

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

“CHANGING CULTURAL CONCEPTIONS OF THE ‘NATIONAL’: FACING UP TO THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY MIGRATION IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL”

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Within only a few decades, cultural diversity has become a reality in the Iberian Peninsula and resulted in a radical change in the cultural understanding of the concept of the ‘national’. A national preoccupation with preserving their Christian unity and purity characterized Spain and Portugal for centuries - from the time of their emergence as nations during the medieval process of the Reconquista (the reconquest of the Moorish-Islamic settlements in the Iberian territories by the Christians, combined with the expulsion of the Jews) to their democratic transition in the years 1974 and 1975.

This idea of a special national character was also a feature of the colonization of the New World and of the Portuguese colonial rule in Africa and has become deeply ingrained in the discourses of both states in the form of specific national myths. From the eighties onwards, a new chapter began for these states with the immigration of people from Eastern Europe, the Maghreb, Africa and Latin America. The arrival of immigrants intensified notably, post millennium, and changed Portugal and Spain from countries of emigration to countries of immigration.

At present, there are very special dynamics in this process that are influencing practices common to the everyday life of both countries, affecting the strategies employed in cultural translation and transforming the countries national self-images.

The international conference provides an opportunity for reflection on the ways in which concepts of the nation and national are currently undergoing change in Spain and Portugal in the context of current global developments, particularly the influx of migrants. This new reality requires us to re-examine the historically evolved exclusive ideas and myths inherent in discourses of the national, to look at how these are interpreted and re-written, and to search for buried points of contact and new strategies that will enable the adoption of a freer, more open-minded and inclusive sense of identity. These processes of remodulation are currently underway in Spain and Portugal. The aim of the conference, therefore, is to document intermediate results, identify current trends and developments, and to propose possible ideas that may ease the way to more successful coexistence in an environment of cultural diversity in the years to come.