



mobile identities



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**Mobile Identities:
Migration and Integration
in Transnational Communities
(HOME/2012/EIFX/CA/CFP/4201)**

**TEMPORARY AND CIRCULAR MIGRATION:
NATIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
ITALY**

**With the financial support of
Directorate B-Immigration and Asylum-Directorate-General Home Affairs
European Commission, European Fund for the Integration of
Third-country nationals 2007-2013**



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MOBILE IDENTITIES: MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION
IN TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES

TEMPORARY AND CIRCULAR MIGRATION IN ITALY
NATIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Psychoanalytic Institute for Social Research (IPRS)

Introduction

The “Mobile Identities. Migration and Integration in Transnational Communities” (“*Identità Mobili. Migrazione e integrazione nelle comunità transnazionali*”) project was financed by the European Commission, DG-Home, within the European Fund for Integration and coordinated by the Psychoanalytical Institute for Social Research (IPRS). The duration of the project was a total of 20 months starting on 1st January 2014, and it was carried out in 5 European countries (Germany, Spain, UK, Netherlands, and Italy) by a consortium made up of six partners and many associated partners, which included non-European countries such as Albania and Morocco.

The aim of the project was to explore the links between the various forms of transnational temporary and circular migration and the process of integration. In particular, it wanted to assess the ability of current integration policies to promote the welfare of migrants affected by forms of temporary and/or circular migration. Following an initial *desk-research* phase, the research continued in the field for a total of 5 months during which in depth interviews were conducted with the *stakeholders* and *policy-makers*, as well as with the temporary/circular migrants themselves.

The majority of policies and European integration models are based on the expectation of a migrant’s definitive stay in the country of destination and therefore have focused on building pathways to the integration of these migrants aimed at strengthening their sense of belonging. Although this does not mean that the migrants have to completely sever the ties with their country of origin, the logic behind these policies and integration models is to consider catchment and terminal migration as opposite poles.

In more recent years, circular migration was seen by governments in many European countries as a possible solution to the challenges posed by the integration of migrants. In particular, the circularity of migration seemed to outline the possibility of a "Triple win" solution that would benefit all parties involved: the country of origin, the country of destination, and the migrants themselves. Today however, this view seems to have lost its appeal and many governments and European immigration policies have gone back to examine other strategies which would be more suited to promoting the integration of migrants and more compatible with the economic and social situation of the moment.

On the other hand, an effective circularity of migration is already in place, albeit often a spontaneous one, in Italy as in other European countries, especially in the sectors which traditionally use seasonal employment such as in tourism and agriculture.

It is this dynamic and controversial scenario which inspired the results of the project's research and led to the Workshop: "Mobile Identities. Migration and integration in transnational communities", held in Rome on April 13, 2015. A workshop aimed at providing participants with an opportunity for exchange and reflection on a still unresolved issue, the impact of circular and temporary migration on the host country, that of origin and on the migrants themselves.

Through interviews with stakeholders and migrants as well as through the exchange with experts and stakeholders at the national and international workshops, the project sought to respond to the following questions:

1. Why is circular migration no longer a political priority?
2. Why do some migrants choose forms of spontaneous circular migration? Is their decision dictated by choice or necessity?
3. What can be done in EU countries to foster the well-being of TC migrants? Are there any specific challenges for reception and integration policies?

We wish to thank all workshop participants for their valuable contribution to the debate on temporary and circular migration and for their fundamental contribution to the results of the project "Mobile Identities".

Temporary and circular migration in Europe

The phenomenon of circular migration is a relatively new concept not only at a European level but also as far as the Italian political-legal-Institutional context is concerned, where it has barely been approached. At present, the terminology "temporary and circular migration" does not appear in any of the texts regarding the Immigration Act, neither at a National nor at a regional level. Internationally, the concept of circular migration, which is relatively less new than it is in Italy, has its roots in practices already widely tested in the Europe of post-war reconstruction with the *Gastarbeiter* programme for example, set up by the then West Germany for guest workers from Southern and Eastern Europe. In the European context, references to this subject are represented by the recent Commission Communication on the "European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Countries" (COM (2011) 455 final), and by the Integration Handbook published by the European Commission (EC, 1994, 2007 , 2010).

A lack of knowledge persists however, regarding the evaluation of its impact on social integration, economic and cultural life in both the countries of origin and the destination countries, even with regards to the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) , SEC (2011) 1353 final. The last of the four pillars on which the GAMM is based, in particular states that "a stronger involvement of Diaspora and migrant groups can help to attain the objective of the Renewed Global Approach to address, more systematically, migrants rights and the empowerment of migrants".

The characteristics of temporary and circular migration are the following:

- provisional nature;
- renewability;
- circulation (the freedom to move between the country of origin and that of destination must be guaranteed for the entire migration period);
- legality;
- capacity to meet the actual needs of the labor market from one country to the other;



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Despite the lack of a precise definition, the intent of responding to a need for more flexible labor from the Member States, under the increased pressure of global competition, is quite clear.

Seasonal work

One of the areas of migration policy which highlights practices partially related to the concept of temporary and circular migration is undoubtedly that of seasonal work.

Seasonal employment in fact, is the most likely vehicle to lead to a “win-win-win” type situation, where the needs and interests of the country of origin, that of destination and the migrant himself are met.

Indeed, while the circular migrant’s country of origin solves its problem of surplus labor and receives, upon their return, nationals in possession of better professional qualifications, the receiving country would solve its shortage of labor problem without displeasing local inhabitants alarmed by the prospect of a permanent settlement. On the other hand, the “circular migrant” would benefit (despite the gradual closing of borders towards migrant work) from having the possibility of returning to the receiving country. The aim of this would be to put the migrant and his needs at the centre of International mobility, allowing him to use the experience as constructively as possible to his advantage whenever he decides to return to his country of origin armed with more knowledge and know-how. It is clear that there would be a “triple advantage” if the process were simplified and adapted to the individual need of the migrant, the country of origin and the country of destination.

Temporary and circular migration in Italy: the workshop debate

In introducing the subject of circularity in migration, we must first consider the radical changes migration has undergone in recent years, in Europe and in the rest of the world. Requests for asylum and international protection is growing but there have also been many changes regarding long-term residents, second generation immigrants, stabilization projects and integration procedures.

Circularity in Europe was first discussed as a subject concerning immigration and how to regulate it, especially from a border control/safety perspective, and monitoring movement between one European country and another. The "Triple win" solution was introduced to aid cooperation in development (geopolitical ties).

In many cases, circularity means that there is no real project on behalf of the people that choose this form of migration, but a necessity or an opportunity for temporary work or study, which can, subsequently, be transformed into a real migratory project.

Circular migration should be closely linked to bilateral agreements between Member States. For now though, these agreements have not been greatly developed; Italy for example, has signed six bilateral agreements but circularity was not the main focus in any of them. Above all, the match between the skills required by the business world and the number of admissions was not carefully monitored, and the arrival of migrants was instead managed using nationality as the main criterion.

What does the seasonal work phenomenon represent for Italy? Can it be considered a form of circularity? It is strongly linked to two main sectors - agriculture and tourism and occurs in response to the lack of Italian resources during certain periods of the year and for certain types of occupation. In practice though, even seasonal migration failed as a top-down controlled circular migration project due to the fact that although most migrants were in possession of yearly or biannual permits they preferred a 6 month stay. In this way their form of circular migration was spontaneous and better suited to jobs in the agricultural and tourism sectors.

Geographical differences between countries of origin: circular migration is possible, and perhaps more interesting for migrants from countries closer to Italy, such as Eastern Europe (primarily Albania) and not so easy for people from other continents such as Africa, Asia, America.

Other issues

Despite there being a lack of data regarding circular migration (so much so as to dub it “invisible migration”), it appears that many migrants, whether for social, economic or cultural reasons fall into this category. The consequences/results of this type of migration are a) to return to the country of origin with a greater wealth of knowledge (know how). b) to return with an established contact base. c) to fulfill the “dream of returning” to one’s family with greater economic resources than one set out with.

In light of what has been tried out in other countries and based on data collected from interviews, the creation of temporary and circular migration programs must be based on certain conditions.

Circulation in migration programs

The flexible and repetitive nature of circular migration represents a necessary and advantageous characteristic for the migrant for various reasons.

Benefits of circular migration:

- the migrant does not have to choose to stay permanently in one country or another;
- it allows the migrant to maintain his traditions, his citizenship and the relationship with his family;
- the migrant gains economic (because he is not accompanied by his family), social and cultural wealth;
- with the know-how gained through his experience, the migrant can set up his own business in his country of origin or even network between the two countries, contributing financially to both economies;
- the “brain draining” phenomenon decreases
- the foundations for creating new businesses (startups) can be laid

Negative aspects of circular migration:

- Being away from and missing the loved ones
- Women are generally penalized in whichever role they choose
- Difficulty in getting ones qualifications recognized upon return to the country of origin
- Earnings of migrant workers are not enough to contribute to the socio-economic development of their country of origin. The fact that they spend only a few months working abroad usually means they only earn enough to be able to support their family.
- In the country of destination, migrants are usually employed in poorly paid low-skilled professions (construction or agricultural field) thus gaining little information, expertise or knowledge of the Italian language.
- the institutions and infrastructure of their country of origin are not up to date enough to deal with their new found know-how.
- Difficulty in communication due to not being able to speak the language
- Difficulty in integrating in a completely new and different culture
- Difficulty in finding accommodation in line with their financial resources. (Creating the need for special housing programs)

Seasonal work is central to the circular migration phenomenon. It can only be effective though if the migrant is predisposed towards this type of migration, a temporary experience which will create a bridge between his country of origin and the receiving country.

However, as bridges must be supported by strong foundations also circular migration must be supported by valid conditions. The migrant will only be able to gain from the experience and use it to his (financial) advantage if he becomes the main protagonist of the experience. The circular rotation of this form of migration can only work if there is a balance between the political motivation and the migrant's objectives/benefits. But do these conditions exist?

In the case of circular migration, the conditions to aim for are the following:

a)) Firstly, the *professional competence of migrants*. The incentives towards circular migration will only benefit the persons involved if they are able to improve their professional status through the new skills they can acquire. It would be useful to study qualified migrant workers in both their country of origin and their receiving country in order to promote a certain continuity between the two countries. It would also be useful to facilitate the career path of migrants who return to their country of origin with their newfound experience and know-how.

By simplifying circulation of migrant workers, the objective would be to identify the professions which would benefit from the turnover of "new and improved" manpower which would serve to support sustainable development between countries. A worker who has been taught how to perform his trade/profession well has the possibility of using that know-how to build professional relationships between his country of origin and his receiving country, creating joint-ventures thus helping occupation.

b) Secondly, the training of migrants: the aim would be to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge on the part of the circular migrant through: a) language courses in order to learn the language of the receiving country. b) professional training courses (i.e. Specialization courses for construction workers or courses on new cultivation techniques for agricultural workers). c) refresher courses for previously trained workers upon their return to their country of origin.

The temporary nature of migration programs

The **provisional nature** is due to the fact that the migrant's aim is to find an occupation abroad for a limited period of time which will allow him to put enough money aside to then return home to his country of origin for good. In this case we would be dealing with a "one-shot" form of migration which would not consent the renewal of the residency permit but would permit the migrant to stay for a short-medium length of time; a period neither too short nor too long but one that would allow the worker to maximize his earning and possibly also complete a professional training course.

For this reason a well organized and structured approach to this type of migration should be in place in the receiving country in order to sustain the worker throughout his stay, control migration flows and offer support and opportunities in particular to younger workers. With these structures in place there would also be less risk of workers staying permanently in the receiving country and/or settling all in one place.

Benefits of the temporary nature:

- It allows the migrant to maintain his cultural/social traditions, his citizenship and his relationship with his family.

- it is a source of social enrichment. If the migrant is able to establish good relationships during his time working abroad, he can use those contacts to his advantage upon returning to his home country. This is often the case when a worker collaborates with his employer from his receiving country to set up a sort of partnership/financial sponsorship to start up a business in his country of origin.
- it is a source of economic enrichment. Using the capital gained from his period working abroad (remittance), the migrant can build a better future for himself in his country of origin;
- the experience can prove to be enriching from a professional point of view.
- integration may be easier due to the fact that the migrant's stay is only for a brief-medium length of time and of a provisional/temporary nature.

Negative aspects of the provisional nature:

- Being away from and missing ones loved ones
- Women are generally penalized in whichever role they choose
- Difficulty in getting ones qualifications recognized upon return to the country of origin
- Earnings of migrant workers are not enough to contribute to the socio-economic development of their country of origin. The fact that they spend only a few months working abroad usually means they only earn enough to be able to support their family.
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Role of migrant and trade associations

It is necessary to draw attention to the fact that the circular migration phenomenon is already a reality, albeit an "underground" one. There are in fact, already many foreign workers who although "invisible" from a legal and institutional point of view and therefore non observable



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statistically, can be classed as “circular migrants”. It is for this reason that the role carried out by trade unions and trade/migrant associations both in the country of origin and in the receiving country, is fundamental for providing information:

1. Information regarding worker’s rights and duties, trade rules and regulations, and fundamental rights such as; health and safety regulations and housing. The information should be given in the migrant’s own language.
2. Information regarding initiatives to aid and improve integration in the job market and social integration. These initiatives also support the migrant through his reintegration once he returns to his country of origin and help him set up a business of his own if he has the means to do so.

Policy recommendations - Italy

1. The concept of circularity must be completely rethought. Circularity can be functional for some individuals, but it must be closely followed, accompanied and assessed: it needs to be managed. The specific needs of the various professional fields need to be identified, both on a National and European level, in order to adopt the correct measures to address those needs. Moreover, it would be useful to identify which countries of origin would be interested in being involved in this *specific* policy making process.
2. Circular migration of high/low skilled workers in a continent such as Europe, characterized by the constantly changing needs of the labor market and of industry in general: there is the necessity to analyze these needs, demographic projections and specific skills required in order to develop a strategy to "attract" circular migrants to a specific country or region.
3. The perspective regarding the issue of development cooperation must change. Perhaps it may not be possible to implement "Country projects", but it would be interesting to encourage the acquisition of specific and qualified skills with a view to promoting self-employment among circular migrants.
4. In signing bilateral agreements it would be useful to create schemes that involve the acquisition and subsequent transfer (to the country of origin) of entrepreneurial skills and techniques. This would give circular migrants an added incentive and the hope of building a future for themselves upon their return home.
5. Collaborating with the associations operating throughout Italy would be useful to understand the real needs and expectations of migrants. Often, the choice of an unofficial network rather than an institutional one is a more effective means to reach people and by working closely with these kinds of associations, possibly through formal agreements and protocols, it would be possible to get more information. This process should involve not only the Italian but also foreign associations situated throughout the country.
6. In this perspective, it is essential to promote the empowerment of associations, providing them with the ability to dialogue with the institutions, both in Italy and in their countries of origin.



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7. Circular migration is too "rigid" and "constrained". It should be based on: 1. A greater and ongoing dialogue between political institutions and migrants, perhaps with the mediation of migrant associations as facilitators; 2. A reduction in bureaucracy, "circular mobility should affect the free movement of persons, as assets and capital".
8. Lastly, circular migration should be based on greater information and communication and on an exchange of ideas and opinions among the associations present throughout Italy.