

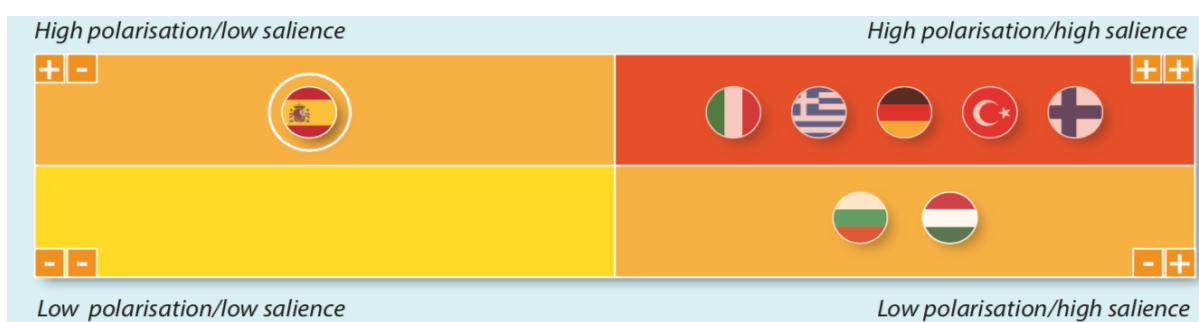
Politicization of the «Refugee Crisis» in Spain

Francesco Passetti, CIDOB, Barcelona
e-mail: fpasetti@cidob.org

Introduction

Since the summer of 2018, following the closing of the Eastern and Central-Mediterranean routes, Spain has become the main route of access to Europe with a total of 65,400 sea-arrivals during 2018 (UNCHR, 2019). This has led to an increasing salience of the immigration topic in the public and political debates. Vis-à-vis new migratory changes the answer provided by Spanish actors has been rather heterogeneous. The analysis carried out for [WP5 country report](#) captures the Spanish idiosyncrasy: i) a public opinion still favourably open towards immigration; ii) a civil society mobilised in favour of immigration and refugees; iii) a multilevel confrontation between the central state, on the one hand, and local policymakers on the other; iv) a parliamentary arena internally divided on migration-related matters.

CEASEVAL Factsheets: Patterns of politicisation on refugees and policy responses
<http://ceaseval.eu/publications>



In view of the recent electoral results and the formation of the government lead by Pedro Sanchez, division on immigration and refugees' issues is particularly worth of consideration. The Popular Party, the main right wing party in the country, holds a securitarian position and calls for strengthening the fight against irregular migration, more borders control and a

European solution to the so-called refugee crisis. On the opposite pole of the political spectrum we find *Podemos*, which supports a legal and humanitarian frame and demands greater responsibility of Spanish institutions for ensuring the safeguard and protection of migrant's needs and rights. In between these two positions we find the Socialist Party (*PSOE*), the outgoing ruling party.

To date Pedro Sanchez's government has held an ambiguous approach towards asylum and refugee. If the Aquarius gesture at the beginning of its legislature (June 2018), along with an open and benevolent discourse, made reasonable to expect a substantive change in the asylum policies, measures undertaken in the following months gave the lie to such hopes. Despite the condemnation of the European Court of Human Rights, pushbacks at the southern border kept continuing. Despite complaints coming from human rights organisations, the externalization of border control to Morocco has been reinforced. Despite the Supreme Court's condemnatory ruling, Spanish relocation quota remains unfulfilled.

At the same time problems at accessing international protection at borders have increased in the last year with delays of several months for formalizing the application and the risk for asylum seekers to be forcibly returned to the countries where they had fled from. After the wide consensus gained in the last election, which has strengthened the *PSOE* position as ruling party, the hope is that time is ripe to put words into action and deploy policies for asylum and refugee up to contemporary challenges.



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