

20th march 2009



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UdL and IEI create an Immigration Observatory

The Interculturality and Development research group will coordinate a project aimed at creating a reliable database to devise research and specific policies in this field in the Lleida region

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The Interculturality and Development research group (GRID) led by UdL lecturer Jordi Garreta will coordinate the Immigration Observatory, promoted by IEI (Institut d'Estudis Ilerdencs). Its goal is to analyse this phenomenon from an academic point of view, encouraging the exchange of experiences among institutions, organisations and associations that work on this area. It aims at creating a reliable and inclusive database that accounts for the situation of immigrants in the region in order to devise specific studies.

As UdL Rector Joan Viñas and the president of the Lleida Provincial Council Jaume Gilabert highlighted during the presentation of this initiative, this will allow the Observatory to become a referent in the debate about policies and strategies of intervention on the subject of immigration in the Lleida region. The lecturer in the Department of Geography and Sociology at UdL Jordi Garreta and the Director of IEI Joan Busqueta were also present in the opening event.



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Joan Busqueta, Joan Viñas, Jaume Gilabert and Jordi Garreta

The project is divided into two phases. The first consists in collecting and analysing information from different institutions, studies carried out and available resources. This study will comprise several areas, from demographic statistics of official registers and census to socioeconomic references from employers, employment offices, immigrant associations and religious centres. In-depth interviews will also be carried out. The second phase is due to start in 2010 and will consist of an annual research work on the migration phenomenon.

GRID is planning to activate the Immigration Observatory in September on the IEI web page. It will include different sections: training on this subject offered in the Lleida region, actions carried out to promote integration, and studies about the situation of immigrants. At the same time, an electronic

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magazine of wide circulation will be published in order to collect the most relevant results obtained by the Observatory

■ Resources lack and racism increases

The first research report by GRID about immigration in the Lleida region reveals that the increase of immigration without a proportional increase in the necessary resources has collapsed many services. There are remarkable lacks, especially in the fields of education, health and social services, and immigrants are often blamed by users for these deficiencies. Native citizens with a lower socioeconomic level think that they are suffering the consequences of high labour competitiveness and low salaries. As Jordi Garreta explained, "this perception has been increased with the current economic crisis, while racist attitudes have also grown."

In order to elaborate this study, the research group at UdL has organised thirteen discussion groups formed by around ninety people working in the areas of politics, business, agriculture, political administrations and the university, among others. Telephone interviews to staff from local and provincial administrations who work on the immigration phenomenon have also been carried out.

MORE INFORMATION

[Grup de Recerca Interculturalitat i Desenvolupament \(GRID\)](http://www.geosoc.udl.es/recerca/grid.htm) [<http://www.geosoc.udl.es/recerca/grid.htm>]

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