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ITALIAN-EGYPTIAN MODEL IN MANAGING THE EMIGRATION FROM EGYPT TO ITALY. DIMENSIONS AND PROSPECTS

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CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2008/18

Circular Migration Series

Political and Social Module

Cooperation project on the social integration
of immigrants, migration, and the movement
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Euro-Mediterranean Consortium
for Applied Research on International Migration

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Italian-Egyptian Model in Managing the Emigration from Egypt to Italy.
Dimensions and Prospects

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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

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Abstract

This paper tackles the phenomenon of circular migration in Egypt by referring to the Italian-Egyptian Model in managing emigration from Egypt to Italy. In addition to focusing on the phases, dimensions, and impact of the project, the paper critically alludes to certain fundamental prerequisites so that circularity evolves into a win-win scenario for both home and host countries.

Résumé

Ce papier met en exergue le phénomène de la migration circulaire en Egypte tout en se référant au modèle italo-égyptien qui vise à gérer l'émigration de l'Egypte vers l'Italie. Après avoir décrit les phases, dimensions, et retombées du projet, l'auteur met en lumière quelques conditions nécessaires pour que la migration circulaire réponde aux intérêts et aux besoins à la fois des pays d'origine et des pays d'accueil.

Global international migration has undergone a transformation in the last decade. Migratory mobility, of course, has a long history. In the contemporary world, however, international circular migration is occurring on an unprecedented large scale, involving a greater cross-section of groups and taking a wider variety of forms than ever before. This change has produced a number of challenges to both policymakers and researchers.¹ In the meantime, Egypt has witnessed changing migration trends, particularly since the 1990s, some of these changes date back to Egyptian economic circumstances, and others are related to regional and international transformations.

Several conditions in the contemporary world are highly conducive to the international circulation of labor, both skilled and unskilled. The development of transportation has meant that money and time costs of travel have dramatically decreased, which will not only facilitate the international “journey to work” but also enable migrant workers to return readily to their home nation in an emergency and for frequent visits. The intimacy of contact with the family based in the home nation is enhanced by the cheapening of international telephoning, emailing, and faxing. All this is at a time when demographic and economic differences between nations are widening, especially between the so-called “labor surplus” and “labor shortage” nations.²

According to the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), the principal forces that are driving international migration are due to the 3D: differences in development, demography and democracy³

Despite their demographic decline and labor market shortages, countries in the North of the Mediterranean, have shown a highly ambivalent attitude to receiving labor migrants from the South, with policy fluctuations and a lack of clear objectives in migration and labor market management.⁴

Baldwin asserted that throughout the EU recent history, there has been a remarkable one-sided emphasis on the security aspects of immigration control (borders, asylum, expulsion of illegal migrants) and an almost complete absence of even co-ordination of policy on immigration for employment, issues of legislation of illegal immigrants, and until recently on the rights of long-term immigrants.⁵

EU states are under increasing pressure to reform and align their immigration and asylum practices. The issue has taken on economic as well as humanitarian urgency. Experts say that aging EU states, many with low birth rates, face a labor shortage in the near future. At the same time, thousands of Africans continue to make the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea in search of work and a better life. The problem has become particularly acute in Southern European countries along the Mediterranean Basin.⁶

More recently, several new trends of policy have emerged. First, there has been recognition of the need for major labor market reform for the purpose of economic development, and migration is a small part of that process. Second, greater collaboration between Northern and Southern parts of the Mediterranean has been launched so as to combat illegal migration flows on the one hand, and encourage as well as organize labor recruitment on the other hand.

¹ Hugo, Graeme, “Circular Migration: Keeping Development Rolling?”, Migration Information Source, June 2003.

² Ibid

³ Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), Migration in an Interconnected World, New Directions for Action, GCIM Report, October 2005, p 32.

⁴ Edwards, Martin Baldwin, “Migration in the Middle East and Mediterranean, A Regional Study”, Global Commission on International Migration, see <http://www.mmo.gr>.

⁵ Edwards, Baldwin, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: North Africa as a Region of Emigration, Immigration and Transit Migration”, http://aei.pitt.edu/6365/01/between_a_rock_final.pdf, p 14.

⁶ See: Chol, Julia, “African Migration to Europe: A Resource for Nonpartisan Information and Analysis”, Council on Foreign Relations, http://www.cfr.org/publications/13726/african_migration_to_europe.html.

In this context, circular migration has become one of the alternatives to solve the dilemma mentioned above. It offers destination countries a steady supply of needed workers in both skilled and unskilled occupations, without the requirements of long-term integration. Countries of origin can benefit from the inflow of remittances while migrants are abroad and their investments and skills upon return. The migrants are also thought to gain much, as the expansion of circular migration programs increases the opportunities for safer and legal migration from the developing world.⁷

Circular migration: a new approach

Circular migration can be defined as a form of migration that is managed in a way that allows some degree of legal mobility back and forth between two countries⁸ as well as a management tool that allows the introduction of labor migration quotas for specific professions.⁹

In December 2006, the European Council invited the Commission to propose ways to:

- Integrate legal migration opportunities into the Union's external policies in order to develop a balanced partnership with third countries adapted to specific EU Member States' labor market needs;
- Suggest ways and means to facilitate circular and temporary migration;
- Present detailed proposals on how to better organize and inform about the various forms of legal movement between the EU and third countries.¹⁰

It is noteworthy that this new approach deals with two main issues: mobility partnerships and circular migration.

Mobility partnerships

This approach proposes the negotiation of mobility partnerships between the EU and third countries ready to work actively to manage more efficiently migration flows, and in particular to fight illegal migration, in partnership with the EU, in exchange for enhanced possibilities of mobility between their countries and the EU for their citizens, in terms of legal migration opportunities and of short term movements (short stay visa issues).¹¹

Circular migration

Circular migration is understood as a tool that can both help address labor needs in EU Member States and maximize the benefits of migration for countries of origin by fostering skills transfer and mitigating the risks of brain drain. This new approach depends on legislative and non- legislative measures that could facilitate circular migration and calls for a dialogue amongst Member States and relevant stakeholders on these issues. As circular migration raises a number of challenges, the

⁷ Agunias, Dovelyn & Newland, Kathleen, "Circular Migration and Development: Trends, Policy Routes and Ways Forward", Migration Policy Institute, Policy Brief, April 2007.

⁸ See "Circular Migration and Mobility Partnerships between the European Union and Third Countries", Memo/07/197, Brussels, 16 May 2007.

⁹ Constant, Amelie & Zimmermann, Klaus, "Circular Migration: Counts of Exits and Years away from the Host Country", Institute of the Study of Labor, IZA DP No. 2999, August 2007.

¹⁰ See "Circular Migration and Mobility Partnerships between the European Union and Third Countries", op.cit.

¹¹ Ibid

Commission is also ready to look at the possibility of supporting innovative pilot schemes to test the feasibility of this concept.¹²

Circular migration is considered a new paradigm which represents a potential leverage for development: financial, human and social capital gained abroad can have powerful benefits for the source country if migrants return or maintain strong ties.¹³

Italian-Egyptian Cooperation Model for the Management of Migratory Flows. The context – overlapping factors.

Italy is the European country that experiences the highest inflow of Egyptian migration. According to Egyptian official data (2000), 10.9% of permanent Egyptian migrants were living in Italy, which means around 90.000 people. However, the OECD reports a stock of only 32.8 thousand residence permits held by Egyptians in Italy for the year 2000. The discrepancy between the Egyptian and the OECD figures on the number of permanent Egyptian migrants in Italy points to the possibility of the existence of a high number (around 60.000) of undocumented Egyptian permanent migrants.¹⁴

It is worth adding that the current stream of Egyptian irregular migration to Europe started on the eve of the 21st century with massive number of fresh graduated and less-educated unemployment youth engaged in irregular migration to Europe, either through the Mediterranean Sea via Libya or by overstaying tourist Schengen visas.

There are specific reasons behind this new type of migration:

- High unemployment rates among Egyptian youth
- The difficulty to find employment opportunities in the Arab Gulf countries due to the massive number of cheap South East Asian labor
- The geographical proximity between Egypt and Italy
- The ease of traveling to Libya where most of the boat journeys to Europe usually start.¹⁵

On the other side of the river, the Italian government has referred to the poor use of the privileged quota, which allocated for Egyptian labor migration in Italy and the need for improving migration in recent years. According to the Italian Consulate in Egypt in 2002, only few demands were coming from the Italian entrepreneurs for the recruitment of Egyptian workers. The same low propensity of Italian entrepreneurs to recruit Egyptian workers was collected by the Italian Regional Labor Agencies. In this regard, the IMIS project has been targeted to raise awareness and disseminate information on the Egyptian labor capacities and availabilities towards Italian territorial enterprise associations on the one hand, and to improve the access of Egyptian migrants to the Italian labor quota and job opportunities on the other hand.¹⁶

The number of Egyptian legal immigrants, which was about 3,751 in 1981, increased to nearly 20,000 in 1990 and then to 26,000 in 2001. In this respect, it is important to mention that during the

¹² Ibid

¹³ O'Neil, Kevin, "Using Remittances and Circular Migration to Drive Development", Migration Information Source, MPI, June 2003.

¹⁴ Talani, Leila & et al, "Why do Migrants Leave their Countries? Motivations to Migrate at the Point of Departure: the Case of Egypt", the British Academy, Nov 2003, p 14.

¹⁵ Zohry, Ayman, "Egyptian Irregular Migration to Europe", Migration Letters, vol 4, no.1, April 2007.

¹⁶ Stocchiero, Andrea, "Fostering Egyptian Local Development Through Diasporic Networks in Italy", Rome, CeSPI Policy Paper on the Integrated Migration Information System (IMIS) Project, May 2004.

1990s, three regularization measures took place and more specifically in 1990, 1995 and 1998.¹⁷ It is true that in comparison to other nationalities, the official increase in the number of Egyptian immigrants in Italy was low. However, in spite of these regularization steps, the Egyptian illegal presence continues to be relevant in terms of number on Italian territory.

In addition, the expulsion of Egyptian immigrants (2003-2004), which draws attention to the undoubted existence of illegal flows, confirms the need to improve migration policies between the two countries.¹⁸

Therefore, the cooperation aims at a two-fold objective:¹⁹

- Contrasting the Egyptian irregular/ illegal migratory phenomenon towards Italy;
- Offering to Egyptian citizens concrete and regular job perspectives in the Italian labor market. In other words, encouraging the regular migratory flows of the workers in response to the needs of the international labor markets.

Italy has signed two fundamental agreements to this effect: the first, the Labor Agreement was signed in November 2005, and the second, the Re-admission Agreement, was signed in January 2007.

The Italian-Egyptian cooperation model has been effectively realized through the IMIS (Integrated Migration Information System) and IDOM (Information Dissemination on Migration) projects which are financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Cooperation for Development and implemented in partnership with the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower and Emigration and IOM. Such projects have respectively allowed the match-making of demand and offer as well as the institutional capacity building and the dissemination of information, through the Egyptian mass media, concerning the dangers of illegal migration practices. Within this framework, a “free toll number” has been set up to provide information on the legal procedures they must go through to enter Italy.²⁰

Integrated Migration Information System IMIS²¹

Upon the request of the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration (MME), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) started on June 2001 the Integrated Migration Information System (IMIS) project financed by the Italian Government. The main objectives of the IMIS Project are to provide support to the migratory strategy adopted by the Emigration Sector (ES) of the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration by:

- Designing executive plans and policies to encourage Egyptian migration and provide opportunities for its success;
- Sponsoring Egyptians abroad, encouraging them to create Egyptian gatherings, unions and clubs, focusing on the second and third generations of migrants, and fostering their ties to their homeland;
- Benefiting from Egyptian potential abroad in the fields of development, production and advanced technology in cooperation with the ministries and involved bodies;

¹⁷ After the regularization regulatory measures enforced by the new Italian Immigration Law in 2002, the Egyptian presence doubled reaching the number of almost 46,000 in 2003.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Cooperation on Migration, Migration Policies: The Importance of Investing in Human Resources and the Role of Media, International Conference held in Cairo, 25th February 2007.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Stocchiero, Andrea, “Fostering Egyptian Local Development through Diasporic Networks in Italy”, Rome, CeSPI Policy Paper on the Integrated Migration Information System (IMIS) Project, May 2004.

- Establishing an integrated database on Egyptians abroad, emigration markets and migration regulating legislation in the countries of destination.

Information Dissemination on Migration (IDOM) :²²

The IDOM project, which is part of the integrated approach of the initiatives of the Italian cooperation in the emigration sector, aims at assisting the Egyptian institutions in creating consciousness and awareness on the risks and consequences of illegal migration through an innovative approach that would allow to guarantee the interactivity between media, collaboration with non-governmental organizations and the creation of focus groups for the analysis and the dissemination of information. The whole information strategy of the project focuses on three main points:

- Effects of illegal migration on the youth and their families;
- Ways of dealing with illegal migration;
- Opportunities and procedures for participating in legal labor mobility schemes.

This integrated approach, that aims at reducing illegal migration through legal and concrete opportunities, is based on the three following pillars:

1. Match-making between Italian demand (through the Italian Data Collection System Borsa Lavoro) and Egyptian offer (through the system set up at the MOME by IMIS).
2. Human resources development activities through :
 - Italian support to Egyptian selected training institutions aimed at providing professional competencies, according to a demand-driven approach;
 - Provision of competencies in line with international benchmarks. The process will allow for automatic and larger flows of supply, making match-making easy and reliable. Certified language courses for enhancing professional and social integration in host country;
 - Analysis of regulations and laws hindering mobility in view of facilitating the whole process;
3. Media and social awareness campaigns aimed at providing information about the dangers connected with irregular practices and above all, about the legal possibilities and the ways to enter the labor mobility schemes implemented together with the Egyptian authorities.²³

On this basis, the International Mobility Project is being implemented. The project is financed by the Italian Ministry of Labor and jointly executed by the Italian Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower and Emigration. The technical assistance is provided by Italianavoro Agency. The pilot phase of this initiative is almost completed, and two-hundred Egyptian workers have been selected to work according to the specific needs expressed by some Italian regions. Once they have completed their linguistic and professional training, these workers would have to enter the Italian labor market.²⁴

The matching process between labor demand and offer through the distribution of the Egyptian privileged quota among Italian regions and the provinces represents a problem. For example, the Emilia Romagna Region distributed its quota among its provinces, but the quota established for the Reggio Emilia Province (maximum of 6 workers) is smaller than the demand for Egyptian workers

²² Cooperation on Migration, Migration Policies: op.cit.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

coming from the local enterprise, while at the same time the quota established for the province of Bologna (37 workers) is greater than the local demand.²⁵

Regarding the effects of this project, the institutional Egyptian representatives underlined that the agreement signed with the Italian government, particularly the component of awareness campaigns on migration, has contributed to a significant reduction of the illegal immigrants in Italy. In 2005, the number of 10, 000 illegal immigrants was reduced to 4400 by 2006, a decrease of around 50%.²⁶

Year	Total disembarked	Egyptians	Egyptian%
2004	13.594	8.782	61%
2005	22.824	10.201	45%
2006	22.016	4.478	20%

Challenges and Requirements:

For many years, emigration has been a relief valve for North African countries, alleviating strong social pressure caused by unemployment and high rates of demographic growth.

Nevertheless, it is important to enhance the role of education and training in order to face socio-economic challenges generated by an increasingly globalized and competitive market economy. Besides, it is essential to integrate the educational and occupational policies according to the needs of the market. In other words, the key-word is once more integration. Integration between economic development, employment and education.

Educated people have better access to information, greater means and funds to move and travel abroad and they are less inclined to utilize illegal means. Moreover, migrants who have medium levels of education and good professional skills are more likely to be successful in integrating themselves in host societies.

In the framework of occupational mobility, the components needed for the activation of a win-win scenario between the origin and destination countries require: first, facilitating the acquisition of basic skills in order to raise the occupational possibilities (e.g. linguistics skills), second, allowing the comparability and transferability of qualifications and certificates, third, activating partnership in the field of education and training so as to establish common educational standards.²⁷

One can summarize the preconditions of mobility skills in a win-win scenario in three dimensions: basic skills of migrants to increase their chance of employment, transportability of skills and diplomas and partnership approach in investing in education.

Although there are 1200 training centers in Egypt, the scarcity of skilled manpower is still noticeable. In this framework, it is important to orient the educational and training offers according to a demand-driven approach, by assessing the needs of the labor market and by organizing training sessions in terms of didactic methodologies and curricula. The integration and greater synergies between schools and the entrepreneurial world are the key to improve Egyptian competitiveness. Such integration is linked to the capacities of the country to provide training courses in line with what is required by the international labor markets, and it is also connected to the necessity of cooperating with the destination countries in terms of bilateral agreements and technical vocational partnership for

²⁵ Stocchiero, op.cit.

²⁶ Cooperation on Migration, Migration Policies, op.cit.

²⁷ Ibid.

job creation.²⁸ Thus, the international follow up conference “Cooperation on Migration” recommended:

- Strengthening the bilateral relations between origin and receiving countries through readmission and labor agreements;
- Enhancing a better match-making of demand and offer through the creation of informative and operative centers;
- Integrating educational offers with employment, reorienting the first according to the needs of national and international labor markets;
- Activating programs in support of the educational and vocational system in order to achieve joint educational and vocational standards between sending and receiving countries;
- Defining action plans, designed by the governments, in order to enhance and promote return migration and finally, defining and activating awareness campaigns able to convey clear messages on the dangers pertaining to illegal migration as well as information campaign on the reality of receiving countries.²⁹

Conclusion

In spite of easing the legal mobility of Egyptian migrants, the number of illegal migrants in the recent period is on the rise.³⁰ In fact, the fight against illegal migration can not be successful without dealing with two critical issues: the first issue is related to widening the scope of programs aiming at facilitating legal mobility, and the second issue is related to development strategy in Egypt. In this frame, it is necessary to reduce the welfare gap between the North and South, therefore, the EU’s aid strategy should aim at a significant improvement in the people’s welfare.

Last, the success of models (programs) of partnership is contingent on some considerations represented in creating committed bilateral partnerships between sending and receiving countries, giving migrants the same rights and obligations as native workers to every practical extent, having clear as well as independent dispute-resolving mechanisms, and finally widening the range of partnerships to include many receiving and sending countries (multilateral framework for governing human flows). Hence, integrated methodologies are fundamental to make labor mobility an enriching factor for both origin and destination countries.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Two hundred Egyptians tried to reach the Italian shores last October. Some of them were killed, and the ones who survived were expected to be deported to Egypt according to the Egyptian-Italian bilateral repatriation agreement. It is noteworthy that since last March, 2007, 2400 immigrants were deported to Egypt.