

# The industry of migration control

*The Spanish winners of European  
Union border policies*

**Executive Summary**

A report by Fundación porCausa de  
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## Executive Summary

An “industry” can be defined as the set of economic interactions between different actors with the aim of producing and commercializing certain goods and services. When those interactions are designed to control migration flows, the stock of “goods and services” will include fences, concertina wires, surveillance systems, detention facilities, deportation flights or cooperation projects designed to discourage migration in the first place. The main industry actors are a myriad of companies and organisations that receive an economic compensation in exchange of playing a decisive role in the system’s machinery.

This document presents, for the first time in Spain, a radiography of the Industry of Migration Control. It depicts the ecosystem of actors and interests without which the objectives established by the politics of border control could not be fulfilled and whose operations rely almost exclusively on public funding.

According to the research conducted by porCausa Foundation, in the period 2007-2017, Spain allocated at least 896 million euros of public funding to companies in order to conduct activities in the four sectors of this Industry:

- 1) Border protection and surveillance (such as the fences in Ceuta and Melilla or the Mediterranean Sea)
- 2) Detention and expulsion of irregular migrants (from the detention facilities to the deportation flights)
- 3) Reception and integration of migrants through temporary and long-term programs.
- 4) Externalization of the control of migration flows, through agreements with private organisations and public institutions in third countries.

The first two sectors constitute the focus of our analysis: they concentrate over 97% of the resources channeled through the 943 public contracts identified in our investigation. The bulk of the resources for these activities come from different European funds, such as External Borders, Return, Internal Security, and Asylum, Migration and Integration). They also come from Frontex, and from the investments of the Spanish Government, through the co-funding of European funds and the construction of infrastructure.

The role of the EU in this Industry is not limited to the provision of economic resources. Public spending is determined by the priorities of a policy framework established by the European institutions and Member States. By executing these policies, the Spanish Government becomes an intermediary between these institutions and the companies and organisations benefiting from the contracts.

This does not mean that Spain has played a passive role in this process. As a guarantor of the protection of the European Southwestern border, and as the border with Morocco and Africa, Spain has pioneered the implementation of the policies that are nowadays fostered by the EU and its Member States. Our country started to nurture the migration industry long before Europe started panicking with the refugee

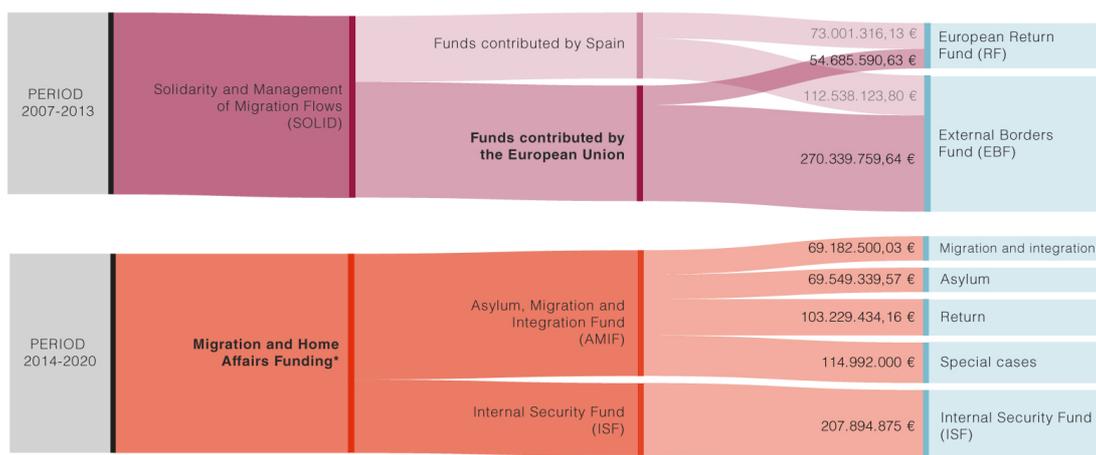
crisis, and it has done so with the complicity of governments across the ideological spectrum.

**Data: funds, intermediaries and contractors**

The database compiled for the development of this report -which is available at [porCausa.org](http://porCausa.org)- includes contracts with almost 350 enterprises for a total value of 610 million euros. Among the recipients of funds from the Industry of Migration Control we have found a great variety of companies, some of them participated by the Spanish State. The most expensive activities are related to border surveillance technology development. Deportation flights also stand out, as well as the expenditure related to the management of detention centers and centers for temporary stay.

Ten out of the 350 companies included in the database concentrate over half of the total resources allocated through public procurement. These companies are INDRA, AMPER, EUROCOPTER, ALBIE, TELECOMUNICACIÓN-ELECTRÓNICA Y CONMUTACIÓN, ATOS, DRAGADOS, FERROVIAL, SIEMENS, TELEFÓNICA ESPAÑOLA Y GMV. The technological company INDRA is the number one contractor, engaging in 60 operations worth nearly 110 million euros.

This research project has gone through constant, and in some cases insurmountable, difficulties. After one-year long investigation and over 50 requests of information to the Transparency Site of the Spanish Government, this research process constitutes a testimony of the opacity of this sector. The methodological annex explains how the lack of access to what should be public information has been overcome through the use of different sources to locate the contracts. The result is a partial, yet revealing, account of how the Spanish public budget the European funds are allocated to the Industry of Migration Control.



\*Note: Funds for period 2014-2020 are estimated, previous funds (2007-2013) are already executed.

Source: European Commission, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Employment and Social Security of Spain.

## Is there political capture by private interests?

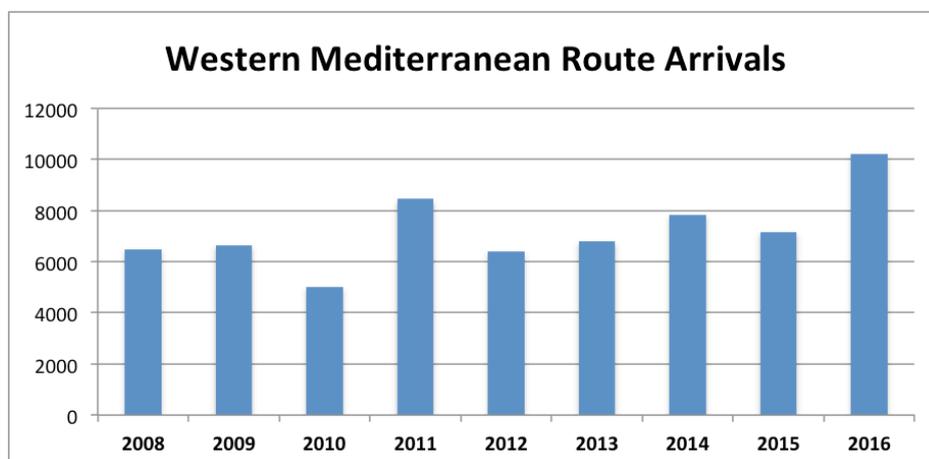
It is possible that the breadth of this Industry is not limited to just public procurement implementation. One key question of this research was related to the potential regulatory capture of the politics of migration control by those who benefit from it. This phenomenon -which has been thoroughly documented in the defense and pharmaceutical industry- refers to the process by which a certain elite plays a decisive role in specific political and regulatory decisions, by either blocking them or promoting others more in line with their interests and preferences.

With the information at hand, our research is not conclusive on this question and we can not yet prove that the Industry of Migration Control in Spain has taken over an important part of the public politics. On one hand, with respect to the so-called “revolving doors”, our analysis of the list of executives and members of the Board of Directors has not been able to identify significant correlations between the Spanish government or Parliament representatives and the Industry’s executives. On the other hand, we have not been granted access to key information that would confirm or deny company or individual payments to political parties and foundations.

This does not mean that we rule out this influence. During the course of this research, we have been able to identify different factors that encourage us to keep looking: the extreme opacity of this sector and the existence of indirect or informal channels of influence (such as commercial fairs, corporate conferences and influence on media outlets). What’s more concerning: the technological development and the management of an Industry that is key to border control and state sovereignty is being left in the hands of private companies.

## The consequences of this migration model

The consequences of the logic behind this model should be considered when it comes to assess its efficiency and its alignment with Europe’s values. With the expansion of the Industry of Migration Control, the legal, economic and personal risks associated to mobility are multiplied: whether we acknowledge it or not, what results from a fence rddled with concertinas could be the suffering and death of human beings who have committed no crime. In high-risk places such as the Mediterranean Sea, this Industry has been established to detect threats in the border, not to rescue people.



Equally important, those doors closed to irregular migrants may end up obstructing mobility for the rest. According to Frontex, for each attempt to enter Europe irregularly in 2016, 206 people entered Europe with all the required permits. This obsession over the securitization of the system affects migration patterns as well, stimulating the mobility of certain profiles (such as qualified workers or international students) over others whose only option left is the irregularity. This inequality pattern can also be seen in the link between migration and development, for it contaminates relationships with third countries and forces international cooperation to follow the same objectives of human mobility control. This inevitably undermines Europe's stance when it comes to demand the compliance of others with human rights.

It is precisely for these reasons that uncovering/unveiling the machinery behind this Industry of Migration Control is of vital importance. This is the first report of a research project that will expand into the analysis of the companies identified so far and the exploration of the potential political capture by corporate interests. We will also start examining the activities of reception/integration and externalization of migration control, as they are two sectors where the operating actors and the financing tools are very different from the ones we have seen so far.

*The full Spanish version of this report, as well as all the annexes, the interactive database and the repository of related journalistic pieces are available at [porCausa.org](http://porCausa.org).*