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Voluntary Return Programmes:
Could they Assuage the effects
of the Economic Crisis?

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Notes

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Abstract

In November 2008 the Spanish government authorized a voluntary return program for foreign workers in order to decrease unemployment pressures in the wake of 2008/09 financial crisis. Voluntary return programs are not new. France appears to have been the first country which authorized them in the wake of the oil crisis of 1973/74. This paper analyzes the Spanish voluntary return program against the background of lessons provided by the thirty years long experience with similar programs in France. The aim of the paper is to assess to what extent could voluntary return programs help both the developed and the developing countries cope with the effects of the crisis.

Key words

Voluntary return programs, recession, foreign workers, France, Spain, development

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France and Spain were among Europe's largest foreign labour importers in the post-WWII and in the post-Cold War periods respectively. The economic expansion before the 1973/74 and 2008/09 crises masked the growing dependence of French and Spanish employers on migrant workers and of migrant workers on French and Spanish jobs. In consequence, by 1973 and 2008 respectively, France and Spain developed segmented labour markets and migrants constituted a significant proportion of workers in the most unemployment-susceptible jobs. With the onset of the economic crises, France and Spain institutionalized voluntary return programs (VRPs), allegedly to protect migrant workers against unemployment. What were the principal lessons from the thirty year long French experience with VRPs? To what extent have the architects of the Spanish VRP been able to benefit from the French lessons to design a coherent VRP? Under what conditions could VRPs assuage the effects of the economic crises for the sending and receiving countries alike? The lessons from the French post-1973/74 VRPs demonstrate that while some foreigners left, others (family members of former workers, new seasonal workers, asylum seekers and irregular migrants) replaced them, because neither employers nor migrants were interested in return migration. Given that neither labour demand nor labour supply was halted in the aftermath of the oil crisis, and both began to increase anew during the 1990s, the French VRPs evolved from an exceptional to a recurrent feature of migration policy. On the eve of the 2008/09 crisis, France had developed a complex voluntary return system, which remained and is likely to remain underused due to the mutual dependence of employers and migrants on one another in the most labour-intensive jobs. This mutual dependence also inheres in Spain. But unlike the French VRP, the Spanish VRP remains in its embryonic phase making it administratively and ethically feasible to abort it in favour of full integration of those migrants who have settled in Spain and their family members who will inevitably come.

The paper consists of three parts. The first part examines the evolution of French VRPs since their *début* in 1977 to their *pérennisation* in 2009. It argues that even though the French VRPs have evolved to be more inclusive, bilateral and co-development friendly, they continue to find it difficult to achieve their objectives because the nature of migration flows since the 1970s has also become more complex. The second part analyzes the nascent Spanish VRP since its inception in November 2008 to March, 2009. It suggests that just like its French counterpart in the 1977, the current Spanish program will need to more closely match the needs of migrants, employers and the countries of origin. As of 2009, the Spanish program could not be expected to foster the return of others than those who planned to return anyway. Based on the comparison of the Spanish VRP with its French counterpart, the concluding part will argue that a significant proportion of Spain's migrant population will not want to return, thereby calling for more comprehensive migration policy measures. The paper concludes with a discussion of policies that Spain and France would need to adopt to grapple with foreign worker settlement, in the context of a crisis, and beyond.

The French part of this paper reviews the results of the 1977 voluntary return program, examines the key circulars regulating French VRPs since 1977 until 2009, and analyzes official VRP assessment by the agency in charge of VRP implementation (National Agency for Migrants' Reception, ANAEM). The Spanish part examines the two decrees which regulated the Spanish VRP as of March 2009 (RD Ley 4/2008 and RD 1800/2008), the employment data provided by the Ministry of Labour (MTAS) and Employment Office (INEM), as well the first reactions among migrants and employers and the countries of origin.

Voluntary Return Programs: the Legacy of the French Postwar Foreign Worker Admissions

French VRPs in the post-WWII period

By 1970, three years before the oil crisis of 1973/74, there were over three million migrants in France. They constituted over six percent of the total population. About a million of them were non-Europeans. Migrant workers were highly concentrated in unskilled and semi-skilled work in building, manufacturing and services, but French agriculture employed over 100 000 seasonal labourers, many from Spain. As migrants settled and began to bring in their families, racially motivated attacks began to increase.

Between 1945 and 1975, about two-thirds of foreign workers admitted received legal status post facto. But in 1972, the French government announced that it would no longer routinely regularize foreign workers who arrived illegally and other attempts were made to tighten up immigration policies. The aim was to increase control on entries, and to introduce selectivity: demographic growth was to be provided by Europeans, while Africans were only to provide labour on a temporary basis. Measures were taken to reduce inflows from former African colonies and restore ONI's monopoly over recruitment from non-EEC European countries, save for Algeria (Miller, 1978; Castles, 1983: 52). The change of policy came amidst growing politicization of immigration issues that had long been dormant. The living conditions in the *bidonvilles*, shantytowns largely inhabited by foreign workers, became a *cause célèbre* (Miller, 1979). Violence against Arab foreign workers grew culminating in the bombing of the Algerian consulate in Marseilles.

The measures to reduce migration in the 1970s were adopted in a unilateral fashion, without consultation with trade unions, employers or foreign worker associations and the *Conseil d'Etat*. This partially explains why they provoked such opposition. Many of these measures were adopted in the form of circulars. International agreements helped to foster opposition against governmental circulars. For example, article 19 of the European Social Charter 1961, ratified by France on 22 December 1972, permitted family dependents to join a worker in another country (Edey, 1987: 45).

In July 1974, following a November 1973 ban on further foreign worker admissions in Germany, the French government announced a zero immigration policy, although this did not apply to seasonal foreign workers. While the poor economic perspectives during the recession helped to keep new workers from coming, the

ban on family reunification contravened a number of international and bilateral agreements. The November 1977 denial of a work permit to the family members of a Portuguese worker was declared illegal by the *Conseil d'Etat* in December, 1978 (Bonnechère, 1979 in Castles, 1983: 234).

In 1977, the French government introduced a voluntary return scheme for any non-EC foreigner who would renounce all claims on the French social security system and leave the country. While only the unemployed were at first eligible, the program was soon extended to all foreign workers with five years of residency and to their dependents. Furthermore, the initial time period during which migrants had to apply following dismissal was eventually dropped (Rogers, 1998: 153) and so were requirements regarding minimum work time, maximum wage and age (Rogers, 1981: 340). The eligible foreign worker who renounced residency and working rights in France received a free ticket home and a cash payment of 10 000FF (then about \$2000) per adult and half per child. The bonuses were paid after migrants left French territory (Miller and Martin, 1982: 88).

The program did not attract the numbers and type of migrants that the French government had hoped. The government aimed to repatriate all of the unemployed foreign workers in France – approximately 100 000 in 1977. Of the 60 000 workers who used it, less than one-quarter were unemployed; and of the total of 94 000 beneficiaries (workers and family members), 65 percent were employed Portuguese and Spanish, near retirement age. Only 4655 Algerians benefited from the program between 1975 and 1982. Thus, from the French government perspective, the least assimilable foreigners were also the least likely to apply (Miller and Martin, 1982: 89). The results of the 1982 regularization demonstrated that some of the program's participants soon returned to France illegally (Weil, 1991: 327). Since 1986, Spaniards and Portuguese could not be prohibited from re-entry to France due to EU citizenship.

The program was criticized by the sending countries and by advocacy groups in France. First of all, the program had been instituted unilaterally and did not consider the needs of the sending countries. It was only after the program had been authorized and proved ineffective that France signed bilateral agreements with some countries of origin, notably Algeria and Senegal. If the countries of origin had been consulted from the outset, they would have helped to design migrant training so that it could fit with their labour market realities, recognize French training certificates and perhaps even provided the returnees with additional incentives for return. But, as usual, there was a considerable conflict of interests between the countries of origin and migrants: the countries of origin were primarily interested in migrant training, but the migrants in return bonuses. Between 1975 and 1980, only 1669 migrants benefitted from training, 1439 of whom were Algerians (Lebon, 1981: 159). Moreover, the initial time pressure created the perception that the program was not truly voluntary - further alienating migrants and the countries of origin.

Second, the return bonus was equivalent to less than one year's unemployment assistance, and too small to help migrants re-establish themselves at home. At the end of 1979, the nationals of Mali, Senegal and Mauritania were excluded from the right to the bonus and two years later also Spanish and Portuguese were declared ineligible. The Spanish and the Portuguese represented roughly 55 percent of all foreigners who benefited from aid to return and almost 70 percent of those who actually returned (Lebon, 1981: 154).

Third, migrants were further discouraged from applying by the requirement that they surrender work and residence permits which entitled them to French social benefits. Fourth, the program had been expected to ease employment pressures, so that jobs vacated by migrants could be offered to the unemployed French workers. However, a study of employers carried out between October 1979 and the beginning of 1981 showed that one third of the vacated jobs were eliminated and foreign workers replaced the departing foreigners in a greater number of cases than French, the figures being 1330 and 1263 respectively (Lebon, 1981: 164). Despite the high unemployment, the French were not interested in taking the jobs left by foreigners, because they were typically unskilled and poorly paid. The entry of family members of those who stayed, refugees and asylum seekers, seasonal workers and irregular migrants mitigated against rapid improvement of working conditions.

Fifth, adopted by circular, the program was considered legally questionable and declared unconstitutional by the State Council in 1979. Nonetheless, the program continued to operate until 1981 (France 1985: 82 in Rogers: 1998 153), when a November 25, 1981 circular ordered the program to be redesigned so that it could be genuinely voluntary and based on bilateral cooperation. Foreigners who had left France based on the scheme were promised priority in application for new permits if they decided to return (France, 1981).

Given the weak attraction of the 1977 program among North Africans, on September, 18 1980, the French and Algerian governments signed an agreement in order to encourage the return of Algerian workers. The agreement marked a considerable a step forward in return migration policy in the sense that it made up for the bilateral cooperation deficit. However, the Franco-Algerian and then Franco-Senegalese agreements proved an exception to the rule, as by 1980 other countries continued to have no influence over the return of their nationals. The return of Algerian workers was to be achieved through four broad policy instruments: (1) a return bonus (*allocation-retour*) paid in full in France (as opposed to instalments paid both in France and in the country of origin); (2) occupational training programs to prepare migrants for specific jobs in Algeria; (3) investment fund (e.g. subsidized loans) to support development of small-scale industrial enterprises; (4) duty concessions and favourable exchange rates (Adler, 1985: 279).

Most Algerians who returned did so spontaneously and would have done without governmental help. There were also those who returned, but re-emigrated back to France upon realizing that they could not make a transition. Those who stayed in France did so for very practical reasons. First, many workers had their

families with them, and feared return to more traditional Algeria would pose re-adaptation problems. Second, Algeria suffered from a severe housing shortage. Third, the Algerian dinar was overvalued and the government rates could not compete with those offered in the black market. Fourth, despite all the concessions made by the Algerian state, Algeria remained too bureaucratic a place to live and work (Adler, 1985: 279). Fourth, the *aide au retour* bonus continued to be regarded as too low and training for employment inadequate.

In 1980, the *Loi Bonnet* was codified. The law combined work and residence permits, linked immigration with employment and extended the reasons for deportation. The aim was to export unemployment. In 1980, several hundred people were being deported every month (Castles, 1983: 54). By linking migration to social problems, such measures fuelled racism and attacks on North Africans continued to increase. They made migrants feel insecure, but they did not lead to a massive exodus. Although the number of foreigners in the labour force fell from its 1973 peak of 1.8 million to about 1.4 million in 1981 (OECD, 1982: 58), the total number of foreign residents rose from 3.2 million in 1969 to 4.2 million in 1975 and then stabilized. Moreover, around a million people obtained French citizenship under the fairly liberal naturalization laws, so that the population of migrant origin totalled around 5 million (Castles, 1983: 54).

In May 1981, a new Socialist government was voted in, on a program that promised a new deal for migrants. Soon after coming to power, the government stopped deporting French-born foreign youths and declared an amnesty for *sans-papiers*. New immigration laws controlling entry, stay and illegal immigration were passed in October 1981. Under these laws, foreigners born in France, aged under 18, married to a French person, or with a child of French nationality could not be deported (Castles, 1983: 54).

In 1984 the French National Immigration Office (ONI) instituted another program of “reintegration aid” for unemployed foreign workers (except for EC citizens) and workers whose firms had requested permission to lay them off. Originally, it required that the unemployed apply before a specific deadline, but this requirement again was dropped. The aid package consisted of a cash payment by the French insurance office, state funds directed toward realization of migrant’s return project and toward transportation and moving costs. Although the program was presented as an aid to the migrant, its purpose was to reduce the number of unskilled and poorly integrated foreign workers in France (Rogers, 1998: 154).

The number of applicants was the highest in program’s first year (3 873). After that, the number declined steadily to well below 1000 per year. ONI officials suggested that the decline was due to the poor state of the economies of the migrants’ home countries, the excellent benefits the migrants received in France, the fact that some returnees’ projects were unsuccessful, and the dissatisfaction of those who returned. Between 1984 and 1993, the total number of migrant worker beneficiaries was 31 648; when family

members were added in, a total of 71 623 persons left with the help of the program. This number was exceedingly small if it was to be evaluated as a return incentive, but it did provide some assistance to a subset of returning migrants and probably satisfied public opinion (*“Immigration et presence étrangere de 1984 à 1986”* (1987) in Rogers, 1998: 154).

French VRPs in the post-Cold War period

With growing flows of asylum seekers since the beginning of the 1990s, the number of persons with an official “invitation to leave the French territory” (IQTF) grew so rapidly that in August 1991 and September 1992, France approved two circulars aiming to facilitate voluntary return of anybody granted the IQTF status (*aide au retour volontaire*, ARV) or having found themselves in a difficult financial situation (*aide au retour humanitaire*, ARH)(tables 1 and 2).¹ The participating adults were entitled to the equivalent of €153 and their minor children €46. Most migrants came from Algeria, Romania, Moldavia, China, Russia, and Sri Lanka (France, 2007 a: 105). Except for the citizens of Madagascar, sub-Saharan Africans evidenced little interest in the program. In order to incentivize return of sub-Saharan Africans, since 2003 the French government signed bilateral agreements with Mali and Morocco (2003), Senegal (2004) Comoros, Benin, Cameroun, Togo, Congo and Guinea (2006).

¹ Since 2001, other voluntary return programs were authorized, among them: for persons with IQTF status from Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2002), for minors (2003) and another for victims of trafficking (2003). Kosovars took greatest interest in VRP. During the three years of agreement with Kosovo, 3003 persons returned home.

Table 1
Voluntary Returns based on 1991 circular, ARV
(programme d'aide à la réinsertion des étrangers invités à quitter le territoire français -circulaire interministérielle n° 91.11 du 14 août 1991)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Applications²	35	12	10	13	15	16	10	88	74	60	64	76	94	67	64	12
	5	12	50	27	99	44	03	7	9	0	4	1	7	5	7	77
																8

Source: France, 2007a: 106.

Table 2
Voluntary Returns based on 1992 circular, ARH
(programme de rapatriement humanitaire des étrangers - circulaire Affaires sociales / DPM n° 92.21 du 14 septembre 1992)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Applications³	99	221	155	212	233	194	249	265	642	503	696	477	361	389
														6

Source: France, 2007a: 106.

One change in the VRP policy that was expected to increase the interest of migrants from the most impoverished countries of origin, including sub-Saharan Africa, involved a greater emphasis on linking return migration to the development of countries of origin. Since 2003, *aide a la reinsertion* became the preferred term to *aide au retour*. The turn to co-development meant greater cooperation with the European Union, which became financially involved in French return policy, the countries of origin, which had to agree on the projects being carried out, and the NGOs which assisted in monitoring migrant projects.

Any migrant, but particularly rejected asylum seekers, could apply for free transportation and for up to €7000 to support their (co-development) project. Additionally, legal, settled migrants could solicit between €1067 and €1220 to research the feasibility of the project (*aide au montage d'un projet de création d'activité économique-étude de faisabilité*). Unlike irregular migrants, those with legal status were eligible for a circulatory visa (*visa de circulation*) so as to allow them to maintain a business in France while living permanently outside of France (France, 2005a: 57).⁴ The citizens of nine countries comprising the homelands of the largest proportion of asylum seekers (Moldavia, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Mauritania, Congo, Guinea, Cameroun, Turkey) were expected to avail themselves of the program. However, citizens of sub-Saharan Africa continued to be sceptical despite co-development funds and circular visas available. In 2006,

² Including family members

³ Including family members

⁴ Created in 1995, the circulatory visa was a business visa allowing foreign nationals to stay in France for up to 90 days within a six month period. The visa was issued for one to five years.

26 projects were approved, 22 in Moldova and 4 in Armenia. In the first half of 2007, some citizens of Georgia and Armenia applied, but Africans remained uninterested. In 2006, a new circular reshaped French voluntary return policy to its current form.

Table 3

Voluntary returns under the current ARV and ARH scheme

(Circulaire interministérielle N°DPM/ACI3/2006/522 du 7 décembre 2006 relative au dispositif d'aide au retour pour les étrangers en situation irrégulière ou en situation de dénuement)

	ARV	ARH	Total
2007	2040	2898	4949
2008 (first semester)	916	6149	7065

Source: France, 2008: 107

On December, 7th, 2006, the Ministries of Interior, Employment and Social Cohesion issued a joint circular regarding voluntary return of migrants in irregular or vulnerable status. The circular aimed to pull all relevant circulars together to render French VRP more “cohesive and understandable“ to migrants as well as to reinforce the link between voluntary return and co-development.⁵ Both, ARV and ARH offered free transportation home and departure bonuses for either legal or illegal migrants. However, while the former aimed to repatriate those with repatriation orders (and thus were inapplicable to EU citizens), the latter aimed to assist anybody in a particularly precarious socio-economic status (and thus applied also to EU citizens as long as they met specified criteria). The program was run by the newly created *Agence Nationale de l'Accueil des Étrangers et des Migrations* (ANAEM).

While the program remained voluntary, ANAEM urged migrants to apply because, if caught illegally, they could be repatriated involuntarily and without any support. Out of 29 796 returns conducted in 2008, one third (10 072) were voluntary and two thirds (19 724) were involuntary. The involuntary returns concerned migrants who “had been proposed voluntary return, but rejected it” (ANAEM, 2009: 2).

The successful applicants were offered free transportation costs from their hometown in France to their hometown in the country of origin, with departures normally taking place within 30 days after the approval notification. ARV participants received €2000 or €3500 depending on whether they applied as individuals or as a couple, plus €1000 per each child up to three children and €500 for any additional child (ANAEM, 2009). The bonuses were paid in three installments, the first in France (30%), immediately prior to departure, the second (50%) in the country of origin, six months following arrival and the third (20%) in the

⁵ CIRCULAIRE INTERMINISTERIELLE N°DPM/ACI3/2006/522 du 7 décembre 2006 relative au dispositif d'aide au retour pour les étrangers en situation irrégulière ou en situation de dénuement.

country of origin 12 months following arrival (France, 2006: 6). The ARH participants were entitled to €300 for each adult and €100 for each minor child (increased from €153 and €46 on November, 27, 2007). Given the small amount, the ARH bonus was normally paid in France, upon departure. The installment character of departure bonus payments was considered necessary to ensure that migrants would stay in their countries of origin for at least twelve months, but it mitigated against investment and favored consumption.

The embryonic credit system in most of the countries of origin made investment difficult. ANAEM committed itself to provide up to €7000 in start-up grants for the approved migrant co-development projects. The start-up funds aimed to make migrants independent of the deficient homelands' credit systems, but just like departure bonuses they were granted in three installments (70%, 25%, 5%) over the 12 month period, as they were meant to complement migrant's individual funds rather than sponsor the entire project. In some countries, only micro project support (up to €3 660) was available and, where macro-project support existed, it was subject to an innovativeness rule, with "innovative" projects eligible for the full amount and "feasible" projects eligible for half of it. Migrants who had made larger savings found it easier to receive more because their projects could give employment to other people and thereby be considered more innovative. Co-development start-up funds are useful to migrants, who wanted to return and invest in the country of origin anyway, rather than to those who were undecided or against the idea of return. They rewarded those who had planned to return but did not precipitate the decisions among the undecided ones.

ANAEM representatives assisted returned migrants with project development. But the extent of assistance varied greatly, depending whether there was an ANAEM office in a given country or not. As of March 2009, ANAEM post-return investment funds were available to the citizens of Algeria, Armenia, Benin, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Cape Verde, Comoros, Congo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Georgia, Guinea, Haiti, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Moldova, Niger, Nigeria, Central Africa, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Suriname, Chad, Togo, Tunisia, Ukraine and Vietnam. However, ANAEM offices were present only in Mali, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia, Turkey, Romania and *Canada*. In theory, returning migrants could contact the nearest office abroad, but in practice most found it too difficult. The lack of local outreach undercut the co-development goals because it was only following the return that migrants' projects were examined. As of early 2009, practical difficulties challenged the co-development effect of return migration, making the undecided migrants skeptical about the benefits of return.

According to ANAEM figures, in 2008, the French government spent €23.6 million for 180 reintegration projects for migrants returning to their countries of origin. However, only a part of these funds was granted as cash, with the rest invested in training, project evaluation, project follow up etc. (ANAEM, 2009: 4). Since 1997, French reintegration assistance was particularly aimed at citizens of Mali, Senegal and Mauritania, reflecting the growing proportion of Sub-Saharaners entering France illegally and their continuing weak

participation in the VRP.⁶ Out of the three countries targeted, ANAEM officials considered the VRP to have started most successfully in Mali. The number of reintegration projects in Mali grew from 35 in 2000 to 153 in 2007 and ANAEM contributions rose from almost €375 000 to almost €700 000 (ANAEM, 2007b: 24-25).

A legal basis for the *aide au retour* for Malian citizens has existed since 1991, but it was not until mid-2000 that the combination of higher return incentives, creation of a local ANAEM office in Bamako and pauperization among the growing irregular Mali community in France rendered it more attractive. According to ANAEM's 2007 program assessment conducted on a sample of 153 beneficiaries of co-development grants, a typical Malian participant was male from the rural region of Kayes (however returning to settle in urban Bamako); in an irregular status because he could not renew permits; married, with children or family relying on his remittances; and unemployed or employed in a job which made it difficult for him to sustain himself in France, and send remittances. The pauperized status was reflected by the fact that 50 percent of returnees were repatriated under the ARH program after living in France for three years. Forty one percent were repatriated under ARV program after living in France also for three years. The remaining four and five percent left spontaneously, without any sort of assistance after having lived in France for five (irregular) or ten (legal) years (ANAEM, 2007b). Judging by the profile of Malian returnees, they would have most likely left France anyway. In this sense, the programs helped migrants return home in dignity (out of their own will and with some seed money for the project), but did not foster departures among the undecided.

Between 1998 and 2006, commerce, agriculture, transport, services benefitted most from co-development funds of Malian workers returning to invest at home (France, 2007a: 102, ANAEM, 2007b:26). Fifty-four percent of projects carried out in 2007 were qualified as 'feasible' (therefore entitled to up to € 4000) and 46 percent as 'innovative' (therefore entitled to up to the full €7000 promised) (ANAEM, 2007b: 30). The proportion of innovative projects increased from 22% in 2004 to 46% in 2007. On average, the ANAEM subventions were largest in agriculture, where successful migrants could receive up to 70 percent of the total project costs (as long as the subvention did not exceed €7000). Successful project entrepreneurs had had some experience in the sector where they wanted to invest, as well as sufficient education and savings to conduct the project with minimum governmental help (ANAEM, 2007b). The most favored projects authorized by the ANAEM committee in Mali in 2007 were: cow-hide commerce, grocery store, taxi and mini bus service, car rental, construction truck service, construction equipment rental, tailor and copy services, video game parlor. The major problems with the projects in Mali were the proliferation of grocery stores, the limited spectrum of choices for sustainable jobs due to deficient infrastructure and the lack of multiplier effect. To reduce project costs and reliance on an untrained labour force, migrant entrepreneurs tended to create jobs for themselves and sometimes their families, but not for others, except for a taxi

⁶ During the first semester of 2007 the citizens of Mali were in the 8th position among those who availed themselves of ARV and ARH; only 38 applied compared to 185 Chinese, 128 Algerians and 104 Moldavians, 75 Serbians, 60 Bosnians, 58 Russians and 43 Turks (France, 2007b: 125).

entrepreneur who was too old to get a driver's license, and who had to change drivers every three months because they did not work loyally (ANAEM, 2007b: 43).

Given that those who availed themselves of the voluntary return programs had not been able to utilize any of the skills or education they may have acquired in France, the projects generally did not involve know-how transfer. Since most migrants originated from the rural areas of Kayes and returned to the capital Bamako, the projects they carried out benefitted the part of their country which would have attracted comparatively more investment anyway. But the investment decision was dictated by practical reasons, as the areas where migrants came from lacked infrastructure to support the projects (sparse population, intermittent electricity and water supply, bad roads, little demand for certain services, lack of ANAEM office etc.). Furthermore, return to the capital as opposed to the rural area constituted social mobility and thereby reinforced a feeling that their migration project was not a total failure.

The program in other countries besides Mali developed more slowly due to the weak interest among migrants, the lack of local ANAEM offices, and smaller co-development funds available. In Romania, 28 returnees received "micro-project" support in 2005 and 67 in 2006, mostly to support animal farming (ANAEM, 2007: 35-37). In Senegal, six projects were sponsored in 2006 allowing returned migrants to work in tourism, as car mechanics and in agriculture (France, 2006: 104). In Morocco, the plan was to encourage returning migrants to work in rural tourism (France, 2006: 103).

Employment Trends among Spain's Foreign Workers in the Eve of the Economic Crisis 2008/09

Economic boom at the cost of expansion of unemployment-susceptible jobs

At the beginning of 2008, there were 46 million people living in Spain, 5.2 million (11.3 %) of whom were migrants (2.1 million from EU and 3.1 million from non-EU countries). The largest population growth occurred after 2000, when 4.5 million migrants settled in Spain. Much of this settlement was precipitated by the economic boom and resulting demand for foreign labour (España, 2009: 4). As a general rule, the longer migrants stayed in Spain, the more likely they were able to secure stable jobs. By 2007, one third of migrants who had come to Spain before 1987 had a stable job in the middle or high end of the labour market ladder and only 18 percent remained employed in manual, low-qualified jobs. Half of those who came to Spain between 2002 and 2007 did low qualified manual jobs and only one-fourth qualified manual jobs (INE, 2007: 106).

Construction and Moroccans – the principal victims of the crisis in 2008

Between 2005 and 2007, the proportion of foreign workers in the Spanish labour force rose from eight to almost twelve percent and accounted for almost half of the expansion in the active population. As the

proportion of immigrants in the labour force grew, so did their unemployment, particularly in construction, industry, agriculture and services. Unemployment in Spain started to grow as early as the beginning of the crisis in January, 2008, but was not given attention until August 2008 when the monthly increase in the rate of the unemployment jumped from 1.53 percent to 4.25 percent.

Between January 2008 and January 2009, the absolute number of officially registered unemployed in Spain rose from 2 261 925 to 3 327 801, i.e. by 47 percent. Judging by the comparison of 2008 unemployment rates with those from previous three years, the economic crisis appears to have first affected agriculture, which witnessed an 11.75% monthly unemployment rate growth already in January and then construction, which registered a gradual but steady employment increase since February. Industry and services seemed not to be affected by a drastic unemployment rise until September and October respectively. Between January 2008 and 2009, the unemployment rose the fastest in construction (107 %) followed by industry (48 %), agriculture (41%) and services (38%) (table 4).

In 2008, Moroccans, Ecuadorians, Romanians and Colombians constituted over half of all foreign workers entitled to unemployment benefits in Spain (table 5). The proportion of foreigners among all unemployment benefits-eligible increased steadily throughout 2008, from ten percent in January to thirteen percent in December.

Table 4: Evolution of unemployment (Spanish and foreigners) by month and by sector, January 2009-January 2009

	Total		Agriculture		Industry		Construction		Services	
	Absolute	% ⁷	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
2008										
January	2 261 925	6.22	75 361	9.52	289 695	3.47	292 797	3.15	1 382 354	7.64
February	2 315 331	2.36	84 219	11.75	290 985	0.45	305 263	4.26	1 406 114	1.72
March	2 300 975	-0.62	75 692	-10.12	292 313	0.46	316 990	3.84	1 384 009	-1.57
April	2 338 517	1.63	77 407	2.27	296 943	1.58	333 637	5.25	1 401 464	1.26
May	2 353 575	0.64	77 327	-0.10	299 496	0.86	349 128	4.64	1 397 851	-0.26
June	2 390 424	1.57	80 665	4.32	301 480	0.66	370 208	6.04	1 402 406	0.33
July	2 426 916	1.53	91 698	1.28	306 403	1.63	390 529	5.49	1 414 921	0.89
August	2 530 001	4.25	83 524	2.24	322 284	5.18	429 060	9.87	1 461 265	3.28
September	2 625 368	3.77	85 591	2.47	329 286	2.17	443 301	3.32	1 518 162	3.89
October	2 818 026	7.34	94 630	10.56	349 430	6.12	479 576	8.18	1 631 882	7.49
November	2 989 269	6.08	100 422	6.12	372 147	6.50	520 029	8.44	1 729 579	5.99
December	3 128 963	4.67	101 338	0.91	399 872	7.45	590 730	13.60	1 776 050	2.69
2009										
January	3 327 801	6.35	106 876	5.46	431 148	7.82	607 905	2.91	1 912 660	7.69

Source: INEM, 2009: 28

⁷ Monthly variation, measured in percentage of unemployment change from one month to another

Table 5
Foreign and Spanish workers entitled to unemployment benefits, January –December 2008

	Morocco	Ecuador	Romania	Colombia	Spain	All foreign	All workers
January	36 431	21 431	12 732	11 901	1 446 335	161 923	1 608 258
February	37 582	23 166	13 187	13 073	1 451 909	169 680	1 621 589
March	35 928	21 954	13 373	12 275	1 433 593	160 434	1 594 027
April	37 801	22 192	15 110	12 327	1 459 427	165 217	1 624 644
May	39 900	22702	16 524	12 236	1 476 203	168 748	1 644 951
June	43 833	23 579	18 898	12 172	1 509 147	178 230	1 687 377
July	49 506	22 787	21 431	12 016	1 584 974	188 451	1 773 425
August	52 863	23 815	23 301	12 581	1 654 655	199 546	1 854 201
September	54 918	25 026	23 797	13 767	1 642 207	209 101	1 851 308
October	56 168	29 285	26 265	16 500	1 751 657	233 588	1 985 245
November	63 335	36 285	31 570	20 434	1 925 684	283 711	2 209 395
December	66 696	41 140	35 618	22 446	2 006 402	311 953	2 318 355

Source: INEM (2008a)

The highest growth of foreign worker unemployment between January 2008 and January 2009 occurred in construction (130%), followed by industry (121%), agriculture (67%) and services (65%). Among EU workers, the highest unemployment growth during this period occurred in construction (214%), followed by industry (135%), agriculture (93%) and services (70%). Among the non-EU workers, the highest unemployment growth occurred in industry (115%), followed by construction (109%), services (64%) and agriculture (61%).

Voluntary Return Program in Spain

The principles of Spain's 2008 VRP

By the end of July, 2008, the imminence of the economic crisis led Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero to order his cabinet to postpone summer vacations until an emergency plan could be established. On July 29th, Zapatero met with the secretaries of national employer organizations (CEOE and CEPYME) and labour unions (CC OO and UGT). The participants in the meeting recognized that the Spanish economy

had slowed down and agreed to elaborate solutions (MTAS, 2008a). In September, the group developed a four-pronged plan to reduce unemployment, particularly in construction. The plan did not concern migration, so the representatives of employers and labour unions were surprised when, on October 2, the Minister of Labour presented the Congress with a voluntary return program for foreign workers. Congress approved the initiative by 175 votes in favor, 3 against and 125 abstentions and the program was launched on November 11, 2008.

The program was advertised in all of Spain's employment services offices, where the applications must be filed.⁸ The candidates had to be the citizens of the country which: (1) had a social security agreement with Spain and (2) was not a member of EU, European Economic Area or Switzerland. The first condition aimed to ensure that workers would be able to collect the departure bonuses once they returned home. The second condition aimed to prevent the workers from returning to Spain after having collected the bonus.⁹ The Ministry of Labour gave itself a leeway to approve the citizens of the country with which Spain did not have bilateral social security agreements, as long as these countries could guarantee the payment upon return. According to these two principles, the VRP applied to the citizens of Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, United States, Philippines, Morocco, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Russia, Tunisia, Ukraine, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Migrants who wished to participate in the program had to be eligible for unemployment benefits. Unless they had met this criterion already, they had to register with a local Employment Services (ES) within fifteen days after being laid off. If they did not report within this time frame, they lost the right to unemployment benefits, and therefore to this particular voluntary return program. Since it was the worker's (and not employer's) responsibility to keep abreast of the unemployment benefits eligibility regulations, many unemployed, both foreign and Spanish, were not aware of the fifteen day rule and could not avail themselves of the cash for return until they became involuntarily unemployed again and reapplied within fifteen days.

It was expected that migrants who committed themselves to the program as soon as they became unemployed would be able to claim between €7000 and €8000 in benefits. Migrants could commit themselves to the program at any point of time while they were receiving unemployment benefits. But the longer they waited, the smaller the voluntary return benefits they were going to obtain. This did not make much of a difference for migrants, because they were going to receive the benefits anyway, but it made a big difference for the program, because the value of the departure incentive decreased overtime. When the unemployed migrants used up their unemployment benefits, they become illegible for the program. Thus, while the Spanish government scheme was budget friendly (as it drew on the social security benefits that

⁸ For an overview of the program, see the Spanish ES leaflet (INEM, 2008b).

⁹ The citizens of EU, EEA and Switzerland could not be prohibited from re-entry to Spain, therefore they were not eligible to participate in the program.

migrants were going to receive anyway), it limited itself to the migrants who were going to depart Spain anyway. With the amount of benefits decreasing over time, the program was in a poor position to attract undecided migrants and unable to convince those who treated repatriation from Spain as the last resort.

Once migrants committed themselves to the program, they received one way tickets, €50 per person for travel to the port of departure as well as 40 percent of the unclaimed unemployment benefits available to them. In exchange, they had to depart Spain within 30 days after receiving the 40 percent payment. They could change their mind before receiving the 40 percent payment but not after. Once in the country of origin, the returnees must personally report to the Spanish embassy or consulate to surrender any documents linking them to Spain (work and residence permits, national identity number card, social security card, health care card etc.) to Spanish diplomatic mission abroad. The mission authorized Spanish ES to release the remaining 60 percent of migrants' unemployment benefits through a check or a wire transfer within 30 to 90 days following migrant return. The 40 percent was exempt from taxes in Spain, but not all bilateral social security agreements guaranteed that taxes would not be levied in the countries of origin. Colombia imposed up to a 30 percent tax on migrants' remittances and the citizens of Colombia therefore were apprehensive that this would also apply to the voluntary return payment.

The countries of origin

The returnees were prohibited from reentry to Spain for the three years following departure. This was one reason why the program did not apply to the EU citizens. With no internal controls and the EU right to reside anywhere in the EU, it would be impossible to extend the program to e.g. Romanians. The Romanian government was nonetheless interested in extending the voluntary return to its citizens because emigration had threatened its ability to attract foreign investment and use the post accession EU funds. The Romanian government lacked funds to motivate its citizens to come back so the Spanish voluntary return program would have been very helpful, particularly following the January 1, 2009 lifting of transitional labour market mobility periods for the citizens of Romania (and Bulgaria) on the Spanish labour market. Some Romanians who had lost their jobs in Spain returned home spontaneously but soon re-entered Spain after realizing that the employment perspectives in Romania were illusory.

Given the Spanish government's reluctance to include Romanians in the program, the Romanian government continued to curtail Spanish employer demand for seasonal workers. While the Romanian government viewed the economic crisis in Spain as an opportunity for national development, Morocco and Ecuador knew the limits of their capacity to integrate returnees. They faced a dilemma between accepting the returnees or acquiescing to their downward labour mobility from year-long jobs in industry and services to seasonal jobs in agriculture. Since the Spanish VRP did not include any training or job creation provisions, the non-EU countries expected the program to increase unemployment pressures and interrupt remittances flows.

While they supported spontaneous return of their citizens, and even supported it with customs exemptions and other minor post-return assistance measures, they considered a sudden wave of return migration a major obstacle to development, particularly in the context of a crisis.

Migrants and labour unions

Ecuadorian (*Rumiñahui*) and Moroccan (*ATIME*) organizations expressed skepticism about the ability of the VRP to attract their nationals in the form it was approved. They held that the bonus should be larger and there should not be a prohibition to re-enter Spain within three years. The NGOs feared that the countries of origin were not prepared to offer returning migrants sufficiently good conditions for returnees to find a sustainable source of income and housing.

According to Dora Aguirre, the president of *Rumiñahui*, even those migrants who collected up to €7000 in unemployment benefits would still find it difficult to depart Spain (*El Mundo*, 2008e). While most Ecuadorians had originally planned to return home, their attitudes have changed with the prolongation of stay. In a survey conducted by *Colectivo IOE* prior to financial crisis, migrants said that the main reasons for settlement were better living and working conditions in Spain as compared to Ecuador (26%), relocation of family to Spain (23%), initial steps made towards settlement (16%), hopes for social and labour mobility (10%), perception of better future for children (9%), overall satisfaction with life in Spain (8%), economic stability (6%), social benefits (2%). By contrast, those who planned to return to Ecuador were motivated by: separation from family (41.4%), nostalgia and loneliness (26%), dissatisfaction with life in Spain (14.7%), perception of ameliorated working and living conditions at home (7.9%), dissatisfaction with their migration project (5.6%), and difficulty of legalizing status (3.8%) (*Colectivo IOE*, 2007: 156-157). Even if Ecuadorians were willing to leave they could not do so due to property acquired in Spain, family reunification or unpaid debts associated with migration project (e.g. housing credits) (*El País*, 2008a). As of March 2009, the Spanish voluntary return program did not provide any assistance that would make it easier for the settled workers to sell property, prepare children for transition into the new schooling system, professional training or post-return labour market integration.

The Ecuadorians doubted that employment opportunities in Ecuador would ameliorate in the near future. Even if Ecuador could attract foreign investment the way Mexico did, it would first occur in the areas with decent infrastructure and not the rural often geographically isolated areas from where many migrants came. Aware of these fears, the National Secretary for Migration created a small seed grant (*El Fondo Cucuyo*) to the returning emigrants from rural areas willing to invest in Ecuador (*SENAMI*, 2009). However, given the small funds available, the grant was to be distributed on a competition basis. Third, even if *maquiladoras* sprung up in Ecuador, work on an assembly line would mean downward labour mobility for many Ecuadorians who had worked in Spanish services.

According to preliminary survey conducted by ATIME among 360 Moroccans residing in Spain, only 10% thought the program was attractive and 83 percent thought it was not: 78 percent of respondents said that they would not want to give up the right to enter Spain within three years for what was being offered, while only eight percent would. Eleven percent considered the voluntary return bonus as a last resort, if their situation in Spain were to be exacerbated as the crisis progresses. 44 percent thought Spain should provide additional economic incentives to voluntary return, 43 percent did not think it was necessary. However only 13 percent of those who thought an additional bonus would be necessary thought it should be less than €20 000 (ATIME, 2008), thereby reflecting migrants' doubts about the ability to quickly find decent work in Morocco following return.

Even when unemployed, migrants in Spain were better off than in their countries of origin. Spanish law provided migrants with basic services such as free health care, free education for children, re-qualification programs, regardless of the legal and employment status. Furthermore, the crisis had a milder effect on demand for workers in the unstable jobs and informal economy, thus as long as somebody was willing to accept difficult work for low pay they had an alternative to VRP. The longer migrants stayed in Spain, the more rights they enjoyed. Even though the voluntary return program promised that after return to Spain in three years, migrants would be able to claim the period of legal residence to adjust their status, it could not guarantee that migrants would be granted visas to re-enter Spain. There was a lot of confusion about what the Minister of Labour's "zero migration policy" would mean.

The Minister of Labour considered the program to be consistent with Spanish policy on labour migration, as it enforced the principle that migrant workers be admitted in view of the ability of the Spanish labour market and society to integrate them. According to the Minister, just as it was legitimate to expand foreign worker admissions when the economic situation was favourable, it was legitimate to limit them when the economic situation worsened. The Minister explained that the new economic scenario, characterized by a significant growth of unemployment requires that national labour reserve, be it Spanish or legally resident foreign nationals, be given priority in employment. Only when these sources are exhausted, should employers be permitted to bring workers from outside of Spain (MTAS 2008b). "It does not make sense to bring foreign workers from abroad if there are some 2.5 million unemployed available in Spain" said the Minister indicating further that he would propose to reduce admissions of workers from countries of origin in 2009 to almost zero.

In December 2008, the Spanish government prepared a new draft of the Foreigner's Law. Among other aspects, the draft aimed to strengthen the nexus between foreign worker admissions and the ability of the Spanish labour market and society to integrate them. This meant that a number of exceptions to this rule stemming from non-labour market reasons, such as family reunification or application for asylum, were going

to be curtailed severely. Whatever the final draft of the law was going to be, migrants feared it was going to make re-entry more difficult, even for those who would strategically leave a family member in Spain. Even migrants who lost their jobs considered that they should stay to make it easier for their children (whether already residing in Spain or still abroad) to obtain a job in Spain. Most of Spain's migrants did not suffer a language barrier either because they spoke Spanish as their mother tongue (Latin Americans) or were romance language speakers and learned Spanish quickly (Romanians and Francophone Africans). The practical lack of communication problem between migrants and Spanish society theoretically provided an easy "way out" for migrant children should their parents decide to return. But it had also greatly facilitated their social integration, and prevented the development of other educational policies aimed to facilitate future re-integration in the sending societies. Thus for many migrant children, language remained the only significant link that they had with their home countries. The same was true for children of other nationalities.

Before the economic crisis, migrants had been able to reunite with their families after one year. Family reunification was considered the most important motor of migration to Spain over recent years. In 2007, 128 161 persons came to Spain through family reunification (España, 2009: 4). The new family reunification provisions would require that only permanent residence permit holders be entitled to bring their families in, so as to ensure that those who receive them in Spain would have sufficient funds to support them. The draft of the new law also aimed to lower migrants' working age from 18 to 16 years old and to facilitate reunion with family members holding a long term residence work permit elsewhere in the EU (España, 2009: 10).

While most migrants did not find voluntary return attractive, the policy could potentially appeal to those approaching retirement age (with largest accumulated unemployment benefits and least likely to find a new job in Spain) and the newly-arrived (with smallest unemployment benefits and more likely to find a job abroad).

Similarly to migrant organizations, labour unions also feared that immigrants had not earned enough in unemployment benefits and that the three year-long prohibition to reenter Spain would discourage migrants from applying. According to labour unions' estimates, most migrants could claim nine months of unemployment benefits. So, in the best scenario an unemployed person who is eligible to €900 a month would receive a €8100 voluntary return benefit. On the other hand, those who saved more substantial amounts should not be encouraged to leave, because they probably integrated themselves well in Spanish economy and society (Del Barrio, 2008).

Both labour unions and migrant organizations also agreed that the Spanish government should encourage investment in migrants' homelands to provide migrants with durable employment opportunities following

return. Alternatively, labour unions claimed, the Spanish government should facilitate migrants' settlement given how much they contributed to the Spanish economic boom.

Employers

The employers who had used migrant workers preferred that foreign worker admission continue because interrupted labour supply would penalize Spanish business without necessarily helping the unemployed. Farmers and growers argued that, despite the economic crisis, they continued to find it difficult to attract Spanish workers. Soon after migration curbs were announced in September, the president of Spain's largest agricultural organization (COAG) met with the Minister of Labour to request that the agricultural sector be exempted from the recruitment curb. According to the president of Huelva's COAG branch, in the 2008/2009 season, Huelva strawberry employers needed 6 000 planters and 35 000 harvesters. In September 2008, Huelva employers interviewed some 800 registered unemployed and only two percent demonstrated interest in taking up job offers. In Camacho's opinion, the potential for activating workers available in Spain or in the enlarged EU was very low, because they had already gotten used to work in less strenuous construction, industry and services (*El Mundo*, 2008 c). The Minister of Labour agreed that the strawberry sector would need foreign workers and assured farmers that the first jobs to be excluded from the registry of occupations exempted from labour market tests would be year-round (rather than seasonal) jobs. Year-round jobs were potentially more appealing to Spanish and legally resident foreign workers. The Ministry of Labour promised to develop a plan to help the unemployed re-train. COAG's pleas for continued admission of seasonal workers to Spanish strawberry agriculture were supported by the Moroccan Minister of Labour. At a meeting with his Moroccan counterpart, on February, 12, 2009, the Spanish Minister announced that Moroccan strawberry pickers could count on 18 000 jobs during the 2009 harvest (MTAS, 2009b).

The Spanish government reduced the quota for one year-long work permits from 15 731 (2008) to 901 (2009) including from 992 to 656 in agriculture (Ministerio de Trabajo e Inmigración, 2009). Seasonal admissions continued to remain uncapped (MTAS, 2009). In this respect, the 2008/09 crisis in Spain, like its 1973/74 predecessor in France limited but did not stop foreign worker admissions.

Conclusions

VRPs were born in the context of guestworker-style migrations to Western Europe. France was one of the first host countries to authorize VRPs in the history of the postwar foreign worker admissions and in the history of the post-Cold War admissions. In the wake of the 1973/74 oil crisis, France curbed admissions of foreign workers. But the flows of family members of those who had settled, seasonal workers, refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants continued. As the gap between the total and working migrant population widened and anti-immigrant sentiments increased, in 1977 France launched Europe's first official VRP.¹⁰ In 2008, this program informed the formulation of Spain's VRP. However, by 2008, France had modified its VRP considerably, because the original 1977 scheme met with skepticism of migrants and their countries of origin. As of March, 2009, the Spanish program remained basic compared to its French counterpart. The most significant difference between the two VRPs concerned the degree of cooperation with the countries of origin. While the French aimed to strengthen VRP cooperation with the countries of origin, the Spanish continued to administer the program largely themselves.

France and Spain were among Europe's largest guestworker importers in the postwar and post-Cold War periods respectively. Both found it difficult to rotate their workers already before the onset of the 1973/74 and 2008/09 crises. Thus, at the same time that they admitted foreign workers, they also legalized those who had settled or arrived illegally. Since legalizations were controversial, both governments decided to use the economic crises as a window of opportunity to repatriate foreign workers through VRPs. It was expected that VRPs would help to enforce foreign workers' rotation in a way that would be acceptable to migrants and local populations. The French and Spanish governments expected that, in the context of crisis, migrants would be more likely to take up financial incentives to return home, and local populations would be more likely to accept the state-subsidized repatriations. They also assumed that the countries of origin would acquiesce to VRP conditions.

The four main categories of return incentives provided through the French VRP since 1977 were: (1) free transportation home; (2) departure bonuses for eligible migrants and their family members; (3) professional training; (4) job generation. Given the uncertain nexus between departure bonuses and permanent return, as well as professional training and labour market reintegration, with time the French VRP began to pay increasingly more attention to job creation. When, in the early 2000s, the proportion of migrants from the most impoverished countries began to grow, it became necessary for VRPs to be more sensitive to the

¹⁰ In May 1975 Hans Filbinger (CDU) instituted a departure bonus to foreign workers employed in the Audi factory in Heilbronn, Baden-Württemberg. However, the scheme raised controversies and the Federal German government did not implement a state-wide VRP until November, 30, 1983 (Rogers, 1981: 344-345).

economic, political and social conditions in the countries of origin. It is in this context that since 2003 France became more involved in generating jobs in the sending countries.

As of March 2009, the Spanish VRP limited return assistance to free transportation and a departure bonus corresponding in value to worker's unemployment benefits. Spain's 2008/09 VRP, like its 1977 French counterpart, departed from the assumption that the countries of origin were ready to readmit their migrants in as large numbers and as promptly as Spain wished. However, faced with a crisis and the return of their emigrants from other countries, the least developed countries of origin had a limited ability to integrate returners from Spain.

As of March 2009, the French VRP continued to attract more citizens of the relatively developed countries, thereby indicating that economic and political stability in the homelands shaped return migration more than any return incentives authorized so far. The early lessons from Mali have not yet demonstrated a multiplier effect and where they have, they favored migrants' immediate families rather than larger communities. Furthermore, it is not yet certain what effect would employment subsidies granted to returning migrants have on the unsubsidized local entrepreneurs. If driven out of business, local entrepreneurs could emigrate thereby replacing those who had returned from France. Also returners unable to integrate themselves in their countries of origin could migrate back to France.

In order to minimize the oversaturation of the same type of employment initiatives, the administrators of the job-generating VRP grants should provide migrants with thorough logistical and legal support throughout their employment project planning and early implementation. Particular attention should be paid to the sustainability of migrants' employment initiatives. Ideally they could further develop, rather than burden, the existing infrastructure, and thereby attract greater financial and administrative assistance from local authorities. For instance, migrants proposing to open a grocery store in an area where many grocery stores already exist could be offered extra support if they decide to produce goods to be sold in this store or transportation services to supply them more economically. It is to prevent business saturation and overcome the paucity of infrastructure that the French development grants set aside additional funds for the "most innovative" employment projects. But "innovativeness" was never clearly defined and was often misunderstood for "uniqueness", rather than the ability of the project to sustain itself, produce jobs for others, ameliorate investment infrastructure etc.

While VRPs have helped France and are likely to help Spain repatriate migrants in a humanitarian way, they could only constitute one element of a comprehensive migration policy that recognizes the fact that some migrants would not want to return home. One possible reason why it may be unrealistic to expect significant voluntary returns is that the post-Cold War era has fostered interdependence between much more economically, politically and socially diverse countries than the postwar era did. The lack of political stability

and basic infrastructure was one important reason why the French and German companies were reluctant to move to Algeria and Turkey in the 1970s, and it seemed to be the reason why French or Spanish companies have been reluctant to move to Mali or Colombia in the 2000s. Since it is the more fragile countries like Mali and Colombia, rather than relatively stable like Morocco or Romania, that are likely to produce most significant migration pressures, receiving and sending governments should aim to minimize employer –migrant dependence and foster e.g. freer trade as an alternative to labour migration. Should such employer-migrant dependence have already occurred, receiving countries should facilitate migrants' labor mobility to allow them to move out of precarious jobs.

The economic crisis has not affected all sectors and geographical areas of France and Spain to the same extent. Moreover, native workers are less likely to move across the country and labour market due to family attachment, property ownership, unwillingness to perform certain jobs, and entitlement to attractive unemployment benefits entitlements. When granted legal status and full labour market and geographical mobility, many migrants would lift themselves up from pauperization. Those who would not, would return home, but over an extended period of time thereby easing unemployment and housing pressures on their countries of origin.

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