



# **CIRCULAR MIGRATION: IS IT RELEVANT FOR THE SOUTH AND EAST OF THE MEDITERRANEAN?**

*Philippe Fargues*

---

**CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2008/40**

---

**Circular Migration Series**

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**

**Analytic and Synthetic Notes – Circular Migration Series**  
**CARIM-AS 2008/40**

**Circular Migration:**  
**Is it relevant for the South and East of the Mediterranean?**

Philippe Fargues

Scientific Director CARIM

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence, Italy

This publication is part of a series of papers on Circular Migration written in the framework of the CARIM project, and presented at two meetings organised by CARIM in Florence: *The Role of Circular Migration in the Euro-Mediterranean Area* (17 - 19 October 2007), and *Circular Migration: Experiences, Opportunities and Constraints for Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries* (28 - 29 January 2008).

Please follow this link to access all papers on Circular Migration: [www.carim.org/circularmigration](http://www.carim.org/circularmigration)

© 2008, European University Institute  
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

This text may be downloaded only for personal research purposes. Any additional reproduction for other purposes, whether in hard copies or electronically, requires the consent of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

Requests should be addressed to [forinfo@eui.eu](mailto:forinfo@eui.eu)

If cited or quoted, reference should be made as follows:

[Full name of the author(s)], [title], CARIM AS [series number], Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute, [year of publication].

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS PUBLICATION CANNOT IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES BE REGARDED AS THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

European University Institute  
Badia Fiesolana  
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)  
Italy

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/>  
<http://www.carim.org/Publications/>  
<http://cadmus.eui.eu>

## **CARIM**

The Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM) was created in February 2004 and has been financed by the European Commission. Until January 2007, it referred to part C - “*cooperation related to the social integration of immigrants issue, migration and free circulation of persons*” of the MEDA programme, i.e. the main financial instrument of the European Union to establish the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Since February 2007, CARIM has been funded as part of the AENEAS programme for technical and financial assistance to third countries in the areas of migration and asylum. The latter programme establishes a link between the external objectives of the European Union’s migration policy and its development policy. AENEAS aims at providing third countries with the assistance necessary to achieve, at different levels, a better management of migrant flows.

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)

*For more information:*

Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration  
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (EUI)  
Villa Malafrasca  
Via Boccaccio, 151  
50133 Firenze (FI)  
Italy  
Tel: +39 055 46 85 878  
Fax: +39 055 46 85 755  
Email: [carim@eui.eu](mailto:carim@eui.eu)

**Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies**

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/>

## **Abstract**

*Circular migration: is it relevant for the South and East of the Mediterranean?*

Defining circular migration by six criteria – being temporary, renewable, circulatory, legal, respectful of the migrant's rights, and managed in such a way as to optimize labour markets at both ends, in sending and receiving countries – one finds that Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries have a long and much diversified experience, as senders as well as receivers, of forms of migration that are “quasi-circular”, i.e. respond to part of these criteria. All across the region, multiple and two-way mobility is an emerging pattern. It often serves the interests of individual migrants themselves, in particular young adults in their twenties and early thirties, who live in their home countries a long and painful transition from school or university to the labour market, then to marriage and the founding of a family. However, for those who have an experience of it, temporary, multiple and two-way migration goes together with risk, de-protection and more often than not the denial of rights. To be fully attractive and compete with informality and irregularity, circular migration must be respectful of migrants' rights.

## **Résumé**

*La migration circulaire est-elle intéressante pour les pays sud et de l'est de la Méditerranée ?*

Si l'on définit la migration circulaire par six critères – être temporaire, renouvelable, circulatoire, légale, respectueuse des droits des migrants et gérée en sorte d'optimiser les besoins des marchés du travail des pays de départ et de destination – on trouve que les pays du Sud et de l'Est de la Méditerranée ont tous une expérience, souvent longue et diversifiée, comme pays source aussi bien que pays hôte, d'une migration « quasi-circulaire » qui remplit une partie de ces critères. Dans toute la région, on assiste à la montée d'une migration multiple avec retour au pays de départ. Cette forme de mobilité sert souvent les intérêts des migrants eux-mêmes, en particulier des jeunes adultes qui se voient confrontés dans leur pays d'origine à une longue et difficile période de transition entre la fin de l'éducation scolaire et l'obtention d'un premier emploi, puis le mariage et la fondation d'une famille. Cependant, ceux qui en ont l'expérience savent que la migration temporaire, multiple, et à double sens, signifie souvent risque, absence de protection et déni des droits. Pour devenir véritablement attractive et l'emporter sur la migration irrégulière, la migration circulaire doit être respectueuse des droits des migrants.

## **Introduction**

Like the line of a circle drawn out by a pen, circular migration is a continuing migration which eventually brings the migrant back to their point of departure. Although an old reality, it currently arouses much interest among policymakers in the developed world. At a time when migratory pressure is growing in many parts of the developing world and irregular migration gaining unprecedented momentum, turning traditional sending countries into new receivers of transit migrants, circular migration is viewed as part of a response. On the one hand, it would provide the international mobility of labour which is required to match sector-specific shortages in developed countries with the corresponding surpluses from developing countries, while maintaining social cohesion and minimizing tensions that may arise from the long-term settlement of migrant populations. On the other, it would open a new window for legal migration that may help to prevent irregular migration. To be a workable solution, however, circular migration has to win the full commitment of all parties in a genuine act of cooperation between the source and host countries of migrants, and to foster development in source countries.

The Communication from the European commission on *Circular migration and mobility partnerships between the European Union and third countries* issued by in May 2007 (COM(2007) 248 final) defines circular migration as “a form of migration that is managed in a way allowing some degree of legal mobility back and forth between two countries.” It applies, both to third-country nationals who engage in an activity in their country of origin while retaining their main residence in an EU member state, and on to “persons residing in a third country who come to the EU temporarily for work, study, or training on the condition that, at the end of the period for which they were granted entry, they must re-establish their main residence and their main activity in their country of origin.”

This communication of the EC advocates circular migration as a means to “help EU Member States to address their labour needs while exploiting potential positive impacts of migration on development and responding to the needs of countries of origin in terms of skill transfers and of mitigating the impact of brain drain.” It proposes “mobility partnerships” for active cooperation in managing migration flows between the European Union and third countries that are “interested in securing better access to EU territory for their citizens” and “ready to take on in terms of action against illegal migration and facilitating reintegration of returnees, including efforts to provide returnees with employment opportunities.”

This paper will discuss the relevance of circular migration for Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEM) countries. It will first discuss the concept itself, then review its potential for development and ask what policies could help circular migration, and finally review actual experiences of circular migration.

## **Defining and measuring circular migration**

Circular migration is not a well-established concept. It does not refer to any particular category of migrants, migrants that have, for example, a particular legal status. Rather it refers to a loose notion which has been variously defined. One finds both restrictive definitions like the one adopted by the European Commission, and the wider, more inclusive definitions of some researchers. They take into account the ‘transnational’ nature of many modern migrant communities around the world, and anticipate that in the future, thanks to easy and cheap transport and communication and to the close ties migrants can keep with their country of origin, circularity will become the rule, not the exception.

In an attempt to class various kinds of circularity in a single framework, Agunias and Newland (2007) combine two criteria (kind of emigration and kind of return) with two categories of duration (permanent vs. temporary) and propose four types of circular migration:

- Type A Permanent migration and (one or several generations later) permanent return;
- Type B Permanent migration and temporary return;
- Type C Temporary migration and temporary return;
- Type D Temporary migration and permanent return.

According to this typology, a single migration in the course of a lifetime would be sufficient to make a circular migrant (Type A) out of any person born of migrant parents. For example, a French born in France of an immigrant Tunisian father would become a circular migrant if she travelled once to Tunisia and decided to establish herself there. A migrant person alternating irregular stays in the host country with returns to her home country in order to renew her short-term visa or to change passport, would also be a circular migrant even though she never settle again in her home country (Type C). Obviously, this definition is too inclusive to offer any operational method for identifying circular migrants as envisaged by the European Commission.

For the purpose of this paper, it will be sufficient to list a number of criteria that make migration circular:

- Criterion A Being temporary: periods of stay are limited in duration;
- Criterion B Being renewable: several periods are possible;
- Criterion C Being circulatory: freedom of movement between source and host countries is fully-enjoyed during each period of stay;
- Criterion D Being legal;
- Criterion E Being respectful of the rights of migrants;
- Criterion F Being managed in order to match labour demand in one country with supply from another country.

Additional criteria, such as suiting labour needs, enhancing migrants' skills, providing for skill transfers to source countries, mitigating the negative consequences of brain drain, etc. could be added, but they are more difficult to assess.

Once a definition is adopted on the basis of the above criteria, monitoring circular migration and estimating numbers and profiles of circular migrants may turn out to be difficult, in particular because of the temporary nature of the move. Visa and contract statistics are notoriously inadequate and traditional demographic methodologies are, at best, adapted to estimating permanent, but not temporary migration. Conventional definitions of international migrants (as residents, or persons intending to reside in their host country) and existing systems of data collection (based on population censuses taking place every ten years and collecting no or little information on temporary residents) fail to capture temporary migration. In order to capture circularity, longitudinal studies, rather than administrative data, would be needed.

In addition, circular migration can only be measured *ex post*, after the return has taken place, i.e. when migration has ended. In order to get round this obstacle and to capture current circular migration, one can use data on visas (permanent / temporary; renewable / non-renewable, etc.) or, in the case of some countries, responses to questionnaires on migrants' intentions (settling / returning) (Hugo 2003). However, stated intention may not square with reality if, for example, migrants who initially intended to return home do not find in their country of origin opportunities that could compensate for the loss of a position acquired in their host country. Return to the home country is a migration and as such it must be attractive: the 'pull' factors of the home society play a vital role in the actual decision to return.

## **Assessing the impact of circular migration on the development of origin countries**

The literature does not tell us much about the actual or expected impact of circular migration as compared to that of other forms of mobility. Indeed, circular migration is made of two distinct moves – first the emigration (possibly with successive destinations), and second the return – and therefore its overall impact on development in migrants' home countries can be seen as the sum, or combination, of two distinct impacts: while circular migrants are abroad and upon their return.

a) The impact of circular migrants' departure and stay away from their origin country can be dealt with in the same way as that of any other migrants, i.e. in terms of financial, human, and social capital.

- Financial capital: like other migrants, circular migrants remit money to their family and community left behind, but their remittances can differ with regard to the channel used to transfer funds, the amount transferred and its distribution in terms of investment and consumption. More than permanent migrants, they have the comparative advantage of being at the same time in two worlds, earning their income in a high-wage country and spending or investing it in a low-wage, low-cost one. It is usually expected that circular migrants will send higher amounts and also more investment-oriented remittances than other migrants.
- Social capital: because circular migrants are likely to remain more connected with their country of origin than other migrants, the networks they contribute to establish, or simply find in their destination countries may be mobilised more efficiently for the benefit of their origin country.
- Human capital: if circular migrants are more often than others selected on the basis of education and skills, their departure may create a greater loss of human resources (albeit one of shorter duration) in origin countries, unless those skills attracted abroad are those underused at home, or specific policies are designed to offset the negative impact of brain drain. On the other hand, as circular migrants will eventually return home, any skills acquired during their circular trip may benefit their home country.

b) Upon return, circular migrants are like other returnees. Whether migration brings a sustainable change in their socioeconomic condition as individuals, and their return contributes to the development of their home society and economy, will depend upon a number of factors, pertaining both to their experience abroad and to the environment in their home country.

Migrants who have had unskilled jobs abroad will likely return with little experience that can be mobilised for development, while those who have acquired technical or industrial skills may find themselves unable to make use of these skills once back in their home country, for lack of appropriate institutional framework or industrial infrastructure, etc. (Gmelch 1980). Bangalore, the Indian hub of computer science, developed by Indian returnees from Silicon Valley, is a success story. But there are many other examples where things did not turn out so well for those coming home.

The extent to which knowledge or ideas gained abroad by return migrants turn out to be an 'innovative', versus 'conservative', force was theorized more than 30 years ago and the following critical factors stressed (Bovenkerk 1974):

- The size of the returning population: large numbers may form a critical mass necessary to initiate changes, while small numbers will have less influence.
- The duration of migrants' absence: short periods abroad and short exposure to another culture will bring fewer changes than longer periods; on the other hand, when migrants stay a long time abroad their readjustment upon return may be problematic.
- The social class of the migrants: returning members of the elite may have a greater impact than unskilled workers.



- The differences between origin and destination areas: those who migrated to metropolitan areas will have more impact if they return to urban centres than to rural areas.
- The quantity and quality of the acquired skills: innovation may be fostered more by the acquisition of general skills than by a specialized education that would be difficult to apply in the context of origin countries.

It has been found that the return migrants who have the most positive impact on development are those who had a successful experience abroad, an experience that strengthened their financial resources and/or their education and professional skills: while those whose experience abroad was a mere replication of the unskilled work they would have done at home are left in the same low position in which they found themselves before migrating (Gmelch 1980). Another condition of successful return would be the manner in which migrants prepared their coming home while abroad and the resources that they can mobilise once returned (Cassarino 2004).

Turning the brain drain into a brain gain is another issue with return migration. The negative impact of brain drain on origin countries can be reduced – or even transformed into a positive one – when return migration brings back to origin countries skills that have been enhanced by professional experience and skills gained while in migration, and where economic links made abroad by migrants benefit their home country through opening the way to foreign investment, market opportunities, etc. In the case of SEM countries where high unemployment rates prevail among young people with higher education, the facilitation and the orderly management of circular migration among skilled persons may bring more benefits than costs.

### **Designing pro-circular migration policies**

Growing circular migration reflects the fact that many migrants would remain in their communities, were they offered opportunities at home. Spending as little time and money as possible in their host country is part of a strategy for optimising their move, and saving as much as possible for investing at home is their goal. Therefore, migration policies must acknowledge that the most important actors for development are migrants themselves not the state, and these same policies must enhance investment opportunities available to migrants and their families (O'Neil 2003).

Circular migration also reflects the intensification of relations and the interdependence of economies in large regional spaces such as the Euro-Mediterranean area. Therefore, both governments of host and source countries play a critical role in making circular migration work for development.

For host countries, promoting circular migration often means encouraging return and penalising those who overstay the time allowed them in their visas. In practice, however, many migrant workers who find themselves in an irregular situation do not leave the country but continue to work, though afterwards illegally. Moreover, many make repeat moves in such a way that migration has been described as a self-perpetuating process, each move increasing migrants' knowledge about border-crossing. It has been found that once migrants are used to crossing borders, they will continue to do it whether legally or not; in addition, they may transfer their knowledge of procedures to others and open avenues for new migration to take place (Vertovec 2007).

Because easy interaction between migrants and their country of origin – from easy travel and border-crossing to low-cost transfer of remittances – has been found to favour circular rather than permanent migration (Hugo 2003), host countries frequently encourage migrants to maintain ties with their home countries. For their part, origin countries increasingly offer members of their diasporas attractive conditions to invest money or knowledge at home. The United Nations TOKTEN programme (Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals) is an example of such policies.

Apart from these usual policies, alternative ways to promote circular migration could be explored. Because it has been found that success, rather than failure, in host countries favours a constructive

return home, the intensity and quality of ties established with host countries are critical to circular migration. For this purpose, temporary contracts need to be long and flexible enough to enable migrants both to recover the financial costs associated with migration, and to save enough money to establish businesses upon return. Obstacles to cross-border circulation must be removed and circular migrants should be allowed to re-enter their destination country, to apply for renewable stays, and to change their employers (Agunias and Newland 2007).

Pro-circular migration policies in SEM countries should target young adults. Owing to a combination of local pressure on labour markets and delayed age at marriage, many of these are open to a migratory experience. Between the end of university education and first employment, the young search for a first job on average for 2-3 years. Once that first job is found, another period of 2-3 years is used to save enough to get married. These two intervals, taken together, form a window in the life cycle, say between 25 and 30, which could be suitable for circular migration schemes, in particular those intended for highly-skilled persons (Fargues 2005).

### **A new interest in an old form of migration**

Circular migration is not a new phenomenon. In the modernising economies of Western Africa, Eastern Africa and Indonesia, circular migration was a major form of labour mobility right through the second half of the twentieth century (Arthur 1991; Elkan 1967; Hugo 1982). In Asia, circular migration has been the dominant pattern of international migration. The two-way mobility of workers, and particularly return migration and their impact on the home society and economy, was already a topic for research more than thirty years ago (Bovenkerk 1974).

In his seminal work on capitalism and the domestic community, French anthropologist Claude Meillassoux has shown how pendular migration between two distant regions – that of workers' domestic community and that of their employers' capitalistic plantation – was intrinsically linked with the emergence of wage-earners in the traditional economies of Western Africa. At a time when African rural economies became divided into two sectors, subsistence crops vs. export-oriented agriculture, workers were employed in large-scale plantations only on a seasonal basis. After each period of employment they would return home where they were no longer paid by their distant employer. The salary they would receive paid only their work, not the reproduction of their workforce, that is their families' maintenance. It was traditional subsistence-agriculture that was feeding those families, i.e. taking care of the reproduction of the workforce, in contrast with a one-sector capitalistic economy where family support is also covered by the salary. As a result, pendular, or circular, migration between the domestic community and the plantations where workers were employed, was transferring wealth from the subsistence-crops sector to the export-oriented capitalistic one. Circular migration was a corollary of free work, of labour becoming a commodity at a time when the end of slavery had freed an enormous labour force (Meillassoux, 1975).

What may be one of the earliest experiences of international circular migration has been revealed in recent demographic work concerning the history of the Chinese community in the United States of America (Chew & Liu, 2004). Over the sixty years of the 'Chinese Exclusion Act' (1880s—1940s), i.e. two generations, male Chinese workers were barred and Chinese residents were not given the possibility of US citizenship. Logically the Chinese population of the US would have been fated to vanish. But this is not what happened. Not only was its size maintained- Its age pyramid, typical of recent immigrants (excess numbers of young adult males), did not alter. How this occurred is not fully-documented. But, surely, there is only one explanation: for sixty years, old Chinese workers were regularly smuggled out of the US to China, and replaced, on a one-to-one basis, by young Chinese workers smuggled from China into the US. Chinese immigrants in the US had then invented, as early as the 1880s, the temporary international mobility of labour. If they did so while it was against the law, they probably did so because they considered it to be in their own interest, and perhaps in the interest of the community left behind in China.

In contrast with this unregulated and early Chinese version of circular migration, the large scale movement of temporary labour migration which started in the context of booming post World-War-Two Europe was, instead, initiated by states, and regulated by formal agreements between states. For two decades, official programmes for the recruitment of guest workers – mainly from the Maghreb in the case of France, Belgium and the Netherlands, and from Turkey in the case of Western Germany – provided European industries and Europe’s construction sectors with a temporary migrant workforce. This was ‘circular’ migration before the term existed insofar as migrant workers would stay in their host countries for the duration of their contract and then come back to their home countries until the next contract came along, if any did. It was a two-way circulation of mostly unaccompanied male workers, whose families stayed in the home countries.

Moreover and rather paradoxically, the subsequent permanent settlement of migrants from SEM countries in Western Europe which eventually resulted from the circulation of guest workers, can be seen as the unplanned outcome of the discontinuation of temporary migration schemes, a discontinuation that was decided on by European governments in response to soaring unemployment and economic crises in the mid-1970s. As visas were required of travellers from countries that were until then exempted and because the recruitment of new migrant workers started to be difficult, if not impossible, those already in the place became reluctant to return home between two periods of work for fear of not being able to re-enter their host country. As the only door still open to migration was through family reunification, they, instead, decided to ask their wives and children to join them in Europe. This is how the two-way circulation of unaccompanied men was replaced by one-way immigration and the permanent settlement of families. Later on, several European governments tried to implement policies encouraging the return of former migrants to their countries of origin through financial incentives. Apart from their initial success in Germany, where bonuses granted to voluntary returnees favoured the return to Turkey of some 310 000 immigrants from 1983-85 (Içduygu 2007), these policies generally failed to arouse the interest of migrants. Not only economic reasons (bonuses were too modest compared with income losses), but emotional and social motives were pulling against return migration, that was seen as breaking social and any family ties built up in host countries. The lesson to be drawn from this early experience is that circularity requires fluid, if not free, circulation of workers and family members.

In the modern history of circular migration, the Arab Gulf states offer the most dramatic examples of this phenomenon. For the last half century, their entire economies have been run with the systematic use of a temporary migrant workforce. Foreign workers represent between 1/3 and more than 4/5s of the total workforce in GCC countries and almost all of them are recruited on a temporary and contractual basis. Their stay is strictly limited to the duration of their contract, even though a number of guest workers may *de facto* end up in permanent residence. Gulf labour markets attract workers from all over the Arab Middle East and Turkey, as well as from other countries.

### **Quasi-circular migration today in SEM countries**

SEM countries appear to have a long and much diversified experience of forms of migration that are close to circular migration, as senders as well as receivers. Because these movements do not meet, at the same time, all the six criteria proposed above – i.e. being A) temporary, B) renewable, C) circulatory, D) legal, E) respectful of the rights of migrants, C) managed – they will be named “quasi-circular” migration. SEM experiences of quasi-circular migration are listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Past and present experiences of formal or informal quasi-circular migration in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries**

Country	Experience of circular migration	
	As sender	As receiver
Algeria	1960-70s: Bilateral agreements with European countries for guest workers programmes	Chinese and other foreign workers temporarily employed in Algeria by foreign firms contracting with the Government of Algeria
	Agence Nationale de l'Emploi (ANEM): matches the supply of Algerian labour with the demand on external markets / reciprocally manages the employment of foreign workers in Algeria	
Egypt	Temporary migration to the Gulf, Libya and Jordan	<i>De facto</i> circular, regular migration of mostly female domestic workers from Asia and Africa
	Italian-Egyptian cooperation: IMIS (Integrated Migration Information System) and IDOM (Information Dissemination on Migration financed by Italy and implemented by the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower and Emigration and IOM	
Israel	Jewish passing-migrants: immigrants from one country leaving for another country after a temporary stay in Israel, though at the risk of losing their 'absorption package'.	Some features of <i>de facto</i> circular migration of non-Jewish foreign workers entering and re-entering Israel (long-term, repeated temporary migrants)

Jordan	Unmanaged, but organised, temporary migration of Jordanians to the Gulf labour markets; Jordanian companies operating abroad	<i>De facto</i> circular migration of 300,000, mostly single men and largely irregular foreign workers moving back and forth from their origin countries
		<i>De facto</i> circular, regular migration of mostly female domestic workers from Asia and Africa
		2007 memorandum of understanding between Jordan and Egypt regulating the entry and stay of Egyptian workers based on the needs of the Jordanian labour market. Egypt required to keep a computerized database of workers wishing to work in Jordan.
		Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs) set up in the framework of a Free Trade Agreement signed between the US and Jordan in 2001: export-led, labour intensive industrial plants; 60% foreign workforce on limited duration contract. Conditions of work denounced by a 2006 report of the National Center for Human Rights.
Lebanon	Predominant pattern of <i>de facto</i> circularity in the traditional migration of unaccompanied Lebanese men to Africa and to Gulf countries	<i>De facto</i> circular migration of Lebanese citizens permanently established abroad but keeping an economic activity in Lebanon and travelling back and forth
		<i>De facto</i> circular migration of mostly female domestic workers from Asia and Africa
		<i>De facto</i> circular, unmanaged, irregular, large-scale (1/2 million?) migration of mostly Syrian temporary and seasonal workers to Lebanon
Libya		Community of Sahel-Saharan States CEN-SAD established in 1998 and Arab Maghreb Union (1989), two frameworks providing for the freedom of circulation, residence, work, ownership and economic activity. Freedom of entry unilaterally abolished by Libya in 2007.

		Traditionally an open labour market for temporary migration; Irregular stay penalized by the 2004 law on Entry and Exit of Foreign Nationals and readmission agreements (2006) with Egypt, Niger, Chad, Algeria, favouring <i>de facto</i> circularity of migration to Libya.
Mauritania	Traditional network of Mauritanian traders across Western Africa: men alone, families left behind in Mauritania	Unmanaged, irregular, temporary presence of migrant workers in Mauritania: 2/3 declare an intention to return to their home countries
	Seasonal migration to plantations in Senegal	
	In the 2000, agreement with the United Arab Emirates for the temporary migration of Mauritanians to serve in the UAE military and police	
	2007 bilateral agreement with Spain, providing for seasonal employment opportunities to Mauritanian workers	
Morocco	1960-70s: Bilateral agreements with European countries for guest workers programmes	
	Agreements signed by Agence Nationale de Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences (ANAPEC) with France (2001) and Spain (2003) providing for the joint selection and management of temporary migrant workers.	
Palestine	Daily commuting of Palestinian workers to Israel is not circular migration because permission to work does not allow them to stay in Israel at night.	
Syria	Unmanaged, irregular, large-scale (1/2 million?), temporary or seasonal migration of unskilled male workers to Lebanon	
Tunisia	<i>De facto</i> and unmanaged circular migration from Tunisia attested by a significant influx of mostly young unmarried migrants returning to that country.	

Turkey	Temporary migration managed under bilateral agreements with Germany and other European countries in the 1960-70s, with Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iraq in the 1980s with Russia and Ukraine in the 1990-2000s. Matching demand on external markets with supply from Turkey now dealt with by the Turkish Employment Organisation (TEO).	Informal circular migration of irregular workers moving back and forth between Turkey and their country of origin in order to renew short-term visas or change passport and remain legal.
	Unmanaged pendular migration: Turkish dual citizens 2nd generation migrants in the EU moving back and forth between Turkey and their country of second citizenship	
Source: papers presented at the CARIM Training Session on Circular Migration, Florence, 18-19 October 2007		
Algeria	Kerdoun, Azzouz <i>Aspects juridiques de la migration circulaire en Algérie. Changements et perspectives</i>	
Egypt	Labdelaoui, Hocine <i>La dimension socio politique de la migration circulaire en Algérie</i> Nassar, Heba <i>The Role of Circular Migration in the Euro-Mediterranean Area. The Egyptian Case</i>	
	Roman, Howeida <i>Italian-Egyptian model in managing the emigration from Egypt to Italy: dimensions and prospects</i>	
Israel	Mundlak, Guy <i>Circular migration (CM) in Israel: Law's role in circularity and the ambiguities of the CM strategy</i>	
Jordan	Yacobi, Haim <i>Circular Migration in Israel</i>	
	Arouri, Fathi <i>Circular Migration in Jordan, 1995-2006</i> De Bel-Air, Françoise <i>Circular Migration to and from Jordan: An Issue of High Politics</i>	
Lebanon	Olwan, Mohamed <i>Circular and Permanent Migration: A Jordanian perspective</i>	
	Kasparian, Choghig <i>La migration circulaire : perspective démo-économique au Liban</i>	
Libya	Kiwan, Fadia <i>La perception de la migration circulaire au Liban</i>	
Mauritania	Perrin, Delphine <i>Aspects juridiques de la migration circulaire dans l'espace euro-méditerranéen. Le cas de la Libye</i>	
	Bensaâd, Ali <i>Mauritanie : L'inhibition des « effets retour » de circulations migratoires diverses et intenses</i>	
Morocco	El Yessa, Abderrahman <i>L'encadrement juridique des migrations en Mauritanie est il favorable à la migration circulaire ?</i>	
Palestine	Sidna Ndah, Mohamed-Saleh <i>Eléments de migration en Mauritanie</i>	
Syria	Khachani, Mohamed <i>La migration circulaire : cas du Maroc</i>	
Tunisia	Khalil, Asem <i>The Circulation of Palestinian Refugees and Migrants</i>	
	Kawakibi, Salam <i>Migration circulaire des Syrien : Etat et perspectives</i>	
Turkey	Ben Cheïkh, Farah & Hafidha Chekir <i>La migration circulaire dans le contexte juridique tunisien</i>	
	Fourati, Habib <i>Les migrations de retour entre mai 2005 et mai 2007, comme indices de</i>	
	İçduygu, Ahmet <i>Circular Migration and Turkey: An Overview of the Past and Present – Some Demo-Economic Implications</i>	
	Kaya, Ibrahim <i>Circular Migration And Turkey: A Legal Perspective</i>	
	Kirisçi, Kemal <i>Informal "circular migration" into Turkey: The bureaucratic and political context</i>	

Most migratory flows in Table 1 fulfil the first three criteria of circular migration: they are temporary, renewable and circulatory (A, B and C). What many lack is legality (D), respect for the migrant's rights (E) and their management (F) in such a way that labour surpluses in source countries are used to match labour shortages in host countries without creating a loss of needed skills in the former and unfair competition in the latter.

Several flows do not meet any other criterion as they are partly or mostly irregular, unmanaged and hardly respect the rights of migrants. This category includes movements such as: Syrian workers employed in Lebanon; cross-border workers moving back and forth between Turkey, where they are informally employed and neighbouring countries where they renew their visas or change their passports before re-entering Turkey; Egyptians farming or employed in other low-skilled, low-paid activities in Jordan whose work became illegal after the application of the 2007 memorandum of understanding between Jordan and Egypt; African and Arab migrant workers in Libya, in particular since the freedom of circulation was abolished by Libya in 2007, turning many into irregular migrants; non-Jewish migrant workers in Israel who replace former Palestinian workers now banned from crossing the border; and several other cases.

In addition to the three criteria mentioned here, the legality of employment and stay (D) and a certain level of labour management (F) – i.e. looking after labour needs in host countries while disregarding those in source countries – are typically found among migrants who otherwise remain insufficiently protected by the law of their host country. This applies to most workers from Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria employed in countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, or to foreign employees in the Qualifying Industrial Zones of Jordan. The growing migration of mostly female domestic workers from South-eastern Asia and the Horn of Africa to Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan is another type of quasi-circular migration. It is temporary, renewable and generally legal (A, B, D), but in many cases it is not truly circulatory as domestic workers often have their passports confiscated by their employers, and not respectful of the rights of migrant workers as domestic workers are given work by private households that are not considered employers by national labour laws.

In the end, only few cases of migration meet our six criteria: Egyptian migrant workers admitted to Italy in application of the Italian-Egyptian cooperation agreement; Moroccan workers employed in France and in Spain under agreements signed by ANAPEC – even though human rights advocates have stated that the conditions under which women are recruited for work in Spanish strawberries plantations (married with children left behind in order to guarantee that they will return to Morocco) are in breach of basic rights; Mauritanian migrants enrolled to serve in the military and police forces of the United Arab Emirates under an agreement between the two states; Turks employed in Russia and Ukraine through the Turkish Employment Organisation; and a few other examples.

## Conclusion

Promoting circular migration is increasingly viewed as a solution for addressing labour shortages in the ageing, and the soon-to-be shrinking, populations of Europe, while avoiding the social and cultural problems arising from permanent migration; for offering developing countries a pressure valve for saturated labour markets and an alternative to massive irregular migration; for optimizing the development impact of migration on source countries; for gaining their commitment to cooperate with Europe on what is seen as one of the most difficult challenges of the day.

Defined for the purpose of this paper as migration that is temporary, renewable, circulatory, legal, respectful of the migrant's rights, and managed in such a way as to optimize labour markets at both ends, circular migration could bring more benefits than permanent migration. This is a hypothesis and not yet a result: there is, after all, a lack of empirical evidence for what is still a very new issue. Regarding benefits to source countries, emphasis is put on remittances, that should be fostered if there are plans to return home rather than to settle in host countries, and that should be oriented towards



investment rather than consumption with a view to facilitating that return; on skills gained abroad which should make the gain upon return higher than the initial drain; on professional networks built in host countries that should become bridges upon return between home and former host countries and open up local economies to the global market.

In Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, which are Europe's closest neighbours in the developing world and pools for future circular-migrant workers, circular migration is already a familiar phenomenon, if not a usual one. Every country has some experience of it, either as sender, or as receiver, or both. Only 10 percent of non-Jordanians living in Jordan are in the country for the first time and the rest are multiple migrants; in Egypt, a law of 1983 states that apart from those destined for Europe, North America and Australia, who are considered permanent, all other migrants are temporary, in particular the 60 percent who are destined for Arab countries. All across the SEM region, multiple and two-way mobility is an emerging pattern. It serves the interests of individual migrants themselves, insofar as leaving one's country permanently is always a difficult choice. It particularly suits a growing number of young adults in their twenties and early thirties, who live, with difficulty, the long transition from school or university to the labour market, then to marriage and the founding of a family. However, for those who have an experience of it, temporary, multiple and two-way migration goes together with risk, de-protection and more often than not the denial of rights. To be fully attractive and compete with informality and irregularity, circular migration must be respectful of migrants' rights.

Not only are SEM populations familiar with the fact of multiple mobility, their governments also know its frequent link with informality and irregularity. A liberal visa policy brings irregular foreign workers to Turkey, but they are found to benefit the local economy and therefore tolerated by the government; the government of Jordan strengthens its policy of entry and access to work in response to Jordanian public opinion calling for more protectionism, but at the same time it shows lenience towards migrant workers that are much needed to take jobs refused by Jordanians. Other examples would show that SEM countries have become used to dealing with circular migrants, whether their own citizens or aliens. However, in most cases their mobility is informal and unmanaged. A joint management aimed at optimising circular migration for both the receiving and the sending countries, is precisely what cooperation with the EU could bring to SEM countries. For this, the latter need to be reassured that circular migration is not a one-sided tool serving only the interests of the former.

## References cited

- Agunias, Doreen R. and Kathleen Newland 2007, *Circular Migration and Development: Trends, Policy Routes, and Ways Forward*, Migration Policy Institute
- Arthur, John A., 1991 International Labor Migration Patterns in West Africa, *African Studies Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3. (Dec., 1991), pp. 65-87.
- Bovenkerk, F. 1974. *The Sociology of Return Migration*. The Hague: Nijhoff
- Cassarino, Jean-Pierre 2004, Theorising Return Migration: The Conceptual Approach to Return Migrants Revisited, *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2004: 253 - 279.
- Chew, Kenneth S.Y. & John M. Liu 2004, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Global Labor Force Exchange in the Chinese American Population, 1880-1940", *Population And Development Review*, 30(1): 57-78.
- Fargues, Philippe 2005, Temporary Migration: Matching Demand in the EU with Supply from the MENA, *CARIM Analytical and Synthetic Notes AS2005/11* (7 p.), [http://www.carim.org/Publications/CARIM-AS05\\_11-Fargues.pdf](http://www.carim.org/Publications/CARIM-AS05_11-Fargues.pdf)
- Fawcett, James T. 1989, Networks, Linkages, and Migration Systems, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Special Silver Anniversary Issue: International Migration an Assessment for the 90's. (Autumn, 1989), pp. 671-680.
- Gmelch, George 1980, Return Migration, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 9. (1980), pp. 135-159.
- Goss, Jon & Bruce Lindquist 1995, Conceptualizing International Labor Migration: A Structuration Perspective, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2. (Summer, 1995), pp. 317-351.
- Hugo, Graeme 1982, Circular Migration in Indonesia, *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1. (Mar., 1982), pp. 59-83.
- 2003, *Circular Migration: Keeping Development Rolling?* Migration Policy Institute
- 2005. The New International Migration in Asia: Challenges for Population Research, *Asian Population Studies*, 1, 1, pp. 93-120.
- Meillassoux, Claude 1975, *Femmes, Greniers et Capitaux*, Maspero, Paris.
- O'Neil, Kevin 2003, *Using Remittances and Circular Migration to Drive Development*, Migration Policy Institute.
- Reyes, Belinda I. 2001, Immigrant Trip Duration: The Case of Immigrants from Western Mexico, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 35, No. 4. (Winter, 2001), pp. 1185-1204.
- Snowden, Lynne L. 1990, Collective Versus Mass Behavior: A Conceptual Framework for Temporary and Permanent Migration in Western Europe and the United States, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3. (Autumn, 1990), pp. 577-590.
- Vertovec, Steven 2007, Circular Migration: the way forward in global policy? International Migration Institute, Working Paper 4, Oxford.