and said to him: I am going to stop for one or two months because just one or two days is not enough. I chose to do that and just then my two older brothers already lived in Vitoria. Then knowing that I was like that, my mother told them that I was a little sad because I didn't recover, so they proposed that I should come to keep them company; you come in passing, you breathe different air, it's good for you get away from where you are and in that way you can recover. (Interview 10)

- Flight from difficult personal situations, like the breakup of a partnership or having children as a single person which means that the family living in the country do not accept you very well, is another reason that can bring about emigration. It is a desire to disappear from the place where the person is uncomfortable, to be in another environment where their past is unknown. It is like beginning again without the baggage of “what will they say” or without having to face every day the stress caused by the specific personal situation.

I came to this country in the year 1999-2000. The reason I left Ecuador and came here, was for personal reasons. (...) I am unmar-

ried mother, I have a 17 year old daughter, and I had to fight a lot for my daughter, alone. And perhaps that was the reason that led me to come to this country, because the fact of being an unmarried mother in my country is a ghetto. In certain families, like in mine, it is a very hard ghetto, and perhaps that ghetto is what pushed me to leave... (Interview 12)

- The desire for independence, to lead your own life, to not be accountable to anybody. This reason also has something to do with adventure, to be in charge of your own destiny, not relying on others to organise things. It's about living in your own way, without other people's influences, in a new environment where others are so far that they cannot opine nor influence.

A dream of freedom, to have my things, to buy things for myself and say to myself: "well, this is my life". And to live alone, was the most important thing for me (Interview 4)

- Differences in collective representations. Each culture creates its own representations of the meaning of childhood, youth, or age. In this case the migrants have quickly perceived the differences that exist regarding these topics between the society of origin and the destination societies. When they mention this they emphasise the meaning and representation of old age. They are conscious that in a wealthy society in which the life expectancy of women is considerably greater than 80 years, a person 40 years old is at the height of their life and has still not arrived at old age. What is more, they still have many years left to reach old age and, therefore, are at an optimal age to find work and strength to practice it during many years. Thus, we have found more than one woman who has mentioned this aspect, saying that she has emigrated because in her place of origin she was old and, however, in Spain she was not.

Because the company in which I worked was absorbed by the Bolivariano Bank. My emigration process is almost like that of all the Ecuadorians who came between the year 1999 and 2001, which was dollarization. Then with dollarization came the readjustment of prices, many companies went broke and in Guayaquil, in Ecuador generally, beginning at 40 years old we are old people, they consider us old, they consider us older people. The older people were the first who had to leave and they gave me a vacation. What you do when you're 40? Whereas when I arrived here, they told me that I was a

young woman because they live till 80 and I'm in the middle, I am at the height of life. (Interview 3)

There is no work for older people and if there is work in domestic tasks, they pay very little, 100-200 dollars, which doesn't even reach for shoes or anything. For that reason since we knew that here you earned a little bit more I said to my daughter, I'm going to see what I can do there, and my daughter seeing that I was coming said, I'll go too. And we both came. And here we have been for already seven, eight years since we came. An older person can work and earn their money and we came to see what we could do here. (Interview 11)

4.2.2. *Obtaining funds for the trip*

Without the existence of transnational networks migrants could not organise their journeys, since very often people who are already in the destination are those who provide the money to travel, both for the passage and for the "baggage money" [the money which must be shown at the border as proof of the "tourist's" ability to support themselves]. Sometimes this money is given as a gift, if the relative is very close, so that he pays his relative in Ecuador to move.

Then my uncle and his wife paid for my trip to Spain and I flew from Quito to Madrid and from Madrid to Fuenterrabía and they were waiting for me there. (Interview 8)

A brother of mine had some money that he had been paid. Then I mentioned the idea to him. (...) The flight from there to here cost me 1,500 dollars, in '97. And then it was a lot of money, but my brother says to me: "Girl, it doesn't matter. What they've paid me goes straight to you, so that you can leave, if it will help the family get ahead". (...) He offered me that money so that I could come. (Interview 13)

"I don't want my mother to come with debts to anybody". Then she [her daughter] sent the ticket. A cousin lent me the 'baggage money'. Because it costs a lot: my cousin gave me 2,000 dollars. I gave her back the money the same day I arrived. From Madrid I did the money transfer, they charged me thirty five dollars and I sent the 2,000 dollars there, gratefully; because I do not like to owe money... (Interview 15)

At other times it is a loan that the relative or the friend must give back later. Also there are situations in which the loan is granted in the country of origin, sometimes with interest, when the lender is a profes-

sional lender. In these cases interest can be as high as 20%, and in any case not lower than 10% of the capital borrowed.

I set up the trip in 10 days, my sister-in-law's credit card for the trip, just a few clothes; for the baggage all my friends lent me money. I belong to a Metaphysical group in Guayaquil, and everybody gave me money for the baggage (...). My mother's father was a military man and in my family there is a military-type formation, with a lot of discipline and, within the discipline all of us, from a very young age, know how to do everything, we are very responsible, very careful with debts, with the image. From a mother like that, then... I had this image and everybody lent money to me, I put together 700 dollars of "baggage money" in 10 days, from the people I least expected it from. I put together the baggage money, my sister-in-law lent me money for the trip and I was already in contact with Lugo and they had their cousins in Madrid. They even lent me the suitcase. (Interview 3)

In order to travel you need to take 3000 Euros, as well as the round-trip passage. But the travel agencies set up the trip as if you were a tourist, reserved a hotel for you, although obviously they knew that you were planning to stay. They told you how to do it in the most legal way possible. The trip cost 1,900 dollars, which was paid for by the mother [of my wife] who was in Italy. The father of my wife had sold his house in Ecuador for his wife to migrate and for her to have the money to emigrate. They started renting. They gave me the 3000 dollars to show at the airport. When I arrived I had to give my mother-in-law the 3000 dollars that the family had given me, which were not mine, which were theirs (Interview 9)

The baggage money—which is only for showing at the border if necessary—is given back immediately after arrival. Most frequently, mobility travel is done by getting into debt. People can leave practically without money, after having paid the passage and given back the baggage money. And later, once in the destination country, with the income from their work, they pay back the money that was lent to them.

Then I started taking care of children, cleaning houses, to help him to pay for the passage, because we came over with debts. My family lent the money for my passage and his parents for his passage; then we were in debt with the families. (Interview 1)

We got into debt there with the bank and mortgaged the house to pay the passages. We three helped each other mutually a lot and in that way all three of us paid the debt. (Interview 5)

To secure the money to travel was not easy. There we had... well, that house ended up belonging completely to the bank. They completely took it over. The money to travel... we went around asking people for loans... And selling the furniture... the little that we had, and we ended up with nothing, nothing. What we had left, we left it in the house of an uncle and an aunt. In Ecuador we didn't have anything left when we came. (Interview 14)

Only in some special cases do people have enough money to organise the trip without borrowing. For this reason, they are able to finance the expenses of the passage and later, when they arrival, to have some funds for lodging and maintenance while they look for a job. In those situations the dependency on the transnational networks is less than in the case of those who travel financed by relatives or friends,

I organised the trip with my daughter. I had a few savings and we went. (Interview 11)

4.2.3. *Organising infrastructure for the arrival*

The transnational networks that the migrants have are what prepare for the arrival of the new migrants. The relative, friend or cousin is the one who is goes to meet the person who arrives at the airport. Or it is the one who gives them instructions so that, from the airport, they take a bus or another means of transport to get to their destination. In fact the person just arrived does not feel alone, because she has sufficient knowledge not to be lost in the new situation. Information has been flowing between the two sides of the Atlantic. In addition, on many occasions the person who travels does not do so alone, because several members of the same family come together, or come with someone they know. Or they take advantage of the return trip of someone who has gone to Ecuador to visit their family, to travel together. To sum up, the networks facilitate new emigrations, providing the necessary points of support for the arrival.

Besides going to meet the migrant at the airport, the network also provides the first lodgings, the first roof under which to stay. Sometimes this lodging is temporary, until reaching the final destination or being able to find a place to live. Other times this lodging is definitive, in principle. It is the house where the brother lives with his family. Or it is the house where the mother lives, with other brothers or sisters. Or it is the flat of the friend, or the cousin, or the future parents-in-law.

In the whole that comprises the infrastructure of arrival, besides the meeting and the first location, the network also takes care of the information about how to find a job, or have already prepared some job interview. On other occasions either you come directly with a pre-arranged job and the person just arrived, the immigrant, does not have time to digest all their new experiences, because on the day following his arrival he is already moved in and begins his new job in the new host society.

In Madrid they went to pick me up at the airport (...) A wonderful couple came who I didn't know at all. (...) They took me around Madrid and the following day they took me to look for work (...) they took me to Cáritas and so I spent a week looking for work and I found my guardian angel. She was a lady of almost 70, charming, who wanted a trustworthy person who would look after her four grandsons, (...) of 6, 5, 2 and 8 months (...) for a whole month (...) to Galicia and I said yes, and so my life began. I arrived in Madrid and I lived there until the 12th of September, 2003. (Interview 3)

From Ecuador to Madrid and from Madrid I came by bus here to San Sebastián. I went to my house, OK, because at that point my brother and sister-in-law lived in a flat since they had already been, eh.... well my sister-in-law had been there four years and my brother two, because already there were bases to go to when you arrived. Then as soon as I got off the bus, I went home, took a shower, changed and left (...) I went to the job interview, the interview went pretty well and I started work because I came on a Saturday and by Monday I already started work. I began living with my sister-in-law and my brother because as I already said they already had a flat and the job was a job where you went in the afternoon and came back home. (Interview 4)

I had this friend from Ecuador, who had a friend here, in Madrid. (...) She told me that she was going to pick me up, we recognised each other here in Madrid by our clothes, well... and I was lucky, the girl came to the airport to pick me up. Then being there the second or third day she wanted to send me to work in Murcia, because she told me that in Murcia, in those days, there was work in the fields. (...) But just then, I remembered that in Ecuador I have a cousin who also has a friend here in Bilbao. And she gave me her telephone, when I was in Madrid already. Then I called this girl, and she answered the telephone, and told me: well, OK, come here to Bilbao. She is an orthodontist, she practices her profession in the Basque Country, and then she took me in, here in Bilbao, and that's why I'm here. Everything through friendships. (Interview 12)

4.2.4. *In the destinations*

It is common to travel directly to the destination where one is going to stay. In fact, in two-thirds of cases, Ecuadorian immigrants have come directly to one of the cities in the Basque Country in which they still live (Figure 6). A quarter was in other Spanish autonomous communities, in this case in Madrid —place of arrival because of the airport— and Murcia —where many Ecuadorians have settled. Another country that has received many Ecuadorian immigrants is Italy, and this destination also is reflected by the people interviewed.

First I was in Murcia for a year, like I have told you and then I came to San Sebastián. (Interview 7)

I organised the trip with my daughter. (...) We got to Italy. We were there for a fortnight, we thought we could work there, but we didn't stay because we didn't understand the language. And a friend who was here, in Murcia, we called him and he told us: come over here. And we went to Murcia. We got to Murcia in 2001. There we rented a room. We went to work. Later my daughter went to Barcelona. (...) Then she got tired of it and came to Bilbao. I stayed in Murcia and later in Alicante because another lady called me who went there and I was in Alicante for 2 years. I arrived in Bilbao in December 2008. My daughter has already been here for two years. (Interview 11)

In that period it was easier to migrate to Italy, at the end of 97, to migrate to any part of Europe was easier. For us there was no need for a visa, we had a tourist visa directly (Interview 9)

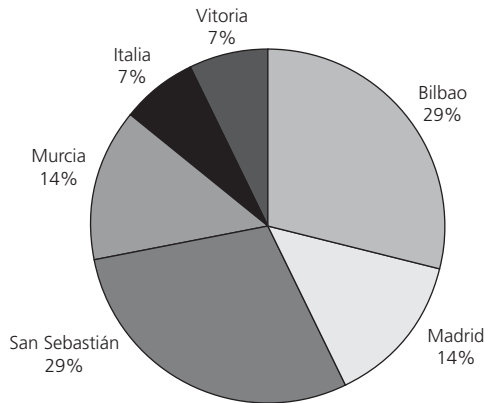
In all cases, the migratory destinations are marked by the existence of some relative, friend or acquaintance who has guided them about where to go. Therefore, the majority of immigrants go directly to a place, where they have been called for and supported, where the contacts of their network in the destination country are located, and they stay there without later moving.

We came directly to Spain and here to the Basque Country directly to a flat that my mother had taken in San Sebastián, and we all got together here 7 years ago. (Interview 5)

I already knew that I was coming here [to Bilbao]. My daughter went to pick me up in Madrid, we went on the bus and arrived here. [I went to live with my daughter] to a flat where we stayed in a room together. There was my daughter, my cousin and me. I came with my cousin, the one that gave me the money. (Interview 15)

Figure 37

First place where the immigrant settled on after leaving Ecuador



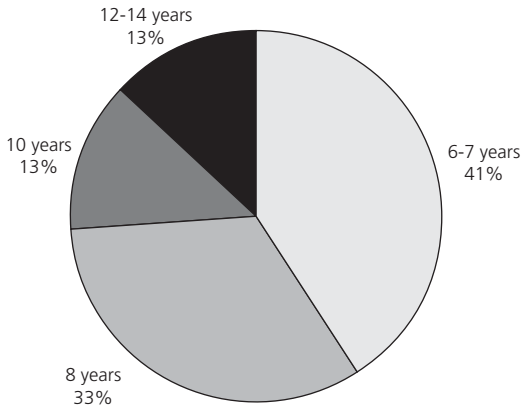
4.3. Time spent outside Ecuador

This section concentrates on the time that has passed since the people interviewed left Ecuador. What we find is that the time the people studied have spent outside their country varies between 6 and 14 years (Figure 7). The distribution of times in the destination shows that almost half has been there for 6-7 years, that is to say, settled in Spain in 2002-2003 and a third have been there for 8 years; therefore, they came in 2001. The rest have been living outside Ecuador for 10 or more years. For everyone, except in one case, Spain was their first destination, although the Basque Country was not always the first place where they settled.

Therefore, three-quarters of the group arrived between 2001 and 2003 and the rest had emigrated before 2000, between 1996 and 1999. A great concentration is seen in the dates of departure. We no longer see people who have just arrived, not even those who have arrived a couple of years ago. The Ecuadorian migration has peaked. The concentration took place during a specific period of time, at the time of the dollarisation of the Ecuadorian currency in the year 2000, which sank many families in poverty. And this dollarisation was caused by the bad economic situation that the country had been through for several years. These dates coincided with the years that the Ecuadorian people interviewed had been emigrating.

Figure 38

Distribution of the time spent outside Ecuador



Between 2001 and 2005 the numbers of Ecuadorians in Spain grew. In 2003 Spain began to require an entrance visa for Ecuadorians and in 2005 the massive stabilisation practised by the Government especially favoured the thousands of Ecuadorian citizens who were in Spain in an irregular situation. As of that moment, the difficulties in crossing the Spanish border increased greatly and from 2006 the number of Ecuadorians registered in the country began to fall. Another reason for this reduction came from the country of origin. In Ecuador things began to improve. The bump of dollarisation has passed and the emigrants already started to think about the possibility of returning. The transnational networks, in this case related to the connections that the Ecuadorians who reside in Spain maintain with relatives and friends who stayed in Ecuador, remain important. Through them, these relatives who are in Ecuador let them know how things are going, they are the ones who have supervised the construction of the house that has been built with the money which the family emigrants have sent, have advised on the purchase of a certain piece of land, or are those who will help start up that business that has been discussed between the two sides of the network, once the return becomes a reality. Nevertheless, the return will be described in more detail in another chapter.

5

Setting in the destination country

Introduction

The migratory projects of Ecuadorian families resident in Spain, designed with a large dose of optimism and hope for a better future but with very variable levels of planning, as we have seen in the last chapter, are always confronted with the reality of living and working in the host society. That is why in this chapter we are going to focus our attention on the living conditions that Ecuadorians face on their arrival in Spain in general and the Basque Country in particular, and how these change over time. To this end, we will start with the characteristics of the housing occupied by this population group, and go on to analyze the main characteristics of their participation in the labour market, their economic situation (closely linked to their obtaining, or failing to obtain, a suitable job), and their experience of leisure and free time, placing special emphasis in this last section on their participation or otherwise in associations of immigrants. The overall intention is to frame the development of transnational family practices and migratory networks, which we will study more exhaustively in the following chapters.

5.1. Geographical location and housing conditions

One of the main concerns of anyone who starts a migratory project towards a new, unknown country is, without doubt, finding a place to live, at least from the moment of arrival. Facing this situation, it is very comforting to think that someone close to them, whether through family bonds or friendship, is waiting for their arrival at the destination airport, which in the majority of cases is Barajas airport. Networks of family or friends play a fundamental role at this moment of the migra-

tory process, such as in choosing a place to settle within Spanish territory for the immigrant. This is reflected in the fact that all the people interviewed in this study arrived at their initial geographic location, almost always in the Basque country, through close relatives or friends whom they had previously contacted from Ecuador, which is why they knew where in Spain they were heading, although they would not know what their destination was like. What is more, the people interviewed who initially settled in other Spanish Autonomous Communities, mainly in the Region of Murcia, having the aforementioned personal contacts there as well as good employment prospects, also mention the call of friends or relatives located in Basque region as their main reason for moving, a certain time after their arrival. Only one of the people interviewed states that she arrived in Bizkaia with the exclusive aim of finding a job and without any personal reference except that of her employer. As she herself relates:

So I called the nun. And she began to move things. And the nun found me a job here in Bilbao. She says to me: "There is a job, but not here. It is not in Madrid or Guadalajara, but in Bilbao". She says to me: "Do you want to go to Bilbao?". And I say to her: "Well, yes; if there's work". It was the first time that I had heard of Bilbao, but I said to her: "Yes! Mother. I have come to work. I have not come to put up any obstacle. If they offer me work, I'll go there". That was it. (Interview 13)

Housing constitutes a basic need for human beings, since it gives a space of privacy, security, shelter against the possible inclemency of the weather, storage for our possessions, besides being a place that allows meeting or coexistence with our family and/or friends, access to work, education, markets, health, information, social services, etc. (Harvey, 1973:159). And the presence of relatives in the destination who have been there for a certain period of time prior to the arrival of the immigrant constitutes the main guarantee for obtaining suitable housing:

As soon as I arrived I went to my house; well, at that time my brother and sister-in-law lived in a flat which, since they already had been... well, my sister-in-law had been there four years and my brother two, so there was a base to arrive to. (Interview 4)

However, this circumstance does not prevent some immigrants, who arrive from Ecuador trusting in the support which their relatives resident in Spain generally and the Basque Country in particular can give them, find their expectations frustrated when they find that they

cannot count on the help they hoped for, whether is because these relatives do not have suitable residential conditions even for themselves, because of personal disagreements arising from coexistence or, even, due to bad experiences and serious problems experienced with other relatives who have previously arrived. Situations like these are mentioned with particular bitterness by the people interviewed because they are especially unexpected given the personal and emotional closeness of the people they are linked to. Let us see an example of each. We begin with the case of an Ecuadorian woman of 36 years old, who tells us quite plainly the terrible conditions of habitability of her first residence in the Basque country, which to start with she shared with her parents-in-law and the family of her husband's brother:

We lived in an extremely precarious house in terrible conditions. I remember that at night we had to get up to clean up water, because it wasn't a case of humidity, water was pouring out of the walls. Then a piece fell off. We were renting, and it was very cheap. We lived in houses that were being demolished. (...) Very bad, and obviously, we were all living in the same house. We slept in a bed and in the bed opposite, my brother-in-law slept with his wife and their two daughters; well, my sister-in-law with her husband and opposite in a very small bed the two children, in the house that my parents-in-law had rented, and they were in the opposite room. And we had one bath for everyone and, like I told you, the conditions of the house. That for me was... I wanted to die, but well, love... love can overcome everything. (...) Well, then I got pregnant. (...) Then because I was pregnant and I was desperate because rats were coming out of the toilet, since I worked in houses, I waited till I got to work to go to the toilet because in my house we covered the toilet with a table, and I asked a neighbour to use their bath, because there were rats in the bath... (Interview 1)

Another person interviewed narrates the hard experience, for her husband in the first place and later for her and their two daughters, of coming to the Basque Country, where part of the family was already residing, given the precarious housing conditions which they met with on their arrival. Indeed this was the reason the woman's reproaching her husband, since she believe that she and their daughters should not have left their house in Ecuador to live in these circumstances:

My brother and my mother [who were already in Bilbao] lent me the money for my husband's ticket so that he could come, and he came. When my brother was living in a co-operative that was called 12 friends, which they knocked down two years ago because it was

in ruins and the poor man had ended up there. (...) And, well, my husband wanted to bring to us. And I pressed him: "Are you coming, are you returning or what". "No, thinking it over, you come with the children". (...) So I said: "All right then". I resigned from the hospital, and I came and arrived at this *12 friends*. (...) That was not his flat, he couldn't pay the rent, and eight or ten people lived in a room. Horrible! (...) He couldn't bring to us to a flat because he didn't have anything and we lived in a room that had half the size of this one, the four of us. My husband and I slept on the floor and the two children in the bed. That moment was the worst. I was depressed here... for six months I was depressed, just crying, saying: "Why did I come here? Why did I quit my job? I don't mind working in whatever job, but not living like this. My daughters...". I cursed my husband: "Damn you, why did you make me come here?". My younger daughter was six and the elder twelve. They were difficult ages... I told my husband: "I hate you; I curse you. Why did you bring me here knowing that there is no stability for us here". And he said to me: "Girl! What would I do here on my own" (Interview 2).

A very different experience is presented in the following narrative. On this occasion a woman of 48 years old, divorced and with a son, tells us of her decision to move from Madrid to the Basque Country with the aim of regrouping her son, whom she initially left in Ecuador, and living with other members of her family, which she considers a fundamental support in the execution of her migratory project. But soon she will find her confidence in the family shattered, on discovering that her son is experiencing a situation of abuse in his own home, at the hands of her brother. She says:

In Bilbao I had two brothers, two sisters-in-law, two nephews and my mother-in-law. And, well, they said to me: "Working with four children, earning two farthings... you are getting old". And I didn't have papers; I had spent two years with them [her employers in Madrid] and they always refused. "You come here where things are easier". (...) And I started having problems in my family, because my brother was abusing my son. (...) It was a pretty relationship, the whole family together, but soon gaps appear, differences start to appear and it was very hard. I went crazy person looking for place to live and I live alone with my son. (...) I spoke with the social worker and she supported me to look for a flat. (Interview 3)

In other circumstances, the feeling of being deceived on receiving less help than one had hoped, or even, the lack of the expected and hoped for family support at that first moment of arrival becomes a

hard blow, and one of the main obstacles to be faced after landing on Spanish soil for the first time. A good example of this situation is that of the Ecuadorian woman that we previously mentioned who arrived in Bizkaia with no other reference than that of a job as a live-in domestic worker, indeed fleeing from a residential situation with a cousin and her husband, which was untenable for her:

I asked [her cousin] if she could come and pick me up from the airport, because I don't know the place, and well. (...) She had already said yes, that she was going to pick me up. Then when I arrived, she introduces me to her husband and says to me: "Let's go, I am going to drop you with some friends." I was surprised to when she said to me: "Some friends", like that. And she says to me: "And you have to pay there". And I said to her: "Look! (...) I've only got 100 dollars. Let me stay in your house". She says: "You know that if it was up to me, I'd be delighted. But the house isn't mine, it's Manuel's. And I know you, you're hardworking, conscientious and all that. But you know: we all pay for the sins of a few.". She says: "The daughter of aunt Elizabeth and my sister [previously welcomed in their house] have done some stupid things and so Manuel doesn't want anybody to stay in the house". And I say to her: "Let me speak with him". Then I say to him: "Manuel, please, let me stay in your house. I am not going to bother you. Look! Just until I find a job, and I swear to you that I am going to do it as soon as possible, and I will pay all the expenses. Don't tar us all with the same brush. You have had bad luck with my other cousins, but I am not like that. Let me prove it to you and you'll see that...". "Well, OK, but you had better find a job soon". I was even scared to take something to eat. (...) When one day, I don't know what happened between them and a big argument started between the two of them. And in that moment of annoyance he shouted at my cousin... called her all kinds of names. And, apart from that, he said all the things that he had done for her... that is, he brought them out to the light... threw in her face everything that he had done, and also everything that he had done for her sister, the neglectful way that my other cousin behaved... "And then your cousin comes", he said about me. Ay! My God! My God! What should I do? I say: "No, I'm going away from here". I went to my room to get my suitcase, collected things... and immediately went down with my suitcase to leave. I opened the door and everything, and I was very surprised when I opened the door to leave... and I saw that it was snowing. (Interview 13)

On other occasions it is not families but friendships that provide the main pillar of support on arrival. In this situation, however, the support is mainly emotional, and does not prevent the person who has just

arrived from facing the cost of lodging, which also sometimes occurs with relatives, although the conditions of habitability are usually, in the majority of these cases, clearly more positive.

When it is a friend who takes in the immigrant on arrival, the offer of housing usually consists of a room that is almost never used individually, although in exceptional cases, it could be only a sofa or a mattress on the flat, in a flat shared with other people, sometimes an excessive number, which usually involves problems of privacy, coexistence within the house and with the neighbours, security, etc. For all these reasons, these residential conditions usually appear precisely in the first moments following arrival, with all the effort of the people interviewed being focussed on finding a job that allows them access to sufficient economic resources to leave that house as quickly as possible. This is clearly exemplified by the stories of two following people from Ecuador:

There were seven of us in the flat, plus us two [her cousin and her], nine. All Ecuadorians. From Riobamba. There were three rooms, that is to say, bedrooms, no?, and the hall... There they put me up, in the hall, a few days, no more, until we found a flat. There we were living three... and two five... seven people. Seven altogether. (Interview 11)

This friend took me in, and at that point a flat became free and at that point it was the only flat of immigrants in that district. When I arrived there were about 12 or 15 people in the flat. It was a three-room flat... they put me up there. I remember that I arrived, there were no beds, there were mattresses and, well, they said that the first to arrive got the beds, and the rest, well, on mattresses on the floor. Since there were already some people there, well, I slept on the floor to start with, I remember. And well, living in big groups in a flat... generates a bit of conflict, because of the typical thing, the men on weekends got together, started drinking, drank a bit too much and started to make problems. Then there came a time, a weekend, they got their wires crossed and they started to make problems, and the neighbours called the police. And I remember that to avoid problems, a group of us left the flat. About eight of our group left to avoid problems with the police. I believe that the neighbours called because of these boys who made problems, who started to kick the mailboxes at the entrance, well, that doesn't please anybody. And what did we do? We preferred to leave, and went to the flat of a Rumanian couple in [a nearby district]. One of the boys of the group knew that couple there and they took us in for two days in their flat, eight people. During those two days we got hold of another flat, and the eight of us went to that flat, which was better

located. (...) I remember clearly that I didn't have money even for the bus, and that... for that reason I love Plaza Moyua, which on weekends, with this business of the boys who got drunk on the weekend and who sometimes made problems and we couldn't even sleep in the flat, I decided to leave again, and, since it was nearly dawn by the clock, I lay down in Plaza Moyua, in the roundabout... luckily it was a summer night and there was a beautiful moon... I lay down to see the moon and, well, that has also made me stronger, no? (Interview 12)

Obtaining decent housing is not, as we have observed, free from difficulties, being especially complicated for Ecuadorians who are just now settling in our society, and especially during the first moments of this process. It is for this reason that gaining work in live-in domestic service is frequently considered as a reasonable way out, essentially by women who initiate their family migratory project on their own, because of, firstly, the need to improve their residential conditions, on the one hand, and the need to find a job to improve their economic conditions, on the other. However, as related to us by some people interviewed who are or have previously been live-in employees, although their lodging can *a priori* be considered comfortable, they live with important restrictions on their privacy, the development of their social and family life and, even, their employment rights and/or the satisfaction of their basic needs, such as food. And, on the other hand, these women also find enormous difficulties in satisfying their residential needs during their free days or afternoons, since these are occasional moments, not continuous, but very important, since they allow them to enjoy a freedom that is limited during the rest of the week. Let us see how one of the people interviewed presents some of these points:

I was free on Saturdays. I left at four or five in the afternoon, after cleaning the kitchen and everything, and I had Sunday free. I said to her: "Madam, do you know something? I don't know anybody, and at the moment I don't have any money. I want to see if it is possible for me to stay here". And she says to me: "There's no problem. Well! But, clearly, you understand that if you are going to sleep here, that involves expenses. So on Saturdays you will have to get up, to take care of... to give my children dinner. And on Sundays also you will have to get up, to take care of them, to give them breakfast". That was the first week. The second week I had to give her children breakfast, leave the kitchen clean and leave the beds tidy. The next week I had to do all that as well as clean the bathrooms, mop the kitchen... that is, little by little I had to do more and more. (...) And one day she had guests and everything and she wanted

that me to stay all day Saturday taking care of his guests, and Sunday in the morning also, to give breakfast to her guests, taking care of them. Then I decided to rent a room with another friend that I made, for my free time. Because I said: "I am going to stay there to save, to pay the debt soon, and all that". But then one Sunday I was there in my room and I said: "I am not going out for anything and I am going to stay here locked in the room resting". But then she tried to open the door one Sunday, and when she saw that she couldn't come in because the door was locked: "Open the door!" [shouting]. I was scared, I had my pyjamas on and I put on my dressing gown and said to her: "Just a minute, Madam". And she says to me: "You can't be here resting. You must take care of the children". I said to her: "Madam, it's my day off". "Yes, but you have to take care of the breakfast for the children, and you have to... this... clean the kitchen, and do all these things, because clearly, you have to do this. You already know that you have to do this". That is, I was working from Monday to Monday. And so I decided to rent a room with another girl and all that. Then on Saturdays I went to my room, and since she said this to me about the things getting lost, I don't know what... I said to her: "Look at my bag; search it if you want". And whenever I was going to go out I said to her: "If you want to search my bag, because I don't want you to think that I am taking things". (Interview 13)

It is for that reason that live-in employment is only seen as an attractive option generally in the first stage of emigration, after the initial hosting by a member of the family, and during a period that in the majority of cases is not too extensive, although it allows migrants to maximize saving through not having to face the daily cost of accommodation and food. For these live-in women, the house will not, however, be a place of rest, of freedom or meeting with their nearest and dearest and, in addition, in this type of work they face an enormous obstacle in fulfilling one of the necessary requirements for familiar reunification, which is the demonstration of decent housing conditions for her and the regrouped relatives.

For all these reasons, and because women, at least when they are not accompanied by a partner, seem to be considered less trustworthy when signing a rental contract, surely due to their worse economic and employment position and their greater difficulty in obtaining a certified income, they seem, in general, to experience more precarious residential conditions than their male compatriots. This circumstance is especially aggravated among women immigrants who are at the head of single-parent families (Vicente and Royo, 2006), since to the economic difficulties that they have to face alone, is added the refusal of some

landlords to rent their houses to families with small children, because of the greater damage to the house which could be caused by their presence. One of the Ecuadorian women whom we have interviewed, who is divorced and is the mother of two children now two and five years old, expresses it as follows:

Then I was desperate because they asked us for a certified income and they all refused to rent to us. People were very obstinate with foreigners and they did not want to rent to us. "Ay! No foreigners". They saw me pregnant and "no, it's not that we don't love children; it's just that you know, children break things, they stain things...", and things like that. And me with my belly going up and down, looking for a place to stay. Then we found an individual who had put an ad in the paper, in an excellent neighbourhood of Bilbao. It was expensive; well, at that time 650, but there were no other places and I was going to give birth in a few days, and she said: "You strike me as nice people. I don't think you are messing around. You are going to have a baby and I'll rent you the place". In a very central area and, clearly, 650 a month... it was a lot. At that time I earned 600, but working a lot. Then soon the boy was born and I couldn't work very well, so I was only earning 320, and then I stopped working because it was very difficult with my son. I didn't have anyone to leave him with. My mother-in-law has never taken care of the boy, even today she lives around corner and she never does. (...) The owner of house didn't let me sublet any rooms, though that would have helped me. But she underlined in the contract that I can't have guests, because of the fear that sometimes they fill the house with people, and what's more she lives on the fourth floor and I can't fool her. What's more, the contract is in the name of my ex because he has a certified salary and I don't; they wouldn't have rented to me, because with my income I have to do what I can to pay, and I was just about to give birth. I have asked my mother and my family, I have to pay my ex who let me rent the flat in his name (...) the caretaker comes to see how the flat is and to see whether there are more people living there, see how the walls are... She comes to see if the locks are working... I don't know, she's young, but still she's very thorough and suspicious: To see if we've damaged anything... and, for example, I take a great deal of care; luckily my children never draw on the walls. I have always told them: "You only draw on paper". And I think they have learned because they have never drawn on anything. (...) I hope they do something for single mothers as far as housing goes. (Interview 1)

In this sense, we shouldn't forget that the United Nations Special Envoy on decent housing as an integral element of the right to a suitable standard of living, after his recent visit to Spain, pointed out that

women are especially vulnerable to situations of violence in inadequate housing conditions, which affects women immigrants most especially (United Nations, 2008).

But despite the economic difficulties associated with the acquisition of housing, whether in rental or ownership, the Ecuadorian people interviewed generally show significant improvements in their residential conditions over time, not only regarding the conditions of habitability of their homes but also with respect to the number of people with whom they share housing. Thus, the majority go from sharing a flat with their extended family (parents-in-law, siblings and their spouses, nephews and nieces, etc.) to doing so with their nuclear family only (spouses and children); from living with a large number of people, often strangers, to sharing housing with only one or two friends, and in some cases, albeit exceptional, to living alone. We see some examples of these residential trajectories:

Here I lived with my wife and my three-year-old son. Now alone, but before we shared with my sister-in-law, her husband and three children; the younger brother of my wife and, on and off, her parents. Now the three of us are living on our own. (Interview 6)

Then at the start, like I told you, I was with Mrs. Aurora, in her home and, well, as a live-in helper. (...) But after I had been here for two years she got very sick and had to go into hospital, and after seven months she passed away. My uncle and his wife asked me if I wanted to go with them to London to look for work which was easy to find there, but I said no, I preferred to stay and work in San Sebastián. Thus I shared a flat with a boy from Ecuador, who was an acquaintance of the family. And also we shared flat with a friend of his. And the three of us were living like that for three years. Then the friend left. (...) Manuel and I stayed living in the flat and, well, we were sharing a flat for three years, and soon I got pregnant and, well, then I married Manuel, although it didn't go well (...) and I ended up on my own. (Interview 8)

As at that time we worked as live-in helpers, most of us, so from Monday through Friday we didn't go out, we only went out Saturday evenings and Sundays, and on Sunday evenings most of us went to our jobs. The weekend was only for sleeping, well, you had Saturday night, nothing else. OK, so in this way we were started finding our feet little by little, and so we shared flats at times. Then after a while we each found our independence. We each looked for a flat, and then I managed to leave the shared flat and get a flat of my own, on my own account. Later I shared again with someone else, but not with so many people, just in a two-

room flat. I lived in one, and rented the other to help with the rent, so as not to pay for it all by myself. So that's what I've always done in Bilbao. Since I don't have my family or anything... (...) At the moment I'm lucky that a year ago, the government of this country granted me one of those protected flats, through the Bilbao Town Council, a flat in a block of council flats, and I'm lucky enough to live alone. (Interview 12)

5.2. Type of housing tenancy

As regards the type of housing tenancy, the majority of the Ecuadorian population live in a rented flat, which clearly contrasts with the prevalent type of housing tenancy in the Basque Country: only 5% of Basque households live in rented housing³⁶, compared with 92% of families who are owner-occupiers, and 3% who live in granted housing or in another situation (Dept. of Housing and Social Affairs of the Basque Government, 2008).

Perhaps for this reason it comes as no surprise that it is only a few Ecuadorian people married with Spanish spouses who state that they live in a dwelling which is owned by them or some member of their family. This is the case of the following people interviewed, two men married with Spanish women, one of whom shares the house of their wife's parents:

Before, we lived with the family of my sister-in-law. We were living with family, until the three of us decided to change to a flat which we bought; well, that we have bought with a mortgage. (Interview 6)

I live in an owner-occupied house together with my wife, my 3 children and my wife's parents. We need to be grateful, they take care of the children. It compensates for what there is to put up with. You have less privacy but... my wife and I have never lived alone. First in the grandfather's house; he died and Manu [the brother-in-law] came, and then we bought the house between the two families [his and the brother-in-law's]. Now they have gone away and my wife's parents have come. I don't know what to do any more... but I also say that nobody else would take better care of my children, so it compensates. The house is ours. (Interview 7)

³⁶ The proportion of rented housing in the Basque Country is even lower than that reached at national level (11%), which on the other hand constitutes one of the lowest percentages in Europe.

The path to buying a home, in addition, seems to be meeting with ever greater obstacles. Spain generally, and the Basque Country in particular, in recent years have seen some of the fastest-rising housing prices of all developed countries. With the change in the economic situation in recent years, however, housing prices seem to have begun a process of deceleration in 2007, which has continued throughout 2008 and 2009, due to the clear reduction in sales and to the increasing difficulties in obtaining a mortgage, so that buying a home has definitely not become simpler.

On the other hand, public housing (which includes privately built, publicly subsidized “officially protected housing” (OPH) —and rented social housing), although it has grown considerably in the Basque Country in comparison with the rest of Spain³⁷, is still clearly insufficient, as are policies for affordable housing. What is more, not only is OPH scarce but also it is not within everyone’s reach, despite being below market price. And the fact is that, although the number of people to whom it is accessible has increased with the increase in the maximum income that allows access to OPH or a to price-controlled housing (PCH), it is the most vulnerable sectors of the population who have the greatest difficulties in gaining access to public housing, since they don’t reach the minimum average annual income required. Despite this, for some Ecuadorian people interviewed, access to OPH or rented social housing seems to be one of the best —if not the only— way out of their present housing problem, which is why they have not been slow to register with Etxebide, the public service of protected housing, or to approach the municipal housing services:

Economically I am not very well off. For me, I swear that right now the worst thing is housing, because I have signed up with Etxebide for three years or more, I have been to talk with the social worker, I’ve gone to the town hall, I’ve gone to council housing... That’s what gets me down, because it costs 700 [Euros a month]... I’ve seen a lot of money go only for that, but I’ve also looked for a room with the children and they don’t accept children, and the rooms are very small, I’d be in a 90 cm wide bed with both children. In the estate agents, if I find a flat for 650 [a month], I need to pay three months in advance and where do I get it? For me housing is the subject, because you can find food somehow, you don’t eat an egg and you give it to your child or, like happened to me recently, when I couldn’t work, a yogurt for both of you. Measure the fruit, measure

³⁷ In 2005 one in every three houses under construction in the Basque Country was subsidised by the Basque Government, whereas in the rest of the State the proportion was only one in every thirteen.

the food, make a lot of pasta, a lot of rice so that they get full up. In other words, it's not a problem. (...) But the rent, the housing... if only there was some way, somewhere I could go. And I have looked, because I don't stay still, I have looked for the way, but I don't find it. That's what gets me down very much. (Interview 1)

With this situation in the real estate market for sale, whether private or social, it comes as no surprise that the rental price has not stopped increasing during recent years, since the rental market in Euskadi is small. Encouraged by the price of the housing for sale, by the shortage of public supply, the liberalisation of rental contracts, the growth of demand due to the arrival of immigrants and by the reduced growth of supply of flats for rent, rents have increased outstandingly during recent years, especially in those areas of cities where the most reasonably priced flats are located. According to data of the Basque Government, in 2007 the average rent paid was 390 Euros a month in this territory, although this average rent varies considerably depending on the year when the contract was signed, the age and condition of habitability of the dwelling and its location. Thus, rents currently being charged in the free market are much higher: 891 Euros according to the Survey of Real Estate Supply for 2007, which gives an indication of the increasing difficulty in gaining access to this sector of the real estate market.

Paying rent involves a smaller economic outlay than the recent purchase of a house, which is why it comes as no surprise that this is the main type of tenancy among the Ecuadorian families interviewed, who in general have only been in residence outside their country for a few years and who consider that they already have to make an important financial effort to meet monthly rent payments.

Access to rented social housing, without doubt, permits a major improvement in housing conditions, a situation which is desired by many of the people interviewed but enjoyed in fact by only one of them, who is the only person who states that they live alone, without needing to share their home with anyone:

The government of this country gave me one of these protected flats, through the Bilbao Town Hall, a municipal flat, and I'm lucky enough to live alone. A flat for me is a privilege, I would say, after what I've told you... The flat is rented, but I can live alone, and more relaxed. For the flat at this point I am paying an amount which perhaps, specifically, is what a room costs. A room costs 300 Euros right now. Now I am able to pay less than what a room costs for a flat where I can live alone, although it is rented. At this moment, I live in this flat. (Interview 12)

The high price of rental housing means that many Ecuadorian people have to request economic aid from relatives, friends, churches, town halls, etc., as well as having to share with other people, known or unknown, in order to pay the rent. This is the case of the woman that we quoted previously, who spoke of a situation of abuse experienced by her son at the hands of his uncle with whom she shared a flat among other members of the family, and which pushed her to seek urgently another place to live:

I live with my son in Amezola. (...) It isn't far. And the Church lent me money and gave me references because, of course, it was through an agency and between the agent's fee, the deposit... The Church gave me the money. They gave me the money and I was lucky and got the flat. I had a lodger. (Interview 3)

It is also common to find applications for Emergency Social Assistance, assistance which was created to alleviate emergency situations of the families with economic problems and which little by little are being absorbed (more than 80% of them) by the housing needs of the beneficiaries (rental payments and maintenance):

This year I have applied for emergency social assistance and I am on the list this year, because the past year they refused me for lack of funds. I went the first day that it opened and they gave me an appointment for September. So this thing... I don't know if I'll go in September and also they told me again that the budget has run out. They would give me enough for three months' rent. It would be good. I think that it is about 2,000 Euros. But I tell you, I hope so, because last time they refused to give me it because the budget had already run out. (Interview 1)

5.3. Housing as a gateway to access rights

If public aid is sometimes necessary to meet the economic cost of meeting a basic need like housing, as we have just seen in the previous account, since the year 2000 housing can open or close the door to the enjoyment of certain social rights for people from other countries, although it does not carry the same importance among the native population.

Thus, the existence of a demonstrable legal link with a stable address (rent or sublet contract, municipal registration authorization through living at the same address, etc.) allows the immigrant popu-

lation access to the municipal register (regardless of their legal situation). And, since the passing of Statutory Law 4/2000, municipal registration allows access to the system of social protection: it permits access to the health system, to the educational system, housing assistance, social services and the most elementary resources, among others basic income or the aforementioned emergency social assistance. For the foreign population, in addition, the lack of a stable residence can make very difficult the process of renovation of residence permits in Spain, whereas possession of one opens the possibility —together with employment— of gaining access to the only route now open for regularisation of people without the mandatory authorization for residence in the country, which is via rooting (employment or social). Housing is also a determining requirement to permit or deny the right of foreigners to reunite and live with their families, since the characteristics of the housing can determine —together with the possession of mandatory residence and work permits and the level of income — whether favourable or unfavourable reports are issued to exercise this right to family regrouping. For all these reasons, any difficulty found by the population from Ecuador, especially those in an irregular situation, for access to the municipal register, can cause a greater degree of exclusion or marginality than that for natives people (Zarauz, 2007). But as is clearly shown by our interviews, municipal registration in the habitual place of residence is not always possible, for different reasons, which is why it frequently becomes another stumbling block to overcome. In the words of those interviewed:

The subject of the municipal registration is a separate topic. It is a bit complex because right now where I am living I am not registered. But they cannot register you for many reasons: because they are processing papers for... for example, for a topic of family rooting; they are bringing family from abroad, or because they are getting some kind of aid or benefit or so on... They have many arguments for refusing to register you in the worst case. Right now I am registered in the flat where my girlfriend lives, with her family. (Interview 14)

Municipal registration? They don't want to give you it. It could be because they get basic income and don't want to register you. (...) But I have always been registered. That is, I would say that this August I have been municipally registered for seven years. I always have been registered. (...) Where I am now there is no problem. We are all registered; there is no problem. But all the same I could tell you... because I have seen, I have looked and... nobody wants to register you. At least this Ecuadorian has registered me, and I am OK there.

To be registered is what's essential, no? For everything, no? And I tell my daughter this (...) But it is not easy to get the information. (Interview 15)

The residential conditions, definitively, determine to a great extent the processes of settling and social integration. The enjoyment of decent and affordable housing is a human right that determines to a very great extent the quality of life as well as the process of socialisation and incorporation of people in society. A home not only provides shelter, protection and privacy but it also allows the satisfaction of other indispensable basic needs to participate in community life, such as access to work, health centres, educational centres, shops, contact with friends, information, etc. But, in spite of its importance, at present housing still constitutes one of the main concerns of the Ecuadorian people interviewed, although we observe remarkable improvements over time in the majority of cases.

6

Labor situation and leisure time

6.1. **Economic and employment situation of the Ecuadorian population**

6.1.1. *Access to the labour market*

Access to the labour market, along with the attainment of housing in which to reside in the most comfortable possible way, is one of the main concerns of the Ecuadorian population on their arrival in Spain. And it is a fact that economic improvement through earning more is the main objective of their family migratory projects.

In the majority of cases, the Ecuadorian population experiences a process of downward professional mobility after arriving in Spain, since those who have professional or university education have to wait for a considerable time before obtaining —if they bother to initiate the long procedures and they achieve it— convalidation of their qualifications so as to be able to practice their profession in this, their new destination. People from Ecuador, on arrival, will be located especially in the worst-paid sectors with the hardest working conditions, such as the agricultural, domestic or construction sectors, as pointed out in the third chapter. However, the evaluation of this new labour context is very much affected by the economic improvement that it involves for the worker and his or her family, essentially in comparison with the context of origin:

I had worked in other jobs [related to foreign trade] and I had to start cleaning houses, taking care of children, but I never took care of old people, because first it seemed to me that I needed to know a lot, and one administering medication, or taking their blood pressure or doing injections... I don't know, I don't have the experience. With children... all my life I've cared for my sister, that's more my sort of

thing. Then I started to take care of children, to clean houses, to help to pay for the air fare, because we came with debts. (...) And then, to start with you reject it a little, but sometimes... My mother had a servant in the house and that affected me a lot, because I didn't even know how to cook and I had to learn through hunger and now I can cook well, another positive effect of immigration. (Interview 1)

We also arrived in Murcia, to be reunited with my father and brother. And there my mother and I also tried to find work as soon as possible. I think I only spent one weekend without working. The following week we started looking for work and they took me to work in the field. I already worked gathering lemons, and I couldn't manage the baskets, with so many kilos, and my father had to help me lift the basket onto my shoulder, and even so I was bent double. (...) I was working with the lemons and then also with almonds, hitting the branches to gather the almonds. I worked for three months. (...) We were all working to cover those debts [contracted by the family to come over]. But saw what it is like to live in a developed economy. It is a little contradictory: you never imagine you will end up working like that in the fields, because working in the fields has a very bad image, it is for people who have no education or who have hardly any resources, then... you create some stereotypes and when you get here you say: "In the fields!..." It makes you stop and think, but soon you see what you earn and everything... you get a glint in your eyes and you start to create enormous expectations... enormous. (...) What's normal is working in the fields, you only do it when you arrive. And later because you are aspiring to a better job. My father is working now in an industrial estate, in a factory making cardboard tubes. And my brother right now is unemployed, but he has been working in many things: he has been working as a plumber, supermarket employee... And now he has been in unemployment since the summer of last year. (Interview 14)

As noted in the last part of the previous account, the consideration of these jobs as a route to begin the migratory project does not eliminate the desire for improvement; an aspiration which is intensified with the passage of time, especially as they get to know better the operation of the Spanish labour market and the Basque one in particular. However, in the interviews we see that men find it easier to change their employment sector than women, who usually stay in greater proportion and for longer in the sector of caring and domestic service. Despite this, some of them have also managed to change their employment regime:

I didn't find it hard to get a job, I was lucky then because a month after arriving I had already found a job, but for some days,

moving and so on. Well... the work I have now is as an installer of garage doors; I got it through a temping agency of ADECCO and I was working for more or less two years through the temping agency, until the company hired me. A six month contract, with prolongation for another six, until now, they have made me permanent. Although nowadays they say it doesn't mean anything but well.... eh.... better not to worry about what might happen. I believe that through working and that, you get more possibilities, you have a salary... At the moment I'm comfortable. (Interview 6)

I fought to work in a private company and I got a job in a *locutorio* (telephone and internet centre). And being in the *locutorio* led to a job in AXA Insurance. I have worked for 14 months, but I didn't have a contract, I worked with a commercial contract and they don't register you for social security as an independent worker for three months, and then three months more; and when I could get a discharge, you don't have a fixed salary, you can earn a minimum of 300 and a maximum of 1000, but there's no fixed salary. It was a very pretty experience. I felt satisfied that I passed a psychological test with a good grade. It made me feel very good, because it was something that required education. They valued me a lot and for the first few months I earned between about 300 and 500. I had a lodger in the flat and a cleaner and it was worth being with AXA. I went to do courses in Madrid and Barcelona; in the professional part you learn a lot, but one month you could earn 300, in another 500 and I couldn't even pay for my social security. Then I was working until December and they gave me a portfolio of clients and, yes, I began to grow just a little bit, but then I didn't have the lodger anymore, so I couldn't make ends meet and I said: "I need a fixed job, with holidays and social security". (...) And in January they restructured AXA, they changed the managers that we had before and everybody was out on the street. I was out of work. (...) Just now I found a job in OCASO, and I took a weekend off to make the right decision and the work in OCASO doesn't suit me, because the conditions don't suit me, because it's sales and it isn't worth it for me. I need to give them the answer tomorrow. (...) Yesterday they called me from CEAR because they preselected me for a job in a hotel that they are going to open. To see if I'm lucky. I don't want to keep going in domestic service. It's good as long as it lets you get by, but I want something else. I have register for Lanbide computing courses, and I have to register from January, I even want to go into a private company and, if it improves the economic situation, get into commercial work; and if I don't go into commercial work, start paying social security in the general regime, in a *locutorio*, in cleaning... I have the idea that with the help of Lanbide I wanted to start a business, a bookstore, because I want to retire here and at my age I am not going to find a job in Ecuador. (Interview 3)

Now I work in a *locutorio* right here. I work in the afternoons from 3 to 10 from Monday through Friday and Saturdays all day. I try to make the most of the mornings. I'm going from one place to another, doing substitute work. Before I worked in... well, one year in a hairdressing salon, because here I also studied hairdressing for two years. But I had to leave it because, well, I liked it but economically it didn't compensate me. I had to leave it because I was working all day but the pay didn't compensate me. Then I had to leave and look for another place where I would find better economic compensation. Well, in that respect since I never stop... in spite of that, I always work based on word of mouth, I going to people's houses to cut their hair or they come to my house... I have worked in everything and you learn from everything. (Interview 5)

As emphasized in the last two accounts, for some women moving into an employment sector other than domestic work, in this case work in insurance companies or hairdressing, does not come with the expected increase in pay and the desired stability of employment, even if they have trained specifically for these professions after moving to the Basque Country. For this reason they decide to change their job again or to work only part-time or informally, for example, working as a hairdresser at home, to supplement their income. Several of the people interviewed have left domestic service and caring to work in a *locutorio*, always keeping a strong link with the immigrant population, even those of the same origin:

Now I work in the area of overseas money transfers. A friend told me about this company, he had seen the ad on the door that said they needed a cashier, and he gave me the address and telephone number and I went to give them my CV. And they needed specifically someone like me: a girl from Ecuador. Because there were girls from Brazil and Colombia, they needed an Ecuadorian for the position, if possible. Well, they also liked my experience in Ecuador as a cashier. They interviewed me because the main office is in Madrid; I was lucky and they took me on. They made me a contract for three months, then for six months, and then for a year, and then they made me permanent. I've been lucky enough to keep working until now and I've been there five years. (...) I have contact with all the immigrant groups through my work... because sometimes I have to send money to their countries. (Interview 12)

The women, although many of them take longer to get out of domestic work and caring, if they do get out, they usually also see improvements in their employment situation, going from live-in domes-

tic service to live-out, or moving from the care of ill or elderly people to the care of children or to domestic cleaning, work which is considered as simpler, easier and, in the case of cleaning by the hour, better remunerated, although for this, one has to work in different houses during the day:

It consisted of helping two people who were ill: a couple, the wife was almost blind and the husband had senile dementia. It was hard but in the end I got used to the work, until after a few months you realize that it's a very big responsibility, because you have to take care of two people whose diseases... until then I didn't know what the disease was, but senile dementia is a degenerative disease that gets worse with time... And then you realize that you are not capable of taking care of two people: one blind and the other with dementia. There was another job opportunity, so I left and I found a job which I still have. This is my current job. The truth is that I am very very happy, because when you come from a house where you have a lot of brothers and sisters, what I think is that it was the girl I'm looking after who fulfilled me, no? Then you see it as an way of escaping from everything that you feel, because... since you can't express it, then you try to get closer to the person who you are with the most, and in this case it was the girl I was taking care of, I gave her a lot of affection and it fulfilled me a great deal. (Interview 4)

My uncle spoke with my mother and told her that I could come [as a live-in helper] to take care of the elderly lady [the uncle's mother-in-law, until she was moved to a residence]. Well, it was my flat-mate who told me that there was a person who was looking for someone to clean her house and from that job, another one came up and in the end I had work in different houses. Now I have twelve houses altogether in which I do cleaning. (Interview 8)

Just as in designing the migratory project and finding a place to live, when seeking work the help of relatives and friends is fundamental from the start and remains important when changing jobs with the aim of finding better work, even though the person has been resident in the Basque Country for some time. This is expressed clearly in the last account, which notes that it was a friend who informed her of the job that she has now. In this same line, the same interviewee describes clearly the importance of friendship in seeking work:

I got [my first job in the Basque Country] through this girl who let me stay here, and through the group of girlfriends that she had from over there, because we started looking... and so everyone found out. I remember that in that sense it was a very nice group, because as we

arrived one by one, the ones who were already here made a point of looking for work for the ones who were arriving, and the one who heard about it first told the rest. Then, that's lucky. Through these people, I heard about a job in... I found a live-in job taking care of two children in the area of Getxo, and that's how I got started. (Interview 12)

Relatives and friends not only share information about how to find work and the minimum acceptable conditions in each sector, but sometimes they do the job of labour mediation, or even offer work and contract arrivals from Ecuador. Let us see some examples, although practically all the people interviewed make some commentary in this respect:

I found [work] through my sister-in-law, who simultaneously found [work] through a friend of hers, who worked in the residence where now she works. (Interview 4)

I think I was working for two months in my mother-in-law's bar, but then through a friend of my father-in-law I started working with a truck. (Interview 6)

The following testimony mentions two moments in the conversation with an Ecuadorian woman. In the first the interviewee refers to the role played by her friends in analyzing and evaluating the working conditions in her first job in live-in domestic service, whereas in the second part she describes her role as a labour mediator, after being in the Basque Country for a certain period of time and understanding the operation of the sector in which she was employed. The fact is that in this employment sector information about both jobs and working conditions are transmitted orally between relatives and friends or, at least, acquaintances:

As I started making friends with other girls who were working, they said to me: "Where do you work?". "With Carmen". And they told me: "And how long you have been working there". I told them: "Almost six months". They said: "You're the only woman whom can put up with her. All the women who start working there, only last a month... or not even a month, they work for her for two weeks, one week... and then they leave. I don't know why you've been there so long. And how much does she pay you?". I told her: "Ninety thousand pesetas [540 Euros]". "And what is it: a big or a small flat". "It's a duplex flat". And they told me: "No! That is too much work for you. You have to ask her for a raise. And aside from that you

shouldn't work on your day off, don't do a thing, because it's your day off, it means what it says, and that's something that you have by law. This woman is exploiting you". And I told them about the food and everything. And they told me: "Uff! Find another job". (...) When I took the little girl to the park and that, since there weren't many immigrants there, there were a lot of people who were looking for girls to work. Then one lady came up to me and says: "Do you know anybody, some friend of yours who wants to work". And I say to him: "Well, yes. Of course, yes! If you want to give me your telephone number and tell me the details of the job I can pass that information to my friend...". And she says to me: "Well, look, it would be to work with a couple and a little girl. The main work is looking after the girl. And when the girl is asleep, then she would do the housework: ironing, cooking, cleaning the house... But what interests me most is taking care of the little girl". "Well...", I say to her, "How much you are going to pay for that work". And she says to me: "I'll pay 90,000 pesetas [540 Euros]". (Interview 13)

People who have been in Spain for a certain time and who have renewed permission for residence and work show greater knowledge and access to public entities for employment, such as Lanbide, INEM, etc., although in view of their comments they are not as effective as the informal routes for finding new employment opportunities:

I registered everywhere, I went to Lanbide, to INEM, I looked on the Internet and just then I thought of calling the daughter of the older couple [with whom I worked previously] and she called me after two weeks because they needed a girl, because the previous girls had failed them. (Interview 3)

Temping agencies, on the other hand, constitute another route of access to paid work, especially for men. Also, there are several non-profit organizations that have undertaken tasks of employment mediation, such as Cáritas, Norabide, CEAR or the Red Cross. The majority of these organizations, as well as informing about possible vacancies, can promote access by the immigrant population to the employment market through training. Among the courses offered are those aimed at improving the development of activities already carried out daily, such as courses in Spanish cooking or gerontology aimed at women employed as domestic cleaners or nursing for dependent people, and those aimed at promoting a change in employment sector by means of the professional retraining and/or the broadening of training. According to several interviewees, better preparation is essential to obtain better work:

Now I am doing a course on gerontology with a Foundation (Interview 12)

In Cáritas here I did the course on how to make a bed, lay a table. They taught to me to make croquettes... (Interview 3)

In this case my husband is working in Eroski [supermarket chain], as a distributor and he's getting on very well. It's three years already and we'll see how it goes for him. He started studying here. He got into graphic design with a computer. He studied, and now he is studying to drive a truck. He's a member of CC.OO so they give the members, those who are affiliated to these unions, the chance to get a bit more organized, tell them what possibilities there are. Because now the situation is very difficult in Bilbao. Before there was work and everything to choose, but now it's a bit complicated. (...) I also went to the Red Cross and they said they'd call me. These days when I'm out of work I wanted to study, because my husband has trained here a bit and I haven't trained in anything. (Interview 2)

Finally, within this section and linked with the last account, we wish to mention the impact of the present economic crisis on the Ecuadorian population living in the Basque Country. Although we have mentioned above that the men have higher employment mobility than the women, showing over time the desired change in employment sector, accompanied by an improvement in working conditions, the men are also experiencing a greater impact from the crisis, according to both the Ecuadorian men and women interviewed:

Unfortunately, unemployment is affecting the men more. In the Ecuadorian community unemployment is hitting the men much harder, because for the women anyway there are still children and old people to care for, so whatever happens it's easier. (Interview 10)

I began to work here in tubular products, a contract with one of these temping companies. I was working on temporary contracts for a year and a half, doing substitutions, waiting for a vacant position, looking for jobs, because there was the possibility of being hired directly by this tubular products company which is very good, pays very well, the hours are good: from 7 in the morning till 2 in the afternoon, and you get about 1,100 Euros a month. I was working Saturdays and Sundays, with extra hours, I earned as much as 1,900 Euros a month. But with the crisis, the job that I was going to have was frozen. I was just on the point of getting a vacancy in the company in January this year, which was going to be for me. A fellow had got in, who was just ahead of me, and with the crisis they froze hiring in the company and they left that position vacant and I had to go on unemployment. It's what we are going through now, which is very hard. (Interview 9)

Without doubt, the present global economic crisis will largely determine the labour conditions of the Ecuadorian population resident in Euskadi, as is clearly presented in the previous account. But this topic of working conditions will be analyzed in more detail in the following section.

6.1.2. *Labour conditions*

The immigrant population, at least in the first stage, has very limited employment opportunities, focused mainly on precarious work (long days, poorly paid, poor conditions of security and hygiene, little social prestige and protection, less control in the fulfilment of the contract conditions, part-time work, etc.), which preconditions their social image, as well as their level of income, and even their chances of securing the necessary documentation to reside legally in Spain. And the majority of Ecuadorian people interviewed are found in these jobs, since they have almost all arrived during the last decade. However, in many employment histories important improvements are already seen, as we have pointed out in the previous section.

In this situation, many complaints about job conditions are to be heard in the interviews. And, perhaps because it is the women who find greater difficulty in gaining access to regulated, paid work, since they are frequently found in the underground economy, in so-called "female jobs" and frequently without any kind of written contract, it is the women who have made the greatest number of complaints. Specifically, the Ecuadorian women interviewed who now or in the past have worked in live-in domestic service are those who express the most complaints about working conditions in this sector: Long days, great responsibility, lack of respect for breaks and days off, complaints about the treatment they have received, lack of freedom, etc. are mixed in the majority of comments made:

She told me: "Go and clean...", let's say, "... the living room". I go and clean the living room, and she walks through the kitchen and says: "You haven't cleaned here. Look! Clean here!". I hadn't finished the living room and she tells me to clean the kitchen. And she was always pointing out things that I hadn't finished. Then one day I blew up, the glass overflowed. I said to her: "Look, you tell me clean here and I go and clean there. And then you go the other way and tell me: "Come and clean here". You don't let me finish one or the other, and you make me start doing something else. I can't finish one or the other. And then you point out things that I haven't finished. Why don't you decide what you want me to do? Well, think

a bit and decide what I ought to do first. Because, you see, I've only got two hands. I'm not a machine. And even machines wear out. Human beings, even more so. Because you don't let me finish the work I'm doing. You make me leave all the jobs unfinished: "Come here! Go there! Go over there!" And in the end I don't do either one or the other, and I leave everything half-done. And then you complain. It's not my fault, but it's because you can't make up your mind. And what's more, I tell her: "I am not used to anybody shouting at me, and you do it, you shout at me. And I want to avoid problems because the day will come when the glass overflows and I don't want to disrespect you by shouting. (...) That is, things got worse and worse. To start with, when I did the interview, she told me that there were only the four children, but on weekends... as of Thursday or Friday that house was full of children. The friends and all came, and I had to take care of them all. And they didn't give me a pay rise. As well as the work of the other lady who worked for her... she said to me: "Yes, yes! You help her". So I did the work... that is I was flying to do the work. (...) And I told her in front of her husband: "You are never satisfied with what I do." (Interview 13)

I was taking care of a patient with Alzheimer's. Yes! But I left because it was very hard. I don't take care of Alzheimer's patients. But her daughter hadn't told me that this old lady had Alzheimer's, so I was there two weeks, because I told her I was quitting, because it was very hard, very hard. She didn't let me sleep a single night. Every night she woke me up, she got up, she didn't let me sleep at all, not at all. One night maybe, but every night... They paid well, a thousand Euros, but I left the job because there's no money that can pay for that. I don't want Alzheimer's patients. And the daughter didn't act in good faith, because she didn't tell me. And the way they treated me wasn't good either. I told the girl who was employing me about an agency that... I went and told her that I wanted to quit because it was miserable. There was nothing at all in the refrigerator. That is, the daughter bought everything day by day, measured. Everything. And no, that's no good. Or she brought everything from home. Then... she even gave me leftovers, and... no, no, I don't agree with that. You don't give anybody leftovers. I don't accept that. It was all day... and all night, because she didn't let me sleep. [And I have a day off] only on Sunday, from nine in the morning until nine at night. I left on Sunday and came back on Sunday. What was that all about! I told her... the truth, that I wanted to leave, that I was going to leave that job. (Interview 15)

Curiously, pay is not such a hotly debated subject, not even by an Ecuadorian interviewee who confesses to having been disgusted that in her first job as a live-in help she was forced to wear a uniform, and

who has worked as a live-in helper in the house of an international soccer player for Real Madrid, earning 600 Euros a month; a job that she left when the family asked her to travel with them for Christmas to their country of origin, since she had a different idea: to bring over her son, still resident in Ecuador. For this reason, when she heard about another family who offered her work as a live-in helper and the possibility of bringing her son, she didn't hesitate to change jobs:

It was such a snobby family... they made me wear a uniform and I cried for twelve hours. I didn't sleep all night because they were going to make me wear a uniform. (...) They took me in a car, everything was a big mystery, to a special office and it turned out that it was to be a live-in helper for XXX [international player for Real Madrid]; (...) He wanted a live-in helper. They made me sign a temporary contract, because I didn't have papers; they were going to get me the papers. A temporary contract and a contract of confidentiality. I couldn't say absolutely anything about the house to anybody. I had a driver who took me home from there, I left the gated community with a driver who took me home. They picked me up at my house and took me to the house. Because I couldn't talk to anybody. I worked there for three months. (...) They [the footballer's family] took me to a shopping centre to buy a uniform and told me: "Choose". Since I didn't want a white one, I chose one with flowers and stripes. They gave me shoes and everything, trousers and well, because I had to vacuum, dust and make the food, and they ate very healthy food. I got up at 7.30 and at 8 I was already getting the children ready and at 8 at night I was in my bed. I had my own apartment in the basement, which was right next to the motorcycles and cars belonging to the soccer player. When I left he gave me five autographed t-shirts, with the names of my brothers and my children. (...) They paid me 100,000 pesetas [600 Euros]. (Interview 3)

The previous account refers to three different families as employers, and in fact constantly changing jobs is one of the most common characteristics among Ecuadorian women working in the caring sector, mainly for older people, sometimes because of their personal desire to change job because of the working conditions imposed and more frequently on the decision of the employing families of the people they took care of, because the latter have died or gone into residential home:

I went to work in Gernika, but in a country house. Yes! I worked for two months in the summer. That was it. Later I worked in Lekeitio, but not for long, because they told me two weeks and

that was it. From there, I looked for work, not as a live-in worker. And I worked in two houses with children. I worked by the hour. Then after a time I decided to take care of older people and work as a live-in helper. Because you earn more by the house, you get more rest, but at my age... that is, I don't want to work [like that] any more... as a live-in helper I feel secure, I don't have to run from one place to another and working faster. I'm calmer. And I've already worked by the hour and that hasn't done me any harm, but I made the decision to work as a live-in helper, and I'm fine. Although right now I'm not working. (...) [She is asked how many jobs she has had, more or less] But they keep dying on me! Taking care of old people, that's the problem. That's it. In Las Arenas I started working and it was fine. With that schedule I started at nine o'clock at night and got off at eight in the morning the following day. I started work on Wednesday; I worked Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Monday, I was supposed to go back to work, but the lady passed away on Sunday. What a pity! Then I worked in Santutxu doing housework; that is, in reality it was taking care of a gentleman, no?, who was disabled, but the wife told me that if I kept everything clean, she would look after the husband. But she died too. But there I lasted a year. And after a year Pedro died, a retired policeman; but a good person. There I worked by the hour. Four hours there and three hours in another house. After that another old lady that I took care of in Deusto died at one hundred years and eight days of age, after two months... almost three months. What can you do! (Interview 15)

All the references to accidents at work have also been made by Ecuadorian women employed in domestic service, who have mentioned them placing special emphasis on the total lack of concern shown by their employers towards their state of health, despite having been injured in their home, in a sector in which there is no recognition of accidents at work. This situation in many cases is aggravated by these workers' total economic dependence on their own income, which disappears completely when cannot go to work:

I was cleaning a small house and since the floor was brand new and the wood was polished, I went up on some steps to clean and I slipped, and when I fell I got my foot stuck in the radiator and when I fell I cut the tendons of my foot and I couldn't walk for five months. (...) It was my first day at work in this house. The owners of the house didn't come to see me in the hospital. It was because the lady felt that I was suddenly going to sue her and she didn't want to know anything about me. I felt that she wanted to escape all responsibility and I didn't hear any more from her. (Interview 1)

However, the lack of recognition of rights does not only take place in the case of employment accidents in domestic service; we have also been told about cases where the employment rights of workers in other sectors, such as hostelry, are violated when they are diagnosed with a more or less long-lasting disease. We are going to choose an account in which an Ecuadorian woman speaks of the difficulty of negotiating suitable working conditions, especially when faced with the increasing difficulty of finding employment outside the domestic sector in which she has been working and to which she does not want to return, a situation which worsens notably until she is dismissed due to her delicate state of health:

As he said [the owner of the bar where she was working] I was the waitress, barmaid, cook, sandwich-maker, cleaner of the bar... And... later he gave me an indefinite contract. (...) And I did everything: waitress... everything, everything. [The hours] were from eight until... whenever. And on top of it all, things weren't respected because... well, so that he would give me an indefinite contract, I stayed longer and everything; and also because I was sad to see this man burned out from so much work, because he told me that he'd been working in the bar for 27 years and he was very burned out... Then sometimes I got off at five or six in the afternoon. And sometimes some girl friend told me: "Don't let him get accustomed to it, because what you do as a favour, soon it becomes an obligation, a rule". And it's true; then he didn't want me to leave before that. And he paid me the 1,200 Euros [the amount that she had asked for, plus extra payments]. Yes, he paid me the 1,200, but it turned out that I hadn't read the fine print. And when I read the fine print I saw: "prorated payments". Well, he was paying what he said, 800, and with prorated payments it came to 1,200. Then I said to him: "But that wasn't the deal. And if it's like that, if you don't find a solution, I'm not going to work for you anymore. Go and look for a person to work for you here, because I'm going to work for you this month but no more". But I looked for work and didn't find it. I did interviews but I didn't find work, and so I went on extending, extending the job... And things didn't change. And it stayed like that. I've worked for him for a year and a half... almost two years (...) and then last April, I went to the doctor and he told me: "You have cancer and it's malignant. (...) When I told my boss in the bar he didn't want... that is, when he found out... he'd given me an indefinite contract but he didn't count on the cancer, because then he started making my life impossible so I would quit the job. Then he fired me without due cause. But to get that time paid I had to get a lawyer, because he didn't pay me; he didn't pay since... let's see... August, September, October, November and December... he

didn't pay me. On December 30, now because we were going to court, the business was resolved. All this time he hadn't paid me. He didn't want to pay me what he really owed me. His lawyer told me: "Look! He says he's only going to pay you 1,115 Euros, that's what he owes you". When he owed me from August to December. I spoke with my lawyer and he asked me: "Do you want to accept this". And I told the lawyer for the hotel trade of my union in Bizkaia: "You know what? Tell him to pay me what he wants to pay me. Because right now I'm not up for this. I'm now getting chemotherapy sessions, and right now I'm suffering side effects from the chemo". (Interview 13)

The breach of the agreed working conditions is mentioned quite frequently in the stories mentioned, most intensely in accounts linked to their condition as migrants, such as breach of promise by the employer to start proceedings for regularisation of the employee's papers. Being in an irregular legal situation places important limits on the way of life of both Ecuadorian men and women in Spain, and on their chances of travelling abroad, but it also limits their capacity to negotiate the conditions in which their employment activity is undertaken, which in these cases is invariably carried out within the framework of the underground economy:

The lady who had hired me passed away and then I stayed with the lady who had Alzheimer's. And her nephew took power of attorney for the lady; not him, but his wife, who was the one who took care of these things. She told me to stay because the lady was going to give me a contract soon. I told her: "I'll keep working, but this situation has to be fixed. If you want me to keep working, give me a contract because I don't want to be in this country illegally". Because I had seen a lot of experiences, I had met people and heard about what they had been going through when the political situation changed. Then they told me: "Let us look after it, we'll deal with everything". You always trust people, and the fact is that this situation is not one that you can change from one day to the next, and they had to do the paperwork and all the rest. Then I told her: "I'll wait for you for one or two months maximum". My experience was that after the two months that I had the patience to wait, I will never forget this, a sister of this lady came along and told me: "Let's go shopping". She said: "Take whatever you want". And can you believe that the next day they came and told me: "Goodbye! ", and sent the lady to a residence. They lied to me. The two months that they asked me to wait for the paperwork, they used them to look for a residence for the old lady. (...) That was a very bitter experience and I thought: "I'm not going to let anybody make a fool of me again". My brother-in-law

told me: "These cases are very common, abusing people who don't have papers and all the rest". (Interview 10)

Then my brother had been offered work in a factory, which was a lie, not by my brother, but by the people who told them that they were going to get a work contract. (...) My brother worked as a live-in helper and my husband said to him: "What happened with the job?" "Well, they haven't called me or anything". And my husband said: "So now what do I do?" Then my husband went to work for someone who I can really say was an exploiter, because he paid 30 Euros a week for hauling rubble. And, at night, my husband had found [work through] an advert: 'Wanted, man for care work'. Before there was a lot of that [type of work with] old people who were bed-ridden. So my husband was going to work in the morning moving rubble. My husband was illegal and he got paid so little or when he did not want to pay him, he got an old cooker or an old refrigerator, and well, my husband had planned to bring us over. Well, little by little he got into the work and the opportunity came up whereby this elderly gentleman who he took care of recommended him to another lady and he started working all day, and left the job with the rubble. They got him his papers and he brought us over. (Interview 3)

The need to find residence and work permits is, as we have seen, a determining factor in accepting or staying in a job, but so is the need to have a job in the regular employment market which allows these permits to be renewed every so often, rather than returning to a situation of irregularity:

My search of work was based, mainly, at the outset, in looking for work in my field. I walked all over Bilbao leaving my curriculum in hotels, but nothing came up... it was fruitless. Not one of them even called me back. And well, later, as a result of that I had to look for something else. And I worked distributing flyers... whatever came up. (...) For a while I couldn't find a job, or they were temporary jobs, through temping agencies. But since you are an immigrant, you have to renew your papers and you need to provide certain regular documentation, or have been paying social security for at least six months a year, then those temporary jobs are no good, you have to get something stable. Aside from the work contract. After those seven months I found a job in a cybercafé. I was working until December of last year in the cybercafé [with a work contract and earning an average of about 650 Euros net]. I was working there for more than a year and a half. At the moment I'm unemployed. Now I'm looking for work. But I'm optimistic. I'm doing a course on projects now, but no more than that. When I got here the truth is that I was more worried about looking for work than training. (Interview 14)

In other interviews, the analysis of present work conditions includes the recognition by both men and women of the long working days, longer than those worked in the country of origin, and that, especially for single mothers, makes balancing work and family life remarkably difficult, to the point where they either have to quit their job, or else sacrifice much of the time spent caring for their children. This situation, on the other hand, is especially painful in the absence of other family members —uncles and aunts, grandparents, etc.— who can take charge of this task during their absence:

I've worked cleaning houses and I've also worked in hotels through temping agencies, clean the [Hotel] Nervión, the Carlton, the Avenida... where else? the Hesperia... where they needed extra help; for example, when there's a wedding, washing the pots and pans, the dishes, weekends or Wednesday from 9 to 1 in the morning or from 9 to 4 when it was a wedding, weekends generally... But, of course, always the children, while I was living with him, I could say: "Well, stay with the children". He left them sleeping. But then when I got divorced, who could I leave them with? (...) With two small children it's difficult to strike a balance, because when my children get sick at school they always call me, never the father. I'm always asking for leave from work, or not turning up or coming late. If one day it so happens that while we're leaving the house, my little boy vomits because he has catarrh... I have to go back to change him completely, he smells bad, he needs a wash and then I get to work late and, well, the bosses... (Interview 1)

I had to work from 7.30 till 11.30 and then from 5 till 8. She had three children. I got in, dressed the children, gave them breakfast, took them to the bus and I had to teach my son to suffer. I left the children in the bus and then I ran to pick up my son and take him to school. That went on for about three months, until he told me: "Mum, that's enough; I can go by myself now". I was very sad. He was seven years old, and I gave him all the instructions and at five I was at the bus stop, I picked up the three children and one of the mothers from the school picked mine up and took him to the park. And that was how he grew up and became responsible. I was working for her for two years. One day I had to go to the trade union to get some papers and I arrived late, she got annoyed and I left. I got to the park at six and saw my son sitting in a corner and I went over to him, then she got annoyed and fired me, shouting at me... in front of everyone... I was very humiliated. I went home in tears, picked up my things and I left. The next day I called her husband on the phone and apologized to him and asked him to end the contract, because I loved the children very much. (Interview 3)

In other cases, on the other hand, the people interviewed affirm that they have stayed in a job that in principle was not very attractive to them, because of the good treatment they received and the understanding shown by their employers in balancing the job with care for their children:

When my daughter came over she was still small, she was 7 or 8 years old when she came. Then was still working in a family home, because in the last house where I was working when I brought my daughter over, they facilitated... you see, if my daughter needed to go to doctor, they told me: "There's no problem, go ahead". If I had to go to the school for some meeting: "Go ahead". I valued this family very highly, because they supported me with my daughter. And at some point when I didn't have anyone to leave her with and she didn't have school, they told me: "Bring her to work". And I took my daughter to work. I valued all that. When my daughter left primary school, and she started becoming a bit more independent, she started secondary school, and I started giving out CVs to companies... Well, I didn't always want to stay working in a house, you're always looking for a little more, because of the work I had in my country and... and now, because my daughter was more independent: she could to school on her own, come home alone... then a friend told me about this company whose ad she had seen on the door. My job is transferring money to Ecuador, I work Saturdays, Sundays, holidays. I don't stop. There's one day off each week, either Friday Wednesday or Thursday, and then my daughter is in school. So, I haven't been able to spend time with my daughter. A day now and then, but it's rare that she has had a weekend to enjoy, or even a full day, and that has made my daughter feel very alone,, very sad... because of the fact of not having family here. She has taken refuge in the friends that she's made at school. (Interview 12)

Despite this, many of the interviewees have seen a progressive improvement over time of their employment situation, which without doubt contributes to the success of their migratory project, leaving open a door to hope and the accomplishment of the dreams and illusions with which they arrived, although not without considerable efforts and sacrifices:

You can always ask for more, but I work independently for [the Ministry of] Promotion and well; good, but you can always ask for more. The bosses are my friends, before they were bosses they were friends. There are good prospects for work.... the truck belongs to me.... My case is that I worked for myself in Ecuador; except

when we had to leave because of the volcano when I had to work as a truck driver but for someone else. But I like to work for myself. Putting in the hours but which are reflected in my pay packet. (...) I make good money, 1700€; even some months, because I work more, I earn more. Here [in Spain] you have a lot of comforts but everything is more rigid. A lot of monotony, stress... one, two, three, four... you can't skip anything. There [in Ecuador] if one day you don't want to go to work you don't go and nothing happens to you, but even though I'm self-employed I can't do that in my work since there are people who depend on me and you let them down; everything is very organized. (...) I came over in June 2001, I'm 30 and in eight years I've got a wife, three children, my own truck and my own business. (Interview 7)

6.1.3. *Economic situation*

Since the main source of income for all of the families interviewed is the wages of their adult members who are employed in either the formal or the black economy, it comes as no surprise that the evaluation of the economic situation of these Ecuadorian families is determined by their success or otherwise in finding paid work in this society, as analyzed in the previous sections.

With the pay they receive for their work, the people interviewed attest that their families manage to cover unavoidable expenses, such as paying for food, clothing, housing (essentially rent, less frequently mortgage repayments, as well as other payments linked to housing, such as electricity, water, etc.) and the education of their children, if any. With the income obtained from their work, the people we have spoken with state that they have been able to pay off or at least, with more or less effort, keep up payments on debts incurred to undertake the migratory project that we are analyzing in this study. In addition, many of the people interviewed say that they continue sending money to Ecuador, not only to the spouse or children that they left behind but also to other members of their family, mainly to parents, grandparents, sisters or brothers who, for whatever reason, may be going through critical economic circumstances in their country of origin, or indeed in anticipation of such economic dire straits and/or in thanks for help given in the past:

I'm telling you: my parents had six children that they had to bring up, so all the children —whether they have money or not, we've never stopped sending money; although my parents would say: "No, don't worry, we can keep going...", but no way! It's the obligation

of the children: "They can save it if they want; but there it is". I'm telling you, getting ill in Ecuador is terrible. We children never forget my parents. My parents are already elderly; we don't send large amounts but every month the four brothers and sisters send 100 €, we agreed on that. When I was out of work I talked with my husband and he told me that as long as things didn't look too black we should carry on sending it. (Interview 10)

In some cases the shipments from money to Ecuador are even used to buy a house, land or to invest in a business, laying the foundations for a possible return with guarantees of family success in the place of origin after the migratory experience.

In this context, few Ecuadorian families admit to depending on public or private aid to stay solvent (although they may not have as good an economic situation as they might wish). However, practically all the people interviewed recognise that they have had the support, at least on occasions, mainly of their family and friends, at the start of their migratory experience, when they had to meet many expenses with no income before finding a job in Spain. But it wasn't always the need for money which motivated the aid; emotional support, access to information or mediation in employment and housing are equally fundamental, as we have previously mentioned.

Only in exceptional cases do the interviewees say that they have had to resort to the charity of strangers, generally the Church, to meet their basic needs on arrival in Spain:

And [the parish priest] told me: "Wait, I am going to give you a bag of food to take with you so that he doesn't say anything". And he gave me a bag with some food for cooking: pasta, beans... a little food. Well, he gave one bag to her and one to me. Then he asked her to leave, and he said to me: "Daughter, take care of yourself!, and I will help you look for work. I'll help you look for work, so relax, we are going to find it. You aren't alone any more. You have me and we are going to help you". (...) And, well, he gave me confidence and a bit of relief, when he pulled out an envelope and gave me a thousand pesetas (6 €)". (Interview 13)

The existence of the social aid granted by the public administrations is well known among the Ecuadorian population resident in the Basque Country, and a substantial part of this group say they have received some kind of social benefit, at least at some point on the migratory route of its family. As well as those who we mentioned in the section on housing as having received some kind of help towards pay-

ing rent or who even lived in rented social housing (although a greater number are hoping to enjoy it in the future, having applied for it one or more times to the social worker, or signed up with Etxebide), we can add people who mention that when their children came over they received economic aid to pay for school dinners or that they receive the basic income, almost always as a result of a difficult period in job terms and, mainly, due to more or less prolonged situations of unemployment, due to health problems. Here are some testimonies with respect to this:

We are receiving help, not much, from the Provincial Government. Yes, but well, it's only 200 Euros, plus what my husband earns, working extra hours. My husband is on more or less 1,400 €. So with that we pay for the flat, we're lucky enough to pay [only] 600 € and, among other things, we got a grant from the children's school. Before, the Delegation gave us the basic income, but since my husband changed companies, because before he worked in another company and... well, gave us it little by little: first they gave us 700, then they lowered it to 500 and then, since they saw that my husband was progressing, they did their calculations and said: "Well, this family..." The truth is that we haven't come here to get rich at anybody else's expense. When I worked I paid my 600 or 400 Euros, and we put everything together and got by; but now, of course, since I'm not working, that's the difference and so things are tighter. (...) But we always get by. So things are a little bit tight but not desperate. (...) We also have applied to Etxebide for a house. We applied four years ago, we'll see if we get lucky this time because I know that another round is going to happen, because the first time we didn't get it. May God give us health and work and I hope the doctors give me the okay to work so I can make my contribution. (Interview 2)

I had been here a year already and I put in for aid. I told them what had happened, and how I didn't have papers and couldn't contribute to Social Security, and I got a lovely social worker, who said to me: "You have the right to basic income. You earn money; you are a worker, you deserve it (...)" I had debts in Ecuador from my trip and I spoke with the social worker and she supported me to look for a flat. And I also came with a myoma, and due to the hard work that I had to do and the menopause, the myoma developed to a great size and it formed a cyst in the neck of my uterus, and affected that part of my health. (...) And just then when I was doing that job they called me from Osakidetza to operate on me. After I had been here a year they operated on me. They gave me a complete hysterectomy, because since my mother died of cancer, here they said that, just in case, it was necessary to intervene. (Interview 3)

The following testimony tells the story of an Ecuadorian woman, the head and main earner of her family, who as previously mentioned, suffered an accident on her first day at work in her new job in domestic service, a sector where industrial accidents are not recognised, so she has to seek public assistance to support herself and her family during her recovery:

The tendons of my foot were cut and I was immobilised for 5 months. (...) When I was in the hospital for twelve days and my children alone at home, the social worker at the hospital told me about that possibility [home help] and then I contacted her [the social worker] and she gave me assistance from the Town Hall. (...) They approved the assistance and I got the basic income. I have 700 of basic income and 270 on top. My rent is 700, plus electricity, water and bread. (...) The children eat at school. You also pay 100 a month in the school, but the father pays that and also helps me out economically. I have received money because there have been some months when I haven't managed to pay the rent, so I have had to apply for aid. They have sent me aid, because I haven't been able to. (...) In relation to all these subjects, I would sincerely wish that they look a little more closely when they give aid and the like, that they give it to people who really deserve or need it, because there are people who play tricks and take advantage and they have basic income and they work and they have money here and there, and they rent a room and they charge [their tenants] for registering with the town hall, and it's not fair. They are taking money that could go to someone who needs it. I think that this isn't very well controlled now (Interview 1)

The last opinion expressed by this Ecuadorian woman is shared, without a doubt, by much of the native population, who frequently express their concern for the excessive use that immigrants make of public aid, without always considering that they have the same right to receive it as the rest of the citizens, or to receive it in the same conditions as the native population. And perhaps testimonies such as that expressed in the following comment contribute to it, since the interviewee states that they receive the basic income and that they send more than a thousand Euros a month to Ecuador for the purchase of a house and to help to a son who is already grown up and without a family:

Shall I tell you the truth? Yes, I get basic income. Yes, I have done for about two years. Yes! It's 645 Euros, because every year in January it goes up. I think I began with four hundred-something. It's difficult [to get it] because... mainly because in the flats where I

live they don't want to help you with the paperwork, because by law the tenant and the owner, the Spaniard, the one who rents it, have to sign. So in some cases they give you it and in others they don't. [Asked about the money that she sends to Ecuador each month] I don't know. Suddenly... I've always made payments by Money Exchange. I've been sending what I have little by little. I send my son money because he is without work. Logical! What do I send him? Just a little: 250 dollars that arrive. It helps out. You can't live without that money, but practically my son is living in my daughter's house, who has also built herself a small house. I send her a thousand and some dollars. For example, about thousand Euros from here, because each month I have to pay 864 dollars on the house; and the rest I send to my son, because since now he's out of work, he's on unemployment... If I send a thousand Euros, the exchange rate is whatever they tell us. You understand? In the currency exchange. For example, right now if I send a thousand Euros, 1,320 dollars arrive in Ecuador. (Interview 15)

The economic crisis that is now having a global impact is also having its effect on the Ecuadorian immigrant population, as previously mentioned, and for that reason many people are asking for public assistance for the first time, such as unemployment benefit:

Now that I am unemployed, I can live and pay rent thanks to the unemployment benefit. (...) I have not considered it necessary [to ask for other public assistance] because until now I have been able to work and now I have unemployment benefit... It would seem a little dishonest to me. But in the worst case, if I don't find work before the unemployment runs out, I would ask for it then, because I have already been registered with the town hall for more than a year... (Interview 14)

Some of the interviewees say that they receive some public assistance, and even consider that this assistance is more generous than in other areas of Spain, but there is also a widely shared opinion that the information about access to it should be more extensive and available through more channels.

6.2. The enjoyment of leisure and free time

Having analysed the area of work, it seems appropriate to also consider how Ecuadorians settled in the Basque Country spend their free time, with the objective of knowing in greater depth how they spend

their lives outside their country of origin. To this end we asked them how and in whose company they enjoy themselves in their time off from work of, paying special attention to associations. Their answers are summarised below.

6.2.1. *Leisure and recreational activities*

The enjoyment of leisure and free time is determined by different variables, among which we can emphasize especially: the time available after (paid and unpaid) work, economic capacity, and the family environment and friends who surround each person.

Beginning with the free time available for the organisation and/or participation in leisure and recreational activities, the Ecuadorians interviewed considers that a certain period of time needs to pass in the destination before one is able to begin to enjoy. The personal, family and social uncertainty that accompany the moment of arrival, together with the urgent need in the majority of cases to find a job as quickly as possible in order to pay the expenses of the migratory project (payment of travel, debts, sending money to family or the need to save for regrouping them, housing, etc.), in a precarious labour market, makes finding paid work the absolute top priority for Ecuadorians, leaving them little time for rest and leisure. A good illustration is the women employed in live-in domestic service, one of the main routes to work by foreign women in our society, although not only them:

Well, with the lady, to start with I didn't leave except to go shopping or to take her for a walk. Then when the lady passed away and I had to look for another flat and another job, that was when I already started to get to know more people. They were people from Ecuador, people who helped me find work and a flat. (Interview 8)

I don't have much free time. (...) And in the work... when you are a live-in helper, the free time that I have I spend sewing, I work wonders by hand, everything by hand. So I'm always making little things by hand, any kind of thing, you see? (Interview 15)

The need or desire to improve their economic resources makes many people look for work by the hour or in periods when they could rest and undertake leisure activities, such as weekends or holiday periods, when they have them:

I had never taken vacations, in order to keep saving, to pay my debts. (Interview 3)

The vacations, I was lucky enough to find another job and instead of taking holidays I stayed working. When I've stayed here for vacations I have never been out of work. I've only stopped when I've gone to Ecuador to visit family; there I stopped. But while I've stayed here I've always been working. And the thing is that my daughter has always been alone for a long time, I've left first thing in the morning and come home late at night. (Interview 12)

However, in general terms, the experience of leisure and free time is gaining importance in the daily experience of Ecuadorians as they prolong their stay in the Basque Country:

You don't have time for anything because you work, you come home, you eat and away you go again. And then Saturday and Sunday come and you can rest and say: "I've got here and I'm working and now it's time to rest a little". Then you happen to talk with your brother and sister-in-law after so many years to see how things have gone with them. And how they have been spending the years. And since I've been here eight years, well, I do more things. (...Right now, well, I work a little on Saturdays and Sundays, but I have time to go out with my friends, since I also have some friends who are from here, Donostia [San Sebastian]. And then I also find time to go some concert of... well, the music I like: rock, heavy metal; and, well, like that I have a chance to go out with my friends. And when I have time I go swimming. And then when the weather's good and I have time I play basketball. There is an association of nuns who let us use the court and we get together, girls from Nicaragua, Honduras, Bolivia... and between all of us we organise basketball teams and play; it's not professional, no, but you have fun and pass the time. (Interview 4)

The need for economic resources, nevertheless, not only limits the importance of leisure in the life of the people interviewed, but also conditions, in an important way, the leisure activities chosen by those who have told us about their migratory experience. Leisure should not be a major expense in the limited individual or family economy. Some accounts are clearly in this regard, when they explain how they spend their free time:

Sleeping. Because it's the only thing that's free and that you can permit yourself. (Interview 3)

Generally, I go to the plaza or park with the ducks to have a picnic, because when you don't have a car it's hard; because if you take a bus the children have to pay as well and that makes the trip very expensive. If you go by train, likewise, or the distances or the fact

that you have to take everything with you so as not to spend money. You have to take food so as not to buy it, because to be honest, I can't afford it. (Interview 1)

My brothers and sisters get together once a week, in one or other of our houses; we play cards, we cook meals from our country. In good weather we go to some lakes near here, we do barbecues... Or if we want we stay home watching films. My mother, since she works as a live-in helper, we don't see each other much and... but we are always in touch with her. We call her, we speak to her. (...) My mother has Saturdays and Sundays off and we also include them [her mother and stepfather] with us when we go out. We make sandwiches, we walk this way and that. What we don't do is feel sorry for ourselves and get bitter about what we have to suffer... we often haven't even had money for the bus, we've walked to Artxanda [a mountain overlooking Bilbao] with our sandwiches. (Interview 2)

The need to limit expenses is also present in all the conversations when phoning relatives in Ecuador or making the decision to visit them during the holiday periods, the two favourite actions when you have free time and money (although, obviously, the calls are much cheaper than the trips and, for that reason, much more frequent). Few are able to return to Ecuador as often as they would like, citing the enormous cost which, in some cases, even leads them to get into debt again. This subject of relations with relatives in the country of origin, however, will be analysed in greater depth in the next chapter. On the other hand, there are people who try to see parts of Spain or visit neighbouring countries, although almost always designing the trip in the most economic way possible:

We have gone to Murcia and it's horrible. We went for a walk but I didn't like it at all. We were in Alicante and I didn't like it either, Madrid, even less, totally chaotic. Barcelona either. The surroundings of Bilbao, beautiful. Vitoria and Pamplona lovely, too. On Easter Thursday and Friday we went to France, to the Virgin of Lourdes to ask for my health, to make sure everything comes out well and it happened that we were there, it was very nice, we went to mass, I brought back holy water. (...) We made sandwiches, rice, we took them in plastic containers, I took tuna, something to drink, we all bought the cheapest things in the supermarket. We bought things for salad in Eroski and took chicken, spaghetti... even things for breakfast. And if we have to we sleep in the car, but we got a hotel for 27.50 a night, for all four of us. The Virgin of Lourdes, lovely, it's worth the trouble. We had a good time; we ate in a park, we went to the market and bought pastries. We had a wonderful time. (Interview 2)

Finally, sporting activities seem to attract plenty of followers among Ecuadorians, especially young people and men, not only because of the need to do physical exercise and because they don't necessarily involve great expense, but because they represent an excellent space for meeting friends, who mainly are also foreign in origin. In fact, the desire to spend free time in the company of relatives, friends and acquaintances plays a central role in the selection of leisure activities, and the people with whom they share these spaces of leisure and free time are not often Spanish:

From time to time we go to the playing fields in Loyola, but there's no association... it's in order to spend time with people from Ecuador, compatriots. (Interview 6)

The truth is that I haven't formed many friendships since I've been here. No doubt because now I'm not studying, and I think that was the main way of forming friendships. But through sport also I have also secured friendships, but mainly Latin people. I play soccer, just for a change [laughs]. Then if I'm not doing any course, I play Thursdays and weekends: Saturday and Sunday. (Interview 14)

Before we didn't go out much, but now we go out more... because before we didn't know so many Ecuadorians and we went out with the friends of my wife, but it wasn't the same, but now we know more compatriots. And we either went out around here, in San Sebastián, or in Pamplona. (...) Most days straight home from work, but normally weekends... well, before we went to the cinema, went out for a walk with her... but now with the little one we can't go out so much. Now I have my bad knee, but otherwise I play Ecuadorian volleyball or equavalley. (...) I have quite a lot of friends and I like to be with them. They're all Ecuadorian. (...) I find it easy to make friends. (Interview 7)

The previous accounts reflect the greater ease in general terms with which Ecuadorians are able to relate to their compatriots. And in some cases, there are important contrasts in the way of life and notable cultural differences that make relation with the Basque population difficult; differences that do not seem to be so important, on the other hand, in relations with immigrants from other countries in the Americas or elsewhere:

Man, friends from here I can count easily: two or so. But it's difficult, I didn't integrate well at first, maybe it's me; I'm not a very open person. (...) People, customs... I don't know, at the outset it's a little shocking, it's... I do not know, everything is different, and at first it

was hard for me. I don't know, even now it's hard for me. Now for example I have friends, but not many, from here, and it's been hard work, because spend time with other people, but I do know them. (Interview 6)

Well, now I have a Argentine friend who has a little boy and is a single mother; another friend who's Peruvian, who's going out with an Ecuadorian. The neighbour who is Rumanian and has a daughter, and her son is in Rumania, and I also talk a lot with her about the situation of separating from her son which for her is very hard and which for me would be impossible. (Interview 1)

This is not always, however, the preferred option of the people interviewed, since negative opinions have also been expressed towards their compatriots and how they spend their leisure time, generally due to inappropriate behaviour due to excessive drinking:

All our compatriots, Ecuadorians, have a bad, a horrible custom of getting blind drunk. And it hurts me to admit it. And the business with the knives is all our fault. I prefer not to get involved with those people. (Interview 2)

There are many immigrants who don't want to mix. And in some way we experience that situation and when we come here and form a ghetto, we reproduce what we have over there: high indices of alcoholism, gender-related violence, promiscuity. (...) Generally we don't leave behind our idiosyncrasy, our bad habits. (Interview 9)

Although in general terms they do not claim to have many friends, there are several outstanding environments which enhance the creation of new friendships. Thus, relations with the native population are normally promoted by the employment and educational environments. We shall see an example of how each of these is considered in this regard:

I got about more in the environment of the workers, of the lads at work. Very generous people, all young, Basques or descendants of Zamorans or from other areas... who have been born here. Very generous, very solid. There is also the world of contracts and the world of those with a permanent job. The people working on contracts get the worst jobs, the most dangerous, the dirtiest. It's the underworld of the contracts. And I started to relate with this group... I don't have many friends. Friendship means spending time together and I'm no longer of an age to dedicate time to my friends. I have my partner who I love very much and I have my life. (Interview 9)

The eldest [of the daughters] does have her friends at the university who are Spanish and are very nice, and they go out to drink in Mazarredo [street, in Bilbao], and I'm delighted when she goes out with them. Because they are well-brought-up girls, girls who are very decent, very rational. They are well-behaved people who are also studying like her and, then, they help her, they give her values and in school her companions who were doing the baccalaureate, some of whom she still sees, they meet for a drink. There have dinners for people who went to the school, they all meet, they do things. (Interview 2)

The educational environment not only promotes relations between Ecuadorians attending professional training courses or regulated courses in Basque educational centres and their classmates, but also between their families, since the proposals for meeting within the framework of scholastic and extra-curricular activities are diverse:

I make other friends, I joined the group of friends of the School, went to the meetings, for coffee, with the five-a-side football group... Saturdays I'm very busy. I am very open and I get on well in society and with friends: a girl who works as a civil servant with the police and another Rumanian girl, who had difficulties finding acceptance for being Rumanian, another from the Ukraine. The civil servant is a great friend; when I had to work, she took my son to Santander. (Interview 3)

Finally, the need to be open to new friendships in the present context of immigration makes a lot of people decide to approach the parishes or to meet and associate with them; aiming, first of all, to extend their options for meeting with compatriots or other immigrants who share the same migratory situation and, later, to initiate an activity which has more to do with defending their rights. The latter, however, is an aspect which we will study further in the following section:

I belong to a social club of people who go out during Carnival. We are called Latin America United and in October we start to get together to work and throw around proposals for going out. For example now we have also organised ourselves to go and have a picnic in the mountains and, well, that group came from immigrants who felt lonely and, well, to find company. We celebrate everyone's birthday all together and we want people to integrate because you see that people are sad. Now there are thirty of us, but we want more people to join. On weekends you get off work and ask yourself: now what shall I do on Saturday and Sunday...? So you get to-

gether and you forget about work, and you try to help people who are worse off than your friends, who work as live-in help and want to get away from it all at the weekend. (Interview 5)

In my leisure time I dedicate myself to an association of women who do activities in the cultural area. Now on mother's day we had a little meeting for all the people who wanted to get together, whether from Ecuador or not... Then, and with these companions from the association we try to do activities at the weekends, we've organised an Ecuadorian dance group, we are starting, and on Sundays, in the afternoons if we can we get together to practice the dance. And well, like that, going a little bit into the cultural area. (Interview 12)

6.2.2. *Associations*

Within the world of associations we will distinguish associations of immigrants, associations supporting immigrants and other associations that do not have working with immigrants from other countries as the central objective of their action. However, they all share a common characteristic: the lack of knowledge and free time to dedicate to them on the part of the Ecuadorian population, whatever the nature of the associations.

Few of the people interviewed have approached associations supporting immigrants, such as *Cáritas* or *SOS Racism*, in search of assistance, although they do know some close friends whom they offer support in the search for employment, legal advice in obtaining the much-desired papers or psychological assistance, among other things. In addition, this is usually a brief contact, which is experienced as an urgent need at that point in the development of the migratory project. And this is the same reason used in other conversations to explain approaching other social organisations, such as the *Help against Cancer Association* by a woman who was recently operated on for chest carcinoma, due to the need to secure emotional support from people in the same situation as her, and even legal employment advice when facing the new situation imposed on her by her state of health.

Participation in immigrants' associations created by the Ecuadorian population itself is also scarce, although greater than in the rest of the associations analysed. Thus, some of the Ecuadorian people interviewed state that they have approached them at some point, or that they participate regularly in the activities that are offered, or even take part in organising them. Many of these associations serve, in addition, as a link between the place of origin —Ecuador— and the host society, especially where this associative movement has reached a certain po-

sition of strength, even beginning to create projects of development co-operation. We will see some accounts in this respect. In the first account, it is notable how the association initiative is based on the desire to work with Ecuador, and later began to undertake other activities more focussed on Basque society, whereas the second highlights the need for advice and responses to the immediate needs of the Ecuadorian immigrant population, and subsequently considers the importance of working in a network, co-ordinating with other associations established in other countries, such as Italy, or the country of origin, Ecuador. Work that, in addition, has to be developed taking into account the weakness that characterises this type of association:

For the moment I am heading this association [Basque-Ecuadorian Solidarity]. I deal with all projects both with the Provincial Government... We also take charge of development co-operation this year. From Ecuador with the friar we work with the Basque Government; the Basque Government send funds for transport, teachers, buildings of the unit. Then we have a fairly big plan with the Basque Government, but when we came here they told us we had to create an NGO, that all the documentation had to go through a NGO. Then we decided to create it and with the passage of time we also saw the need to create things here, with the young people, with the children, and since 2005 we have been creating them; but in order to apply for subsidies your association must be at least two or three years old. Not only that, but as regards development co-operation we are involved in sponsoring children in Ecuador, sewerage projects, electrification... There is not much going on in associations in Ecuador. Here there is more going on. In Ecuador it's hard to get around, and here because of people's work schedules, they'd like to participate but they can't (Interview 10)

There you have the myth of the association. A few friends get together and create an association, apply for a grant, official press releases, we're going to do this, but everything [the money] stays with the ones who run it. But they don't last long. (...) Associations go in phases. First we get together to talk about things that matter to us, to make friends, to look for work... and soon we began to think that things can be improved, we see other alternatives and we start giving another face to the immigrant movement and new things start appearing. But that must come from the associations following a process, so that it isn't a manipulation of certain political or religious groups, but must come from the people who grow as an association. And this is happening in this association. (...) With the immigrants now on Saturdays I go to this association to maintain relationships, which we call Latin Txoko [a type of gastronomic and social club]. (...) It is a

very serious association, even though only a few people come to the meetings. When there's a party it's one hundred, but when you have to meet there are only seven, who are the same people as always, who keep the organisation going. They got together with the political parties. At this moment I'm preparing the system of networks that so that this association can link up with the Perugia association and another association in Ecuador, in order to defend civil rights, not for political motives. So that people from the associations from over here can share the experiences of the other associations from over there. In Ecuador I have contacts with the youth hostel, with the eco-tourism project. (...) I have made contact with the director of this project and I have asked for advice so that people who build houses for immigrants do so taking ecological processes into account, and in order to find contacts and links with educational institutions. The project with the Ecuadorians is called Al-Andalus. Young people from here who can go over there as volunteers, for the immigrants to start a policy that if the majority want to start a stall, a bar, a restaurant, a rural guest house, then Al-Andalus can guide, train, educate the immigrants, those who are thinking about returning. Channels can be opened so that immigrants' organisations can make use of these social networks; the idea is to let people know about them. (Interview 9)

However, not everyone decides to participate in these associations solely in order to meet their compatriots or develop projects linked to their country of origin; they can also do so with the aim of making links with the host society and strengthening integration and exchange in more open and tolerant surroundings:

The objective of coming to the association [Ecuador Etxea] has been the search for a personal enrichment and, simultaneously, to contribute something to society, not only for Ecuadorians, but to as wide a range of people as possible. The objective of the association, and mine, are not just to be with Ecuadorian people, with all the Ecuadorians, but with all people. (...) Then economic support I cannot give, although we have tried to give some information as entrepreneurs, a little socio-professional guidance, and aside from that also... some informative or cultural activities. As for festivities... no. That is to say, we don't dedicate ourselves to that, because there are already associations to organise festive activities. We had better not even touch those subjects. And through work in the association I have also realised that I can contribute something here. It is social work that I like. (Interview 14)

And, finally, we should point out that the altruistic character and non-profit spirit which should guide this type of associationism is not

always perceived among its leaders, a fact which has even led some of the interviewees to leaving associations or creating new ones, instead of participating in the ones that already exist:

I belong to an association. It's a women's association. I have gone to some association and they have told me I have to pay I don't know how much and the director, sincerely it seemed to me that he was more trying to get rich than to help the Ecuadorians. Then I heard, as it seems, I saw that he got aid from here, from the Basque Government, from the Provincial Government, supposedly to present some project of activities and so they gave him money, but well, I don't know, people talk too much... Then I didn't feel comfortable, I think I went twice to do sport at the weekend, but soon I realised that everything was like that, that they wanted to charge you to belong and I could only just make ends meet... (Interview 1)

It is an association that sadly hasn't represented Ecuador as it should. And for that reason, since we have already been here for 8 or 9 years, we feel the need to create an association now, because seeing as we don't have one that... unifies the people, the Ecuadorian group. Because these institutions lamentably, at institutional level, have not represented us well, have even made us look bad to the institutions. (...) We have created this association for these reasons, to see what we can contribute from this institution, because individually we can do nothing, individually one cannot reach the institutions, because they just ignore you. So you need to be legally represented in order to knock on doors in the institutions and is why we have joined together to see what we can do in the future on the subject of Ecuador. (Interview 12)

In any case, this topic of associationism will be analysed in greater depth in the chapter dedicated to the social support networks of the Ecuadorian immigrant population.

7

Migrants and their support networks in the destination country

Introduction

The tendency to seek the support of others has always characterised human beings. At moments of fear or uncertainty, to seek security and stability, at times of great physical and material shortages, or when people have needed food or space, the social network has always been the structure which has provided the social support to satisfy all kinds of needs.

In the migratory process, the social network does not only involve the family group that moves from one country to another. It also involves the people and institutions that relate to them, in the host country or from the country of origin, from a transnational perspective. The use of the social network allows a two-way interaction which affects all the members of the network, forcing the nodes of the network to create strategies for socio-cultural adaptation.

The help initially received by the interviewees during the first stages of their migratory process came from their close network of relatives and friends, whether in the country of origin or destination. These networks are characterised by their very close bonds and by the fact that the people who form them communicate and provide mutual aid; aid that consists of the continual reciprocal exchange of favours between its members, creating a broad system of rights and obligations between members.

As time passes and the emigrant becomes settled in the host country and becomes familiar with the options offered by their new context, most frequently they extend their social-institutional networks, receiving support and mutual aid from them.

We will analyse the support networks of Ecuadorian people, both the informal primary networks and the formal secondary networks, regardless of whether these are located in the Basque Country or in Ecuador. We asked both about the more instrumental types of aid, such as economic, housing or employment, as well as the emotional support received.

7.1. Informal primary networks: The support of relatives and friends

From the point of view of social networks in the destination, we can distinguish two types of migrations: those who come to Spain forming part of a family migratory project and those who have headed a migratory project, leaving their family in the country of origin. In this sense, we can emphasise the emotional effect of this situation, mainly on arrival, considering that contact with their nearest relatives are carried out daily.

However, in cases when the family network remains in the country of origin, this is usually complemented by the new contacts established in the destination: friends, partners or colleagues, which facilitate the necessary support and contribute to their emotional stability.

This extension of networks can occur spontaneously, but it can also be stimulated through different formal and informal initiatives which are developed in associations or other organisations, and which promote contact between immigrants.

7.1.1. Emotional support

Emotional support, means accompanying people to find tools within themselves with which to overcome the diverse difficulties that appear in their lives: situations of stress and anxiety, lack of self-esteem, of self-control, overcoming of emotional losses, family or partnership problems, etc. Through empathy and the creation of a supportive space in which the person can listen to themselves, producing the recognition of their potentials and limitations. The natural extended family, tends to be the greatest source of emotional support in all cases, independent of whether it is in Ecuador or geographically closer. This is the most important node of these networks and the mother appears as a protective figure, from whom they receive more emotional support and containment, with whom they feel a stronger bond. In this way we can see how the following person interviewed mentions the great support

of their mother, who lives in another Spanish city, but from whom they receive advice and guidance:

Mainly the family. My mother is my fundamental support. My parents. When I have had some kind of difficulty they have supported me a lot. (Interview 14)

Brothers and sisters also play an important role in this respect, based on different stories that are observed in migratory experiences, they acquire an important role in mutual aid. They are a source of support when they welcome other emigrant brothers and sisters, and are key to emotional support. In the following interview the woman tells us that she is living with her brother and sister-in-law, but despite her six sisters being in Ecuador she knows that she can count on the elder ones, who are already independent and have their respective jobs, for any situation of need that may arise:

I can tell you which people I count on. My elder sisters who have stable jobs, I know that at any point in my life if things go badly they can help me, also my mother and some of my aunts... (Interview 4)

The in-laws are also mentioned by some people as a source of support. The person interviewed feels greater support from the family of her husband than from her own, except for her mother, from whom she tells us she has received unconditional support throughout her life. In this case, we see the figure of the brother-in-law from whom she has received great support and protection:

In truth, my mother, her and my husband's family. My husband's brother, specifically. My husband's brother, the elder, has been a person who thanks to God has his job, his work, his stability, he has always given us advice, has told us: "This is, don't do this...". Or when my husband was badly off economically: "I'll pay your husband. Tell him that I'll give you". (...). It has been our base. Yes, whenever he calls us or we call him, he tells us: "Keep moving ahead. Fight for a goal. How happy I am to know that you...! (...) I tell him things, and he says to me how my brother is behaving: "You tell me" (Interview 2)

The fact that they work as live-in helpers or spend many hours caring for other people leads to the formation of bonds of trust and the transmission of feelings between employer and employee. In these circumstances affective listening takes place based on understanding, beginning to empathise with the person. When a difficulty, loss or painful

events are expressed, it seems that this story evokes feelings regarding similar personal experiences, making the listener identify with the narrator. In this way one of the people interviewed, 64 years old, who spent many years as a live-in employee, mentions having shared many hours with her respective employers, producing a bond in which the exchange of testimony on both sides was so intense, that the confidence which arose from it, implied great support for both of them:

I count on my daughter for everything, and at work yes... I have also talked with the ladies. Since I work with older people... That is, it depends, because the doctor's mother, who I told you I worked for... a lovely person... She told me about her problems and I... about my life. Of course! We share a long time together that I've been working as a home help (Interview 15)

7.1.2. *Material, economic and service assistance*

The people interviewed generally have required of some type of economic support during their process of establishment, mainly for occasional activities, mostly referring to food, transport and housing. The economic difficulties which these people can go through can make social integration difficult, mainly when they have just settled down in the new territory. With the present economic crisis, despite having income and the ability to pay the rent of the flat, they may need some support in management and in relation with landlords: endorsement or guarantees, non-payments, electricity bills... The unavailability of a close family support network can aggravate these situations of need. The fact of having to request economic aid is something that can be uncomfortable and it is hard to ask for a number of different reasons.

In the case of a 20-year-old woman interviewed, we can see the difficulty that she has found when asking for economic help, because she says that despite having undergone different needs, because her education had instilled in her the need to look for resources for herself without having to ask for outside aid:

We have never been in need. My parents taught to us that we can do things for ourselves (Interview 5)

In other accounts, we see during the initial period of establishment, the family who stay in Ecuador have been able to provide some kind of help. But often, the financial difficulties which different members of the family may be undergoing in the place of origin, also make it dif-

difficult to request economic help from people who are worse off than the immigrants themselves. This is mentioned by the following person interviewed, who despite being able to rely on her closest relatives for emotional support, cannot count on material support from any of them, due to their precarious situation:

We are six brothers and sisters, but I can't rely on any of them. Because one is poorer than the next. And even though they might want to give us money, they don't know where to get it from or how. Their pay is a misery. (Interview 15)

In the same line, a married woman with a daughter mentions that although the family of origin is predisposed to help in every way possible, she does not have the means nor the resources to give this type of support:

I think that it is not easy, because at least at the moment they are all in terrible situations, there's a lot of good will but it's not easy and it's not because they don't want to do it (Interview 10)

The following interview shows the solidarity that can be generated through the personal support network in the country of origin, when giving the emigrant economic support. This 26-year-old man mentions that when needed this kind of help, thanks to the small contributions made within his network, he managed to collect sufficient money to meet the needs:

In Ecuador... economic help from some friends, from my parents especially, an uncle also helped us out... People who have always supported you. Economic support... well, that is a little more difficult to find, since people there are also in the same situation, but it's funny how there sometimes you find people who are worse off than you but who end up helping you out. Strangers, neighbours, friends... This is what moves you the most and what sometimes you miss the most. That is to say, the closeness of the people, so to speak. Then you have to take your hat off. (Interview 14)

In those families which are united in the destination country, thanks to family regrouping, it is common to see that the relatives who have been established the longest are the initial providers of resources. Usually it is the brothers and sisters who give the most help when providing money and housing to those just arrived or facilitating their access to a first job. In the same way, we find the figure of the sentiment-

tal companion who until that moment had gone unnoticed and who in various interviews appears as a key element in meeting certain needs for support. Thus, in the following interview a woman tells us her experience:

I have survived with the help of my brothers and a boy I met during the time I have been working for this man. I noticed that this boy liked me. Well, he's not a boy. He's a grown man. He's an experienced man... he's already 49... and I noticed that he watched me, that he liked me. And then he was analysing me and everything, and I liked it (Interview 13)

Many people face diverse economic difficulties which, being unable to count on their family support network and friends for the different reasons that we have mentioned previously, do so by means of religious communities, which work for the rights of immigrants, giving support to people who approach them and ask for resources:

Yes, the nuns have helped me. The nuns have given me work... Now these days I don't know... I have gone there and been there constantly, but they have told me: "Now there isn't any. Well, it'll come out, I don't know what..." (Interview 15)

7.1.3. *Access to new contacts*

The migration process involves specific tasks for adaptation, such as creating and establishing social and support networks in access to new contacts. In addition, it means leaving behind family, friends, work, social and recreational activities. Added to this is the stress produced by having to learn the customs and culture of a foreign country in the quickest possible time (Falicov, 1991). The immigrant needs support to establish themselves in the destination, to find a job and a home, to learn the language, to become versed in the bureaucratic and formal complexities of the host society, to mention but a few examples. Later, despite the many differences regards speed and each person's evaluation of the process, their position enables them to be a source of help to others.

It is often complicated to weave this new network of relationships. The majority of the people interviewed have a greater network of compatriot acquaintances. The fact that the choice of the destination takes place through the migratory networks, can be a key factor that makes people from the same town or city coincide in the same locality in the destination or relate mainly among themselves (whether they know

each other previously or not). Nevertheless, some are able to establish friendships with Spanish people. At times, those Spanish friends are made in connection with an association, among people who have common and shared interests as well as in connection with labour relations. In the interviews we could see that the presence of friends is related with the formation of new friends, which is why their presence is an indicator of a social connection that guarantees the regeneration of the network. They are also a main source of company, conversation, free time, as well as co-operation and mutual aid. The following person interviewed mentions that her sisters who had already been living for a couple of years in San Sebastián, were those that, most of all, put her in contact with other acquaintances:

My boss where I worked, and my sisters, then the friends that we knew, were like a chain. (Interview 5)

Religion as a cultural element shared by many Ecuadorians means that the church provides an important place for access to new contacts. In these places, many people interviewed have made contact with their compatriots and it has given them a point of contact to create new networks. Thus, one of the people interviewed tells how she made new friendships as soon as she arrived in the host country and had to open herself to new friendships:

It all began with meetings in the Church among Latin Americans, and through them... through the Church, after leaving mass and that, since I've always been open... as soon as I see someone, I start to establish conversation, and that has helped me a lot (Interview 13)

In the case of the following person interviewed who arrived in the country as an adolescent, he mentions that it was through studies that they were able to establish friendships with local people. The integration of young people tends to be easier due, among other factors, to the obligatory nature of schooling at those ages:

Well, in my case through my studies, because there was not much more contact with other Ecuadorian groups when I was studying, in the year 2000. In fact until 2001 or so there were not many Ecuadorian people, and we didn't relate much, mainly we associated with the residents, the Murcians. Later, when more people came, we started to establish more relations with the Ecuadorians (Interview 14)

7.1.4. *Company*

Being alone is not the same as feeling lonely: being alone implies a voluntary or involuntary choice of physical solitude (in the majority of cases) and feeling lonely has to do with an inner state of being, regardless of being in company with someone. Migrants tend to feel nostalgia for the people they have left in their homeland and to start with they miss moments of company. Over time, and as they extend their network of relationships, company can be found through different people. In the majority of the cases analysed, this company comes from the romantic companions of those interviewed. This 24-year-old woman lived with her sisters until a year ago when they returned to Ecuador. Since then she has often felt lonely and without company, until she found a partner:

Before I could say my sisters, now I can say my partner, with whom I have been for year and two months (Interview 5)

The following interviewee has had several partners, as she herself expresses it, so as not to feel alone:

I have always had a boyfriend, so as to at least have somebody to talk with [laughter]. Although my boyfriends haven't helped me much, practically not at all I would say... materially, not at all. I have always lived from my work... The bad thing about having relationships that last for years... I have had a boyfriend in Ecuador (...). Soon he came here, after two years. And well, we got on well, and more or less we were boyfriend and girlfriend. Then I guess here, sometimes people change their ideas, he was not the same boy I had known in Ecuador, and then, well, he went one way and I went the other, and 7 years wasted [laughter]. Then other friendships over here, but no, no... they were not the right people to form a family... wonderful people, who also help you a bit emotionally..., yes, company (Interview 12)

Another of the women interviewed also says she has received a lot of support from her boyfriend after going through a serious illness:

Good... Look, for the partner relationship is each in their own home and when we get married then we'll start our partner relationship and all that. Then he and I were in this thing like boyfriend and girlfriend. And he does want to marry me, but since this happened to me, I'm waiting until I'm completely over it. Yes! He has been supporting me a lot during this time. Between my brothers and him, he has been supporting me during this period. (Interview 13)

In the case of the following interviewee who works as a live-in helper in a house with two girls of 10 and 6 years old, she says that she gets company from the children with whom she shares most of her time:

At the start I've had the most company from the girl, Maria, that I take care of and then the other little girl who is 6 years old, they are the ones who have given me the most and I think that they are the ones who have given me that push to keep going and to stay here... (Interview 4).

7.1.5. *Providing advice*

Providing advice refers to the guidance that a person receives from someone who is really interested in them and who serves as a guide or reference in decision making. In the majority of the cases analysed we see that they receive this good advice from their family and specifically from their mothers. Although there are also some cases in which advice is received from people who may be key to the migratory process thanks to the help they provide. Thus, the following interviewee mentions a Basque couple who helped her a great deal when she arrived in the city:

My friends. In Bilbao I have three wonderful people. And the best friendship, I recall, was my last boss where I worked. They always advised me and they are also entrepreneurs. The husband, you see, who previously had also emigrated to Venezuela, he has a company here in Bilbao, and in China, in Venezuela, in Colombia... then since he has lived to a certain degree in the world of migration, so they have understood... and he has been a great help to me. I am very grateful to that family, even today I am still in contact with them, because when I got my current job I left them, and I said to them: "I am going away because this opportunity has come up". And they said to me: "Go ahead!". And this family, I am very grateful to them and they have been a great support to me. They are from here, they're Basques. They're all friends, more than family. (Interview 12)

7.2. **Geographical location of the primary informal networks**

7.2.1. *Networks in Ecuador*

Today's immigrants are no longer people who are uprooted and torn away from their countries, but rather they are in permanent transnational contact thanks to television, telephones, Internet and the greater ease of travel. Proof of this is the great proliferation of *locuto-*

rios (communication stores) and Internet cafés in Spain. With the new ICTs, new social spaces for human interrelation have been created. Etxeberria (2000) mentions the “third environment”, in which these new communication tools help to confront other social and contextual changes which affect the whole society, but especially people who are far away from their home and their families. We can state that new communication technologies form new spaces of meaning and with them a new culture, the transnational culture. The people interviewed are very related to their relatives who live in Ecuador, with that usually they are in contact with the enemy, almost of weekly form. In the following quote, we see how the strongest support that this man receives is from his uncle and aunt who are in Ecuador, but that thanks to the new technologies, the contact is continuous and lasting in time, since he has already been in Spain for eight years and his relationship with them has not been affected by the distance:

Mostly with an uncle and an aunt, more than even with my father; my father is my father, but my uncle... With my uncle and aunt I speak every week to find out how things are going there and listen to what they have to say. On my mother's side, an aunt and on my father's side, an uncle. I would trust them with my eyes closed for anything that I needed. Whenever I go, it's them I talk to and so on, and spend many days with... (Interview 6)

In spite of that continuous contact, thanks to the new ICTs, when the migrant returns to the country of origin, whether for a visit or to stay, they realise not only that they have changed but that the situation and the context that they remember has changed, and in most cases the migrant does not adapt well to these new changes. Perhaps these changes cannot be perceived in the communications that take place periodically, but they become obvious when people meet physically. In the following extract we see this confused feeling which may be felt at the moment of return:

I never thought of staying in Ecuador. It was not possible. On this journey I realised that, although it's only for a short time, people and friends change. You arrive and your family is your family, but it's not your family, nor are you. I think that the one who changes is you. Your family stays in the same space-time, living together, doing their things, but you are not you. You know that you are, but you are not you. You arrive and it's a shock. Now I understand the other immigrants who arrived: Ah, have a beer. Then you go and you aren't in the everyday routine any longer. Then you go

here and you go there and hee-hee, ha-ha, how's it going in Italy, wonderful. Everything is fine. You live well, you work well and everything's going well. What you are going to tell them, that you're cleaning houses...? (Interview 9)

7.2.2. *Networks in the Basque Country formed by Ecuadorian people*

The majority of the immigrants found a house and job thanks to the help of relatives and friends, as we have seen in previous chapters. In cases where it is the first migration, it is friends or acquaintances who provide the necessary resources for the migrant to establish themselves in the destination locality. For relatives who regroup in the new destination, the process of establishment becomes simpler, because they receive expert guidance and instructions on how to get established from their relatives:

A brother-in-law that I have, well, he also has his family, but we get on well, they're always there to lend us a hand, right here when I have meetings —since my daughter's already pretty big— because they help me out and then if I get together with people from Ecuador, we chat, the ladies have coffee, here behind the North park where a lot of people get together on weekends, Sunday afternoons, then you get together. (Interview 10)

In the same line we found a young woman who receives all manner of help from a couple in Ecuador who acts in the role of parents:

A married couple, who are always looking out for us and I know I can count on them as regards money and emotional support and then my sister-in-law, the wife of my brother, who I have always counted on for everything. Well, here I have counted on her a great deal, also she has always given me economic, moral and emotional support (Interview 4)

7.2.3. *Networks in the Basque Country consisting of people from the Basque Country*

The majority of immigrants did not work in domestic service until coming to Spain. The sector has become an almost exclusive entry-level "labour niche", although many have secondary or higher education. To gain access to employment, immigrants essentially use the networks of relatives and acquaintances, employment agencies, religious orders and NGOs.

The relations between employers and employees are fundamental in evaluating the working conditions. They can range from sincere affection to practices that violate the dignity of the worker, a situation that we have not found in any of the interviews. Even when a friendly relationship with the employer is established, this relation is based on maternalist practices.

The owner of one of the houses where I clean, has helped me a lot in many ways (Interview 8)

The women interviewed who work in domestic service generally offer a positive image of their relations with their employers, receiving support from them in different circumstances:

Yes, my husband's boss, yes, they are from Bilbao. My husband worked in Deusto. He worked there for many years with a gentleman who got him his papers, who had cancer and passed away. Their daughters loved my daughters, my daughters called them grandparents. [...] We have very good relations with the people from here. They have helped me out economically, and they let me have the money that at one point I wanted to ask my mother for and she didn't have it and that woman told me: don't worry, I'll give you it". They have helped me out, they are people who've supported me. (Interview 2)

My husband took care of an old man and then he died and we have stayed friends with the wife who is like a mother to me and I call her mama and she is like the grandmother of my children, brings them sweets, we go to the fiestas in San Ignacio, Deusto, and sometimes we go for a walk to have a picnic in a park, though she can't move very much because she's 80 years old. She helps it me because I share my problems, but she would not understand to me because she's very old, but it's the closest thing to support that I have here. (Interview 1)

In another of the interviews a woman expressed her gratitude for the discretion of a mother and daughter for whom she works, to whom she can go in any difficult situation that she may come across and who do not ask any indiscreet questions and who help her with whatever she needs:

Right now I have support and they have never, never, never failed me. (...) From a couple of ladies where I work at weekends. They have known me since I came here and always, always, in whatever complications I have had, with loans of money in large amounts, they have

always helped me, they have never asked me what it's for or how I am going to do it, they have always given me a hand and I know that they are always ready to help me in whatever I needs. Well, also the people I work with, I can also count on them. And with a friend too, a friend who is from here, who is Basque and I have a lot of contact with him. He is one of the friends who have also supported me since I came here and I know that I can also count on him. (Interview 4)

The nuns also take on this protective role and help as much as possible, taking care of difficult situations which their employees can go through:

With the sister from the convent, she's always... like she says she is our second mother. She loved my sister very much and them me too. She supported and advised us. (Interview 5)

7.3. Formal secondary networks

7.3.1. *Formal support from public organizations*

This support corresponds to the bonds that the families establish in the community and social context. This type of network builds links and relationships of self-help, cooperation and solidarity, in order to find solutions to shared difficulties, shared dreams or common projects.

Integration depends, among other elements, on the social contexts generated by the type of socio-spatial insertion, housing and its location, the neighbourhood relations that are established, the presence of immigrants in the public services (health, education and social services) and interaction in public spaces. This type of networks offers them the possibility of being integrated in community cohort processes, opening the perspective of participation as a mechanism to promote and achieve their rights based on the community experiences.

These networks mention all those services/benefits and institutional-type supports that the Welfare State provides all its citizens, which are available to families whether to overcome their difficulties or to reach better standards of living. The effective use of the existing institutional resources depends, to a great extent, on the capacity that individuals and their families develop to approach these services and make effective use of them. The present model of social intervention with immigrants is characterised by the coexistence of different agents, public administration and social or third sector organisations, with a division of functions and, at the same time, a deep functional interrelation.

In the case of the public social services, those persons in an irregular administrative situation can only gain access to the basic services and benefits, since the specific ones are linked to the condition of resident.

Yes, I imagine that there are good institutions here and I have noticed that the Basque Country, and Spain in general, in that sense, are very generous and very helpful in the most difficult moments. And I believe that if I had a very difficult situation I am sure that I would receive support, I guess. The occasion has not arisen, but I think that yes, I would. (Interview 12)

In this interview we see the knowledge that this mother has about summer camps for her disabled son:

I know all the colonies for him to go on holiday and not be alone at home. 15 days in July with the Town Hall, 15 days with the Provincial Government and in August to the beach with my sister-in-law, my brother, to the park or to Santander. The thing is that I leave him alone for a long time and he's become hooked on television; as soon as he can he escapes to the television. (Interview 3)

The following woman tells us her experience with the Basque public health system when giving birth to her premature daughter. At the moment the right to receive emergency public medical care is recognized for all immigrants. Pregnant women, regardless of their administrative situation, have guaranteed public medical care during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum. Also, the right to medical care is recognised for all foreign minors. For foreigners who are not in any of these situations, the right to medical care is established, with the sole requirement of being municipally registered. She tells us her experience as follows:

There is and there isn't. Neither I nor my siblings had ever gone to the social services, my daughter was born prematurely and it was a very hard experience for us as a couple, and since we were admitted to Cruces hospital, my daughter was born perfect despite only have completed 26 weeks, the worst was that 23 days after being born she was diagnosed with meningitis and then since I was pregnant, I had had a difficult pregnancy with threats of miscarriage, I couldn't work or anything, the only one who worked was my husband. With a mortgage to pay, travelling back and forth every day, our situation was difficult. One day we went to the social worker at the Provincial Government and we explained the situation to him, what we were

going through. The only thing he asked my husband was: "Are you working?". "Yes! I'm working, but I'm telling you what's left of my wages". And they said to us, no, there wasn't any kind of aid. So we haven't gone back to ask for anything else again. My husband's parents have always been there to help us out however they can and there are other people from here who have always been worried. Also the Ecuadorian consul is one of the people who have always been concerned about my daughter and about me, people in the hospital, a doctor who saved my daughter and who played the role of a sister, of a psychologist, with me because the day-to-day was getting me down. (Interview 10)

In the analysis carried out, we can observe, first of all, that the immigrants do not usually present a picture of multiple problems characteristic of marginal family and/or personal trajectories and who have been the typical users of the public administration's social services over time. In many cases, they are people who have a normal employment and social situation in their country of origin and who emigrate because of the economic crisis, lacking future possibilities or a desire for a better life. The problem that they present is generally economic in nature, closely linked to the first moments of the insertion process here. In the following interview a woman refers to the aid that she has received from the public administration since she settled in the Basque Country, seven years ago. We see the change that has taken place in the economic benefits received from the social services which have been reduced in proportion to the increase in household income:

Previously the Provincial Government gave us a basic income, but since my husband changed to a different company, because before he worked in another company and, well, they gave us little by little, at first they gave us 700, soon they cut it to 500 and as soon as they saw that my husband was progressing, they calculated and said that this family... The truth is that we haven't come here to get rich off anybody else's back. When I worked I contributed my 600, my 400 Euros and we put everything together did all right, but now since I am not working it's a bit more difficult. Sometimes there's nothing in the house, and you buy what you can and if not, there isn't anything, but thanks be to God, there is something, we always manage. Sometimes my brother says to me, lend me 50 or so and I'll pay you at the end of the month. I've asked him twice, but well, thank God. With my daughter's school they also helped, with the school meals, so things are just a little bit tight but not desperate, for that reason, not just for economic reasons, I love this city, I love it

a lot and, God help me, I don't wanted to leave ever again. We also have applied to Etxebide for housing. We applied 4 years ago, to see if we get lucky, because I know that there's going to be another lottery, because in the first lottery we didn't get a house and our intention is to stay here, because my daughter wants to study here, my younger daughter and my husband also want to stay. May God give us health and work and may the doctors give me the OK to work already to contribute my little bit. (Interview 2)

The general perception of the social services given by people who say they know them is positive. They feel protected by a system that covers or can cover their needs when they need it, in contrast with the insecurity they feel in their country of origin. Thus the following interviewee remarks:

Well I think that there's a lot of aid and it's good. Because unlike other autonomous communities, the Basque Country tries to protect immigrants quite a lot. And working with the association, I realise that. You can choose to do a series of jobs through subsidies, in which... in the best case, you can even get paid for doing your existing job. (...) Some very valuable job creation can happen. And even, speaking of other state organisations like INEM here, in the Basque Country, or Lanekintza, these are organisations that also give you the chance to train through courses and they even subsidise them. Then that range of possibilities is very interesting. (Interview 14)

Still there are people who do not go to the social services because of the negative image of social benefits, identified with a concept of public aid as a response to situations of extreme poverty, that leads them only to go when they all their personal resources and those of their primary network have failed.

I don't know about them. (Interview 5)

Generally in all the cases studied, when talking with immigrants who have been resident for a certain period (the people interviewed have been based in the Basque Country for at least seven years) or else have been "advised" by their network of relatives and friends, there is a more specific request for economic aid. The already "know" the resources and, therefore, they usually make specific requests for what, according to their own experience or that of their compatriots, they "know" falls within the framework of the benefits. One comment, among others, illustrates this situation:

I work three days a week in cleaning and domestic service. This earns me very little money, so for that reason I went to the social worker, but the social worker said no, I wasn't eligible; but I have a neighbour who is Rumanian and her social worker gave her aid from the city council, which pays part of her rent and she pays the other part, and my social worker says that doesn't exist. I don't know if she doesn't like me or what. When I hurt myself and I cut my foot, she also made things difficult when I went looking for help, but later I spoke with a girl from a co-operative which had previously helped me with cheques from the [Foundation la] Caixa, which they give you for feeding and hygiene for babies, to buy nappies and so on, depending on your situation. Sometimes I qualified and they gave me a cheque and I heard her say that she had help at home. When I was in Basurto hospital for twelve days and my children were alone at home, the social worker at the hospital told me about that possibility and soon I contacted her and she gave me home help from the city council. Nevertheless she [the social worker from the city council], who a few days before had called her in desperation, told me that there was nothing. For that reason, I don't know what happened. They know my income, my situation, my two children. Now you can't imagine the effort I'm making to train myself to improve my situation. I don't know why she doesn't help me, seeing the effort I'm making. Because there's a Colombian girl who lives in Santutxu, who comes to visit my neighbour across the hall, who it pays 170 in rent and I pay 700 and she gets help. (Interview 1)

The administrative requirements, such as for example the requirement to have been municipally registered for six months and to be over 25 years old, are usually one of the main barriers to gaining access to the various services and benefits, since the majority of the demands are concentrated during the period of arrival; just as the requirements to gain access to economic aid leads not to return to the service. In the following case the family felt rejected by social services for not satisfying the requirements for access to economic benefits and this experience led them not to go back and request any kind of aid:

We asked, but they didn't want to give us because they said my daughter worked. We asked in that institution and they said no, because she's already working. I haven't gone back because we already have our papers, that's why. They didn't give her anything, they said no and it would have been good if they had helped us even if only to pay for the flat because what you earn doesn't pay for any more than the rent, the electricity, water, and telephone. (Interview 11)

In the analysis carried out it we see that when families develop the ability to define the networks that they count out for support, whether these are natural, constructed, primary, secondary or institutional, they have taken an important step towards reaching effective results in the processes that allow them to advance both at individual and group level; for that reason the greatest challenge is to ensure that the family understands the meaning of networks and that they become integrated in them in such a way as to broaden their perspective in relation to their surroundings, which can facilitate multiple alternatives to deal with everyday situations.

In my situation it has not been necessary. My wife has been my greatest emotional support. There have always been needs but my wife's family has helped me, always, even if not with money, they have always been there for everything. My friends from here, one of my friends has been the one who has helped me a lot and we have had a lot of contact. He is part of my wife's group of friends and has been the one who has helped more than anyone else, and he also fits in with our pace of life, our surroundings... He likes music and everything. Company as friends, let's say my brother-in-law and his wife, most of all. (Interview 6)

On the other hand, we see the work of the Town Halls to guide immigrants towards other public and even private social services, so that they can find suitable routes to solve their needs. In the following extract we see how by means of basic social services, this person was guided towards a Basque Government programme which manages legal paperwork and provides legal information to foreigners:

I know HELDU which helped me with the paperwork to bring over my mother and my brothers (Interview 8)

One of the main barriers which immigrants find in gaining access to the benefits of the system is the ignorance of the existence of this aid. Information about services and benefits is normally found through channels which are difficult for the immigrant population to access (for example, Internet portals); in addition, the main information channel is word of mouth, which is why the information that arrives is often erroneous. As the main source of information on access to the system of social protection, the majority of the people interviewed state that they found out about the social services —both public and private— through a relative, friend or acquaintance.

In this sense the fact that immigrants belong to some association or have a consistent primary support network, promotes the exchange of essential information for the development of their rights as a resident in the Basque Country.

7.3.2. *Private non-profit organisations*

With respect to the different problems of gaining access to social services (ignorance, distance, public distrust, access conditions, limited resources, etc.) social organisations of the third sector (both associations of immigrants and non-profit organisations) have acted as recipients for the demands of the immigrants. Thus private organisations have provided different services due to the absence of public initiative: survival (food or clothing), support for employment (information, training, labour exchanges, legal advice), or housing.

7.3.2.1. ASSOCIATIONS

Associationism promoted by the foreign population that has settled in a given territory involves the entrance into play of three elements which need to be co-ordinated: the host society, the institutions, and the immigrants themselves and their associations. Although immigrants are more inclined toward forming groups and joining associations, in the analysis we immediately see general explanations that the people interviewed give to explain the lack of participation in these associations. These justifications are also valid for native people's lack of commitment to local associations: little availability of time for reasons of work or family, little interest, etc. Associations find it easier than does the Administration to detect immigrants' new social needs and to proceed to proposing solutions. The feeling of connection is what usually encourages people to form associations, which, apart from being conceived as spaces for meeting and celebration, catalysts of nostalgia and memory, also serve as platforms for vindication and denunciation. Compiling the information provided by the people interviewed about what they have received from the associations that they know or belong to, we understand that they cover the following needs:

- Companionship and support: people who support them and understand the situation they are going through.
- Empathy: Problems are shared and all learn by advising each other.

- Self-help: Solidarity and disinterested support to reach personal and group goals.
- Access to information and resources: Teaching how to use services and if they have already made contact they can accompany others to facilitate attention.
- Solidarity: Everyone helps out with what they know and what they have.
- Reciprocity: helping others in the community who need it.

Nevertheless, we should point out the widespread ignorance about the existence of migrant associations and how to get in touch with them, as the following interviewee tells us:

Here we still can't count on this kind of aid because here there are not many Ecuadorian people and there is no an Ecuadorian organisation here that you can count on. In Madrid there is one, but not here in Donosti. An association from here that you can count on is Caritas and SOS Racism which is an organisation that helps you to obtain papers and look for some a job, and they have helped me since I came (Interview 4)

Sometimes the perception of Ecuadorian people with respect to this type of associations is distorted and they think that they only exist to make contact between compatriots to carry out leisure and free time activities:

No! Never! I once went to a Church here, near here, but... I have gone to one for about two years running but... how can one say it...? Well, they have had meeting of Ecuadorians, as a Foundation or so on, but they don't draw my attention. I just don't like them... Not even in Ecuador was I fond of dancing, going out... I like staying at home a lot. I have been a real homebody. (Interview 15)

It was also observed in several interviews that there is a certain distrust regarding participation in this associative movement, due to lack of faith in its leaders, as we have seen in chapter six. Other interviewees reject the idea of sharing their free time with their compatriots, since these people do not want to participate in activities that the host society could perceive as provocative or which serve to reinforce stereotypes towards them:

We don't go out on trips or for walks, or to events, because everything is linked to the Latin discos and I don't have anything against people having fun, because I would also like to have fun, but there

are always problems. All our compatriots, Ecuadorians, have a bad, a horrible custom of getting blind drunk. You see them in the streets, they wake up there, drunk. On Sunday at 10 in the morning and the worst is that they come with bad habits from over there. And it hurts me to admit it but it's true. Because my brother also drank when he was here on his own. After work he met his Ecuadorian friends and he spent his time drinking, to the point where he was beaten up, was given a beating that left him in the hospital, they stole his money, a watch, his shoes, his coat, and he learned from the experience and didn't go out any more. And the business with the knives is all our fault, because they drink so much they lose consciousness, that's why we don't get involved. It's not because we're better or worse than anybody else, but I prefer not to get involved with those people, because unfortunately very few families are like us. (Interview 2)

As a result of bad experiences there are people who have decided to embark on the adventure of creating associations that fulfil the conditions that they consider indispensable and representative of the group:

And for that reason, since we have already been here for 8 or 9 years, we feel the need to create an association now, because seeing as we don't have one that... unifies the people, the Ecuadorian group. (Interview 12)

Generally, the needs perceived by the new members of the community encourage their participation in associationism, insofar as they resort to the mediating role of the associations in search of aid, guidance or satisfaction of some basic needs: knowledge of the host society (language, laws, customs, proceedings in the local or regional administrations), guidance on employment and administrative topics related with their residence and work permits, defence of their rights, access to urgent assistance (food, housing)...

The aim of coming to Ecuador-Etxea has been in a search for personal enrichment and, simultaneously, to contribute something to society, not only to Ecuadorians, but to the greatest range of people that we can include. The objective of the association, and mine, are not just to be with Ecuadorian people, with all the Ecuadorians, but with all people. (...) Then economic support I cannot give, although we have tried to give some information as entrepreneurs, a little socio-professional guidance, and aside from that also... some informative or cultural activities. As for festivities... no. That is to say, we don't dedicate ourselves to that, because there are already associations to organise festive activities. We had better not even touch those subjects. (Interview 14)

It is also influenced by the desire to present the reality and the culture of the country of origin, and to promote methods for the natives to stay connected with them, although over the years and the generational changes, the family bonds with the country of origin tend to be weakened. In this sense, and as we have seen, many of the immigrants are involved and they participate in the associations as active partners.

The associations have their phases. First we get together to speak of our affairs, to make friends, to look for work... and soon we began to think that the things can be improved, we see other alternatives and we giving other colours to the movement of immigrants and new things appear. But this must come from the associations following a process, so that it is not a manipulation by certain political or religious groups. But it must come from the people who are growing as an association. And this is happening in this association. I was with them at the start, but soon I left it for a while. (Interview 9)

7.3.2.2. CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

It seems appropriate to emphasise the influence, observed in the analysis of the interviews, of Church organisations on emigrants. The commitment of the Church to needy people in general, but especially lending a hand to recently arrived migrants. The Church provides special services to those people who, due to their conditions of life, cannot go to the ordinary services.

We heard about Caritas, I don't know what others. We heard about the Provincial Government through the social workers of the school, who are people who offer guidance. They do this as volunteers. They had a parents' association. They did the management of the church. They told the priest: "Look! We have a family that has arrived from Ecuador and needs clothes". Since there are people, and I have often been to leave clothes, because they have grown out of them and I can't send the clothes to my country because it's very expensive. (Interview 2)

Diocesan Cáritas is named in many of the interviews. The social work that this organisation develops is very broad and very diversified. Not only does it undertake activities aimed at social assistance, rehabilitation or insertion of immigrants, but it places special emphasis on the promotion and denunciation of the causes of injustices which generate situations of social inequality. Thus a woman tells us of the help that

she has received from Cáritas from which she receives different types of support, including psychological:

Cáritas is offering me psychological help for my son because he has been rather badly affected by the life we have been living. He started by being a little aggressive, soon he became very quiet, depressed and he experienced a lot of violence. My children are five and two years old. My husband left when the little one was two months old. My son saw him as the baddie of the film because he always came and shouted, and then his little brother came along; the year he was born we took him out of school because I had a bad experience and he spent three years without going to school, then at the age of four I sent him again, and well, then his brother came along, then there was the divorce, the return to another school, he's already been to three schools and then I had my accident in September... (Interview 1)

The objective of the associations is to establish the bases to gradually establish interculturality in Basque society through coexistence based on respect between native people and immigrants, promoting and strengthening their support networks because this is the perfect formula to reach personal autonomy.

8

Complexity and diversity of transnational family relations

Introduction

Among the different institutions analysed in the sociological studies carried out in recent years, perhaps the family, and the changes that have taken place in it, have provoked the greatest interest. This is because the family is still the most important community of reference in the emotional life of individuals and is also an axial institution of society (Perez Díaz, Chuliá and Valiente, 2000:11). In almost every society, people grow up in a family context; nevertheless, as happens with other aspects of social life, there is great variation in family patterns in different cultures.

Spanish society —besides adapting to the great changes in values that took place in the 1960s and especially the 1970s, in which the freedom and autonomy of men and women prevailed as the basis of new family relations— is having to face new realities linked to the increase in immigration and the diversity of cultures and models of family organisation which this entails. On the one hand, the structure and operation of family nuclei influence the possibility of emigrating; but, on the other hand, migration transforms and influences the family, both in the country of origin and the destination.

At present we can see that the social reality of some immigrant families is present in several nation states: their members, activities, relations and resources can be found both in the host society, the country of origin and other geographical spaces where member of the family live. These are families which have a transnational³⁸ form and

³⁸ Transnationality as a phenomenon is understood as a situation where the spheres of life and the projects of migrants are not located in a single space, but they forge and maintain simultaneous social relations that join the societies of origin and destination.

which are a further example of the diversity of family forms existing in our society. This transnational perspective entails the modification of the nature of the family as a socio-economic unit, since family relations are continuously redefined through time and space.

In this chapter we are going to analyse the diversity and complexity of the family realities of Ecuadorian people who live in the Basque Country and their relationships with family members in the country of origin. To this end we will study the changes that have taken place between the members of the family units, linked with the migratory process, in the emotional relationships between family members in the origin and the destination, in the relations between couples and in raising their children, and we will also analyse the transnational strategies and practices that they develop to maintain permanent links between the two realities; along these lines, we will see the role played by telephone communications, new technologies, journeys and remittances of money and material goods.

8.1. Changes in gender roles

8.1.1. *Relations between partners*

Emigration involves an important change as regards gender roles within couples in Ecuador. In the destination country, we habitually see substantial changes in the model existing in the country of origin, in which the man was the breadwinner, and the woman, in addition to her work outside the home, was exclusively responsible for housework and childcare. This change of roles, we can say, is taking place in all scopes, both as regards sharing day-to-day domestic tasks, in decision-making in the areas of education and economics and, also, in the distribution of power within the couple:

We share a lot, I can't complain about that. My husband does a lot of the housework, he helps me in whatever he can even though he has a terrible work schedule. He gets up at three in the morning, eats lunch from 1 to 2, he only has an hour and a half and the journey takes half an hour; at night he gets home and, even though he really needs to go to bed, he always wants to be with his daughter: "Let me help you", etc. He participates a lot. Me, on that side... that's the reason I married him, because I saw a little of that in him. Before we worked we were always equals. Since we got married, I would put the washing machine on, I would iron and he would mop the floor. We've always shared the housework and now, despite

his terrible schedule, he's always helping out; at night he helps me to give the girl her shower and he doesn't want to go to bed if he doesn't see his daughter. We get on very well, we complement each other very well as regards housework. (Interview 10)

In my country men are very chauvinistic. They don't want you to go to a party alone or to go out alone. They can come home the next day, or three days later... There [in Ecuador] they never cook, never help in the house; people are like that there. (Interview 11)

One of the women interviewed, while emphasising the great change in roles that migration generally involves for men, also points out that some women who had assumed that the man's role was that of the breadwinner and that the woman's role was purely within the home, have had to change, forced to do so by the new socio-economic reality in the destination countries.

Many have told me: "No, look, my husband has understood that he takes charge of the children at the weekend; he helps me around the house to make it work". The men have had to change their mentality, to answer the question, why can't my wife go out to work? We both can. That doesn't mean that she's a bad person. So I see, like in everything, pros and cons, but there has been a change of mentality, both for men and women; because the women also said: "No, I'll stay home and he will find a way to bring the money to support me". Many women have come with that idea but here you have to work, you need to work together to make ends meet. (Interview 10)

The men interviewed are also very conscious that migration leads to changes of roles, in the sense of sharing domestic tasks, and also power within the home, with women. Generally they say that Ecuadorian society is very chauvinistic and that the predominant values in the destination societies oriented towards greater gender equality, lead men to take on a series of roles that favour equal relations between men and women. The men who make this point are mainly young, with a relatively high level of education, and some of them had already taken on housework and caring roles in the place of origin. Their evaluation of the changes is positive and they do not consider it as a loss of power:

In my parents' house we all helped with everything, to a certain extent, naturally. My mother, since she knew more about cookery, maybe she was in charge of cooking; but if she wasn't there then my father would probably cook, and in his absence I cooked. Well, that also taught us in our family to look after ourselves when they weren't there. (Interview 14)

Well, yes, there have been changes. Now it's different, what can I say: here it's the woman that takes charge of the household. In Ecuador, we didn't have women in the family, well, you notice that here they are more in charge, but in a different way. I don't know... I don't know how to put it. How could I say it... maybe with an example... maybe marriage for example eh... there's more machismo there. Yes! That's it! I don't know, the woman drives the work but maybe the men have to sweat a little... for me in particular it hasn't meant a big change because in my life, since there were only men, I don't know... Not to me, I think... maybe my partner sees it differently... (Interview 6)

But when you are with your wife, she does everything for you. On the other hand, here [in the Basque country] what can I say, she doesn't know how to cook; her mother cooks wonderfully but she doesn't know or want to learn. And if I want to eat, then I'm in charge of the kitchen. We've matured a lot, I iron her shirts, I iron her clothes if I have something to iron, I hand wash, little things like that. I do one thing, she does another. There's no difference of roles. You take turns. But I can tolerate mess a little more, I'm a little more permissive. The question of roles has changed a great deal... But women here are different. There are things that you appreciate —having a partner beside you to talk, to share things, have a laugh, and you wouldn't change that for a plate of lentils. Now with my wife, well, we share chores, and it's no problem for me. There are more important things in life than arguing over who does the cooking, or the ironing... Each of you does what you should and that's it. And that's good and that relation is more homogenous, there's no difference; we have a relationship that's more biological than social or legal and that's good in my way of thinking and my way of living. (Interview 9)

Another of the interviews spoke about the unequal relations between men and women with the educational and economic level of the immigrants in the country of origin. This emphasises that in Ecuador, although relations between men and women are still very unequal, the situation is changing, linked to the change in values that is taking place:

No, thank God, I for one grew up with and spent time with people who were very open. Despite having studied in a religious school, I was always lucky to find people who spoke without any kind of taboos. My parents were more closed in that sense, but little by little they have been changing; my elder siblings gave them a different view of life and also of us two younger siblings. In that sense there are still certain women here who, given their educational level, given the sector they come from, and how they have lived, have got a different attitude to life, to the couple: who are very submissive, what your husband says

is what you have to do, things like that. But no, in that sense they brought me up with a more open mind, I always like more to spend time with this person who I mentioned from the resort, a gentleman who taught me a lot, I liked a lot to relate with teachers in the university. Well, I liked to relate with people who could contribute something to me or who taught me something. That helped me a great deal to see life from another perspective without losing certain things, but also without allowing certain things to follow. (Interview 11)

8.1.2. *Influence of the extended family on couple relations*

One of the aspects that immigrants miss most in our western societies is the support offered by the extended family, so common in their countries of origin. However, when relations between the partners and their respective families are not positive, conflict and lack of unity in the couple can be the result. In the next case the interviewee, while evaluating positively the support of some members of their family in Ecuador, emphasises the opportunities offered by their new situation in the destination where, since they don't have other relatives, they take decisions in the context of the couple, which has favoured better coexistence and relations between the couple and their children.

Whatever the decision, it's the four of us; be it good or bad, we may get it wrong, but it's the four of us. But, yes, this has changed a lot, because he can't worry any longer about his family, that is to say, it's not that I want him to worry, because I have wonderful brothers-in-law, but my sister-in-law is worse than a mother-in-law; she never stops messing up our life. She's always keeping tabs on us: "And, you remember that so-and-so you used to go out with? Well, she asked for your phone number and gave her it". And so-and-so calls and gives us problems... But my husband and I, we just ignore it. So she is a person that we don't have to consider. However my husband's two brothers are excellent (...) they are very good people, they are very fond of me... The problem is this girl, because her marriage failed, she also wants her brother to be unlucky, to not be happy; for her, she would like her brother to live there and always be with her and when we were there she was always... She gave him ideas, and he got angry and problems arose where there were none. So a very great difference there. On the other hand, here it's me who says to him: "Look, let's do this, what do you think" (...) You can see it, it's great! Also our daughters have grown up. To start with the children were very possessive, it was all their father, their father. Now they have are a little less stuck on their father, because they now have more confidence with me. We're always having normal arguments, but then we get over it. (Interview 2)

8.1.3. *Changes in the attitude of women to gender violence*

In Spain gender violence is considered as an important concern at social level. There is a social awareness that denounces any situation of violence against women; in addition, cases of gender violence have greater media visibility and there are various political, legal, law enforcement and social services programs and measures. Against this background, migrant women feel that they have the possibility of protection in situations of violence by their partners, which gives them greater security in denouncing violence and even breaking a relationship that was damaging them.

The interview with a woman who runs an association of Ecuadorian people in the Basque Country, and who in her work is in contact with women working in associations in other parts of Spain, helps to clarify the questioning of gender roles in immigrant couples and, especially, the influence of the predominant values in the destination society of with respect to zero tolerance of domestic violence. She considers that the sensation of social protection that women emigrants feel in the destination societies makes it possible for women to change situations of violence that they have experienced within the family:

I believe that there is a bit of everything. I am going to say some things that are rather hard. I see many couples that have split up because many women over there... well, machismo is still very crude no matter how much it seems to be changing. But again I say, it depends on the sector, your educational level and all the rest have a lot of influence in the home. Over there women were always dependant on what their husband says, always doing the housework; you do not work, you stay home taking care of the children; and they come here and in order to get ahead, they couldn't continue in the same way as before, staying home and everything. Here they both had to work and in that sense, I don't know if I am right in saying this, here the woman is better protected, in the sense that if they mistreat you, you go and report it and somehow you will be protected. However, in the family if the father beats you, you just have to put up with it, it's the man who has to decide, they practically treat you like you are nothing, you don't have a voice for being a woman, and many women have come here, since we're an association. I have contact with many other associations in Spain and mostly we agree that we have been seen as an escape window. "Here they are going to protect me, you are not going to continue treating me like you did in Ecuador, in Chile, Bolivia...". Because we are similar in many ways. So the woman has seen an escape window and has put a stop to it. And as for other couples, who in Ecuador didn't have abuse but it was "you stay at home" and all the rest, well, they have changed their roles. (Interview 10)

8.1.4. *Formation of new couples in the destination society*

Among the people interviewed, the experiences of forming new couples in the destination society are very diverse. Generally they state that it has not been easy for them to establish new relationships, and it is women who have emigrated alone and who have been reunited with their children in the destination country who have expressed the least interest in starting new relationships:

It's more difficult, because I go from my house to my work, and when I worked in the communications centre and the insurance company... I wouldn't say that I missed it. But you do think about it. In fact I have a great friend now and I tell him: "If you move onto a different level, all of a sudden, the friendship's over. If we become more than friends, the friendship finishes". Little by little, I don't want to rush it, because you have to know how to choose the right person and let that person choose you. And I have to think hard about it because I have a son. (Interview 3)

The new relationships started in the destination society by the single or divorced men interviewed, whether with Ecuadorian or Basque women, tend to follow patterns that are ever more common both in the society of origin and that of destination, like coexistence before the marriage and partnership without a legal union.

I would like to live with my girlfriend first, and then we'll see if we get married or what. And, look, I don't know about nowadays, but before, living together before marriage wasn't approved of in Ecuador. Nor was it approved of to have sex before marriage... There was a lot of hypocrisy. But it doesn't worry me. I know very well what I feel, and towards whom... (Interview 14)

8.2. **Transnational maternity/paternity**

There is a stereotyped discourse according to which the migration of women leads to the breakup of families and, especially, to destroying the lives of the sons and daughters who stay in Ecuador. This discourse has been fed by the concept that for the children, the mother is the main, only and irreplaceable person, without whose direct presence the life of the children is destroyed. Nevertheless reality is much more complex, and among the people interviewed we met with very diverse family situations in which nuclear families do not constitute a single type of family, but there are many different ways of living to-

gether. We need to consider the diversity of transnational families, without necessarily assuming the generalising stereotype of traumatised sons and daughters. As we mentioned in the forth chapter, migrants do not have the nuclear family as the only family model. In fact, shared child-rearing and growing up with other relatives constitute quite widespread practices, both across social sectors and regions.

In the Ecuadorian migration in the Basque Country, the relations between sons and daughters and their fathers and mothers have followed different paths and modalities, depending on which person has emigrated in the first place and what was their marital status and their family situation in the place of origin. In the case of nuclear families in which the first person who emigrated was the father, leaving his wife and children in the place of origin, family reunification took place once the legal, employment and economic situation allowed it; the woman travelled to the destination with the children and the nuclear family was supposedly reunited in the destination. This situation took place especially in cases where the couple had children and, in particular, children under 16 years old, since older children who are already studying and in some cases with their own family relations in Ecuador, in many cases choose to stay in the country of origin. Also there are situations of older children who emigrate but who do not adapt to the destination society and return to Ecuador. In these cases, the relations between parents and children are maintained, mainly, through telephone contacts, economic remittances and journeys.

When women with children head the migratory process, we must also consider the different personal and family realities that they have in the place of origin, if we are to understand how they experience motherhood in the destination. If they are women with young children, separated or divorced in the origin, these women already shared care of their children with their extended family: mothers, aunts, grandmothers... and emigrate alone leaving their children to the care of people with whom they have previously established support networks, and it is a high priority for them to achieve stability in the destination in order to bring over their children. As in the case of men, reunification in the destination with the children older than 15 or 16 is difficult for them, because of level of integration that they have in their country of origin.

In the cases of women who have a partner and children and who decide to migrate alone, the children stay in the country of origin in the care of the father and, in most cases, of another female member of the extended family of the woman emigrant.

8.2.1. *Single migrant women with children*

The testimonies that follow of women who divorced in the country of origin and who migrated without their children, show us how their role of mother has been a constant throughout their migratory trajectory. We see that they undertake their project of emigration in a very planned way, bearing in mind the well-being of the children who stay in Ecuador for the moment. This is what they say when they refer to the decisions that they have had to take when choosing which members of the family they will leave their children with, trying to find those who would take better care of their children and with whom they would be most comfortable.

These women also emphasise the suffering involved in leaving their children in their home country when they began their migration, and how difficult it was to explain their decision to such small children. This is how one of the interviewees put it, who chose not to confront the reality and but to lie about the situation, which made her feel guilty for not having said good-bye properly to her son and, some time later, this separation is still painful for both the mother and the son.

The boy was three years old when I divorced, and when I came here he was five. It just happened, because I'm a lucky person, that part of my family has lived in Bilbao since 1999. The saddest part was separating from my son. I left him with my sister. My son went to the La Salle school in Guayaquil. I spoke with the school, the teacher... I took my son out, took him on a trip. I went to Riobamba. (...) My son thought I had gone to Riobamba. He never found out; he didn't come to the airport. This is the part about Ecuador; the hardest part was to leave my son with a lie. Now when he is feeling hurt by what I did, he throws it in my face: "You lied to me". (Interview 3)

I left my daughter there with my mother, you see? Then after three years I came back and brought her over, and well, she was here with me until three months ago when she went back to Ecuador, and now she's living in Ecuador again, although I hope she returns soon... At the moment she doesn't have plans to return; she's at school there now... (Interview 11)

We also verified that the desire that their children should be happy with their relatives in the country of origin and should not suffer through the separation means that these women stay in permanent contact with the relatives in charge of taking care of their children and keep close tabs on their education, trying to solve the problems that can arise from a distance:

They bought me a card each week to call my son. Every Saturday I was crying and crying on the telephone. He had stayed with my sister who had three children. At that time they were 16, 14 and 9 and there was a big difference with my son; but well, they treated him well and they told me via Internet that the psychologist said the boy had gone backwards in his studies, that they had to give him psychological treatment because he became incontinent, which had never happened before, and that it was a disorder brought about by the absence of his mother. That killed me, and so for that reason Mrs. Maria bought me the card for ten Euros. No, they were pesetas then, for me to call him. I spoke with my sister, my brother-in-law, with my son. On Saturday and Sunday I had the card to call (Interview 3).

Meeting again in the destination country with the children who stayed in Ecuador is an especially emotional moment, both for the mother and the child, since some years of separation at such an early age, even with permanent communication via telephone, leaves both parent and child suspended at the time of separation, and sometimes the new meeting requires a phase of adaptation for both:

My stepmother came over and my son came with her. I would have cost more to send him in the care of the airline. They pulled strings to get a ticket quickly and the boy came with my stepmother, my brother, my sister-in-law, my nephew... And my stepmother also brought her cousin and her sister. Then they came to Bilbao, and they told me and I went to pick up my son. And it was like in a novel. I didn't recognise my son. When I left him he was fair with curly hair, and when he came he was dark, very black and he had his hair cut very short. His baby teeth had come out. I didn't recognise him. And he was very thin, very, very thin. He had grown. I started crying. I didn't recognise him and he said to me: "Mother, it's me, Luisito...". He remembers all that: "Mother, you didn't recognise me" (Interview 3).

8.2.2. *Raising children in the destination country*

The immigrants interviewed, both men and women, say that in Western societies family values are very different from the ones that they received. In particular, they consider that the value of respect towards adults is lost in western societies and that children behave badly in their relations with their parents and other adult relatives. They indicate their fear of loss of the values with which they have been raised and which they would desire for their children. They are aware that, on a public level, their children are going to share certain forms of be-

haviour, both in school and in other environments in which they relate to other children in this society, and that their it is very difficult for them to intervene in this environment so as to transmit the values that they have received. So they want to control what we call the "private" space of the family domestic environment, to raise their children with values that they consider suitable and that are related to the way they were raised in their country of origin.

The fathers and mothers interviewed and also the single people who plan to have children have indicated their desire for their children to be raised "the Ecuadorian way", and make it clear that they want them to have more respect for adults and more discipline. They think that education in these values is not only going to be good for their children, but will be a contribution to the host society, promoting values that have been lost and which are basic for good intergenerational coexistence.

But it seems to me that there is very little respect for parents. I have my children here now, but I don't know... We see a lot of children who don't treat their parents as they should, the parents, grandparents, the older people that they meet... I don't know, I don't like it one bit. A lot of freedom, they think they can do what they want and treat their parents however they feel like, and that's not the right way. (Interview 7)

Aside from that, our children are also... it's true that sometimes we don't know how to raise them correctly, but they also have to respect our way of being, because sometimes they told me, too: "No, no, that's not right!". "My love, I'm going to raise him the Ecuadorian way". It's a manner of speaking, because here there's too much benevolence with children. There's too much... lenience, and the fact is that those children are future adolescents, because I have taken care of young children, in Madrid and here, and I've seen the difference, they're consumer children, consumer loves, I love you because you give me things, I give you a gift because you've done something, I reward you in return... and we're not like that. I don't believe in giving payments; I don't give my son that. He says to me: "I need it for this". And I give him it. I want to raise him the Ecuadorian way. I'm not separating myself from this society, nor letting them be racist with me. In fact, I think that if I raise him well, he will become a part of this society who in future will act correctly and will generate good things. And I do not permit the lack of respect that children here show their parents. Here parents are very lenient, they permit disrespect and that is why adolescents go on to smoke cannabis, have sex at an early age, drink... These are children who have not been brought up properly and

they want us to be benevolent, well no. Sometimes we as mothers, too, because we work too many hours, we aren't with our children and some [mothers] reward them like the mothers here, and don't spend time with their children. (Interview 3)

We see ourselves as a couple that are united, and if we have to reprimand them, we reprimand them. We don't punish them physically because it's never gone that far, but when need to get angry, we get angry; when we need to reproach them, we reproach them, and when we need to punish them, we punish them severely. "Go to your room; daughter, go away". We are perhaps a little harsh. A little old-fashioned... I'm very strict. As regards physical appearance... you don't go around with highlights or with dreadlocks. "Either you wear proper trousers like decent people or I'll take your trousers off in the middle of the street and leave you in your underwear, whatever you like". "No, no, mother...". Those things, for me... either you dress properly... Since her little friends wear those hipster trousers, no, she never tried to do that because I have never let her and she was 15. I told her: "Hey, young lady. Here you either dress decently or else if you want to leave, there's the door". (Interview 2)

Young people also share the values of adults as regards promoting respect, but they are aware that their integration in the destination society means sharing its lifestyles and values, so they are more flexible as regards how these values can be transmitted and they question some of the disciplinary methods that have been used in raising them.

It is obvious that there are changes in the family. To start with, the concept of family here, in Spain, and the concept of family in Ecuador are totally different; but, yes, we are seeing changes. Speaking of types of families, perhaps what immigrants stress most often is the difference in behaviour and respect. In the great majority of South American countries we still have that idea, that concept of respect through authority and discipline, a little old-fashioned. One example, we Ecuadorians always speak to our parents using the formal pronoun *usted*. We never speak to them familiarly using *tú*. That is... Well, of course, it hits you from the start. And well, these are things that... but I would like to pass on to my children a mixture of both, let's say, trying to find an intermediate position between life over here and over there. And inevitably there will be changes. I would like them to keep that respect towards their parents, but not through fear... through fear and punishment like it usually is over there. That is to say, over there you raise your kids but it's through punishments, a little violence, a little abuse... That is to say, to achieve that but not through those means. (Interview 14)

Women who have emigrated alone or who have separated or divorced in the destination country and who have children, mention the difficulty that they have in combining their working days, with often very long hours and sometimes working weekends, or working as live-in helpers, with the resulting difficulties for living with their children and day-to-day support.

These mothers, who have been courageous enough to emigrate, sometimes leaving their children with relations in the country of origin, and who have fought to be able to bring them over, believing that they will have a better future in the destination society, are very concerned about their children's education. On one hand, they see that the destination society accuses them of not taking care their children, of not participating in their raising, and on the other hand, they themselves wish they could have more time to share with their children in the day-to-day and help them in their schoolwork, but who can't do it because of their work schedules.

My son is a very good boy. I have tried to raise him as I was raised, with a lot of discipline, with a lot of respect, also as we began to live alone from a very early age... He heats up his own food. I have put the microwave on the table so that he can reach the things. I am one of those mothers who leaves him his breakfast, his lunch, his snacks, his tea. (Interview 3)

Some of the women interviewed who are working in the domestic service sector live with the paradox of taking care of the children of native families in which both spouses work outside the home, and who can't spend time with their own children, and sometimes having employment difficulties because they try to make their own family's schedules fit with their work.

She was an economist and her husband was a notary, and they wanted someone to take care of their children. And they loved the fact that I lived nearby. I had to start at 7.30, leave at 11.30 and then work from 5 to 8. They had three children. I arrived, dressed the children, gave them breakfast, took them to the bus and I had to teach my son to suffer... I took the children to the bus and then I ran to get my son and take him to school. After about three months, he told me: "Mother, don't worry, I can go by myself". It made me very sad. He was seven years old, and I gave him all the instructions, and at five I was at the bus stop at the park, I picked up the three children and another mother from the school picked up my son and brought him to the park. And so he grew up and became responsible. I was with her for two years. One day I had to go to the Comisiones Obre-

ras trade union to get my papers and I was going to be late, she got annoyed. I went and got to the park at six and saw my son sitting in a corner and I went up to him. Then she got upset and she fired me, shouting at me... in front of everyone. I felt very humiliated. I went to the house crying, got my things and left. The next day I called her husband on the phone and I apologised to him and I asked for my wages, because I loved the children very much. (Interview 3)

Of the testimonies gathered, one of the hardest has been that of an interviewee who told us her feelings of pain and impotence in a situation of abuse towards her son by a very close relative, which she did not know about and which caused her son great psychological suffering.

There began to be problems in my family, because my brother was abusing my son. The boy arrived at 5.30 to do his homework with them, had dinner and I arrived at 9, because my work was from 5.15 to 8.15, I arrived on the run and sometimes found him asleep. I woke him up, helped him with his homework and always found him sad. And they sent me a report from the school saying that they wanted to set up a meeting. It turned out that my son had been evaluated by the psychologist and he had a very low level of self-esteem. He had been interviewed and he had been with two psychologists, and that was where I found out that my brother was abusing him. He had told the psychologist but he hadn't told me. That was the second thing that was very hard; first having to leave him in Ecuador and after bringing him here, having to leave him with other people in order to work. It was very hard because one day I stayed in the corridor to see if it was true and I found my brother beating my son. That was the drop that made the glass overflow. I went crazy looking for a house and now I live alone with my son since the 8th of December 2004. (Interview 3)

Another of the interviewees expresses her sadness and hopelessness when she recalls that she has not been able to dedicate herself to the care of her daughters because she had to work and because she had no family network to help her. She feels guilty and questions the objective of its migratory project because of the experiences of her daughter who, after six years in the Basque Country, has returned to Ecuador with her relatives, after going through a difficult period on a personal level:

That experience is hard for me. As I told you before, I brought my daughter over. She came when she was 7 or 8, and stayed here until three months ago. What was the reason for my daughter's return to

Ecuador now? Because during these six years that she has been here, in her heart... on the surface she has adapted very well, but in her heart it wasn't "her thing", she always had in mind that she wanted to go back to Ecuador. Why? In my personal experience, I've always been working. My topic has always been work. You know that here a single person is hard put to pay for a flat, to have the right to education and all that, in this case for my daughter who is in my charge; so, I've always have been working. During the vacations, I've been lucky enough to find another job and instead of taking a holiday I've stayed here working. When I have stayed [here during vacations], I've never been without work. I have only stopped working when I have gone to Ecuador to visit my family. I've stopped working there... And my problem is that my daughter has always been alone for a long time. I left home early in the morning and came back at night... So she has spent a lot of time with the friends that she made in school. She's a bit different from me, I'm a bit more open. She's introverted, it's hard for her to make friends. And that's not just here. It was the same in Ecuador. So her personality has not helped her a lot in that sense. And a moment came when that sadness, that solitude that she felt made her feel depressed and she came to a point, last year, during a short period... my daughter made two attempts at suicide. That is very hard. It's hard to talk about it, but it's the truth. And analysing this subject, we have seen that it's the price of immigration, because here we don't have family, because over there, if there isn't the one, there's the other... and she's no longer alone. Here, since I don't have anybody, and everyone does their own thing... It's not typical of other countries: "Neighbour, can you take care of my daughter for a little bit until I get there". Over there we are a little more affectionate than they are here. Here it's each to his own. So that's the story in a nutshell". (Interview 11)

8.3. Family contacts: Diverse round-trip itineraries

The permanent relation between migrants and their relatives in the country of origin permits the construction and maintenance of transnational relationships. Economic remittances constitute an important practice, but not the only one, since we must add migrants' visits to relatives, telecommunications, air transport as a result of the movements generated by migration, and so-called nostalgic commerce, which includes, on the one hand, sending products typical of the country of origin to the host communities and, on the other, non-monetary remittances which immigrants send to their relatives in the country of origin, so as to be present in spirit at moments with particular emotional significance, such as Christmas or birthdays.

Long-distance communications are one of the most common types of non-material transnational practice. The possibility of making contact in real time directly affects the lives of migrants and their relatives. In this line, new technologies help the development of more frequent communication, and allow migrants to be an active part of family decisions. The availability of telephone, Internet and flights that are becoming ever cheaper facilitates this contact with loved ones, at the same time as representing the possibility of maintaining the “affective circuit” with sons, daughters and other members of the family.

In our research we have been noted the multiple forms of communication and interchange established by Ecuadorians resident in the Basque Country, among which we can mention: telephone communications, use of the Internet, sending economic remittances, the interchange of products between the origin and the destination, and journeys to their country of origin.

8.3.1. *Telephone conversations*

The frequency of the contacts is very intense. On average immigrants telephone once a week and mainly use pre-paid cards and mobile telephones, which allow them to receive SMS messages at any time of day. One of the aspects that Ecuadorians emphasise is the difficulty of telephone communication due to the time difference between the countries of destination and origin, a difficulty that can be largely resolved via mobile phone messages.

Mostly it is the emigrants who call their home countries on their own initiative and speak with their close relatives: brothers, sisters, parents, children, grandparents... and also with their friends. They also try to be present via telephone at moments when the whole family is together, during birthdays and other celebrations.

The reasons for the conversations are emotional, informative and also educational. The majority say that they talk to share moods and gain mutual support; also to exchange news and anecdotes and, in cases when they have children in the society of origin, telephone contacts are used to follow their studies and schoolwork and thus to guide and give advice.

I am always in communication, mostly with my mother, who is the one who is always home and, well, who has always supported me. And then there are my sisters, who are always sending me messages: “Hi, sis”, “how are you?”. They send you a message on the mobile. At midnight or at 5 in the morning or 3 in the morning you

get a message and, well, you don't have to say "I'm sleepy and you woke me up", but instead you have the pleasure of saying: My sister! And since the time difference is quite big, well, 6 or 7 hours, well it gives you a lift. Well, with my mother because I call her every week, I get an SMS on the mobile twice a week from my sisters and, sometimes, when they are at home for a celebration, you take advantage of that to call and speak with everyone. (Interview 4)

Yes, well, at the moment it's always with my mother, because she's elderly now. My father died twelve years ago. My mother is the one I'm most concerned about in that sense. Then with my siblings, I get on well with them all. But normally, I always call my mother once or twice a week. And now that my daughter's there, I call her and my mother. (Interview 11)

With my children. I always call them and my daughter has a telephone with a contract. It's cheaper that way. Also from the mobile. My daughter says it's cheaper from the mobile. And above all you can call whenever you like, quite late. Because right now if I call... Boy! Right now it's four thirty in the morning. At this hour, what good is it? However, if we call at night, like for example at ten o'clock... From eight o'clock, when my daughter can call, it's one p.m.... (Interview 10)

When the whole nuclear family has emigrated and their stay in the destination country gets longer, we observe that contacts with the country of origin diminish and become less frequent.

Well, now we hardly have any contact with Ecuador. We do have cousins and aunts and my mother calls them to congratulate her sister and her nieces and nephews, but I don't call much. I left twelve years ago and it's long time to keep contact. My grandma, my mother's mother, who at the start was in Ecuador, then left to live to Venezuela with another daughter who left to work there. So my mother goes to visit grandma once every year; but I don't. (Interview 8)

Lately I communicate with my nieces, but with my brothers, mainly with my older sister, from time to time I give them a call to see how they are, how everything is going. I suppose I have talked to my mother 3 or 4 times during these years. (Interview 9)

Among the interviewees, new information and communication technologies (Internet, Skype, Messenger) are used to communicate between the countries of destination and origin, mainly by young people, in some cases the sons and daughters of migrants:

My daughters, yes, via Internet all the time with my nephews; yes, they do. (Interview 15)

Yes, I use... well, on the computer via Internet and also there's a page called HI fi5 and my brother is always sending photos and friends can send you photos and you're more or less in touch with everyone. Even though you don't call you have emails and you see photos of your friends, your brothers and sisters... (Interview 4)

Communications centres, though known by Ecuadorians resident in the Basque Country, are more used for shipments of money and buying pre-paid calling cards, than to communicate by telephone.

Well, I also call from the *locutorio* (communications centre). Yesterday I went to call but it was closed. I call but not for long. I call for five minutes or so, for one Euro. Twenty cents a minute. Or ten minutes at most, which costs two Euros... like that. And I call to say hello, how are you... I am waiting to hear right now whether my son has found a job or not, what they told him, because we called from here to speak with a friend from Ecuador, who has just retired, and is in that line of work. And she offered to help us. We called yesterday but she wasn't there... (Interview 15)

8.3.2. *Sending and receiving of economic remittances and material goods*

8.3.2.1. ECONOMIC REMITTANCES

Remittances —money which immigrants send, more or less regularly, to their relatives who have not emigrated— is the most evident economic dimension of the movement of migrants, as well as the most widely studied; it constitutes the most important transnational practice and the one with the greatest impact on the life of migrants and their families in the country of origin. In general studies refer to their positive impact on the economic situation of relatives in the country of origin, although there are other academics who point out some negative aspects such as consumerism or price inflation.

According to data of the National Institute of Statistics (2009), 67.5% of Ecuadorians resident in Spain send money to their country of origin. The remittances are most often sent to parents (63.7%), followed by children (29.8%) and spouses (6.7%).

The majority of people interviewed tell the same story: Nine out of ten say that they send money to their country of origin for individual or family purposes, and that it is also intended to help their relatives eco-

nomically and to help with particular incidents of illness or operations. They also send money to educate their children, siblings and/or other relatives. To a lesser extent they say that they send money to invest in their country of origin. One of the people interviewed has said that they have sent money for building a house in their place of origin.

The means of sending economic remittances are, in order, via the banks; via the Money Exchange and through *locutorios* (communications centres). Some people say that they take the money themselves when they travel to the country of origin or, in special cases, send it with highly trusted people. Several say they are afraid to send it with friends or other people that they know.

No! No! Sending money with friends, no. Via an agency it's more... secure. I do it via Money Exchange, never with friends or acquaintances. With friends... I give him the money and it may never arrive. No! That's happened a lot... Yes it has! Poor people... (Interview 15)

I am helping my sister with her studies. The first of each month, 350€ for my sister and to pay the debt over there, she's studying law and already my parents have supported me and have told me: "Look, Mary, you do your own thing and don't worry about us, we've already received enough". I send it via the Popular Bank and they get it in three days. I have been paying her like that for two years and it has gone very well. (Interview 5)

I sent them almost everything. I stayed here with just the minimum that I needed. For example, before I got ill, when I earned 1,200 Euros a month, I sent about 800... 700 or 800 Euros. For everything: food and studies. My mother and my brother took charge of the money between them, and I sent it through the bank. Well, I sent it through two organisations: through a *locutorio* and via the bank, depending on which one paid a bit more. (Interview 13)

One of the people interviewed said that she had passed through very precarious economic situations, due to work and personal problems, and received money from her family in the country of origin.

I received money because there were some months when I didn't make enough to pay the rent. (Interview 3)

8.3.2.2. SENDING AND RECEIVING OF PRODUCTS

Among transnational practices carried out by immigrants, one that draws attention to itself is the intense and fluid interchange of products between the origin and the destination, and vice versa.

These are articles, above all, which have a sentimental value related with affection and memory at a distance. Thus, interviewees say that they have sent clothes, perfumes, toys... mainly clothes. The shipments are sometimes made on the occasion of family celebrations: birthdays, anniversaries... and they are made through the Post Office, *locutorios* and, especially, through friends and acquaintances who travel to Ecuador, as well as personally on the trips that they make. Generally they look for the most economic and also the most trustworthy means to make sure that the shipment arrives at its destination for the intended date.

Via the *locutorio* or the post office, because I've discovered that the post office is cheaper than the *locutorio*. In the *locutorio* they charge thirteen Euros a kilo; thirteen a kilo! [*with strong emphasis*]. On the other hand, we once sent things by mail, a lot of things, because I bought some pretty sets of pots here and we sent them by mail. And for twenty kilos they charged us 104,20. Extremely cheap! Only that for the twenty kilos. The pots alone weighed thirteen kilos, and even though we got rid of the cardboard they still weighed about twelve kilos. (Interview 14)

I send clothes and my sister says to me: "Send me them". And I send them by packet post or when someone goes over there I ask them to take them for me. (Interview 5)

Yes! My brother went and I sent them with him. I sent them clothes. Because they always like the fact that you send them... anything, but what I sent them in this case was clothes. (Interview 13)

Some people interviewed, when speaking of the products that they send, refers to specific brands, that are known in the societies where the immigrants live and which in some cases are specifically requested by the relatives in the country of origin and, in others, constitute a means of showing the differences between the societies of origin and destination.

I sent them things for father's day, a bag from Zara by mail and then by packet post, I sent them some clothes, some perfume from Agatha Ruiz de la Prada, via the *locutorio* and it didn't arrive: it arrived after two months, I protested and said: "I won't send any more! When I go there I'll take them". (Interview 3)

Yes! I have sent gifts, packages through the *locutorio*. A two-kilo package: Sweets, some small gifts [laughter]. To my children. I haven't sent anything to anybody else, only to my children. Always at Christmas, and to my sons. Always! I always send them sweets... My

son said the other day: "Mother, please, if you can, send me 'Milka' [referring to a brand of chocolate]". And I sent him ten packets, but with a friend who went on the second of April. (Interview 15)

They also say they have received products from their country which in some cases are not commercially available in the place of destination, but in others, although they may be available in the market, represent more than just the product itself; they have a symbolic value of connection at a distance with memories and daily life in their country of origin. They also mention that they receive foodstuffs and food products that one cannot find in this country, as well as clothes and other products.

The products are sent by direct relatives and mainly with people who travel and, to a lesser extent, via the post office.

They send me things from over there when there's a chance, when somebody comes from there, there's a cereal from there that I don't see much here, *machica*, that's a barley flour. Toasted ground barley, which is a delicious and very complete food. You cook it with milk. They also send me *morocho*, maize, which they have in the *locutorios*, you see it more and more, already there's a lot more. The big plantain for frying, which is also very common. (Interview 1)

They don't send us much because it's very expensive. My brother at Christmas very devotedly sent us bags of sweets that they make there for Christmas, we have the custom with children on Christmas night, to play the tambourine, sing carols and give them gifts and bag of sweets. It was in that spirit that I asked my brother to send them to my daughters. They never arrived. (Interview 3)

Then the people who are over there, when they go back, maybe they send you something, over there people eat a lot of guinea pig, which is called "Cui" over there. So they send you packets of roast guinea pig meat (laughter). And also there are some fruits that they don't have over here and they send you things like that from over there. (Interview 4)

As people become integrated in the destination society and break away from their contacts with the society of origin, these shipments are reduced and nor are they so appreciated by the immigrants:

I don't like them to send me anything from over there, because they spend money and I don't know... often they can't get it through customs and... well, I don't think so, and I'm already accustomed to life over here, so... (Interview 6)

8.3.3. *Trips to the country of origin*

Immigrants make the most direct contact between the countries of origin and destination through trips to their countries of origin. These visits, according to the people interviewed, do not take place as often as they would like, especially when they are parents who have their partners and children in the country of origin. The average frequency of visits is once every two years. The cost of travel constitutes one of the main obstacles and, to overcome this, some of the people interviewed say they have asked for money from their relatives in the destination country or have taken out a bank loan to make the trip; another difficulty is related to some people's situation of legal irregularity, which means that they know they are not going to be able to see their relatives until they obtain legal status:

I have made one trip to Ecuador. Two years ago I made that first trip; it was because I got my papers, so I had the chance to travel to Ecuador. The reason... was more to see my family. At the start I didn't want to go because I had it in my head that I was coming here to stay because going back is difficult to stat with, and costs a lot. And then, well, I mainly went to see how everyone was and because my brother and sister-in-law and nephew were going to go and, well, my mother wanted to see all of us. Coming back again was very hard although I am the type of person who keeps a stiff upper lip when I have to, and I couldn't express what I felt during those moments, because I didn't want my parents to worry, either; I wanted them to see that I was happy to go (Interview 4)

I went over there two years ago. In the convent they said that I had to stop working for a month and, without thinking, I took out a loan of 3000€ from the bank to go to Ecuador. After three days they gave me the loan and I went to buy things to take over there. I planned it from one day to the next and my parents didn't find out until I arrived in Venezuela, then I called them to come and get me. And they couldn't believe it, they thought that I must be lying to them. I wanted to take them by surprise because they often say that they're OK and maybe it isn't true. For that reason I wanted to surprise them. And yes, they were well, just as they said. The last days were hard, because we said: "It's the last Saturday...". It gives you a terrible pain to leave there them again. (Interview 5)

In other cases they show the ambivalent feelings that they feel when they travel to their countries of origin. On the one hand, contact with their relatives and their loved ones brings them a sensation of great joy and well-being, which they express with phrases like "ab-

sorbing the family affection”, “just being with my family”. But, on the other hand, seeing the situation of the loved ones who have stayed in the country and who are going through many difficulties, gives them a sensation of great impotence and discomfort.

Other stories tell of the suffering that arises for some migrants who have not had the economic success they wished for in the destination country, having to face a reality that is unknown for their relatives in the country of origin, since the latter have the perception that their relatives who have emigrated are in a good economic situation, since this is what is transmitted as part of the success of the migratory project by people who have emigrated.

I see so much injustice... I felt impotent. Of course the poor people think that here we are making money, money, and it's not like that, it's not that (...) and the reception was very nice, lovely, to see them after years, but then I was saying: "I want to go". I felt impotent, seeing what the family is suffering day after day, they have to pay the rent, the food, school fees, expenses for the upkeep of the children and there were times when my sister said: "Sister, can you lend me money for the bus". And I got a knot in my throat and I said: "Yes, yes, don't worry". And I told my husband: "Dear, can you send me 500 dollars which I don't have". "What have you spent it on?". "What we're going through here...". Maybe I feel bad here, but seeing my nephews over there looking at me, like: "Hey, Auntie! Hey, give us something; give us the money...". I felt so bad... Maybe I felt like a thief for coming over to steal their food. Of course I took food with me, I made food, I went shopping for everyone. But I felt bad. (Interview 2)

In all these years I have returned four times. I have not returned any more. Seven years ago I came to Spain. I hadn't seen my family for seven years. Yes! Seven years without seeing my mother. And I went over there. Then I went and all month I was there I went from clinic to clinic, doing all the analyses, all the things for my mother and father; mostly for my mother. My mother was quite fragile, and she is still fragile. My mother, due to medical negligence, now has to take medication for life. My brothers didn't want to say anything to me, but my brother told me: "Sister, I'll buy the ticket and we'll both go". And I said: "But I don't have the money". And he says to me: "No! I'll buy your ticket". And he bought the ticket and everything for me. (Interview 13)

The return from the country of origin to the destination is spoken of as something sad and painful for the majority of interviewees; those who have reunited the whole family in the host country and who have

been there for years balance this suffering with the possibilities of travel that they have, because they value highly the level of well-being obtained and, in addition, because they have been able to see that conditions of life have improved little in their country of origin:

Now I travel every year. In my vacations I go away every year and, well, it's more for the family; to see the family and mainly to spend time and to eat with them. That's the fundamental thing, to enjoy family and nothing else. I always stay with my father and he, who lives alone, is always with me. He has had his children but he carries on living his life. We sometimes have thought that he might come here, but it would be a little complicated. Perhaps the fact is that I don't really know how this would work. The best thing would be for him to try because he has never come here. Although maybe he wouldn't like it. He's 53..., 54, well, more or less. (Interview 6)

In summary, we have observed that the social strategies and practices of transnational families are related to the position of migrants and their families in the social structure, both in the society of origin and the destination, in terms of position —whether social, cultural, educational, gender, generation, urban-rural habitat, etc. We have also seen that the bonds of affection and care within transnational households are to do with the context in which the international migration takes place, the social position of the migrant in the destination society and his or her bonds with the society of origin.

9

The future projects of immigrants

Introduction

In studies on international migrations, the predominant trend of research has been directed towards understanding the characteristics of the integration of migrants in their destination countries, and only lately have analyses on the return and its different aspects been added to these studies.

Along these lines, we can see that the return project of migrants is, to an ever greater extent, nuanced by the appearance of transnational communities which have called into question the initial plan for a definitive return. The development of communication technologies and the reduction in the price and speed of transportation, among other factors, permit migrants to relativize distance and to temporarily return to the country of origin, before going back to the destination society.

Within the framework of the aforementioned context of transnationality, in this section we want to show the thoughts of immigrants from Ecuador, living in the Basque Country, about how and where they wish to live in the fairly near future: their individual and family plans and projects. For this reason, we have not merely been careful to find out whether or not they have a plan to return to their country of origin and whether this return plan formed part of their migratory project, but rather, on a more open basis, focussed on the situation and interests of migrants, we have tried to let them show us the different options they consider regarding their future work and family situations which, as we shall see, are conditional on the economic situation which they are experiencing in the countries of origin and destination.

9.1. Staying in the destination society

A third of the interviewees state their intention to remain definitively in the Basque Country. Of these, a third expresses their desire to stay, but combined with periods of return to the country of origin. That is to say, they want to maintain contact with families and friends living in Ecuador, but with a permanent residence in the Basque Country.

The motivations of interviewees who state their intention to remain in the destination society are diverse and sometimes related to emotions between the desire to return, which they felt at the start of their migratory project, and the real economic, employment and family situation that they experience in the destination society, which conditions the realisation of their desires and which can even lead them to question the initial migratory project.

According to the report on the 2007 national survey of immigrants carried out by the National Institute of Statistics, the family situation of immigrants, in particular cohabitation with relatives and especially with the partner and children, increases the probability of remaining in the destination society. This same trend can be observed in interviewees with children who go to school in the Basque Country, who state that their desire to stay is linked to their children's welfare, since they consider that their employment and social future will be better in the Basque Country, which in some cases makes them reconsider their desire to return and make them prefer to stay.

I believe that here they have a better future, because my country is very rich in resources, but it is so badly governed that I don't know if it will ever make a comeback. I see that although we are in crisis here and the crisis is global now, here we will be a little bit better off (Interview 1)

I see that within families the parents want to return, but that return becomes a bit difficult because of the children. The children came over when they were small. Now, they already have their nucleus of friendships over here and they are leading their life here, they have more facilities for certain things, more liberties in many things. Like everything, it has its pros and cons. So it becomes difficult for them to return for that reason. I listen to Ecuadorian couples say: "For me, I'd go back. I'd like to go back to my country, but the ones who don't want to go back are my children". (Interview 10)

We have also seen that the staying in the destination is linked, on the one hand, to the level of well-being obtained, essentially based on

having a job and a house; and on the other, it is conditioned by the difficulties in both work and socialisation that people consider that they may have in their countries of origin, which makes them discard the idea of a definitive return in the short term, keeping it as a long-term objective, linked to nostalgia or the dream of going back.

At the moment I'm still thinking of staying, in Bilbao to be precise. I'm not thinking of moving... I have a fairly stable job, so I can't go, because now in the time we're in it's quite complicated; so, while I can keep what I've got, good. I have a flat that the government has given me, so I'm very contented for this reason, and in another city I wouldn't have that. (Interview 12)

The difficulty of finding a job in the country of origin are especially expressed by the women interviewees who are over 35, who consider it particularly difficult to get a job in the country of origin due to their age. They say that in Ecuador a woman over 30 is already too old to find a job, which does not happen in western societies where thirty is considered "a mature youth", since emancipation, marriage and the arrival of children have been delayed.

In the Basque Country, due to the ageing of the population (two out of ten people are over 65) and also due the need for support among families with small children whose parents work outside the home, the possibilities of employment for women immigrants over 30 are greater, since the majority of these work in domestic service and in particular in the area of caring, both for children and older people; jobs for which people with personal maturity and life experience are in demand.

There you can get work until you're 32 years old, 35 at most. For that reason I tell you that I wouldn't go back, because I would have needed to have a career, to have been in a company for 10 years. Now I go there and don't find work. So, what do I go for? That's why I have to live here (Interview 1)

My project here, with God's help, is for us to stay here. I no longer want to return to my country. I am not able to see many things and I think I would suffer a lot there, because first of all, I wouldn't be able to find work there (Interview 2)

I want to retire here and at my age I wouldn't be able to find a job in Ecuador. It's clear to me, I want to stay here, because my son likes it here, he has his friends, has his relations here. I have seen a lot of businesses and I want to start a small business that allows me to live and to be with my son. To pay the last 15 years of social secu-

rity contributions and retire. I'm 48 years old and I need it. I miss my country, but we have to be realistic and keep our feet on the ground, there's no money to stay in my country. (Interview 3)

Access to social resources, both the economic aid provided by town halls and, especially, the educational and health services in the Basque Country and the interviewees' highly positive evaluation of their operation, mainly that of the health system, constitute other factors that influence the desire to stay in the destination society:

The health service is, undeniably, a great advantage. What I say, is that it may have its problems: "They called me at two and I didn't see the doctor until almost four". They are small problems, but it's enviable. The health system here in the [Basque] autonomous community is enviable. I don't know how it may be in other places, but in Euskadi it's formidable and many people are aware of it; because in Ecuador there is a health centre but even an aspirin you often have to buy it outside. You get ill and often you have to do x-rays, you have to go to private clinics, you have to pay for everything. (Interview 10)

In the hospitals they take care of me marvellously. They're very smart, they're always on hand, they don't make me wait for ages. They tell me: "Look, you have this disease. We are going to cure you. How do you feel?". The eye doctor also operated on me and, well, a Colombian girl told me that they left her very badly off. They operated on me in the Red Cross and I'm very well. If they tell me to wait for a month, I'll wait; whatever's necessary. They've taken spots away, they've sent me for biopsies, the dermatologist has seen me... I came from my country with this [shows spots on her skin]. Things are as they are. My fingers were hurt here and I spent a lot of money on doctors over there. My husband spent money on ointments, patent medicines, what that man didn't do to see my hands get better! And here they found the solution. Here they treated me and they helped me and it didn't cost me a penny. It's not that I'm taking advantage, coming over here with diseases to get cured. I didn't know that I had this very strong anaemia; here they did analyses, studies, biopsies and they know what they should give me. (Interview 2)

The period of stay in the destination society has been considered as another factor that can influence the immigrants' decision to stay or return. On the one hand, the longer the stay the greater the uprooting from the society of origin and the more social and employment integration in the destination, which tips the balance towards staying. Nevertheless, nowadays the possibility of using new technologies such as telephone and Internet makes it possible to be permanently in touch

and to practically experience day-by-day family life between the origin and the destination, which relativizes the uprooting that took place at other moments when the difficulties of communication between the origin and destination were greater. On the other hand, it is also considered that a greater time spent in the destination, leads to greater possibilities for saving and, therefore, investment in the country of origin, which could facilitate the realisation of the return project.

In our study, the immense majority of interviewees have been living in the Basque Country for more than seven years, a fact that corresponds, as we mentioned previously, to the massive arrival of immigrants to Spain that took place starting in the year 2000, coinciding with the switch to the dollar in Ecuador and the economic crisis that then took place in the country and which led to the emigration of a great number of people towards different destinations, including the Basque Country.

Among the interviewees, we verified that the period of residence tips the balance towards staying, especially in the cases of younger people, whose family and social referents are based more in the destination society than in that of origin. These are people who have either emigrated as children with their families, and who thus have been through practically the whole school system in the destination and are integrated in the host society, or young people who have come through family networks or through personal relations with people from the Basque Country.

Generally young people of my age who have made their life in Italy or Spain, they no longer want to return, they have become integrated. I, for example, no longer have the dreams of an immigrant. (Interview 9)

The truth is that I like Bilbao, I would like to stay in Bilbao; but that is something that has to be talked about, when deciding if you have to talk about it and it depends on a lot of things. But my project, in truth, is to stay here. My desire has changed during these years. At the start I wanted to return, later I realised that it isn't viable, it's not the right thing, it's not even... an objective. And so you realise that that the best thing is to stay and that to go there to live is madness. You don't even have the means of support. (Interview 14)

Some of the interviewees emphasise personal improvement as one of their important projects for the future. Their intention is to stay in the destination society, but to improve their level of studies essentially with the aim of finding a better job. They are mainly women who have initially found work in domestic service and who want to change to

other areas of work, for which they consider a greater level of training to be necessary:

I have the aspiration to continue studying, it doesn't matter to me whether it has to be at night. The truth is that I've seen my sisters who have their good jobs, their good positions and I'm the only one who has finished school and emigrated. So I would like very much to be more or less at the level of my sisters and to also be somebody and have a degree and that is my intention, to study at night for the degree that I chose, accountancy, which is what I did in school. And those are my aspirations and my intentions. (Interview 4)

Now I am trying to accredit my studies to see if I can finally get a job in my own area. I know that every company prefers people from here; it's a reality that I would do in my own country, too: if there are unemployed people from my country, then I'm not going to prefer someone from abroad. But well, that's my intention, to stop cleaning houses and work in my own field. So that my brain does a bit of work, because eight years is a long time... I had an excellent level of English and now there are words that I can't even remember how to write (Interview 1)

9.2. **Staying in the destination country with temporary returns to the country of origin**

This form of return which we could call "round trip" is framed in the transnational space in which many immigrants live. As mentioned above, several decades ago migrants either stayed in the destination society or returned definitively to their country of origin. Nowadays the possibilities offered by technological means of communication via telephone or Internet with relatives in the place of origin have made it possible for immigrants to experience the day-to-day economic and social situation of their relatives and their country. We could say that the distance between the origin and the destination is qualitatively smaller.

Also, the possibility of travelling to the countries of origin has increased remarkably. Once the immigrants are in a regular situation in the destination country they plan trips to visit their relatives in the place of origin. All the interviewees who are in a regular situation in the Basque Country have travelled to Ecuador on one or more occasions. Their main reason for these trips is to maintain relationships with family and friends, as well as to have a vacation.

In this line of permanent relations between the origin and the destination, temporary returns are considered by groups of immigrants

who intend permanent residence in the Basque Country, but who wish to keep a permanent relation with their country of origin:

My husband practically has adapted totally here. He hasn't returned to our country since then. I myself went three years ago, but only for a month. I went with the children but I didn't fit in. Because well, you see so many things, and I felt impotent due to not being able to help my family (...) My project is to return for a visit, but then to live here (Interview 2)

To go for a vacation to see my mother and my family. To absorb some of that family affection that we miss so much here. Because this country is all very well, economically you have everything, but what I notice is that here they are lacking a lot of affection... In that sense, including even the people from here, it's a bit hard. Here they're more materialistic... it's a reality... if one person has a car then the other sees him and buys a better one... If one buys a house, the other one buys a better one... In that sense we have a bit more heart. And that's what we miss in this country. And I don't just say 'we', I'm speaking from my own experience and that of the people around me. (Interview 12)

9.3. Definitive return to the country of origin

The return to the country of origin is usually considered as a part of the migratory project by emigrants; we are referring to a voluntary return, desired and which in many cases motivates the decision to leave. Nevertheless, there are times when people decide to return in the face of difficulties, in particular economic difficulties, especially due to the lack of employment in the destination country, which makes it impossible for them to maintain a basic level of subsistence. Regarding this last form of return, official statements have described it as "voluntary" and have proposed various measures of aid, economic and social, to promote return by people who apply for them³⁹, although in fact it is an undesired return that is forced by circumstances.

³⁹ In the presentation of reasons for the resolution of 23 October 2008, of the Ministry of Work and Immigration, the Main Directorate of Integration of immigrants, it is stated that the policy of return has been promoted on the level of the European Union and it mentions the Decision n.º 575/2007/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 May 2007, which establishes the European Fund for Return for the period 2008-2013 as part of the General Program "Solidarity and Management of Migratory Flows". This Resolution gathers the different subsidies for development of a program of voluntary return of immigrants, who are in a situation of vulnerability through their pre-

The return of Ecuadorian immigrants to their country of origin has also been promoted by the Government of Ecuador, which has proposed the "Return Plan", designed to facilitate the return of Ecuadorian migrants living abroad⁴⁰.

In our analysis we are going to concentrate on voluntary return, that which is desired by the migrants, and which has been mentioned by a third of the interviewees.

Return projects are related to the possibility of enjoying favourable economic and employment conditions in the country of origin, an aspect that is underlined by all the interviewees who have indicated their desire to return. To this end, the fact of having been able to save during the period of residence in the Basque Country, sending economic remittances and making investments in the country of origin, constitute one of the requirements, which for some are determining factors, in the decision to return. This is a return associated with personal success in the migratory project, having fulfilled the expectations of obtaining economic well-being for themselves and their families which justifies the objective of their emigration and their absence.

Well, what I would like is to form a family. In principle I would like very much to form a family, and in fact, I have done some things in Ecuador. So far I have a house there. It's a house that my parents have built, well with builders and all that. And well, that's my aspiration, to have it ready and to be able to go. And then, with a firm base, to think about being with someone and becoming a mother. (Interview 4)

carious position or risk of social exclusion. Also, the Ministry of Work and Immigration through the Secretariat of Immigration and Emigration and the Directorate General of Integration of Immigrants, finance a program of voluntary return aimed at immigrants "who indicate the desire to return to their country of origin while in a precarious situation or at risk of social exclusion", which includes various types of assistance, especially economic, to facilitate return. Within the plan of voluntary return it is anticipated that immigrants who return to their country can receive the unemployment benefit to which they are entitled through their work in Spain in two instalments: The first 40% of the total and the other 60% a month after they have returned to their country. The immigrants who take up the offer must commit to not returning to Spain within three years, although after this time they will be able to return, with all the rights that they had previously consolidated.

⁴⁰ The Ecuadorian Government has set up a web page: <http://www.migranteecuadoriano.gov.ec>, to facilitate information and find out who is willing to take part in the initiative proposed in the program designed for the period 2007-10 which proposes differences based on the country where the emigrant is located and different aspects of the type of return: whether definitive or temporary, or for the undertaking of investments.

To have a hairdressing salon, is what I have in mind. First to stay here for a few years and save money here. I have bought a little house in Ecuador, I've applied for a mortgage with the bank from there and the idea is to do up the house and then sell it and thus be able to open the hairdressing salon. My partner also wants to go over there and he has also invested in setting up his business. (Interview 5)

My idea is to go back to Ecuador and I have the idea of setting up a large-scale chicken farm that gives a good yield. Also I would like to set up a greenhouse on a piece of land that I have already bought with my brother-in-law and I want to build a good house so that my wife and children will be comfortable. The idea is to go when I've finished paying off the loan on the truck, that is, within four years. By then I'll have money saved and everything will be easier. (Interview 7)

In the cases of couples or marriages between Ecuadorian and Basque people, the return project, even while desired by the migrant, is considered with greater difficulty in its realisation, as a project which they consider would involve uprooting one of the members of the couple, both geographically and emotionally:

You see, right now my situation is a bit complicated since I have my wife, who's from here, and my son. I think I have the same desire as all Ecuadorians: to go back. My wife knows this, but I don't know... I would like to go to Ecuador. To prepare some business, to have the means to live more or less like we do here. That would be the idea. To have a business, a house in which to be happy with my family... I would go to the place where we've got a piece of land which we bought two years ago, which is 50 hectares. We only have the land, but the idea would be to build a house, to start a business and to living. That's it. (Interview 6)

From everything that has been stated we can deduce that the traditional bipolar scheme that considered migratory movements from a temporary/permanent dichotomy is not suitable at present to explain the differentiated characteristics and forms presented by migratory projects. The characteristics of the link with the primary networks between origin and destination are those that have the greatest influence on immigrants' decisions about their future.

Conclusions

After studying, analysing and reflecting on people who have moved from Ecuador to Spain to live in a new cultural, economic and social environment, and, through their testimony, learning about their reasons for moving and the relationships that have pushed and helped them in this migration and in settling definitively in the Basque Country, these conclusions aim to reflect some of the general trends that have been observed.

First of all, Ecuadorian migration to Spain has made clear the existence of “*environments favourable to migrations*”. Indeed, both in the country of origin, Ecuador, and in the destination, Spain, a series of circumstances has shown that there are historical, economic, political and social moments during which it is easier for migratory movements to take place and that the latter would not take place if these situations did not exist. Cases can vary from one country to another and from one historical moment to another, and, in the case we have analysed, among those circumstances we can mention the following:

In Ecuador:

- 1) A serious economic crisis that led to the adoption of the dollar as official currency and which led to economic ruin for much of the Ecuadorian population. This crisis affected all Ecuadorians, but especially the middle class. It's not that the crisis was more serious for the middle class than for those in Ecuador who live in conditions of poverty, but that the formation of the middle class in Ecuador is limited, recent and somewhat precarious. With the crisis many people in this group lost their jobs, or their businesses failed; and these are people without a safety net of savings to meet unforeseen expenses. At the same time, their capacity for migration was great; they had a better idea what

to do and they had more experience and intellectual capacity which made them able to leave the country with the aim of settling elsewhere.

- 2) A migratory tradition that for many years has configured the collective imagination through the experience of displacement from countryside to city and from Ecuador to other countries, which comprises the everyday life of families. The population considers migration as a fact that is habitual, natural, even desirable, and, for this reason, they are not going to resist or try to exert their influence against it if a relative says that they are going to leave. This reality has contributed to the creation of migratory networks and chains which are there, available for whoever wants to make the leap of leaving their familiar surroundings and moving elsewhere.

In Spain:

- 1) The existence of a continued period of economic boom, with the creation of numerous jobs; together with an ageing of the population and, therefore, the need for people to take paid work that the Spanish workforce was not able or did not wish to do.
- 2) The development of the welfare state, still with certain weaknesses, but which provides security with the availability of the health system for all, the education system for all, and social services and social benefits for those who are in precarious situations. In summary, a secure environment that doesn't exist, to a great extent, in the immigrants' countries of origin.
- 3) Legislation favourable to the arrival of citizens of Latin American countries. Until the start of this decade, Ecuadorian citizens could enter Spain without a visa. Bilateral agreements, legislation on family reunification and facilities for naturalisation also are important.

Thus, the circumstances in Ecuador with citizens who wished to leave and the situation in a Spain which was growing and had its doors open, came together in the late 1990s and early 2000s and constituted a "favourable environment for migration". The result was that, by 2008, 400,000 Ecuadorians were living in Spain, nearly 3% of the 14 million people that live in Ecuador. We think that what we call a "favourable environment for migration" can be detected by analysing other moments in time and other countries. And that this migration between Ecuador and Spain was not a singular case, but a particular manifestation of this phenomenon.

Secondly, we should to bring to light the role of transnational networks of family, friendships and colleagues in the international migratory movement of people. The phenomenon of “*social support networks promoting mobility*” has been made very explicit in our research; these are transnational networks that have been promoting Ecuadorian immigration towards Spain. These networks are mainly fed by relatives. That is to say, these networks basically consist of close family, although not forgetting that some friends and neighbours also play a role. When the family —sometimes in Spain, sometimes in Ecuador, and sometimes in both countries simultaneously— has influenced the decision to emigrate, when the same people of reference have helped in financing the trip, welcoming the emigrant on arrival in the destination, settling recent arrivals in Spain and even in finding a job and a house to live in, as well as with the necessary emotional support, we must conclude that these close networks are what promote, favour and increase migrations. This is what we have found in our research, among Ecuadorians who live in Spain. Also we think that the “*social support networks promoting mobility*” will be repeated in other studies of other migrant groups at other moments and in other countries. In our case we are speaking of transnational networks because, beyond national borders, there are links of unity, proximity and contact, independent of distance.

Thirdly, we must insist on “*multi-motivated migration*”. What has been called economic migration is no more than a way of hiding the wealth of people’s motivations and interests when they make the decision to leave for a new horizon. The diversity of personal and family motivations cannot be hidden behind the economic motivations which, by all means, are very important in all decisions in people’s lives. But in the migration of the Ecuadorian population we have found family reasons, reasons of gender roles, reasons of social control or more accurately flight from social control, of solidarity with relatives in a difficult economic situation, of the desire for better educational possibilities for children, of adventure... In summary, this is a “*multi-motivated migration*”, where economics has its importance, but where the other reasons also weigh heavily, sometimes hidden behind the alibi of ‘economic reasons’ with which everybody seems to conform.

In fourth place we have noted the “*acceleration of change in the demographic patterns of immigrants*”. Host countries, like Spain, have taken two generations to reduce birth rates drastically, with the resulting reduction in family size. The great change from big families to families with one, two or no children has taken place from grandmothers

to granddaughters, via the intermediate generation of mothers. Immigrants —Ecuadorians in this case— have gone in a single generation from the large family formed by their parents, their brothers and sisters and themselves, to their own much smaller family —similar to that of the host societies. The great change has occurred from the families created by the mothers to those constituted by their daughters. Also in relation to this change in demographic patterns, the immigrants have been “rejuvenated” while travelling. The longer life expectancy of the host societies, in this case Spain, means that the Ecuadorians are considered as younger people, socially, than they were considered in their country. A woman —or a man— aged forty or forty five is considered as fully available for work, something that doesn’t happen in Ecuador. Paradoxically, we see that the ageing of society leads to the perception of rejuvenation at many ages, in the same way that childhood and adolescence are extended, youth and maturity also last for a longer period of years, before reaching old age.

In fifth place, Ecuadorian emigrants demonstrate “*patterns of family breakdown*”. It is common to hear stories about the frequency of divorces, separations of unmarried couples, families that are reformed and with subsequent break-ups, stories of acts of infidelity and disappearance of the partner, leaving the spouse with the children, never to return... Women who have to leave their children in the place of origin, family reunifications that are forced, but not always desired... In our analysis, the extended family works better than the nuclear family as a form of emotional support, generally thanks to the principal role played by the figure of the mother, the woman as the sustainer of affection and of the bonds of union.

In sixth place, social networks are supported by communication technologies, which bring people together virtually (mobile phones and Internet communications) and which bring them together physically (the rapidity, frequency and falling price of air travel). The processes of “*virtual transnational presence*” allow contacts between family members in real time. Messages, phone calls and video chats bring people together to such an extent that everybody feels the habitual presence of their loved ones just as if they lived on the other side of the city. In fact, it is more common to “be with” those who are far away than those who live nearby. Also contributing to this transnational proximity are economic remittances, the consumption of so-called products of nostalgic commerce, and the sending of gifts of clothes and complements for those who are far away in kilometres, but nearby in thought. The possibility of return travel —once the long-awaited papers have been obtained— provides the most direct contact between the origin

and the destination. But the trips are happy —because they travel contentedly and hopefully— and also bitter —because they show that everything has changed in the place of origin and that the emigrant has begun to be, and to feel like, a stranger; besides being expensive and unable to be constantly repeated. For that reason, regular virtual contact, oral and visual, is very much appreciated and used, and it is this that allows them to experience day-to-day life on both sides of the ocean, in a transnational space that becomes real because that is how the actors experience it.

In seventh place we have mentioned the “*professional and educational devaluation of emigrants*”. It is very common to find people with educational and professional levels higher than those required by the jobs that they do. The Ecuadorians are not ignorant of this underemployment, but at the same time they know that their under-employment (in agriculture, construction, domestic service and caring) allows them to earn wages that would be unimaginable in the place of origin, which leads the situation to be experienced with less frustration than might be expected. It is these wages that provide the possibility of sending remittances to the families, which sometimes allow them to save to carry out investments in the country of origin, such as building a house, buying land or to starting a business with the intention of returning.

In eighth place, among the Ecuadorians whom we have interviewed in the Basque Country and whom we have asked about their future projects, we have observed a change in their attitudes with respect to traditional analyses of this aspect. We could call this process of change “*from the chimera of return to the desire to remain*”. Traditional readings on emigration maintain that first generation emigrants always speak and dream about their future return to the country of origin, but at present things have changed. Facilities in communications and transport have modified, to a certain extent, the emigrant’s typical decision to someday return definitively to their place of origin. The period of time spent in the destination, previously a key factor in the decision regarding the definitive return, due to the degree of uprooting that it involved, nowadays has less importance thanks to the existence of transnational contacts and the ease of travel. In our study, many Ecuadorians indicate their desire to remain definitively in the destination, in many cases, combining this with periods of return to their place of origin. Among immigrants with partners and children, the probability of definitively settling in the destination country is increased, because they know that if they stay there are more possibilities for their children’s development on all levels than if they return

to the country of origin. In the case of women over 35, age is a factor which works against the desire to return definitively, since it leads to many difficulties in finding a job in the country of origin. Other aspects evaluated when taking this kind of decisions, are the public resources available in the destination country, such as health, education, social resources, etc. These are elements of well-being that improve people's quality of life and which are not developed to the same level in their countries of birth. Projects for personal improvement which migrants consider with respect to increasing their educational level, to allow the socio-professional promotion, also favour integration in the destination country.

To conclude, the fact of migration, the reality of leaving one place and arriving and settling in another, different and distant from the place of origin, leads to a "*modification in the structural characteristics of support networks*". The five characteristics, set out by Carlos Sluzki (1995), are modified. We have stated in the study that the support networks of Ecuadorians living in Spain and in the Basque Country in particular, have undergone changes in:

- The size of the network: Once established in the destination, the support network of the immigrants becomes extended. Added to the people who previously formed an individual's framework of relationships, are others that he or she meets and who also support his or her trajectory of integration in the new location. Sometimes they are new friends, sometimes a new partner, and the employers of workers in domestic service are frequently mentioned. These people work many hours, living together with their employers and, for this reason, get to know them well, establishing emotional bonds, whether of love or hatred.
- Density: The proportion of bonds with those who stay in the place of origin remains high even when the emigrant is already in the destination, because as we have noted, this person needs to know how their relatives are, the parents, siblings or children they have left in the country of origin. In short, contacts by telephone and Internet are very frequent. Simultaneously, links with members of the network who live nearby, in the place where the immigrant has moved, become closer, because of the need for their support and their experience. And in parallel, the bonds with new members of the network who have been met *in situ* increase, people with whom permanent contact must be kept in order to maintain friendship, love, and relationships with colleagues, or with bosses at work.

- Composition: Diversification in the composition of the support network is one of the most evident consequences of emigration. Added to the informal sectors that comprise it (family, friends, co-workers) are joined in the destination by new members of informal networks (volunteers, co-operators, local friends, etc.) but also by members of formal networks (teachers, social workers, members of associations and NGOs, etc.). In our research the Church appears as a sector that is intensively committed to immigrants, in many cases filling the gap that public institutions do not fill. Caritas is the main referent in this section. Belonging to Church organisations, through parochial groups, is also another way of relating and of mutual support. This diversification helps to anchor the position of the immigrant in the host society and can contribute to its becoming a true host society.
- Geographical dispersal or proximity between members: Among immigrants, spatial dispersion between members of the support network increases; transnationality becomes more evident. There are Ecuadorian people who have the members of their support network in North America, in their own country, other European countries, or in other parts of Spain and, in addition, some of these relatives or friends live in the same city in the Basque Country as they do. And what we note is that this geographical dispersion or proximity does not prevent face to face contact. Messages that are constantly transmitted and computer video-chats are communication technologies that make people who live far apart feel as close as if they were sitting together in a neighbourhood café.
- Homogeneity or heterogeneity: Emigration brings about growth in the heterogeneity of support networks in different dimensions, such as attitudes, experiences, values, age, sex, socio-economic level, stage of the life cycle, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, etc. Ecuadorian immigrants have shown that the diversification of people and sectors in the network also entails heterogeneity in the ages, the origin, sex, socio-economic status and in the values of the people who serve as a reference and support them.

In our opinion, this “modification in the structural characteristics of support networks” constitutes a general process of geographic mobility of people who, in moving from one society to another, change the frameworks of their relationships. Different environments change the

lives of emigrants and, therefore, the support network must also adapt to the new situation.

This research has focussed principally on Ecuadorians who have settled in the Basque Country and, through their visions, opinions and evaluations, we have approached other components of their transnational networks. The contrast with people belonging to these networks in other countries and places would doubtless complement the analysis begun in these pages. In this way it would be possible to obtain a holistic vision of this complex network of relationships that constitutes the transnational networks of the migrant population.

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Annex

Fieldwork. Interviews

TECHNICAL DATA				SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE INTERVIEWEE							
Nº	Date	Duration	City	Sex	Age	Marital status	Studies	Occupation in origin	Time in destination	Occupation in destination	Legal situation
E1	03/04/09	70 '	Bilbao	Woman	36	Divorced, two children	Foreign trade	Managerial Secretary	7 years	Domestic worker	Residence and work permits
E2	29/04/09	105 '	Bilbao	Woman	42	Married, two daughters	Baccalaureate	Pharmacist's assistant	7 years	Domestic worker, unemployed	Residence permit
E3	26/05/09	90 '	Bilbao	Woman	48	Divorced, a son	Administration	Administrator	8 years, 6 years in the Basque Country	Domestic worker	Residence and work permits, awaiting naturalisation
E4	16/03/09	50 '	Donostia	Woman	28	Unmarried	College student (did not graduate)	Student	8 years	Domestic worker	Residence and work permits
E5	06/04/09	74 '	Donostia	Woman	24	Unmarried	Hairdressing salon	Student	7 years	Employee in communications centre	Residence and work permits
E6	10/05/09	52 '	Donostia	Man	30	Married, a son	Basic	Construction worker	8 years	Mounter of garage doors	Residence and work permits
E7	10/05/09	48 '	Donostia	Man	30	Married, three children	Basic	Independent worker	8 years	Driver with own truck	Residence and work permits
E8	23/05/09	63 '	Donostia	Woman	34	Divorced, a son	Geriatric assistant	Student	12 years	Domestic worker	Naturalised Spanish
E9	07/04/09	148 '	Bilbao	Man	41	Married, two children	College student (did not graduate)	Tour guide	14 years, 2 years in the Basque Country	Industrial worker, unemployed	Residence and work permits

TECHNICAL DATA		SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE INTERVIEWEE									
N°	Date	Duration	City	Sex	Age	Marital status	Studies	Occupation in origin	Time in destination	Occupation in destination	Legal situation
E10	09/05/09	70'	Vitoria	Woman	35	Married, a daughter	Professional training	Professor	6 years	Employee in association	Residence and work permits
E11	21/05/09	60'	Bilbao	Woman	60	Separated, three daughters	Primary	Housewife	7 years, 6 months in the Basque Country	Domestic worker, unemployed	Residence permit
E12	25/05/09	60'	Bilbao	Woman	40	Unmarried, a daughter	Secondary	Marketing technician	10 years	Teller	Naturalised Spanish
E13	4/04/09	169'	Bilbao	Woman	45	Unmarried	Baccalaureate	Aerobics teacher	8 years	On sick leave	Residence and work permits
E14	2/04/09	73'	Bilbao	Man	26	Unmarried	Diploma in tourism	Student	10 years, 2 years in Basque Country	Unemployed	Residence permit
E15	29/05/09	89'	Bilbao	Woman	64	Separated, three children	Secondary	Travelling salesman	7 years	Unemployed	Residence and work permits
E13	4/04/09	169'	Bilbao	Woman	45	Unmarried	Baccalaureate	Aerobics teacher	8 years	On sick leave	Residence and work permits
E14	2/04/09	73'	Bilbao	Man	26	Unmarried	Diploma in tourism	Student	10 years, 2 years in Basque Country	Unemployed	Residence permit
E15	29/05/09	89'	Bilbao	Woman	64	Separated, three children	Secondary	Travelling salesman	7 years	Unemployed	Residence and work permits

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