

Economic woes shrink Spain's population

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Spain's increasing economic problems have led to a shrinking population. The country's National Statistics Institute stated that in the year to February

1st, Spain's total registered population fell by 205,788. Analysts attribute much of this decline to immigrants fleeing the country amid high unemployment and the bursting of the property bubble. There was also a sharp rise in the number of Spaniards leaving the country in search of work abroad. This brain drain represents a fall in the pool of qualified and skilled workers in the event of the economy picking up pace again. Albert Esteve, a demographics expert, explained why people are leaving, saying: "Spain is less attractive because there are no jobs."

Spain's economic woes are putting a huge social cost on all sectors of society. The middle class in particular is suffering badly. The capital, Madrid, is seeing increasing numbers of university-educated and professional people sleeping rough. Samur, a charity for the homeless, said 25 per cent of those sleeping on the streets completed some kind of higher education. It also revealed that over 40 per cent of them are homeless as a result of losing their job. The charity also reports that homelessness has not dented enterprise. Many of those who lost their regular work are trying to make ends meet by collecting and selling scrap metal, becoming street artists or putting their musical skills to good use by busking.

Sources: BBC / thelocal.es

Writing

The key to economic recovery is higher taxes and increased government spending. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

economic problems / shrinking population / statistics / unemployment / skilled workers / woes / middle class / university-educated / charity / homeless / enterprise / busking

True / False

- Spain's population shrank to the year ending March 1st. T / F
- There population decreased by just over a quarter of a million. T / F
- One reason for the decline is a collapse of the property market. T / F
- Many skilled and qualified Spaniards have left Spain. T / F
- Spain's middle class is going through hard times. T / F
- A quarter of those sleeping on Madrid's streets are well educated. T / F
- A half of Madrid's homeless recently lost their jobs. T / F
- Many musicians are now selling scrap metal. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. increasing | a. survive |
| 2. registered | b. parts |
| 3. fleeing | c. specialist |
| 4. pool | d. weakened |
| 5. expert | e. official |
| 6. sectors | f. initiative |
| 7. revealed | g. reserve |
| 8. dented | h. escalating |
| 9. enterprise | i. made known |
| 10. make ends meet | j. escaping from |

Discussion – Student A

- What economic woes does your country have?
- Is a shrinking population a good or bad thing?
- How have immigrants changed the population of your country?
- What problems arise from high unemployment?
- What is a property bubble and what happens when it bursts?
- What's a brain drain and why is it bad?
- How qualified and skilled are you?
- Do you think Spain is an attractive place to work? Why?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. fleeing the country amid | a. rise |
| 2. a sharp | b. pace |
| 3. brain | c. of society |
| 4. picking up | d. ends meet |
| 5. Spain is less attractive | e. high unemployment |
| 6. all sectors | f. dented enterprise |
| 7. people sleeping | g. the streets |
| 8. sleeping on | h. because there are no jobs |
| 9. homelessness has not | i. rough |
| 10. trying to make | j. drain |

Discussion – Student B

- Why do you think the middle class is suffering so badly?
- Is a university degree good enough to get a good job in your country?
- What do you think it's like to have no job and to sleep rough?
- How can Spain recover?
- How full of enterprise are you?
- What measure should your country take to improve its economy?
- How would you make ends meet if you were jobless and homeless?
- What questions would you like to ask Spain's president?

Spelling

- National Statistic instetItu
- tietbtrua much of this decline
- tsuingbr of the property bubble
- audfqieli and skilled workers
- a eidsprocagmh expert
- less traettvaci
- all srcotes of society
- in ulaartcirp
- inssoplfoera people
- sleeping urgho
- also advleere
- homelessness has not dented einretpers

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. j	4. g	5. c
6. b	7. i	8. d	9. f	10. a

Role Play

Role A – Spain's leader

You are not worried by the fall in population. Tell the others three reasons why. You have tried to make Spain's economy good but the whole world is suffering. Things will get better soon. Tell the others three reasons why.

Role B – Head of IMF

You blame Spain's government for its current economic woes. Tell the others three reasons why. You think it could be decades before Spain recovers. Tell the leader (s)he must call an election to allow fresh ideas.

Role C – Unemployed person

You are fed up with Spain's leaders. Tell the others three reasons why. You had a very successful career but the poor economy means you now sleep on the streets. Tell your country's leader three things (s)he must do.

Role D – Business person

You think the leader is doing a good job. Without him/her, the economy would be worse. It's not the leader's fault. Tell the others three reasons why. A new leader would only make things worse. If people want to work, they must try harder.

Speaking - Attractive

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------|--------------|
| • Spain | • Ireland |
| • Bhutan | • Japan |
| • Canada | • Brazil |
| • China | • Madagascar |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.