

Islam has always been an integral part of the Spanish reality. After eight centuries of Muslim al-Andalus, Catholic Spain maintained its connection with the Islamic world through war, trade or diplomatic contacts that led to the colonial adventure in northwestern Africa in the first half of the 20th century. The Spanish transition to democracy converted the country from an emigration country into a destination of immigration; mostly the Moroccan economically motivated one. The historic experience and the number of Muslims on the national territory led also to the legal recognition of Islam's presence in Spain (1989) as a fundamental requirement for negotiating an agreement for cooperation between the Muslim community and the Spanish state. The legal framework (Constitution of 1978, Religious Freedom Act, Aliens' Act, Asylum Act) gives indigenous, naturalized and immigrant Muslims in Spain a possibility to create associations and the Registry of religious entities (Ministry of Justice), established in the consequence of the approbation of the Religious freedom act, provides the religious Islamic associations with the status of legal person. The Islamic associational process in Spain started at the end of the 60's and has passed through different legal phases, from basic associations, through the hierarchical structure of federations and official representation (Islamic Commission of Spain), until the most recent organizations that are emerging in the form of autonomous Islamic councils and federations on regional level, which cause the diversification of Muslim representations. Association types have also been developing: from the very first Muslim minority composed of naturalized Arabs, through the boom of Spanish conversions to Islam in the 80's, up to the massive north-African immigration waves in the 90's that have been continuing and are taking their part in the associational process. ...