
Spain and Portugal join the European Communities: A long and problematic process

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***Abstract:** Spain and Portugal's aspirations for its incorporation into the European Communities gained momentum with the arrival of democracy for both countries and, for that purpose, the Government of President Adolfo Suárez requested, on July 26, 1977, officially joining the EEC (today Union European). This Spanish and Portuguese aspiration was satisfied eight years later -on June 12, 1985- with the signing of the Accession Treaty in Madrid and the effective integration into the Economic Community on January 1, 1986. Since then, the path of Spain and Portugal has come marked by important advances that have resulted in the well-being of their society as a whole.*

***Keywords:** Spain, Portugal, European Union, Enlargement*

INTRODUCTION

Both countries are located in the South West of Europe and had historically an important relationship with Europe since the prehistoric times, and became important powers during the time of the great discovers of America, the circumnavigation of Africa and the relations between Europe and Asia. The creation of the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, located in different continents meant the beginning of European influence in the world affairs. Also this Empires were important in Europe, as the Spanish Empire was united with the German Empire and had possessions all over the Mediterranean, Italy, Benelux and France. This relation was important in cultural matters, as the University of Salamanca and its important school that had a great influence in the European culture, plus world writers as Cervantes and its novel book *Don Quixote*, painters as Velazquez, and other important cultural personalities. But the European importance of both countries decreased step by step as their Empires declined, becoming in political terms minor powers in Europe and somehow isolating from the rest of the continent. Nevertheless they still were important in Europe in cultural terms, and were involving in all the European cultural movements. Both countries looked inwards increasingly separating themselves from the centre of Europe, but their cultural elites were still strongly link with Europe, with outstanding figures as Picasso, Dali or Ortega Gasset¹. The political elites were also link with Europe, and Europe was taken as an example of modernity, as an example to reform these countries and increase their level of development. The XX century meant the creation of dictatorships in Spain and Portugal under the powers of Francisco Franco Bahamonte and Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and its exclusion from the democratic states of West Europe being even more isolated from the European states as they were seen as the last fascist regimes of the continent. But the Cold War and the possibility of communist regimes in both countries made USA support somehow these countries and incorporate them in the Western area, even when the political ties with other European partners were weak².

¹ Bretherton, Charlotte, and John Vogler. *The European Union as a global actor*. Routledge, 2005.

² Troitiño, David Ramiro, and Karoline Faerber. "Historical errors in the initial conception of the euro and its subsequent development." *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy* 39, no. 2 (2019): 328-343.

PREVIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Portugal was interested having relations with other European states in order to integrate in the international arena and secure the domestic situation with international support, but it could not join the European Communities because of its political system³. On the other hand, its economy was linked with United Kingdom, a traditional ally, so the relations with this country were more important. As the British proposed a new European organization based on economics without any political implication, the Portuguese government involved the country in the negotiations⁴, and Portugal became a founder member of the European Free Trade Association. When United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark left the organization for joining the European Communities, the rest of the member states of the EFTA signed bilateral free trade agreements with the EEC during 1970s. Then the relation of Portugal and the EEC was based in these economic agreements. It could not go further until Portugal was a democratic state⁵.

The case of Spain is more complicated, because its economic ties with the members of the EFTA were not so strong, it did not apply for membership, so the country was somehow isolated from Europe, because its political relations with the member states of the EEC were generally bad. After the Spanish civil war, many intellectuals left the country becoming a strong opposition abroad to the Spanish regime, especially in Europe, and some of them became important in the development of the European integration, as Salvador de Madariaga, founder of the Colleague of Europe, the best institution of European Integration learning. Other important personalities, more than 100⁶, were present in the European meeting of Munich in 1962 representing Spain, without any official representation from Spain. The final conclusions of this European Congress included a reference to the Spanish government pointing out the necessity of the country to become a democracy in order to integrate in Europe⁷. Franco rejected these proposals and the relations between Spain and the EEC became even more problematic. Nevertheless, there were economic relations between both areas, and half of Spanish exports had the EEC as its destination. A preferential agreement was signed in 1970, and established a preferential system with the objective of eliminating the barriers to the commercial exchanges between Spain and the Community⁸.

Spain and Portugal became democratic after the death of Franco in 1975 and the collapse of the Portuguese regime in 1974. Soon afterwards both applied for membership in the European Communities. There was identification in both countries of Europe and freedom, and the accession became an obsession in order to secure the new democracies. The negotiations started soon but the way was long and full of obstacles and the enlargement finally became a reality in 1986, after almost 8 years of negotiations.

³ Moravcsik, Andrew. "Reassessing legitimacy in the European Union." *JCMS: journal of common market studies* 40, no. 4 (2002): 603-624.

⁴ Freres, Christian, and José Antonio Sanahuja. *América Latina y la Unión Europea: estrategias para una asociación necesaria*. Vol. 243. Icaria Editorial, 2006.

⁵ Huysmans, Jef. "The European Union and the securitization of migration." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, no. 5 (2000): 751-777.

⁶ Marks, Gary, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Wolfgang Streeck. *Governance in the European union*. Sage, 1996.

⁷ Panikar, Marina M., and David R. Troitino. "Winston Churchill on European Integration." *VOPROSY ISTORII* 11 (2018): 85-96.

⁸ Dinan, Desmond. *Ever closer Union. An Introduction to European Integration. The European Union Series*. Palgrave, New York, 1999.

THE NEGOTIATIONS

The EEC Communities linked both countries in the enlargement process, so the accession was limited to an agreement with Spain and Portugal. In the case of Portugal, there were no major problems, because of its small size and previous economic ties with the Communities, but the case of Spain was much more complicated because of its magnitude. The negotiations were conducted by different chapters, mainly agriculture, industry, and fishery.

Agriculture was a delicate issue because it was the main Spanish economic activity, and it could distort the already problematic CAP inside the Communities and at the same time compete with the French production. The CAP was by far the policy of the European Communities with a biggest share in the European Budget, and the inclusion of an important country in terms of agriculture could have meant a huge increase in the global expenditure to keep the level of payments received by all the European farmers. So it was important to reform the sector in Spain before the accession to adapt it to the European necessities. On the other hand, the French farmers of the South of the country, focus on Mediterranean production, were afraid of Spanish cheap production and its consequences in terms of market share⁹. The Spanish could produce cheaper, with better quality and because of its weather condition the harvest was ready before than in France, reaching the market before its French competitors. And logically there was an important unrest between French farmers. They even blocked the borders between France and Spain preventing the Spanish agricultural production to reach the European Market. Violence was common, trucks burnt and destroyed, physical attacks commonly spread, and the French police did not stop it. This problem lasted for many years, even with Spain already inside the European Communities, and the High Court of Justice of the EU banned these actions and blamed them on the French state because of the inactivity of its police. Nevertheless, after long discussions the problem was solved with the inclusion of Stand Still clauses and the gradual access of the Spanish products to the European market¹⁰.

Industry was a problem because the regime of Franco had promoted a big industrial sector in Spain, being an important country in this field, but the industry was obsolete and was mainly supported by state subsidies, something against the European legislation. It was clear that the Spanish could not compete with other member states in a free market and its industry should be partially dismantled, but the problem was the timing. Spain wanted to join fast the Communities in order to get financial support from the European Communities for reforming its industrial sector¹¹, but the member states thought that the cost will be too high. The negotiations were hard, and finally an agreement was reached and Spain undertook the reform prior the accession with some European support complemented with national financing. The EEC was paying before the enlargement to save money after the accession. The Spanish government used the requirements of reform of the EEC in this field to justify the needed reform in the eyes of its citizens and avoid a social conflict¹².

This was a constant in many other fields of the Spanish society, anxious of joining the European Communities. The state needed to reform many fields of the Spanish economy, essential reforms that should have been undertake anyway, but were presented to the citizens as a petition of the EEC. As there was a high support for the enlargement among the Spanish citizens the social protest were minimal under the circumstances of the reform, with many State companies closed and high unemployment. The reforms were basic for the Spanish economic competitiveness and were accepted as a minor price for joining the European Communities. This situation expanded to other fields, as social or political, as an example, the legalization of the Spanish Communist party, the long

⁹ Martín, Carmela. *La ampliación de la Unión Europea: Efectos sobre la economía española*. No. 27. "la Caixa", 2002.

¹⁰ Cini, Michelle, and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, eds. *European union politics*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

¹¹ Nugent, Neill. *The government and politics of the European Union*. Palgrave, 2017.

¹² Ramiro Troitiño, David. "Margaret Thatcher and the EU." *Baltic Journal of European Studies* No. 6 (2009): 124–150.

term enemy of Spain during 40 years of a pseudo fascist regime, was partly presented as a necessity to be a fully democratic country in order to join the European Communities¹³.

Fishery was another important field in the negotiations because of the size of the Spanish fleet, the biggest of Europe, and one of the most important of the world. The situation of fishing was difficult after increasing the national sovereignty waters all over the world in the 1960s. The Spanish fleet traditionally fished in international areas that suddenly became national, with the consequent restrictions and conflicts. Accepting Spain in the European Communities also meant accepting the Spanish fleet in the Communitarian waters¹⁴. There were other problems, as environment, because the fishing technics of the Spanish were considered too aggressive for the sea environment¹⁵. And market reasons, because the preparation and competitiveness of the Spanish fleet was higher than the European fleet. The Spanish fish market counted for more than half of the communitarian market, more than half of the fish ate in West Europe was consumed in Spain. So, other European states were interested in the Spanish market as a source for developing their own fishing industry. Also, as it was a communitarian policy, the EEC should represent the interest of its member states all over the world, and the Spanish fleet was spread around the globe¹⁶.

The main problems were between Spain and France, and Spain and United Kingdom. The first conflict was link with the sovereignty of the waters of the Bay of Biscay, where the Spanish did not respect the national waters of France and the French naval forces had problems to reinforce its position. Even there were some sad events when the French shot Spanish fishing boats from a Helicopter, and some sailors died¹⁷.

UK wanted to keep outside of its waters the Spanish fleet to protect its national industry, already in a problematic situation after losing the fishing grounds of the North Sea, before international and then under the sovereignty of Iceland.

Finally, again, Stand Still clauses were accepted restricting the free access of the Spanish fleet to the communitarian waters for long periods of time, but, it was ineffective because once inside of the Community, once inside of the Common Market, the Spanish companies just established themselves in, for example, British soil, using the freedoms of the market to create British companies with Spanish boats, Spanish sailors and selling their catches in Spain, avoiding the Stand Still clauses and getting free access to the communitarian waters¹⁸.

CONCLUSIONS

The Treaty of the enlargement was finally signed and it was the most complicate Treaty of enlargement in the History of the European integration because of its high number of clauses provisions and exceptions. But it meant the incorporation of Spain and Portugal to the Communities. The benefits for Spain and Portugal were numerous, as political support to their new democracies against any internal attempt to reverse the situation, as it happened in Spain with the military coup

¹³ Hix, Simon. *The political system of the European Union*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 1999.

¹⁴ Wallace, Helen, Mark A. Pollack, and Alasdair R. Young, eds. *Policy-making in the European Union*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2015.

¹⁵ Kohler-Koch, Beate, and Rainer Eising, eds. *The transformation of governance in the European Union*. Vol. 12. Psychology Press, 1999.

¹⁶ Moreno, Luis. "La" vía media" española del modelo de bienestar mediterráneo." *Papers: revista de sociología* 63 (2001): 67-82.

¹⁷ Chochia, Archil, David Ramiro Troitiño, Tanel Kerikmäe, and Olga Shumilo. "Enlargement to the UK, the Referendum of 1975 and Position of Margaret Thatcher." In *Brexit*, pp. 115-139. Springer, Cham, 2018.

¹⁸ Troitiño, David Ramiro, Tanel Kerikmäe, Archil Chochia, and Andrea Hrebickova. "Cooperation or Integration? Churchill's Attitude Towards Organization of Europe." In *Brexit*, pp. 33-56. Springer, Cham, 2018.

lead by Tejero, the modernization of the economic and social structures of both countries, and economic benefits from the European policies. Spain and Portugal have been net receivers of European funds until nowadays. In 2011 there was difference between the Spanish payments to the EU and the money obtained by Spain from the European Union of around 2000 million euro. Most of the funds reached these countries via the CAP and the Structural Funds, heirs of the Mediterranean Fund created by the lobby of Papandreou¹⁹. Another important industry of both countries, the tourism, was highly benefited by the enlargement. The numbers of tourist grew year after year because of the membership of the European Communities, with all the legal and social securities it includes as being part of the same politic and economic block. Just Spain during 2010 received 52, 6 millions of international tourists, mostly from the European Union²⁰.

On the other hand, the European Communities obtained benefits from the enlargement, as free access to the Spanish and Portuguese markets when the European companies were more competitive than the Iberians, with the consequent economic benefits, plus more international influence because of the Iberian international connections, especially with America²¹. The enlargement also reinvigorated the European dream, because both states were, and still are big supporters of the European integration and always back new Treaties, new policies and deeper integration in the European building process.

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¹⁹ Roura, Juan R. Cuadrado, Tomás Mancha Navarro, Rubén Garrido Yserte, and Andrés Rodríguez-Pose. *Convergencia regional en España: hechos, tendencias y perspectivas*. Fundación Argentaria, 1998.

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