

**AFRICAN MIGRATION TO THE  
CANARY ISLANDS****AFRIKAI MIGRÁCIÓ A  
KANÁRI-SZIGETEKRE**ADANKÓ Daniella<sup>1</sup>**Abstract**

In my research, I examine the issue of illegal migrants traveling to the Canary Islands. I present the number of flow figures and then analyze the results. In my research, I emphasize the choices of the African routes and their external influencing factors. Within the issue of flow, I look the effects of coronavirus in connection with the illegal migration, and how they handled the arising situation in 2020 on the islands, including the provision of asylum and asylum to African migrants. I analyzed how the distribution of the population of the Canary Islands is formed between the islands in 2020, in which I highlight one of the future problems of the archipelago: the insenecence. In sum, and I am looking for a solution to the problem of the migration crisis in the Canary Islands, For that, I took into account the figures revealed in my research and the factors encouraging the willingness to travel.

**Keywords**

Canary Islands, illegal migration, migration, North Africa, migration routes, migration growth

**Absztrakt**

Kutatásomban a Kanári-szigetekre utazó illegális migránsok kérdéskörét vizsgálom, amelyben bemutatásra kerülnek az áramlás számadatai, majd elemzés alá vetem őket. Hangsúlyt kapnak az útnak induló afrikaiak útvonalának választásainak mértjei, illetve annak külső befolyásoló tényezői. Az áramlás kérdésén belül kitérek -napjaink egyik legaktuálisabb témájára - a koronavírus okozta hatásokra az afrikai migráción belül, illetve hogy a 2020-ban kialakult helyzetet hogyan kezeli a spanyol kormány. Elemeztem azt, hogy a Kanári-szigetek lakosságának eloszlása miként alakul a szigetek között 2020-ban, amelyben rávilágítok a szigetcsoport egyik jövőbeni problémájára: az előregedésre. Összegzésül pedig a migrációs válság problémájának megoldására próbálok választ adni, figyelembe véve a kutatásomban feltárt tényeket.

**Kulcsszavak**

Kanári-szigetek, illegális migráció, migráció, Észak-Afrika, migrációs útvonalak, migráció növekedés

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, illegal migration from Africa has received significant attention and increased the fear of the emergence of migrant flooding in European countries. As a significant part of African refugees reaches Europe through the boundaries of Spain, I consider it worthwhile to examine migration routes more thoroughly over the years and what factors are in the background of increased migration from Africa to Europe. Besides, in order to get an accurate picture, I will examine how the dynamics of the numbers are in recent years.

### MIGRATION TO SPAIN AND THE CANARY ISLANDS

Black Africans from North Africa mainly use the Western Mediterranean route to approach Europe. Most people try to get to Spain on ships, which starts from the ports of Algeciras and Almeria, but they are trying to get into Ceuta and Melilla [1, p. 21] in the mainland to the two North African Spanish enclaves that ensure the two land borders among the continents. Those who wish to go to Europe from West African countries should first reach the Western Mediterranean. Here they can reach the route on the Sahara or the Atlantic Coast. The Atlantic route is mainly favored by those who come from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Mali, Gambia, Nigeria, Somalia, Palestine, Senegal, Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sudan, Morocco, and Ghana.

Since the southern borders of Western Sahara and Europe are close to each other, it became one of the most popular routes for illegal entries. Immigrants traveling through the Morocco are delivered by smugglers, often using the unknown ports of the West Saharan coasts to the Canary Islands.[2]

At the beginning of the 1990s, the refuge flood set out from the ports of the two enclaves with small fishing vessels and boats to cross to Europe. [3] Morocco and Spain introduced increased border control due to the high number of illegal entry, which forced migrants to use longer routes.[4] In 1991, Spain imposed a visa requirement for North Africans, thus hampering illegal border crossing. Marine borders are still dominated by small boats.[5] During border control, African Spanish enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla received special attention. Each time they are tightened by control, immigrants use newer strategies and approach the borders on new routes.[6] Initially, Moroccans regulated the flow of migrants arriving on ships, but since the end of the nineties, more and more African people arrived from the South of the Sahara to travel through Morocco. In 1999, the Spanish Government approved the plan for increased monitoring of Gibraltar. However, according to 2000 statistics, the number of unauthorized migrants captured on the land coasts of Spain increased over 17,000.[5] Since the mid-1990s, the constitution of the foreign population on the island has changed. The growth of immigration to the Canary Islands coincided with the changes in Spain. Until 1996, Europeans were at the head of immigrant populations, with nearly 70%. However, by the beginning of the 21st century, the proportion of Europeans decreased significantly and the African majority were formed instead.[6] Since 2002, the number of migrants entering the Canary Islands has been more than those who target the land coasts of Spain.

Most of those arriving at the Canary Islands started from the nearest points of the land coast, both from Western Sahara and Morocco.[5] The peak was reached in 2006 when

it was estimated that 700-800 people were launched daily to the Canary Islands. Those who wanted to get here needed to travel about 800- 2000 kilometers - depending on the starting point. Those who decided to take on the journey, had to pay thousands of euros to the smugglers to get them to the target country. For the longer roads they used „Cayucos" ships, and "Pateras" ships for the shorter ones.[7, p. 8] New ships coming to the shores of the Canary Islands were called kayaks. These were previously used by fishermen in Mauritania and Senegal. These types of ships were built of wood and fiberglass, painted with vibrant colors. Their structure is much longer, deeper, and more durable than any Cayucos. In addition to that, due to their deeper design, length and their equipments, they are suitable for transporting a lot more passengers and ready to take much longer journeys on sea.[6] Depending on the currents, the journey took approximately 5 to 15 days, during which passengers were often in lack of a sufficient amount of food and drinking water the time spent in a boat. The occurrence of death and disappearings were common. These cases can be estimated at approximately 400-1000 people. [7, p. 8] Migration floods reached a peak in 2006. More and more people arrived from the southern areas, especially from Mauritania and Senegal. Due to these changes, the number of people coming to the Canary Islands has increased.[5] In the first five months of the year, nearly 10,000 people arrived. Probably due to the more favorable weather conditions, the flow of migration to the islands was particularly intense in the spring. 900 people came to the islands only on the second weekend of May. It is likely that most of the migrants who set out die on board. The quantification is not easy, but if we look at the number of corpses found on the shores or consider the words of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, the successfully arrived migrants, and the family members of those that has disappeared, then the number of people that died in transit can be made up to thousands during the spring months. This increase has caused an extraordinary humanitarian crisis in the Canary Islands and has seriously tested all institutions and civil communities in the area.[6]

Some of the migrants on the road managed to obtain a visa and not everyone took the "services" of smugglers, but the overwhelming majority of them did. The price of the trip could differ, but it is about 155 million US dollars in 2010, and they could ask as much as 105 million US dollars per trip in 2011.

Those who finally decide to face the long road, often do not consider the possible dangers and risks, especially those that the Sahara and the Mediterranean can keep during the journey.

## FACTORS CAUSING MIGRATION OF AFRICANS

Some factors affect the flow of migration in the Mediterranean, these are called "push" and "pull" factors. Along the West, on the Mediterranean route, PUSH factors have a greater impact than the PULL factors. The most important push-factors of the most people - regardless of origin – is the instability. This instability can take several forms, for example, in the form of war, social pressure, conflict, or the lack of possibility to make an adequate living. Instability factors make it impossible for people living there to lead a normal life for themselves. The fact that the wages are low also contributes to the issue, also they can not provide permanent work for people living there, and the quality of education is not appropriate either.[1, p. 26] For example, more than 70% of Nigerian residents do not reach the lower limit of the national poverty threshold. [8]

It is common for them to feel that their life situation is much worse than those who live elsewhere. This desperation has a great impact on the decision making process, even greater than their inability to meet their needs. Migrants on the western route of the Mediterranean were not living in much worse living conditions in their own country. For most migrants, however, the uncertainty of life gives the final push to leave their home.

There are some cases when they decide to leave when their acquaintances return from migration and offer them a possibility to join them when they re-migrate. In addition, the number of young people increases from year to year in these countries, and the high unemployment rate causes them to leave their country. Climate change, desertification (lakes are drying out, and the deserted areas started to expand), political instability, internal conflicts, and their suppressing regimes are of great importance when making their decision.

In the countries concerned, there may be even more problems from the listed PUSH factors at the same time. [9]

The performance of the Spanish economy, favorable geographic location, are the factors that attract migrants into the area, so they are called Pull factors. [10, p. 2]

In 2009, UNODC carried out a survey in which the stakeholders were asked in the 36 states of Nigeria about the factors influencing migration. The majority of the examined group is men between 20 and 30 years of age, more than half of them are school graduates and 13% had a college degree. In addition, this research also shows in Mali that the overwhelming part of the interviewed immigrants graduated from high school. When they asked them about their livelihood, more than half of the Nigerian migrants said they were not poor compared to local people. Before they become migrants, two-thirds of these people had dealt with agricultural production, taxi driving or retail. They also have been asked whether they have a relative living in Europe, and 80% of the responds were yes.

Most people did not leave their homes due to full deprivation, but to increase their standard of living.

## **SPAIN'S RESPONSE TO MIGRATION**

Spain has a serious migration past behind its back. Until the seventies, emigration was typical, but the tendency turned to the next decade and immigration became overwhelming. In their migration policy, they put focus on immigrants from Mediterranean areas because they thought it was the largest of the flows and it required attention. In 2006, 30,000 West African migrants arrived through the Canary Islands. As a respond, the Spanish Government created a new policy to cooperate with the main countries of origin. At this point, Seahorse Atlantic was created, which was initiated by the Spanish Ministry of Interior and the Civil Guard to deter unauthorized immigrants. Also, a regional coordination center was established in the Canary Islands to facilitate cooperation between Portugal and the main countries of origin. These measures proved to be successful, as the number of arrival of migrants declined significantly after 2006 (see Figure 1). [1, p.45]

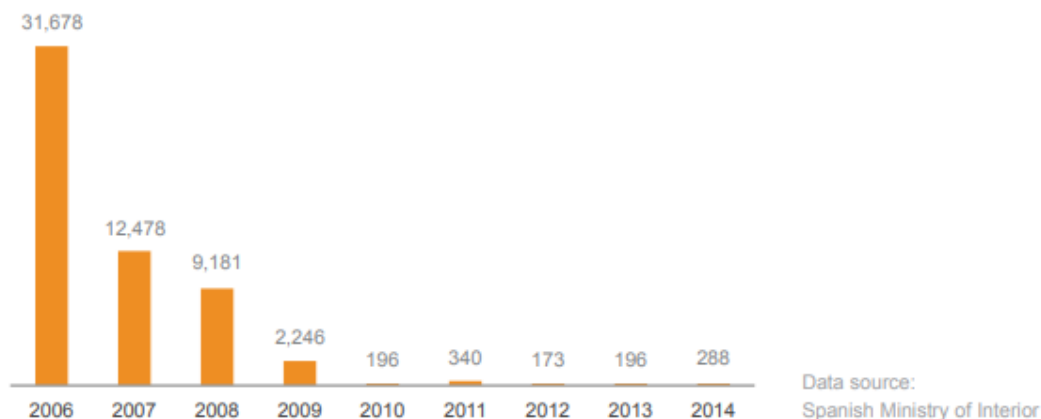


Figure 1: Arrival of migrants to the Canary Islands (2006-2014), Altai Consulting - IOM MENA Regional Office (2015)

First, the Spanish Government focused on three plan initiatives to resolve the 2006 crisis. They has signed new readmission agreements primarily, improved bilateral cooperation in border controls, and has significantly increased development and humanitarian aid and improved multilateral cooperation with the countries of origin of immigrants (by adopting a new Action Plan of Sub-Saharan Africa). One of the goals of the plan is to promote cooperation and to assist the countries of origin in regulating migration flows and combating illegal smuggling.

The plan includes measures such as acquiring information on routes used by illegal immigration networks, consolidating border control, reducing bureaucracy involved in relocation processes, and promoting the social integration of migrants already arrived in Spain. Multilateral initiatives aim to encourage cooperation between Europe and Africa on migration issues and to increase the number of agreements adopted at the Conference on Migration and Development. A number of cooperation agreements include bilateral measures, such as the migration, readmission, and the enhanced Spanish diplomatic presence in the region.

In order to monitor the waters separating the African Continece and the Canary Islands together with the European Union, eight EU Member States participate in a permanent maritime and air patrol system that preserves the shores of Africa. The European Center for Regional Border Controls was established in the Canary Islands by the EU Border Control Agency. In the first half of 2006, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) activity was established between the various Member States of the European Union in HERA I, HERA II and HERA III. The Hera I operation is focused on the opinions of the illegal immigrants from the Canary Islands by boat to see the crossing to facilitate their smugglers. The task of HERA II was to patrol and capture ships in the water waters separating the Canary Islands from the west coast of Africa. The most recent operation includes the objectives of Héra I and Héra II. [6]

## **Regional Coordination Center for the Canary Islands**

In 2006, the Spanish Government established the Regional Coordination Center for the Canary Islands Regional Coordination Center (CCRC) to facilitate the fight against irregular immigration. The CCRC represents a number of stakeholders in the Spanish Government, such as the Navy, the Ministry of Defense, the army, national intelligence, maritime rescue operations, national police, home guard, the Labor, Immigration, Social, Economic and Defense Ministry. The center provides various features that also help parties of interest. Among other things, it has a control role, centralizes and disseminates the information received, directs joint maritime patrols, coordinates police, customs and naval operations, and also deals with marine and rescue operations.

Common supervision by the countries, and the operations that Frontex has implemented at sea borders, has been involved in reducing illegal immigration on maritime routes. In 2006, more than 4200 immigrants were captured on the African coast (11.87% of total volume), while in 2007, this number was 8500 (40.73% of total volume).

Due to these restricted policies and the economic situation, the number of arrivals in the region has finally started to decrease. So much so that in the case of roads leading to the Canary Islands, there was a spectacular fall: 31678 people arrived in 2006, but only 2246 people came to the islands in 2009 (see Figure 1).

## **Seahorse Project and Seahorse Network**

The countries of origin and transit countries have also enhanced supervision in other areas of the African coast and EU. Coastal monitoring, SIVE, and enhanced police surveillance is aiming to stop migrant flooding. Cooperation with police affairs is a complex case, which is based on a shared agreement between the officers in charge of connecting, and the Agrigigos de Interior. The best example of this is the Seahorse Project and Seahorse Network developed by Spain under the Aeneas project.

In 2006, Seahorse was established, to prevent illegal immigration and human trafficking. Seahorse has established Seahorse Network, which is intended to provide the exchange of information on illegal migration across the sea between Spain and the transit countries. The system allows the information to be detected immediately with satellites and then transmitted in order to track the ships and their route. To create a network, local contact points have been created in African countries. Land operations were also included in Mauritania (Cabo Blanco Operation) and Senegal (Gorée Operation) to prevent the launch of ships. [11]

## **RECEIVING MIGRANTS IN THE CANARY ISLANDS**

### **Asylum and expulsion**

Unauthorized immigration in Spain is not considered to be a crime, so those arriving at the Canary Islands will not be arrested on the islands. If necessary, they provide help for them, but if the individual decides not to live with the right to asylum application, they will issue a return order, which will allow them to leave the area - the cost of it is covered by the Spanish Government and the European Return Fund (European Return Fund). The Court can resort to the Authorities for help if they believe it is necessary to preserve the person to implement the return order. If the court finds the need for preservation, they can be held in

one of their closed centers for a maximum of 60 days. The time spent here is an average of 30-40 days, since the individual's identification can be confirmed, cooperation between the country of origin is required. There are several cases where the government can not validate the return order before the expiry of the 60 days. In such cases, the government has its duty to release the person. Then, most of the time, the authorities can not find individuals, but there is a great likelihood that they traveled to other countries of Europe further.

If an unauthorized individual arrives in two enclaves of Spain, they must register at the police. Similarly, in the case of the Canary Islands, if they do not live with the possibility of asylum, it becomes an immigration issue and releases the expulsion order against them. After that, as part of the expulsion order, they are waiting in a closed center until their deportation begins. Based on experiences, many people do not immediately live with the possibility of asylum. [1, p. 47]

### **IOM**

IOM projects in Spain promote the integration and reintegration of migrants. They work on projects that encourage migrants to participate in the community and politics. IOM supports both the integration of authorized and unauthorized migrants, mainly because it is often very difficult to distinguish between the two types. During the project, training courses are provided within the framework of which encourage the activity of migrants in community and politics. [1, p. 50]

IOM has a supported volunteer return program (Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration, AVRR). This program helps migrants who want to go home, but they do not have a way. AVRR can mean the only solution to them. The program provides assistance to migrants in need, to secure and preserve their dignity - to be returned to their countries of origin, full respect for human rights - regardless of their status. This opportunity is open for everyone whose application for asylum was rejected or withdrawn, also, who were victims of human trafficking, and unfortunately, some migrant children arrive without company and there are other vulnerable people as well. [12]

### **UNCHR**

In 1979 UNCHR began its operation in Spain. Its organizational units are international defense and communication and external relations. As part of its international defense activities, UNHCR deals with the tasks relating to asylum applications; They got notified of the applications, which are then evaluated by them. Also, they give guidance and advice to the Spanish authorities and help the asylum seekers and refugees with the interpretation and application of international refugee law, and deal with other, non-governmental organizations.

Additionally, training activities and seminars are organized for lawyers, students, public servants, and non-governmental organizations. The communication and external relations class deals with fundraising, communication, and awareness-raising. [1, p. 51]

### **INCREASE IN THE FLOW TODAY**

European authorities deliver illegally arriving migrants to a larger city where they receive a return decision and will be released freely. This will account for the number of

migrants incoming to the Canary Islands. The number of smuggled people observed by the European authorities is almost the same as the number of those crossing the border. People who do not have the right papers are trying to find other ways to access, making the work of European authorities rather difficult. This also results in difficulty to specify the exact number of illegal immigrants. European governments have been working for decades to tighten border control and to abolish alternative border crossing modes. [13]

Despite the fact that it is difficult to establish the number of persons with these factors, we can even conclude that their number has decreased in recent years. They managed to somewhat slow the migration flow down a bit, as almost all possible smuggling routes were discovered by the authorities, so smugglers had run out of their opportunities.

In 2008-2009, the economic crisis came, resulting in that migration significantly decreased. Based on the surveys carried out by UNODC, migrants who decided to set out by the impact of the crisis turned back to their country, as they were given the news that it was no longer possible to reach Europe. By 2010, the number of migrants arriving by ships does not exceed 16,000. However, 2011 brought an unexpected turn, as in Libya and Egypt and Tunisia a tense situation has emerged since the number of migrants had increased that year at all the entry points that had been declared to be the official. Only few of them came from the west. All in one, the number of immigrants arriving to Spain, Italy, Greece and Malta was nearly 17,000. The evolution of the number of migrants coming to these areas can be observed in the following figure (Figure 2):

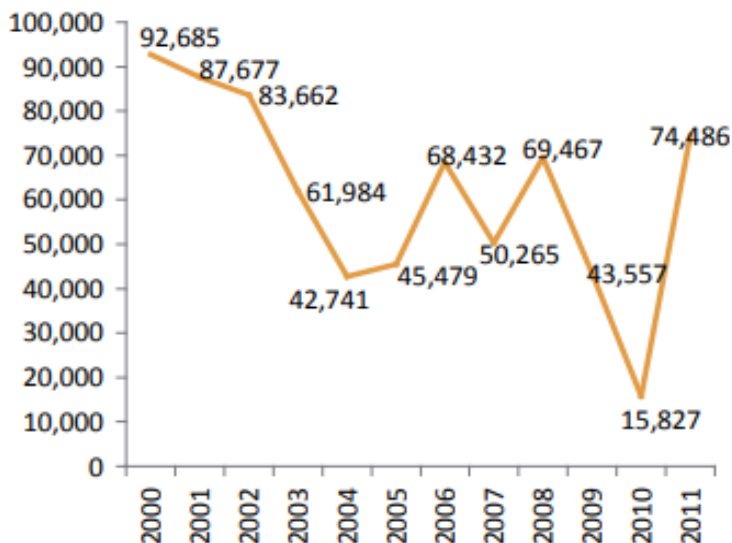


Figure 2: Migrants from West of Spain, Italy, Greece and Malta (2000-2011), UNODC Regional Office for West and Central Africa (2012)

However, this number encompasses all of the migrants arriving from West, including legally and illegally arriving ones as well. The 2010 flow counted for 55,000 people,



which was nearly 37,000 migrants in 2011. [14] In 2020, they again needed to face an emerging flow of migration, as approximately 20,000 people were setting out on the Atlantic route from Africa. [15]

As a result of the coronavirus epidemic, they had more emphasis on land border protection. Due to the North African tension and the favorable weather, the Atlantic route was popular for immigrants. Sub-Saharan people, in 2020 was still intended to start the migration and to use the further operation of smuggling networks. [10, pp. 1-3]

From August 2020, nearly 14,000 migrants arrived at the islands until November, which means that this number increased ten times compared to the previous year. [16]

In November 2020, the number of immigrants increased to the highest in November, when more than 8,000 people arrived to the islands during a month. The situation was the most intense at the harbor of Arguineguin. Previously, there had been a hosting center for migrants there, which provided help for 500 people, and then this figure increased to nearly 2700 people in November 2020, which exceeded the number of the original population of the city. People in inclusive centers are not provided high living conditions, so they are forced to stay in tents for a mandatory 72 hours. However, some people had a chance to spend this time at temporary camps, hotel rooms, or government receptions. [15] Because of the high-quality public security of the port the competent authorities released a significant part of the camps to the streets to make those camps less crowded. The mayor of the city sent these people to Las Palmas by buses where they were placed at the local representative building of the Spanish Central Government on arrival. After a while, the government directed 197 more people to tourist resorts in the southern part of the island who had been sent to the camps to further mitigate the crowding of the port. [17] As a result of the continuous tension of the coronavirus epidemic and the restricted control of the North African countries, the Atlantic route was popular for smugglers again. [15]

## COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION OF THE CANARY ISLANDS

The Canary Islands is one of the most popular areas of the European Union's external regions. Based on the trends of convergence in the past two decades, we can see that the natural increase in population contributes only a little to the population growth, since the birth and mortality rates show a similar tendency. In contrast, the proportion of migration has been multiplied over the past decades as it has become one of the main targets for African immigrants.

In recent years, the mobility of the population has increased at both external and internal levels, which also has a significant impact on the Social Composition of the Canary Islands. The social composition of those living in the islands was affected by this mobility in various ways, as it was mostly the main cause of population growth. In the inhabitable parts of the archipelago, population density has become very high due to growth, but the number of people is disproportionately distributed among the islands.

There is a large part of the population in the islands with provincial capitals such as Tenerife or Gran Canaria. In the eastern and western islands, significant contradictions can be observed. Population issues are increasingly playing a major role in the areas of the archipelago. [18, p. 6]

Forecasts for the period between 2020 and 2030, aging processes in the Canary Islands is rather probable, resulting in economic and social challenges in the region. However, the population's evolution is now difficult to predict the actual evolution of the Canary Islands, as there is uncertainty due to the past period. [18, p. 11] The achievement of the 2020-2030 forecast is that at the time of the survey conducted by Statista by 2020 January 1, the proportion of the age of society was established within the islands: people over 40 years of age accounted for 53 percent of the total population, which means that the most common age group are people between 40 and 44. Children under the age of 10 were about 9 percent of the society.

In addition, Statista has produced a diagram (see Figure 3), which also shows how the distribution of the population of the Canary Islands is formed by 2020 January 1. It can be said that Spain's 2019 population among the autonomous communities in the Canary Islands was the eighth largest autonomous community in Spain. Most residents lived in Tenerife (966,354 people), Gran Canaria's population number was in the second place with 870 595 inhabitants.

To sum up and rank accordingly Spain's population, the Canary Islands was the eighth largest autonomous community, including 1.1 million men and 1.12 million women. According to the research, the most populous autonomous communities were Andalusia, Catalonia and Madrid.[19]

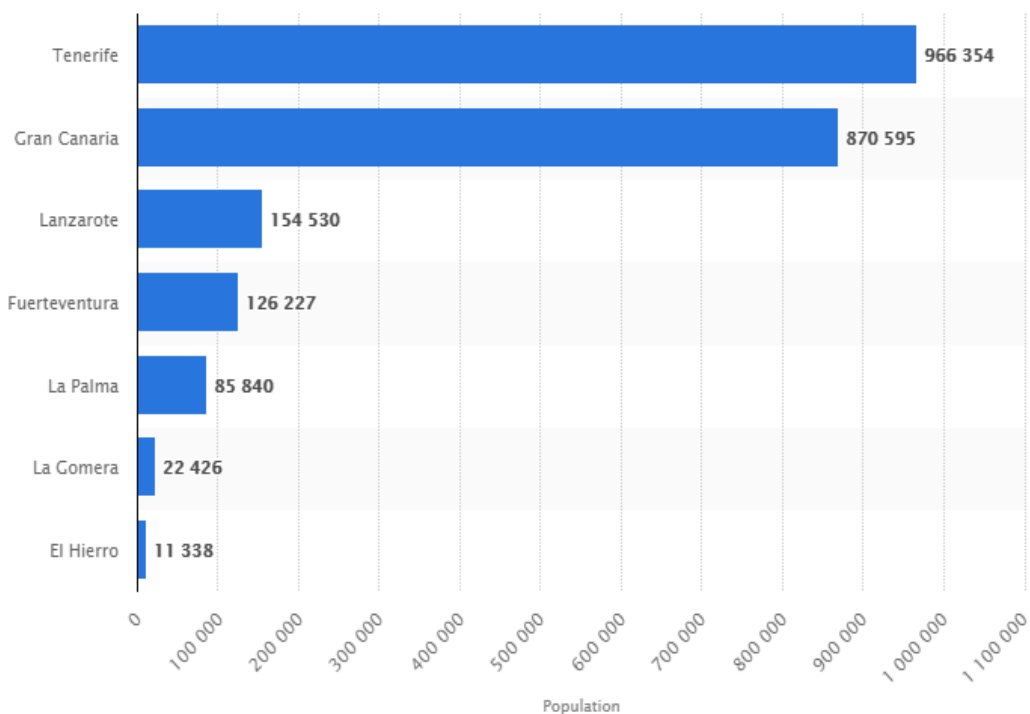


Figure 3: The residency of the Canary Islands in 2020, is divided into islands, Forte, F. (2020): Population of the Spanish autonomous community of the Canary Islands in 2020, by island, Statista

## SUMMARY

Government has so far been fighting the fight with the growing migration flow and the placement of people, which has been solved in the non-use facilities and in different hotels. [17, p. 5] However, in terms of increased migration and the population, if the migrant situation does not change in the near future in the Canary Islands, then to we are looking at a serious situation in the Canary Islands, which is mostly relying on the income of turism and may be in a similar crisis as some Front Islands had been in before. As a result of its ever-growing weight, it may impair their economic prospects in the future. From the number of people employed in tourism, we can conclude that the province wishes to further develop tourism and will continue to build on the sector. In order to find out this, they should send illegal immigrants home sooner. If they do nt act and allow them to stay on the islands, as a chain reaction, there are going to be even more African residents on the Canary Islands. [10, p.6]

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