



# CIRCULAR MIGRATION: ECONOMIC ASPECTS

*Refik Erzan*

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**CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2008/31**

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**Circular Migration Series**

*Demographic and Economic Module*

Cooperation project on the social integration  
of immigrants, migration, and the movement  
of persons (CARIM)



**CARIM**  
**Euro-Mediterranean Consortium**  
**for Applied Research on International Migration**

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**Circular Migration : Economic Aspects**

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Within this framework, CARIM aims, in an academic perspective, to observe, analyse, and predict migration in the North African and the Eastern Mediterranean Region (hereafter Region).

CARIM is composed of a coordinating unit established at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS) of the European University Institute (EUI, Florence), and a network of scientific correspondents based in the 12 countries observed by CARIM: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and, since February 2007, also Libya and Mauritania. All are studied as origin, transit and immigration countries. External experts from the European Union and countries of the Region also contribute to CARIM activities.

The CARIM carries out the following activities:

- Mediterranean migration database;
- Research and publications;
- Meetings of academics;
- Meetings between experts and policy makers;
- Early warning system.

The activities of CARIM cover three aspects of international migration in the Region: economic and demographic, legal, and socio-political.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: [www.carim.org](http://www.carim.org)

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## **Abstract**

This paper is a summarised analysis of the country case studies on circular migration through a demographic and/or economic perspective in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. It noticed the ambiguity in conceptual and definitional issues and the lack of particular statistics. Generally, the papers raised some important questions but could only provide very sparse information on circular migration and its impact. In the light of the questions raised in the country studies, the purpose of this paper is to organize the concepts and definitions surrounding circular migration in an attempt to bring clarity, report the highlights of the findings and make suggestions for further research.

The author starts, in Section II, by scrutinizing the EU initiative on circular migration which triggered this discussion. In Section III, he makes an overview of the attempts to define circular migration in literature as discussed in the country studies. Section IV introduces a broader perspective by defining circularity as a matter of degree. He discusses its dimensions, determinants, eventual impact and policies that may foster it. In Section V, he makes an overview of the highlights of the country studies. The concluding part, Section VI, sums up the main arguments and suggestions for further research

## **Résumé**

Ce papier est une étude synthétique et analytique des études de cas de la migration circulaire dans les pays du Sud et de l'Est de la Méditerranée. Ce rapport mentionne d'abord l'ambiguïté des aspects conceptuels et le manque de statistiques particulières qui caractérisent les études de cas. Généralement, les papiers soulèvent des questions importantes mais se limitent à des informations disparates sur la migration circulaire et son impact. A la lumière des questions soulevées dans les études de cas par pays, l'objet de ce papier est d'organiser les concepts et définitions relatifs à la migration circulaire dans une tentative d'apporter la clarté, de mettre en évidence les points saillants des résultats des recherches et de faire des suggestions pour des recherches avancées.

Schématiquement, l'auteur commence, dans la section II, par scruter l'initiative de l'UE sur la migration circulaire qui est à la base de ce débat. Dans la section III, il a donné une vue d'ensemble des tentatives de définition de la migration circulaire dans la littérature comme cela a été soulevé dans les études de cas par pays. La section IV introduit une perspective plus large de conception théorique de la circularité comme une question de degré. Elle discute ses dimensions, ses déterminants, son impact éventuel et les politiques qui pourraient l'encourager. Dans la section V, l'auteur donne une vue d'ensemble des points importants des études par pays. La partie conclusive, dans la section VI, résume les arguments et suggestions de base pour des recherches plus avancées.

## I. Introduction

An aging and declining population leading to shortage of both skilled and unskilled labor coupled with an increasing pressure of illegal migration pose one of the greatest challenges to the welfare states of Europe. Formulating guidelines for coherent migration policies to regulate legal immigration in a socio-economically beneficial manner and to combat illegal migration have top priority in the policy agenda of the European Union (EU).

Under the current project formulated by CARIM, country studies on *circular migration* were commissioned. These studies were supposed to report on such migratory flows and their impact on the home countries. Due to ambiguity in conceptual and definitional issues and the lack of particular statistics, the papers raised some important questions but could only provide very sparse information on *circular migration* and its impact.

In the light of the questions raised in the country studies, the purpose of this paper is to organize the concepts and definitions surrounding *circular migration* in an attempt to bring clarity, report the highlights of the findings and make suggestions for further research.

We start with, in Section II, scrutinizing the EU initiative on *circular migration* which triggered this discussion. In Section III, we make an overview of the attempts to define *circular migration* in literature as discussed in the country studies. Section IV introduces a broader perspective by defining *circularity* as a matter of *degree*. We discuss its dimensions, determinants, eventual impact and policies that may foster it. In Section V, we make an overview of the highlights of the country studies. The concluding part, Section VI, sums up the main arguments and suggestions for further research.

## II. Circular Migration as an EU Initiative

In December 2006, there was a call by the EU “to propose ways to integrate legal migration opportunities into the Union's external policies in order to develop a balanced partnership with third countries adapted to specific EU Member States' labor market needs; to suggest ways and means to facilitate *circular and temporary migration*; and to present detailed proposals on how to better organize and inform about the various forms of legal movement between the EU and third countries”.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, in May 2007, the European Commission (EC) released a communication entitled “Circular Migration and Mobility Partnerships between the European Union and Third Countries” in which the EU states were called to work more closely both to combat illegal migration and to control legal migration, especially by fostering *circular migration*. The term *circular migration* was used to mean “a form of migration that is managed in a way allowing some degree of legal mobility back and forth between two countries”. The emphasis was clearly on the mobility being “managed” and “legal”.<sup>2</sup>

The term *circular migration* was used by the EU both to describe a phenomenon and to formulate a policy goal to reduce the tendencies of immigrants to settle permanently in the EU countries. It is a temptation to control migration through bilateral agreements, prevent irregular migration, admit some selected types of labour and exclude others.

The country studies report several specific *circular migration* flows initiated by bilateral agreements with the EU. These include arrangements for seasonal farm workers, programs to foster return of students, professionals and scientists.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of the European Union, Presidency Conclusions, 14/15 December 2006, Brussels.

<sup>2</sup> Underlined by Kirisci (2007).

It is argued that “*circular migration* may generate “triple-win” solutions for the three parties, namely the migrant-receiving countries, migrant-sending countries and the migrants themselves. It provides destination countries with a continual supply of skilled and unskilled labor - without the requirements and costs of long-term integration. Origin countries may gain from the ongoing flows of remittances and skills and investments of returnees. Similarly, migrants themselves enjoy a degree of legal dynamic mobility back and forth between their homelands and destination countries.”<sup>3</sup>

There were two lines of criticism to the EU approach. One is that, obviously, such “triple-win” solutions are not automatic. “The positive impact of such *circular migration* on the origin countries and migrants themselves is less obvious than its positive impact over destination countries. It is argued that if *circular migration* is organized through co-operation between partners rather than as an exchange between unequal parties, then its positive impact for development in the realm of these three actors of migration is much more likely.”<sup>4</sup>

The other line of criticism concerned the overemphasis of the “legality” and “management” aspects. “The experience of Turkey deserves closer scrutiny both in terms of lessons with respect to how *circular migration* can help development but also in terms of how *circular migration* might best be managed. There must be a happier balance between the “differentiated informality” of Turkey and over-regulated migration policies of the EU.”<sup>5</sup>

### III. Definition of Circular Migration

What is exactly circular migration?

We have noted that the EU commission used the term *circular migration* to mean “a form of migration that is managed in a way allowing some degree of legal mobility back and forth between two countries” with an emphasis on this mobility being “managed” and “legal”. Obviously this is a concept developed as a policy goal. A European Parliament document used the term “pendular” migration together with *circular migration*.<sup>6</sup> This is a more neutral term describing the reality which is not necessarily managed or legal but mostly spontaneous and sometimes in a twilight zone between legality and illegality.<sup>7</sup>

*Circular migration* as a phenomenon is somewhat different from the “guest-worker” episode of the 1960s. The international climate of the guest-worker programs of the past and that of the *circular migration* of today are quite different. “*Circular migration* today is based on a continuing, long-term, and fluid relationship among countries that occupy what is now increasingly recognized as single economic space”.<sup>8</sup> In the new setting, the revolutionary developments in transportation and communications leading to the globalization of investment, production and consumption, longer and more flexible employment contracts, options of re-entry, and flexible residency rights reduce the likelihood of permanent settlement.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Agunias and Newland (2007), in Icduygu (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Icduygu (2007).

<sup>5</sup> Kirisci (2007).

<sup>6</sup> European Parliament’s working document on “Migration and Development” of June 2006.

<sup>7</sup> See, Kirisci (2007).

<sup>8</sup> Agunias and Newland (2007) in Icduygu (2007).

<sup>9</sup> Hugo (2003) in Icduygu (2007).

The study on Turkey<sup>10</sup> quoted Agunias and Newland who offered a typology defining four main types of *circular migration*:<sup>11</sup> (1) movement of permanent migrants who return permanently (for instance, return of the Irish Diaspora in the late 1990s), (2) movement of permanent migrants who return temporarily (Taiwanese ‘astronauts’ from Canada and Silicon Valley, California), (3) movement of temporary migrants who return permanently (Korean turn-key project managers in the Middle East), and (4) movement of temporary migrants who return temporarily (contract workers from the Philippines). “Among these four categories, while the last one signifies a more genuine type of *circular migration* in which temporary migrants have a degree of legal mobility back and forth between their home country and host country, the first three categories indicate some sorts of circularity in migratory movements. In short, it is possible to think of a variety of the notion of *circular migration* both analytically and empirically.”<sup>12</sup>

The study on Lebanon<sup>13</sup> tried to capture the *circularity* in migration by defining the emigrants in a discrete manner for statistical purposes.<sup>14</sup> These were (1) emigrated permanently not having anything in Lebanon, (2) permanent emigrant having kept a residence in Lebanon, (3) permanent emigrant having kept an economic activity in Lebanon, (4) emigrant (non permanent) with alternative residence and, sometimes, alternative work and, (5) chief of household residing abroad but whose family was in Lebanon.

These efforts reveal that such typologies rely heavily on the familiar definitions of “permanent”, “return” and “temporary” migration – concepts which are more legalistic than economic. Furthermore, the common denominator in all these classifications is a degree of mobility. At some point we might have to make an operational definition of *circular migration*. Nevertheless, particularly from the economic point of view, *the degree and dimensions of circularity* are analytically more useful than arbitrary discrete classifications.

#### IV. Circularity of Migration

##### *Degree and dimensions of circularity*

Let us consider *circularity* as a continuous dimension rather than a discrete one. It is the degree of mobility like the characteristic of *viscosity* in physics, e.g. the viscosity of oil. Accordingly, all migrants have a certain degree of *circularity* on a scale of, e.g., zero to one. At some stage such an index might be constructed. What would be the arguments in this index?

We can think of three sets of variables: (1) The obvious dimension deals with observed mobility. These include the length of stay of migrants in the source and host countries, the frequency of repeated stays, frequency of visits.<sup>15</sup> These data would be reported on a factual *ex post* basis. (2) As a compliment to a factual *ex post* reporting, intentions can be reported on an *ex ante* basis. This would be interpreted as a matter of probability. (3) Another set of variables concern the characteristics of the

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<sup>10</sup> See Ahmet Içduygu, “Circular Migration and Turkey: An Overview of the Past and Present - Some Demo-Economic Implications”, national report published in the Circular Migration Series, CARIM, 2008, [www.carim.org/circularmigration](http://www.carim.org/circularmigration)

<sup>11</sup> Agunias and Newland (2007), quoted by Içduygu (2007).

<sup>12</sup> Kasparian (2007).

<sup>13</sup> See Choghig Kasparian, “La migration circulaire au Liban : perspective démo-économique”, national report published in the Circular Migration Series, CARIM, 2008, [www.carim.org/circularmigration](http://www.carim.org/circularmigration)

<sup>14</sup> Içduygu (2007).

<sup>15</sup> Mobility is not only physical but there is also a *virtual* dimension. Participation in many activities for pleasure and business can be done in virtual platforms. Migrants may also be asked how often they phone home or get to the web pages of their country etc.

physical endowments of the migrants. These include multiplicity of residence (residence in both the source and host country), multiplicity of investments, multiplicity of work and business. They do not directly measure actual mobility but are expected to have a close correlation with it.

### *Determinants of circularity*

What enables or determines varying degrees of *circularity* among migrant populations?

The characteristics of the migrants and the properties of the source and host countries, particularly their emigration/immigration procedures would determine this level of *circularity*. The profile of the migrants can be characterized by their gender, age, marital status, education, employment status (activity level), urban vs. rural origin etc.

Also, restrictions and the ease of emigration procedures in the source countries, and visa, residence and work permit regulations and their flexibility in the host countries are crucial factors. Finally, bilateral agreements such as those for seasonal workers and professionals/scientists, not only enable but may generate such migration.

### *Impact of circularity*

What is the impact of *greater circularity* for the immigrants, on the source (home) and host countries?

For the migrants, it is safe to assume that greater freedom of choice enhances their welfare. Unless there is a special case for a particular group of migrants who would be unable to act rationally on their own, greater mobility by choice is positive. *Circular migration*, in the narrow sense such as in the seasonal worker programs, is an improvement so far it expands the choice set of the individual. However, to the extent that it replaces (displaces) more spontaneous (free) forms of migration, its net effect on the migrant is ambiguous.

The policy debate initiated by the EU presumes that *circular migration* in the narrow sense has lower or no socio-economic integration costs including the fiscal burden. The impact of *greater circularity* of the migrants on the host country is much more complex. There is patchy evidence that more flexible residence and work permits in fact encourage return migration<sup>16</sup> and may reduce the fiscal burden on the host countries. The impact of *greater circularity* on the host society including integration costs deserves further research.

The impact of *greater circularity* on the source (home) countries is presumed to be generally positive. It is assumed that the migrant acquires physical, human and social capital in the host country. The argument is that, greater the *circularity*, more of those would “stick” onto the home country which in turn would foster development. Potentially, this goes for the remittances and investment in residential housing, education of relatives and businesses. There is evidence from several countries that closer relations with the home country have positive impact on the quantity of remittances. Beyond presumption, the impact of *greater circularity* on the quantity and quality of investment by the immigrants to their home countries requires further research.

### *Policies to foster greater circularity*

Arguably, *greater circularity* of immigrants has a positive impact, particularly on the home countries. If that is the case, what is the proper policy perspective?

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<sup>16</sup> The Moroccan study by M. Khachani ([www.carim.org/circularmigration](http://www.carim.org/circularmigration)) provides some evidence to that account for migrants in EU countries. Similar evidence can be found for Turkish immigrants.

We have noted that this change in the character of migration was essentially the result of the new global setup. More specifically, technological breakthroughs in transportation and communications leading to the globalization of investment, production and consumption induce higher mobility of migrants. With respect to the environmental factors, policy determines the openness of the economies to the penetration of global market forces. This would include allowing for greater international competition in the transportation and communications sectors and liberal regulations concerning right of establishment and property ownership.

We have also noted that the length and flexibility of employment contracts and residence and work permits were important factors in increasing the *circularity* of migrants. These are issues entirely in the policy realm of the immigration regulations. Therefore there is ample room for policy initiatives.

## V. Country Cases

These studies<sup>17</sup> were supposed to report on such migratory flows and their impact on the home countries. Due to ambiguity in conceptual and definitional issues and the lack of particular statistics, the papers raised some important questions but could only provide very sparse information on *circular migration* and its impact.

Most authors have used the familiar concepts of permanent, temporary and return migration. *Circular migration* was often meant to cover temporary -including seasonal - and return migration.

While guest-worker episodes had the destination of Europe in the 1960s until the “oil crisis” in 1973, this changed to oil exporting countries in the Middle East, particularly the Gulf States. With the collapse of the Soviet block in the early 1990s, the CIS countries emerged as a new center of attraction.

While experiences with migration to other destinations are important, we will emphasize what can be potentially considered *circular migration* to the EU countries.

### Egypt

The guest-worker episode of Egypt started late due to restrictions on emigration especially to Western countries until 1967. When these restrictions were lifted, labor demand in Europe has already subsided. The major migration movement started with the quadrupling of the oil prices in 1973 leading to a boom in the oil exporting countries of the region.

In Egypt, temporary and permanent migration are defined by a 1983 law. Accordingly, those migrants whose destination is Europe, North America and Australia are permanent migrants, to all other destinations - Arab countries, the Gulf States and all others are considered temporary migrants. In line with that legalistic definition, one third of Egyptian migrants are permanent and two thirds are temporary. One third of all Egyptian migrants are in Saudi Arabia - that is nearly half of the temporary migrants. The remaining were mainly in Libya, but now in Gulf countries.

Migrants are better educated compared to population at large. Therefore, there is potential for spin-offs in this context from return or *circular migration*.

There are survey data on migration including return migration. The profiles of the migrants are well tabulated. An overwhelming majority of migrants are male. The survey on return migration supports the “legal” distinction between temporary and permanent migration by country of destination.

Concerning remittances, one can make important inferences on the impact of *circularity*. The general pattern is that the more temporary the migrants are, the higher the share of savings would be

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<sup>17</sup> See the national reports on Circular Migration Series on the CARIM website [www.carim.org/circularmigration](http://www.carim.org/circularmigration)

remitted home.<sup>18</sup> Most of remittances in Egypt are used in consumption, only a fraction for purchasing houses and renovations, and even less on education and other investment. The developmental impact of remittances in Egypt is under question.

The author supports the World Trade Organisation (WTO) modality for temporary mobility of workers and argues that it should be extended to unskilled labor as well.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, temporary or *circular migration* can be better facilitated under this regime.

## Jordan

Due to lack of data, the study on Jordan focuses on non-Jordanians holding work permits in Jordan rather than Jordanian immigrants abroad.

Only a small fraction of non-Jordanians in Jordan are there for the first time, meaning repeated stays for most. The educational level of the non-Jordanians in Jordan is very low. There are some statistics showing that the Jordanians abroad are better educated and actually have higher level of education compared to those who remain in the home country. Thus, the non-Jordanians are to some extent replacing the Jordanians. Regarding remittances, it is presumed that Jordanians abroad earn relatively high incomes because they are well educated, and remit high amount of funds.

The recently conducted “arrivals and departures” survey also covers non-resident Jordanians. This is a potential vehicle to gather information on the *circularity* of Jordanian immigrants.

## Lebanon

We have taken up the serious work by the Lebanese country study concerning the definitions. The study further goes into the distinction between the Syrian migrant worker, Jordanian migrant worker, Palestinian migrant worker, etc. All having different degrees of *circularity*.

The survey that is reported has a very large sample size and covers the period 1975-2001. The results allow the identification of the following migrant categories: (1) those who left the country for at least 6 months and returned, (2) emigrants who left the country between 1975 and 2001 and who intend to return (their relatives, answering the questionnaire), (3) emigrants who left the country between 1975 and 2001 and who are reported to be undecided, (4) those who left definitely (the relatives stating that they will not come back), and (5) those who reside in Lebanon but work abroad.

The author collapses those who have “intention to return” and the “undecided” into one category and reduces the number to four types. No clear pattern emerged when the profile of the migrants were studied in connection with these categories. For example, age, education and employment do not distinguish so much those who intend to return. It is not easy to predict the *circular migrant* from these data. One criterion that made a distinction was the country of destination: those who migrated to Arab countries intended to return at a greater rate.

One important aspect of the Lebanese survey was its attempt to measure how regularly migrants visited the home country. Those who intended to return were more frequently visiting Lebanon. This seemed to be a good measure of the intensity of the contact with the home country.

A similar and more comprehensive survey would be conducted in Lebanon soon. The author has some very specific questions concerning the definition of *circular migration*.<sup>20</sup> There seems to be scope for incorporating some measures of *circularity* into this survey.

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<sup>18</sup> This is consistent with the Palestinian and Turkish experiences.

<sup>19</sup> WTO, GATS Mode 4.

<sup>20</sup> See the concluding part in the current paper, Section IV.

## Mauritania

This is a very interesting case because *circular migration* was a way of life before the borders were established. One of the most traditional routes of migration was the Moslem pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina through Mauritania. Other types of mobility were linked to the movements of Mauritians practicing trade in Central and Western Africa. Migration of southern Mauritians to France was also a historical phenomenon.

Currently, most of Mauritanian migrants are in sub-Saharan African countries and Arab countries. France is the largest European destination. Draught and regional hostilities were among the main reasons of population movements in recent history.

Proximity of Mauritania to the Canary Islands constitute a major problem by making the country a transit route for illegal migration, It was a positive development that an agreements with Spain was signed in July 2007 to control and manage migration flows. However, as the agreement entails limited quotas, thousands of people are queuing in front of the employment agency hoping to be recruited as emigrant to Spain.

## Morocco

In the Moroccan case, a distinction is made between *circular* migrants depending on the country of main residence: those who are based in Morocco and those who are based abroad. Moroccans in Morocco sometimes travel abroad for reasons other than tourism and that includes seasonal migration. Morocco has also some bilateral agreements with EU countries which include seasonal migration and exchange of young professionals. These agreements exist with Spain, France and Italy. But both seasonal migration and young professional programs are very modest. Under these agreements, seasonal workers enter legally to France and to Spain (respectively about 7,000 and 10,000 annually). This provides some mobility, but the rationing of this limited number of slots is problematic. Thousands of people are queuing and the programs are selecting those who are most likely to come back. Mothers with children left home are given priority to increase the probability of returning. The numbers in any case are very small given the 400 thousands new annual job seekers in Morocco. Young professional programs cover only 300-1,000 persons. However these programs are important to address brain drain issues.

An important issue relates to the financial incentives provided by some EU countries to induce immigrants return back to Morocco. The Moroccan study makes the case that such incentives are not enough to compensate social capital and networks. Making their legal status more flexible would be a more effective way to bring them back. In fact, there are some programs trying to reverse brain drain of academicians and scientists. It appears that it is not the money that enables them to come back but it is greater flexibility and the prestige they are given which make them more mobile, thus enable them contribute more to both societies.

## Palestine

The study uses data pertaining to *return* migration which allowed for the identification of the migrants' profiles and host countries. One third of the returnees were from Jordan followed by Saudi Arabia, Israel and Kuwait. The pattern of return closely followed political events, i.e. peace initiatives versus intensification of confrontations. Only a very small fraction of the returnees were from the EU.

Returnees in general had higher level of education and skills compared to the population and those who were coming from EU countries were even better endowed in this respect. As many among the latter group were self employed or employers, they had a more active contribution to development.

A very large proportion of the young population is currently contemplating to migrate. The destination of migrants shifted from Arab countries towards other countries including the EU.

It was found that remittances had a positive impact on education and professional skills. Remittances were negatively correlated with the period of stay abroad implying that *circularity* may increase remittances.

## Tunisia

The data used in the paper is from the annual household survey on employment with a very large sample. Half of the households in the sample change every year. The households are asked their intentions whether they would be leaving the country and/or returning. Leaving the country meant staying at least one year abroad. There was a net outflow each year. The survey provides a detailed profile of the potential migrants, migrants, returnees and potential returnees. The data allow for the comparison of the profile of those who want to emigrate with that of returnees.

## Turkey

The Turkish guest-worker episode in Europe of the 1960s and 1970s is a thoroughly studied topic, particularly by Nermin Abadan-Unat. Initially, workers, mainly men, were “exported” with 2 to 3 year contracts. They returned home unless their contracts were extended for a similar duration. The peak was reached in 1967; first there was a slowdown with the recession then the “oil crisis” of 1973 halted this flow. This was fully regulated under bilaterally agreements.

The author, Icduygu, described a migratory cycle for Turkey which started with exit migration in the beginning, then there was an adjustment/consolidation period - when this temporariness left its place to permanency. A transition period followed when, rather than the EU countries, first the MENA countries and later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, CIS countries became the new destinations. Some of those initial guest-workers were returning to Turkey as their contracts ended and/or by receiving some incentives to return. Currently, there are about 3 million Turkish immigrants in the EU, some of whom naturalized. There is a large number of emigrants who are “floating” between the host countries and Turkey for various reasons, such as business, leisure and health.

There is also a category of migrants in the MENA countries going forth and back and who have some *circularity*. They are contractual workers who go back home once their contracts are over. Particularly in the CIS countries, work contracts are often tied to turnkey projects. There are no studies on the repetitiveness of these contracts.

The author reported results of the 1994-2000 “Turkish international migration survey”. The results provided some information on the *circularity* of migration as they also covered return migration.

The other study on Turkey by Kirisci focuses on the *circular* character of migratory flows into Turkey, an issue we mentioned among the criticisms of the EU approach.

## VI. Concluding Remarks and Suggestions for Research

A policy of *circular migration* has been suggested as a remedy to the emerging labor shortage in Europe as well as the growing problem of controlling illegal migration. This policy is meant to be implemented with bilateral agreements and hence the resulting migration would be managed and legal. This approach might be strongly criticized if it constituted the main thrust of EU countries’ migration policies. Simply more liberal visa and migration regulations and schemes that would liberalize temporary labor movements on a multilateral basis under the World Trade Organization (WTO) deserve serious consideration.<sup>21</sup> However, if the EU considers the bilateral agreements as one of the

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<sup>21</sup> Under the WTO rules on services, countries do not have to offer Most Favored Nation (MFN) treatment to all WTO members, but only to those that had reciprocal exchanges in a particular issue.

**additional** approaches to tackle migration, this would truly contribute to freer movement of people. In that case, the critical question is the terms of these arrangements and the modality of negotiating them. Serious **cost benefit analyses** - to the migrants and home and host countries - of existing programs are crucial for future undertakings.

Due to ambiguity in conceptual and definitional issues and the lack of particular statistics, the country studies could only provide very sparse information on *circular migration* and its impact. In this synthesis paper, we emphasized the importance of the *circularity* dimension in all forms of migration rather than *circular migration* as a category. Nevertheless, the need for a definition of *circular migration* describing what it covers and what not is emphasized by most authors.<sup>22</sup> For practical and policy reasons an **operational definition** would be useful. The point of departure could be the existing terms - permanent, temporary and return migration - and legal definitions rather than economic concepts.

When we interpret *circularity as a property in all migrants*, we need to capture this characteristic by various dimensions. We have to **decide on a common list** of these variables for **data compilation and cross country comparisons**. This list would include (1) *ex post* data on observed mobility concerning the length of stay of migrants in the source and host countries, the frequency of repeated stays and frequency of visits, (2) *ex ante* intentions for the above, and (3) characteristics of the physical endowments of the migrants including multiplicity of residence (residence in both the source and host country), multiplicity of investments, multiplicity of work and business.

For policy formulation, we need to analyze the determinants of varying degrees of *circularity* among migrant populations. We have to **study the characteristics of the migrants and the properties of the source and host countries**. Our data on the profile of migrants should capture characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, education, employment status (activity level), urban vs. rural origin etc. Data should be compiled to allow for all possible cross tabulations. For measurability, we have to also *standardize* the restrictiveness of emigration procedures in the source countries, and visa, residence and work permit regulations and their flexibility in the host countries.

Once we have a better understanding of what determines the degree of *circularity* of migrants, we might address the **normative questions**: Is it a positive thing to enable and encourage it? How to do it?

To what extent migrants acquire physical, human and social capital in the host countries? To what extent greater *circularity* increases the spin-offs to the home country? Potentially, this goes for the remittances and investment in residential housing, education of relatives and businesses. The relation between *greater circularity* on the one hand and **the quantity and quality of investment by the immigrants to their home countries** on the other requires further research.

In the host societies there is major resistance to immigration. What is the impact of *greater circularity on the host countries'* fiscal systems? The impact on the socioeconomic costs of integration also deserves further research.

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<sup>22</sup> See particularly the study on Lebanon. Its author Kasparian has further elaborated this need in the October meeting in Florence: "What are the criteria to be considered to distinguish different types of migration already existing from circular migration? Does this notion require the practice of an economic activity in both destination and home countries? Is there a minimal duration of stay to consider a migrant as being circular? Does circular migration require a repetition of migration back and forth? Does a migrant who make an economic investment, while spending his holiday in his country of origin be considered a circular migrant? How can we distinguish between a long term expatriate with a circular migrant? How to qualify the mobility of bi-nationals? What about migrants' descendants: how to qualify their mobility? What are their countries of reference?"

**Policies to enable and encourage *circularity*:** Since *circularity* of migrants is largely a global phenomenon, policies that determine the openness of the economies to the penetration of market forces are crucial in this context. This implies that policies for tradable services such as transportation and communications and regulations concerning right of establishment and property ownership should be reviewed in this perspective.

The length and flexibility of employment contracts and residence and work permits directly affect the *circularity* of migrants. These are issues entirely in the policy realm of the immigration regulations. Therefore, there is ample room for policy initiatives.

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