



migrants in Norway. Her aim is to compare the two groups, to find both similarities and differences, and to create a more comprehensive study of work and migrations flows between south and north in Europe.

Bygnes believes many of the Spanish graduates refuse to blame the crisis for their emigration status in order to distance themselves from the stigma attached to unemployment and facing financial problems.

“There may also be some of the graduates who want to draw a line between themselves and low-education Spanish who travel for work. The media, both in Spain and in Norway, has created an image of low-educated Spanish leaving the country due to lack of work and money,” Bygnes explains.

Which may actually be the main reason they are leaving, or at least to a greater extent than Spanish high education graduates.

“My impression is that low-educated Spanish migrants specify the financial crisis and unemployment woes as the main reason for seeking work in Norway. However, they also mention a lack of future prospects, corruption, growing social inequalities and reductions in the social security net as contributing factors,” says Bygnes.

### **The truth behind the media headlines**

When Bygnes started the project, one of the triggers was the media’s portrayal of migrants as Euro crisis fortune seekers, fleeing southern Europe for lack of work and money. She hopes that her research will paint a more nuanced picture of the complexities behind migration flows.

According to Bygnes, there has been relatively little research on migration flows from Southern to Northern Europe. Understanding this migration can help Norwegian authorities to better facilitate the arrival of migrants from Spain. For Spain, a country experiencing a ‘brain drain’, this knowledge is equally essential.

“Spain has lost about a million people of its working age population to migration, of which many are highly skilled. I wanted to explore what this migration is about in reality,” says Bygnes.

She has made some observations that are familiar, or even obvious, about the Spanish meeting with Norway and Norwegians.

“Getting to know Norwegians can be an effort. And the climate is also an issue for many of the migrants. However, the highly educated migrants are quite enthusiastic. In particular, they appreciate the strictly regulated working hours, and the fact that work and family life is easy to combine in Norway,” says Susanne Bygnes.

However, the Spanish migrants with lower education sound a more cautious note.

“The low-education migrants also point to better regulations in the labour market in Norway than in Spain. They do, however, more often feel exploited. Back in Spain, they compared themselves to others in a similar position, and shared a sense of being exploited. In Norway, they compare themselves to Norwegians in a similar position in the labour force, but who have better working conditions than they are given, which gives the Spanish workers a sense of being treated unfairly.”

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 [Spanish people from all educational and professional backgrounds are struggling to find jobs at home. More and more Spanish move to northern Europe, including Norway, to find work. \(Photo: Andres Kudacki, AP/NTB Scanpix\)](#)

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Sverre Ole Drønen

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