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## **ŠPANIELSKY HOVORIACI MIGRANTI V SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKE** **SPANISH-SPEAKING MIGRANTS IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

*Andrej Kiner<sup>1</sup>*

V súčasnosti na Slovensku pracuje okolo tisíc cudzincov, ktorí pochádzajú z krajín, v ktorých je španielčina úradným jazykom. Vzhľadom na to, že ich absolútny počet je v porovnaní s ostatnými národnosťami relatívne malý a nepriťahuje pozornosť odborníkov, primárnym cieľom tohto článku je analýza práve tejto skupiny. Konkrétne ide o migrantov zo Španielska, Kolumbie, Kuby, Ekvádoru a Mexika, pri ktorých sme skúmali vzdelanostnú úroveň, druh pracovnej činnosti a dĺžku pracovného pomeru. Deskriptívnymi štatistickými metódami a analýzou sme zistili, že väčšina imigrantov má vzdelanie tretieho stupňa (s výnimkou Kuby) a vykonávajú adekvátnu pracovnú činnosť k svojmu vzdelaniu. Spomedzi nich sú to cudzinci ekvádorskej národnosti, ktorých trvanie pracovnej zmluvy je najdlhšie.

**Kľúčové slová:** migrácia, vzdelanie, pracovná činnosť, analýza rozptylu, Slovensko

There are currently around a thousand foreigners working in Slovakia who come from countries where Spanish is the official language. Due to the fact that their absolute number is relatively small in comparison with other nationalities, the objective of this article is to analyse this group. Specifically, these are migrants from Spain, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador and Mexico, for whom we examined the level of education, work activity and length of employment. Using descriptive statistical methods and analysis, we have found that most immigrants have a tertiary education (excluding Cuba) and are adequately employed for their education. Among them, foreigners of Ecuadorian nationality remain working the longest.

**Key words:** migration, education, work activity, analysis of variance, Slovakia

**JEL:** F22, N30

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<sup>1</sup> Mgr. Andrej Kiner, PhD Candidate, Department of International Economic Relations and Economic Diplomacy, Faculty of International Relations, University of Economics in Bratislava, Dolnozemska cesta 1, 852 35 Bratislava, e-mail: andrej.kiner@euba.sk.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The object of the presented article is international migration. At present, migration is one of the most important phenomena shaping the current, but also the future economic, political, social, demographic, but also cultural development in the world (Ossman 2004, Wee and Yeoh 2020). The problem of migration and subsequent integration of migrants (or foreigners, as this group of people is perceived by the Slovak legislation) is a highly topical issue both in the world and in the territory of the Slovak Republic. It is the geographical location of Slovakia, the rising standard of living of the Slovak population, and deepening poverty in some regions of the world that are extremely important factors that predetermine the Slovak Republic to become not only a transit state of migration but also a final destination of migrants.

Despite the slower influx of migrants to Slovakia, there are still those whose native language is Spanish. Spanish is the most widely used language in the Romance language family, both in terms of the number of speakers and countries where Spanish has a dominant position. In a total of 21 countries around the world, Spanish is the official language and, in addition to English and Mandarin Chinese, is one of the most widely used languages in the world, with 325 million native speakers<sup>2</sup> (Green, 2018). The Spanish culture is present on a large part of our planet, as evidenced by the findings of Spišiaková and Kittová (2020), according to which the Spanish language is in demand in the global and Slovak labour market. But as far as foreigners are concerned, Spaniards remain the largest group of Spanish-speaking immigrants living in the Slovak Republic, accounting for 1,279 of the total 152,902 foreign-born residents (Jun 2021). In December 2020, there were 1,300 foreigners from Spain living in Slovakia, meaning that to date, this population declined by 21 people, or 1.62 percentual points. However, between 2011 and 2020, their number increased by 141%.<sup>3</sup> The second most numerous ethnic group, whose native language is Spanish, is Mexicans. Their number in the same period of 10 years, ie. from 2011 to 2020, rose from 105 to 228, thus an increase of 117% (UHCP, 2021). Despite rising immigration trends, Slovakia is not one of the most frequent destinations for the Spanish-speaking population.

This article aims to present data on the Spanish-speaking workforce in Slovakia, highlighting the similarities and differences among Hispanics of different ethnic subgroups. It means that the paper does not focus on the whole Spanish-speaking diaspora living in Slovakia, yet the focus is placed on the employed ones. It should be noted that the Spanish-speaking population does not only consist of the Spanish ethnic group as a homogeneous group, but in reality, as Bucknor (2016)

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<sup>2</sup> This figure must be taken with caution, as it is relatively difficult to estimate the exact number of natives.

<sup>3</sup> The number of registered and authorized stays granted to Spanish nationals was 539 in 2011. The figure was calculated from December 31, 2010 to December 31, 2020.

claims, they come from a variety of backgrounds and face a multitude of challenges in the current labour market.

To February 2020, there were about a thousand workers of Hispanic origin in the Slovak Republic, who differ from each other in terms of gender, educational attainment, and occupation. We will use the data of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (COLSAF) for the analysis and subsequent derivation of the results. The Spanish-speaking population is one of the fastest growing diasporas in the world, creating a community that shares products, services and culture. In our case, we will focus on 5 ethnic groups which have the most numerous representation on the Slovak labour market among all Hispanics. This study examines the occupational attainment of long-term and short-term Spanish-speaking immigrants from Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Cuba and Ecuador in Slovakia. The research question we set ourselves is: What is the difference between these ethnic groups in the Slovak labour market if we take into account education, occupation, and the length of the employment contract?

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

As migration is a relatively complex phenomenon involving a number of actors and processes, it can be understood and described by combining and using multiple approaches, which implies that several important theories address the causes of migration. Perhaps the most common concept is the theory of push and pull factors (Lee, 1966). However, the theory of migration is also studied from different perspectives, including neoclassical economic theory or the theory of the new economy of migration (Constant and Massey, 2002). Relevant theories include dual labour market theory and the world system theory (Massey et al., 1993). As the research question also concerns the level of education, there are theories based on the assumption that individuals will significantly apply their education in labour markets, where they will obtain the highest economic return (Taylor and Martin, 2001). Concerning educational attainment, a lot of attention is placed on educational mismatch, primarily overqualification of immigrants. In this regard, according to Eurostat (2011), foreign-born persons in 2008 experienced significantly higher overqualification rates than nationals (34% compared to 19%) in the EU27. Possible educational mismatch and overqualification have drawn our attention as well.

Overall, little focus is paid to the issue of the Spanish-speaking population as one heterogeneous group in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, so it is necessary to focus on individual ethnic groups. Spain is primarily a country of immigration, which in the short term period has gone from being a country which had practically no immigrants to having one of the greatest proportions of foreigners across all EU member countries (Rodríguez-Planas and Nollenberger 2016, Urriza 2008), whilst recently emigration of highly qualified Spaniards has drawn considerable attention

(Alaminos et al., 2010). For instance, Romero-Valiente (2016) accentuates that since 2011, the emigration of Spaniards abroad has experienced a notable rebound that had not been recorded for almost four decades. According to Izquierdo, Jimeno and Lacuesta (2016), the possible reason for the outflow is the Great Recession and the subsequent European debt crisis. According to the official statistics, between 2008 and 2013 there were about 300,000 emigrations of Spaniards abroad. Half of them were heading for European countries, in particular, the vast majority remained within the European Union (47%) and the European Free Trade Association, primarily the United Kingdom, France and Germany. Not all Spanish migrants are determined to settle down and acquire citizenship. Bygnes and Bivand Erdal (2016) studied Spanish migrants settled in Norway as a consequence of liquid migration<sup>4</sup>, which is characterised by „its temporary, flexible and unpredictable character, with workers ‘trying their luck’ in different European labour markets before settling or moving on or moving home“ (Engbersen 2018, pp. 63-64).

It is understandable that so far other Spanish-speaking ethnic groups in the CEECs are not the focus of academics, as their percentage among indigenous societies is negligible compared to other immigrants. However, much more attention – whether from an economic, demographic or social point of view – is given to the Latino community emigrating to the United States of America. Bohon (2005) contributed to the researched topic with his findings that occupational attainment among selected Hispanic communities<sup>5</sup> varies significantly by country of origin, although important human and social capital factors are also significant variables. Thus, for immigrants, place of origin and destination are important prerequisites in job-queue position. Equivalent research was conducted by Bucknor (2016) who found out that in 2014, the unemployment rate for Hispanics residing in the USA was about 8.5%, out of which Puerto Ricans had the highest unemployment rate (11.2%). In terms of education, 15.4% of Hispanic workers have a college degree or more. Women make up 43.3% of the overall Hispanic workforce, and the most common industry for Hispanic women is restaurants (10.3%), while the most common for men is construction (17.5%). Previous findings are also supported by Catanzarite and Trimble (2008), according to which Latinos experience a number of significant labour market disadvantages, such as high unemployment rates, low wages, overrepresentation in low-level occupations, and limited mobility.

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<sup>4</sup> The article dealt with the Spanish and Polish diasporas based in Norway. However, according to the findings, most of the Spaniards interviewed ruled out a possible return to their country of origin due to the unsatisfactory political and financial climate in the labour market. These reasons, namely easier integration into the labour market and the political situation, can be interpreted as one of the causes of emigration.

<sup>5</sup> Bohon (2005) examined the occupational attainment of long-term Latin American immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, Ecuador, and Colombia in four metropolitan areas with large Latino populations.

As we will be interested in analysing the length of employment in this article, we also dealt with return migration. According to Bocker and Gehring (2015), Spanish migrants living in the EU, in this case the Netherlands, generally show a lower propensity to naturalize, as they are EU residents and have the right to free movement across Member States. Spanish-born migrants prefer to maintain a flexible migratory pattern, however, according to findings, female migrants are much more likely to settle down in the country of destination than males. Overall, however, return migration depends on the social system of country of destination. As stated by Yahirun (2012), older Spaniards who were previously employed in Switzerland were likely to return back to Spain after retirement. If we look at Hispanic nations, Mexicans migrating to the United States are a frequent subject of research. In general, the net migration rate is negative, ie. the number of emigrants is higher than the number of immigrants. However, we are currently noticing that this ratio has reversed and Mexican-born migrants are increasingly returning. According to Gonzales-Barrera (2015), among the most common reasons they decided to return to Mexico was family reunification – specifically 61% of interviewed respondents. Cachón and Aysa-Lastra (2015), who found out that Latinos working in the EU, in particular, in Spain, recorded a significant return rate compared to the ones employed in the USA, who resisted better to the implications of the 2008 Great Recession. It therefore might be concluded that return migration of Spaniards is virtually related to the social system. They have longer employment contracts and decide to return mostly for retirement. On the other hand, Hispanics mostly hinge on the working conditions and labour market, as they emigrate due to economic purposes. Consequently, we can expect that they will act similarly in the Slovak labour market, meaning they will have shorter contracts with employers before they return for any reason.

### **3 METHODS AND DATA**

Drawing on data mapping the employment of foreigners in Slovakia during the past period 2016 – 2020, we have set two goals. The primary aim of the paper is to find out the structure of employment across a selected sample of Spanish-speaking immigrants. In the first place, we will be interested in what professions immigrants practice, and by comparison we want to compare the educational level of the researched sample. Official statistical data of the Slovak Republic recognize 10 levels of education:

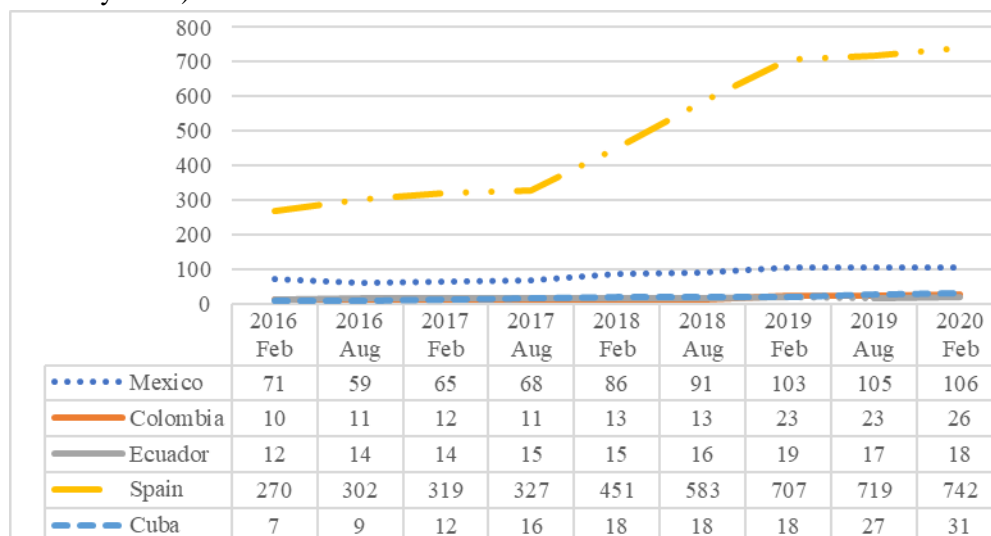
1. No schooling (NS)
2. Primary education (PE)
3. Lower secondary education (LSE)
4. Secondary education (SE)
5. Upper secondary education (USE)

6. General upper secondary education (GUSE)
7. Post-secondary non-tertiary education (PNE)
8. First stage of tertiary education (FTE)
9. Second stage of tertiary education (STE)
10. Third stage of tertiary education (TTE)

In order to find the answer to the research question, we will focus on foreigners working in Slovakia who come from the following countries: Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Cuba and Ecuador. As the employment mapping statistics are published by COLSAF on a monthly basis, we decided to process these data on a semi-annual basis by averaging the number of foreigners over a period of six months starting in February (February 2016 – February 2020), which will be expressed by the coefficient of the share in the range from 0 to 1. Thereby, our methods comprise a quantitative research in order to gain relevant insights of specific issues. Last but not least, we will find out the average length of the employment contract across the examined spectrum. Based on the data and facts discussed in the previous section – Cachón and Aysa-Lastra (2015), Bocker and Gehring (2015), we believe that Spaniards working in Slovakia will work longer than the Latino community. Therefore, we establish the hypothesis that *Immigrants from South American countries (Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador and Cuba) generally have shorter employment contracts than immigrants from Spain*. As in the previous case, we will proceed from the COLSAF data, which we will be processed and evaluated over the period of time. In order to verify whether a different culture and thus nationality have an impact on the length of the employment contract, we use a parametric statistical method created to compare groups to determine if there is a difference in sample populations – analysis of variance (ANOVA). One-way ANOVA is a technique that generalizes the two-sample t-test to three or more samples (Heiberger and Neuwirth, 2009). In our case, the independent variable is the nationality of the foreign employees, while the variable is the average length of contract in months. Using ANOVA is a common practice among many researchers dealing with migration (Cimporeu et al. 2020, Sonderegger and Barrett 2004), thus we also opted for this descriptive statistical method.

The following section presents the results we have obtained according to the mentioned methodology. The following graph shows the number of employees from selected Latin American countries and Spain. We observe that Spaniards constitute a sizable share of the current Spanish-speaking workforce in Slovakia, followed by Mexicans and the remaining ones. Overall, the number of Spanish-speaking immigrants has been constantly growing, however, the ones from Spain significantly outnumbered the rest.

Graph 1: Evolution of the examined immigrants in Slovakia (February 2016 – February 2020)



Source: processed by author.

#### 4 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The purpose of this research is to address a range of questions about immigrants employed in any sector in Slovakia. Specifically, this part seeks to provide information on the profile of the already mentioned group of employees, comprising their country of origin and level of education attained.<sup>6</sup> Among Hispanic workers, there are notable differences by the country of origin. Overall, Latino workers seem to have an equal level of educational attainment than the workers of which Spain is the country of origin, although that is not the case of Cubans and Colombians. Through the whole examined period, there is zero percentage of Latino workers with no schooling, yet we register some Spaniards without any education (0.16%).

To examine the given figures in detail, we can conclude that immigrants from Ecuador are highly educated, possessing any form of university education (85.7%). The Mexican immigrant employees lag behind, with 76.4% of the tertiary educated ones. The share of Spaniards who have a university degree is lower, but still slightly more than 67%. On the other hand, the lowest number of workers with a university degree is registered with Cubans (26.3%), while we observe approximately twice the number of Mexican immigrants (53.5%). If we focus exclusively on any form of secondary education, Cuban (55.1%), followed by Colombians (46.5%), Mexicans

<sup>6</sup> Educational levels used in the paper are subjected to International Standard Classification of Education-97 (ISCED-97) – an international classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields.

(19.8%), Spaniards (16%) and lastly Ecuadorians (8.6%) predominate in this category. As in the case of secondary school, Cubans have the first place in primary education.

Table 1: Share of the examined immigrants based on their education

	<i>NS</i>	<i>PE</i>	<i>LSE</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>USE</i>	<i>GUS</i>	<i>PNE</i>	<i>FTE</i>	<i>STE</i>	<i>TTE</i>	<i>N/A</i>
	Less than Secondary Education		Any form of Secondary Education					Any form of Tertiary Education			
<b><i>Colombia</i></b>	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000	0,3310	0,0845	0,0493	0,0563	0,4789	0,0000	0,0000
<b><i>Cuba</i></b>	0,0000	0,1282	0,0128	0,0769	0,3462	0,1154	0,0000	0,0128	0,2500	0,0000	0,0577
<b><i>Ecuador</i></b>	0,0000	0,0571	0,0000	0,0000	0,0214	0,0643	0,0000	0,2714	0,5857	0,0000	0,0000
<b><i>Mexico</i></b>	0,0000	0,0013	0,0013	0,0358	0,0716	0,0782	0,0106	0,1273	0,6114	0,0252	0,0371
<b><i>Spain</i></b>	0,0016	0,0568	0,0095	0,0391	0,0529	0,0554	0,0029	0,1486	0,5210	0,0041	0,1079

Note: Education level by official statistical data of the Slovak Republic.

Source: processed by author.

## 5 OCCUPATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Hispanic workers work in a variety of occupations. One frustration that we share in data analysis to compare immigrant occupational attainment is that they do not provide information on particular professions but are contained in categorical groups.<sup>7</sup> In the result part, we excluded two categorical groups as there were no employees (armed forces occupations; skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers). Managers, Professionals, Technicians and associate professionals are considered most demanding jobs, requiring high skill levels. Clerical support workers, Service and sales workers, Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, Craft and related trades workers, Plant and machine operators and assemblers require medium skill, while Elementary occupations are conditioned by low skills (ILO, 2021).

According to our findings, the highest percentage of employees in a profession requiring higher level of education comes from Mexico (80%). The rest of Mexican workers work in a sector that requires intermediate knowledge (16.6%) and only a negligible number hold positions in which employees can perform their tasks with the minimum qualifications (0.5%). Foreigners from Colombia and Ecuador are in a similar situation. Approximately 71% and 67% respectively perform a profession requiring a higher level of education, but only 21% of Colombians and 33% of Ecuadorians perform administrative work, work in services, or are employed as production operators. Using the example of Cubans, we can demonstrate how the level of education is reflected in the type of employment. We recorded 26.3% of immigrants who had completed a third-degree education, with a similar percentage pursuing

<sup>7</sup> We opted for the International Classification of Occupations (ISCO) system, which is commonly used in national contexts for the collection and dissemination of statistics



a profession requiring the same education (22.4%). Employees who perform a job requiring a medium (37.2%) or low (34.6%) level of qualification have the largest representation. In the case of Spanish foreigners, we observe that almost 60% are employed in positions requiring higher education, which to some extent also reflects the number of university-educated workers (67%). 33.7% of Spaniards work in services, trade, administration and related jobs, while only 0.5% perform elementary jobs.

Table 2: Share of the examined immigrants based on their occupation

	<i>Managers</i>	<i>Professionals</i>	<i>Technicians and associate professionals</i>	<i>Clerical support workers</i>	<i>Service and sales workers</i>	<i>Craft and related trades workers</i>	<i>Plant and machine operators and assemblers</i>	<i>Elementary occupations</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<b><i>Colombia</i></b>	0,0986	0,4789	0,1338	0,2113	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000	0,0775	0,0000
<b><i>Cuba</i></b>	0,0064	0,2115	0,0064	0,0385	0,1154	0,0833	0,1346	0,3462	0,0577
<b><i>Ecuador</i></b>	0,1500	0,3714	0,1500	0,2714	0,0500	0,0000	0,0071	0,0000	0,0000
<b><i>Mexico</i></b>	0,1114	0,5133	0,1790	0,0862	0,0186	0,0345	0,0265	0,0053	0,0252
<b><i>Spain</i></b>	0,0824	0,3391	0,1738	0,1923	0,0186	0,0575	0,0688	0,0213	0,0464

Source: processed by author.

## 6 LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT

This part provides evidence on the length of employment of the examined sample of Spanish-speaking immigrants. Our findings suggest that there are subtle differences in the average length of the contract, either accepting or rejecting the hypothesis stated. In this regard, we want to justify whether there is a substantial difference between groups. For this reason, as stated in methodology, we used a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the following null hypothesis: *There is no difference in means between groups of the selected samples of Spanish-speaking immigrants employed in Slovakia.* The level of significance was set at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

Table 3: The average length of employment

	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
<b><i>Colombia</i></b>	9	268,8953	29,87725	12,43256
<b><i>Cuba</i></b>	9	270,0657	30,0073	14,93083
<b><i>Ecuador</i></b>	9	395,8405	43,98228	14,6438
<b><i>Mexico</i></b>	9	232,6466	25,84962	9,102132
<b><i>Spain</i></b>	9	261,238	29,02644	6,426688

Source: processed by author.

Based on the data we have calculated, migrants from Ecuador tend to make a contract of employment for the longest period, in particular, for almost 44 months on average. On the other hand, the shortest employment contracts are made by Mexicans, who remained employed approximately for 30 months before they quit or change employment. Colombians, Cubans, and Spaniards are relatively similar when it comes to the period of employment (from 29 to 30 months).

Table 4: ANOVA test

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
<b><i>Between Groups</i></b>	1785,646	4	446,4114	38,79408	2,89E-13	2,605975
<b><i>Within Groups</i></b>	460,2881	40	11,5072			
<b><i>Total</i></b>	2245,934	44				

Source: processed by author.

We do not reject the null hypothesis because the critical value  $F_{crit} 2.605975 < 38.79408$ . We do not have statistically significant evidence at  $\alpha = 0.05$  to show that there is a difference in mean length of employment contracts among the five groups of immigrants as the p-value is greater than the significance level.

## 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The influx of migrant workers who came to Slovakia after Slovakia's accession to the EU was characterized by a high number of those who achieved a higher form of education and more than 50% of migrant workers had a university degree (Přívarová and Přivara, 2015). With the exception of Cubans, we observe a similar phenomenon in our researched sample. When examining the highest educational attainment of the group of immigrants surveyed, we found that the largest proportion of people with a university degree came from Ecuador and Mexico and not from Spain, as we initially thought. The common currency and the free movement of nationals of the Member States do not put as much pressure on education as there are third-country immigrants who may be discriminated on the labour market. On the contrary, among the surveyed group of foreigners working in Slovakia, the lowest educational attainment concerns the population of Cuba, where the highest proportion of people possess secondary education, followed by university graduates, but surprisingly also workers who have completed only the first stage of education. Workers with primary education and no education were practically non-existent in other group or rather their number was less than 6%. The limit of this part was data processing, as we do not have information about education about 11% of Spaniards and 6% of Cubans.

Previously, we have stressed the role of educational mismatch, which has been at the very centre of attention of many authors in the past (Chiswick and Miller 2009, Piracha and Vadean 2012). In our case we observe a certain concord between educational and occupational attainment. Thus, the fact and willingness of taking up lower paid jobs while being over-educated, as illustrated by other academics in their research (Qureshi 2011, Chiswick 1978, Belot and Ederveen 2011), have not been confirmed.

Examining the average length of the employment contract, we found that Ecuadorians tend to have the same job for the longest time, averaging 44 months, which is the longest compared to other Latinos. Spaniards, on average, remain employed for 29 months. It will be extremely interesting to examine the reasons and differences between the different ethnic groups and to determine what is behind the different lengths of the employment contract. According to Bivand Erdal and Ezzati (2015), the causes and length of stay are influenced by several factors. Whether it is a matter of successful integration, age, reunification with the family, or culture plays a role in the whole process, this topic will be the subject of our further qualitative research.

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