

EPC 2008 submission—**Circularity or settlement? Cultural and economic factors in Romanian migration to Southern Europe**

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Abstract (300 words max)

Among other fundamental changes, the post-socialist transformation has witnessed increasing geographic mobility in Eastern Europe. Significant migration from Romania into Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Greece, and Portugal) since 2000 provides a case in point. Part of a larger project examining the development of an East-South migration system, in this paper we assess the contribution of cultural and socioeconomic ties between Southern Europe and Romania to the growth of migration streams over time. While this flow has significant implications for Romania, in terms of both socioeconomic and long term demographic trends, we focus on the institutional, economic and social conditions in the destination countries—investigating how these conditions create pull factors for Eastern Europeans in general and facilitate the emergence of a Romanian migration stream in particular. We argue that it is not random Eastern Europeans who move to the West relying on blind luck or pure choice, but that developing regional migration networks condition the intentions and self-selection of migrants. Comparing the demography, geographic distribution and integration of Romanians in Spain and Italy, we evaluate the relative impact of kinship, social capital, cultural, legislative, and economic factors motivating their respective choices. In particular, we ask what differences in the context of reception contribute to circular or settlement migration patterns.

Extended abstract

Among other fundamental changes, the post-socialist transformation has witnessed increasing geographic mobility in Eastern Europe. Although internal restrictions to emigration were lifted soon after 1989, significant obstacles remained to would-be migrants as potential destination countries upheld administrative barriers to control labor movement from Eastern Europe. Two waves of eastern enlargement of the European Union (2004 and 2007) have incorporated most of the region into the European common market; however, certain restrictions regarding the movement of labor have remained in place. Yet these work against powerful push factors operating in Eastern Europe as well as historical and cultural ties that have facilitated the emergence of both legal and unauthorized migration streams between Eastern European and EU-15 countries. Long economic recession, increasing social inequality, slow improvement of wellbeing, domestic political turmoil and significant East-West wage differentials are all factors behind increasing westward migration, as has been foreign investment in the region by Western European companies and specific labor recruitments by Western

European governments. While in its early years this migration was dominated by Central European migrants going to Northern Europe, this pattern has changed and more recently Southern European countries (most notably Italy and Spain) have drawn the greater proportion of Southeast European migrant workers.

There has been considerable diversity among Eastern European countries in rates of emigration and return, destination selection, legislative response to intra-EU migration trends and the accession process, and levels of economic development. Significant migration from Romania into Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Greece, and Portugal) since 2000 provides a case in point. Romanians not only represent the largest foreign community in Italy, they have played a considerable role in Spain's staggering influx of migrants in recent years; Greece, one of Romania's top three investors, was a strong supporter of Romanian accession to the EU, while Portugal, although to a lesser extent than its neighbors, has used skilled Romanian labor for construction projects largely funded by the boon of its own accession to the EU. What circumstances account for high levels of Romanian emigration? Why suddenly Southern Europe, when Northern countries sufficed throughout the 1990s? Looking to the future, will economic development draw migrants home or will remittance dependence deepen established skill and nascent labor shortages in Romania? If migrants remain in Southern Europe, what will they do and how will they fare? In short, what dynamics are peculiar to this East-South migration system and why? Although the benefits of migration have been acknowledged by both Eastern and Southern European countries, controversy exists over the long term stability of this system from an economic, demographic and social standpoint both from sending and receiving perspectives (Coleman and Rowthorn 2004).

Although a considerable body of research has addressed the causes and effects of East-West migration in Europe (Layard *et. al* 1994; Fassman and Munz 1992, 1994; Manfrans 1992), less attention has been paid to the particular dynamics within specific sending and receiving countries and their contribution to overall intra-EU migration patterns. General concerns addressing the expected mass influx of cheap Eastern labor were rapidly picked up by the Western European media; however, instead of an exodus from all post-socialist Eastern European countries we observe the establishment of country-specific migration networks in which non-random choice motivates migrant behavior. Cultural, linguistic and historical patterns are behind the observed mobility as are specific economic ties—particularly with Italy—developed in the post-socialist period. Active labor recruitment by Western European governments—in the case examined here, specifically Spain—has been an effort to both supply labor markets and control unauthorized flows. Supported by the substantial body of research on migration networks and migration systems more generally (see Jennissen 2007; see the extensive work of Massey and Massey *et. al*), this study addresses a relatively new migration stream amongst those moving from east to west—that of Romanians to Spain and Italy. While this flow has significant implications for Romania, in terms of both socioeconomic and long term demographic trends, in this paper we focus on the institutional, economic

and social conditions in the destination countries—investigating how these conditions create pull factors for Eastern Europeans in general and facilitate the emergence of a Romanian migration stream in particular.

This study is embedded into a larger project exploring the development and characteristics of an East-South European migration system from both sending and receiving country perspectives, with special attention on the differences in the context of reception (see Portes 1993, 1995, 2005). We compare the socioeconomic, demographic, institutional and cultural environment of Spain and Italy from the perspective of Eastern European migration, assessing the relative value of these factors in determining the migration decisions of Romanians. Using EUROSTAT collections to inform broader migrations patterns across Europe and place the issue in context, and country specific collections for receiving regions (for example, regularization, registry and labor force data from Italy¹ and Spain²) as well as qualitative data collection in the destination countries, we assess the impact of various conditions that facilitate the operation of Romanian migrations streams. The work builds on a previous paper (Blakeslee, Bradatan, Kulcsár *forthcoming*) evaluating Romanian statistical collections on immigration (see the extensive work of Sandu), examining push factors in the Romanian context, and differentiating the Romanian case from that of its neighbors, notably Hungary and Poland. Likewise, it adds to the growing body of research on Southern European migration (Venturini 2004; Carella and Pace 2001; Baldwin-Edwards 2002; Baldwin-Edwards and Arango 1999; King et. al. 2000, 2001), assessing how the Romanian case (fits this model and how this model fits to what we call the east-South migration system. Our analysis lays the groundwork for examining the diverse and growing Romanian expatriate communities in Southern Europe — from Madrid to the Veneto — that are having a profound impact on their host societies: Why have they come? What have they found? Indeed, given considerable regional diversity in Southern Europe, what specific conditions have resulted in the emergent pattern of this network?

An important contribution of this research is to go beyond the stereotypical notion of undifferentiated Eastern labor migration to Western Europe, and start to map out particular migration streams. While these migration streams are considered intra-EU in nature, the relative underdevelopment of the Eastern European periphery will not be eliminated in the near future providing substantial impetus for migrants seeking better life in the West. From a policy perspective, this research is also intended to aid policymakers in addressing country specific immigration issues, something particularly essential in Southern European countries struggling to integrate recent, significant and diverse migration streams. We argue that it is not random Eastern Europeans who move to the West relying on blind luck or pure choice, but that well developed regional migration networks—all with particular underlying reasons and developing socioeconomic structures—condition the intentions and eventual selection of migrants.

¹ L'Istituto nazionale di statistica. See <http://www.istat.it/>

² Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). See <http://www.ine.es/>

In some sense, the contemporary migration systems in Europe are the re-emerging networks of pre-communist migration streams; in another, they represent a mobile labor force in European countries exhibiting generally low levels of geographic/regional mobility amongst natives. Aside from geographic proximity and the pull effect of rapidly growing Southern economies, cultural similarities and historical patterns are important factors although seldom taken into considerations by policy makers who are suddenly overwhelmed by a large number of immigrants looking for work. Further, we examine whether migration from Romania to Southern Europe is likely to result in circular migration (as has been reported in Italy) or settlement (as anecdotal evidence from Spain has indicated), as pre-existing conditions and the development and expansion of migrant networks point to a strengthening rather than lessening of these streams over time. This would be a particular contribution to migration networks theory in the European context, provide evidence about the dynamics of long term internal migration trends in the EU, and contribute to recent policy discussions on the relative value of integration and settlement and temporary worker programs designed to maintain circular migration patterns.

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